

Date: June 26, 1979

Occupation: Non-Profit Employee

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when you first heard about the Three Mile Island incident?

NARRATOR: Yes clearly. I heard it while I was at the YWCA by radio.

INT: Do you remember what day of the week?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you know before the incident that there was a reactor at Three Mile Island?

NAR: Yes but didn't know anything what it meant. We really didn't understand it.

INT: What did you think about it when you first heard about it?

NAR: I didn't think too much about it because I didn't understand it #1. It was almost, we giggled. Whether it was a nervous giggle I don't know, but we started dreaming up crazy ideas until we received a phone call from Mexico to the YWCA - a relative of one of the employees, looking for them. And I think that's what shook us.

INT: From Mexico?

NAR: Because that call came through only about, I'm going to say forty minutes after we first heard it. And we're not accustomed to keeping the radio on down there. It was just so (unintelligible). Down there it was just sort of a fluke that it happened to be on and then of course we kept...

INT: So that was the first day it happened then?

NAR: That was the first, as far as I knew, that's the first the public knew anything about it. I don't know whether anything happened the day before or the day before that.

INT: Did you feel it was a crisis or a serious situation?

NAR: No, but I think that's my nature. I began to realize. I began to count the miles between Carlisle and Three Mile Island.

INT: Do you know how many miles there are?

NAR: How the crow flies well if you go the way the crow goes we were over twenty five and that sort of put us in a reasonable safe situation. I also have a pregnant daughter whose home is in Maryland and I felt certain that had she been here I would have gotten

her out of here. No matter what the mileage was. But other than that as far as my husband and I were concerned. No, we didn't go bananas. We were curious.

INT: Did you seek out further information after you first heard about it?

NAR: Only through friends in conversation. I would not say that we deliberately went and got a book or deliberately went to find a professor who knew something about nuclear. (she chuckles) No, we didn't. In fact six of us were on our way to leave town for a church convention up in, at Bucknell, and we went ahead with our plans. And that was, you asked me what day of the week this was and I might be able to catch up with you, but I know we left on a Friday for the convention and returned on a Saturday and so it must have been sometime during the week that, middle of the week. What day of the week was it?

INT: Wednesday, I didn't hear about it until Thursday.

NAR: What I heard was Wednesday when the public sort of was told by radio.

INT: I'm not really sure, think it was first thing Wednesday morning.

NAR: It was the morning, I know it was the morning,

INT: Like early in the morning.

NAR: Yeah, well we didn't hear it then.

INT: Did you listen to the radio or television or read the newspapers any more than you usually would?

NAR: Yes, definitely.

INT: Because you were concerned or just curious about it?

NAR: Both. Both.

INT: Did you talk about it with your friends or family or co-workers?

NAR: Yes, I did.

INT: What did you discuss?

NAR: Our concern was not as much for us as it was for our children and our children's children. And then I think we really began to realize how little we do know. That we knew nothing, and we didn't feel very smart to know nothing. And we took the whole instigation, the whole bit, as a big risk.

INT: Did your attitude change?

NAR: My attitude is I don't think necessarily changed on whether or not we should have another Three Mile Island, as much as I think my attitude has definitely changed in the public has to be better informed and there has to be more openness on what can happen and what are you going to do about it if it does. I felt that there's..., very, very weak, even though they said once they realized they had to do something and be prepared. They worked in a hurry. I'll give them credit for that. I believe they did. I truly believe they did. But I want to know more about it.

INT: Well how did you feel about the media's handling of the incident?

NAR: Well you can read two different things about the same thing. The interpretation from the fellows that know I think is mixed up. I think some people would interpret it one way and another reporter would interpret something the other way. And perhaps some of them were trying to play God themselves to get an answer in the newspaper. They didn't know what they were talking about but they wanted to get back to the... it was a competitive sort of reporting, I think. I think they did the best they could to tell us because it was a first! We have nothing to compare it with but what could have been done. We can now, but while it was going on you couldn't. It had never happened before.

INT: How do you feel about the government officials handling of the incident?

NAR: It was very creditable of Denton, I thought.

INT: Governor Thornburg.

NAR: I thought he said very well in the power, so very well. Carol got me to trust him. And Thornburg stayed cool but gave me the feeling in as complete a control as a new governor could be. And used, he made me feel that he was using all the intelligence of his contacts and depending on them. And not being a, you know what I'm trying to say. If he believed in Powell he let Powell give the answer and said I am going to do what Powell says because I trust Powell.

INT: How did you feel about the industry, Metropolitan Edison's handling of it?

NAR: I don't know enough about industry to really comment about it. I find it difficult to believe that stock holders should pay for it, but I don't understand it. I don't understand it and I'm not a stockholder.

INT: Do you think they were in control of the situation?

NAR: I don't know.

INT: Was there anyone that you found particularly reliable on it? Reliable for information? Or anything like that? Or anyone that you particularly mistrusted?

NAR: Mistrusted or trusted?

INT: Mistrusted or trusted.

NAR: I can't say that I mistrusted anybody because I didn't know enough about it. I did develop a great trust for this Powell. Isn't that his name? Powell? I don't know why, but I did. I don't know whether it was just his personality or. I don't know what it was, but I like the way that he handled everything. But I don't know whether he was right.

INT: Do you think that those in charge of the plant are in control of the situation now?

NAR: I'm not so sure. I think there are a lot of questions still to be answered and now I am reading about these little puffs that are puffing out. Like yesterday's puff was a little bigger than what they said it was and so forth. Maybe it wasn't as far as we knew.

INT: Were you worried about the situation?

NAR: Like I don't know why when I went up to Bucknell and I realized that we were (unintelligible). We took our time coming home and stopped for a couple of meals on the way. And we were with people who had left the area. What did we call them? You know, people who had gotten out from Middletown. And I began to realize that, "gee suppose you couldn't go back." And then I got quite selfish and kept thinking suppose you just couldn't go back to Carlisle, think what we would have lost and everybody that, else would have lost. Yes, I began to think about it, but I was not afraid to return.

INT: Did you make any plans different from what you ordinarily would have made?

NAR: Yes, we made sure that there was gas in the automobile and we began thinking about where would we go. And then we realized when they were telling us how we were going to evacuate, should we have to evacuate; our plans were the direct opposite. Our relatives lived in the east of us and we were going east. Well, apparently we weren't. If we had to evacuate we were going to send west. But, we began to think that way but I think our age kept us more in tune. As I said if my daughter was here we would have gotten her out.

INT: Did you change any or your ordinary daily routines?

NAR: No.

INT: What did you think about leaving? Did you want to leave or did you?

NAR: No, I didn't want to leave. I wasn't. I didn't feel we had to leave. I trusted that we were perfectly safe in Carlisle and if anybody was going to leave they were going to leave closer to Three Mile Island and they were coming to Carlisle and we would open our house to take somebody in. It never entered my head to leave.

INT: If you had left, what do you think you would have taken with you?

NAR: My golf clubs. I hadn't really even stopped to think about that. I'm sure it would have ended up to be very personal things. Pictures and things that couldn't be replaced.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures of what was happening at Three Mile Island or what might happen if there had been a hydrogen explosion or a meltdown?

NAR: All I can think of is leukemia. Ummm, Bimminy! Where in World War II when they exploded the atomic bomb. My brother in law.

INT: Hiroshima?

NAR: No, Yeah. That's one but I am talking. This was an experiment. And all I could think of was just the great big, as you say, the cloud of Hiroshima and so forth and total devastation and nothing. That's the only thing that I can, probably would happen. And I sort of still believe it would happen. You wouldn't know what hit you. As far as how large and area, I don't know. I haven't the faintest idea. But I didn't, I wasn't thinking that. I think I was more optimistic that this was something controlled.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened at Three Mile Island might have affected your health?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think it might affect your health in the future? Or say your daughter's health if she had been here?

NAR: Well, we used to talk about that too, a lot. Like nobody will know those answers until 35 years from now and I won't be here 35 years from now so I'll never know. No, I truly don't. I think they were safe to drink the cow's milk and eat the food. I just hope I'm right, but I'm not sitting here sweating over that possibility.

INT: If the worst had happened, how do you think other aspects of your life would have been affected? Say the community, things like that.

NAR: You mean against? Elaborate on that a little.

INT: Well like if the worst had happened, how do you think it would have affected your health?

NAR: You mean radiation. Total exposure to radiation? I'm really not sure. I, I. As you say, it would probably be another Hiroshima and I don't know.

INT: What do you picture radiation to be?

NAR: I don't know, it makes me think of fire, burn, heat. Total mutilation of a human body. Obviously causing death if totally exposed. Close enough. I don't know the connection between radiation, if there is, between that and cancer. I don't know if there is. (long pause) I respect radiation enough to be very fearful of it, if it's not controlled. And yet, but I don't know enough about it.

INT: Did you picture in your mind any effects of radiation on life around you?

NAR: No, you mean did I think of the cows and the foliage and the, No, no.

INT: Did you think about your own death?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about the death of others?

NAR: Yes, I was concerned for the people that lived in the area very close to Three Mile Island. I didn't know what was going to happen, if anything, but I was definitely concerned.

INT: Did you think you would survive the incident?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What did you pray about?

NAR: For the safety of the people involved, the intelligence of the people that could get us out of this mess and wisdom and.

INT: Did you pray or ask God or Mary or Jesus to do anything for you or others or for the reactor?

NAR: Oh, for all of those things. Just what I was just saying. For the health and the wisdom and the...

INT: Did any biblical stories or events cross your mind?

NAR: No.

INT: Did the idea of Satan, the last judgment, or the end of the world enter your thinking or your feeling? Did you in any way consider Three Mile Island to be an act of discipline or instructing on the part of God?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you attend a religious service during the crisis?

NAR: Just like customary Sunday services, church services, that were planned anyway.

INT: Did anyone speak on Three Mile Island?

NAR: From the pulpit? Or from. Yes. Well, it was always in our prayers in Church.

INT: Were there more or fewer or the same number of people as usual there?

NAR: I'd say the same.

INT: Same number? Ok. Did attendance at the service change your thoughts or your feelings in any way?

NAR: No because it was the same.

INT: Did any religious or ethical codes of behavior guide your actions during the crisis?

NAR: It might have, but I would be unconscious about it. It was just normal behavior.

INT: Does your own faith say anything about the rightness or wrongness of man's use of atomic power?

NAR: Not that I know of.

INT: Do you think that religious institutions or religious persons should take a side on the rightness or wrongness?

NAR: I think everybody, anybody has the right to take a stand one way or the other. As far as a religious stand and everybody, they have as much right to take a stand. Anybody has a right.

INT: Do you think they should take a stand and speak out?

NAR: Oh, yes it's foolish is somebody has something they want to say and want to be heard and they don't speak out, yes.

INT: Did you feel that you had certain responsibilities during the incident?

NAR: I felt would have had an evacuation occurred. I very definitely felt I did and I was prepared to do whatever was needed. I shouldn't say prepared, but I would have done anything I could have done is what I mean.

INT: Did you feel any conflicting responsibilities toward your family or toward you community?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have things to do which you otherwise might not have had to do? If there had been an evacuation, of course, you said you would have volunteered?

NAR: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, but there wasn't and I went about my daily business.

INT: Did you have any ideas about how it would be best to behave in such a situation? You pretty much already said, you know, helping other people out if there had been an evacuation...

NAR: Well, what was that question? Say that again.

INT: Did you have any ideas on how it would be best to behave in such a situation?

NAR: Oh, I think we had to be ready to help out in any way we could. We had to stay calm, cool, and collected and as knowledgeable on everything as we could make ourselves. Wait for the leadership, there had to be leadership somewhere.

INT: Was there anything that made it difficult for you to behave this way? Fear of any kind? Anything like that?

NAR: I really wasn't frightened.

INT: Okay. At the time did this event bring to mind any past experiences or past events?

NAR: It reminded me of Hiroshima. Other than that, no.

INT: Did anything like this happen to you, before? In your lifetime.

NAR: No, not that I can think of because I'm not of a scientific turn of mind and I haven't paid that much attention to it. I just asked their department. I would ask the reason, I.

INT: Did any TV shows or movie shows come to mind at the time? Any books or any stories you have read along the same lines?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs?

NAR: Not any different than I would have anyway.

INT: Nothing related to the nuclear incident? At the time did you have any day dreams that you remember?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any sleeping dreams?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you usually remember your dreams?

NAR: Yeah, pretty well. Nothing relating to this.

INT: So your sleep wasn't disturbed in any way?

NAR: No.

INT: What changes happened to the people around you during the incident?

NAR: Well I think the one thing, the one change I noticed in, It might not be a change in people but I noticed in people was they were beginning. Many were thinking more of themselves and what they would do. We weren't about to think that way. You know, like getting out or evacuating or something like, I was surprised at the number of people that did leave Carlisle and how long they stayed away. And then I began to wonder if half of them just didn't use it as a good excuse to take the children and go visit mother and she'll cook for 3 weeks, you know. I did notice that and I was rather surprised I think as a young girl I, with a couple of children and we lived in Carlisle I would not have. If I had been pregnant I would have, simply because I was told too. I was impressed also with the way we Americans could still laugh throughout what could have been just the most, the worst thing in the world. And need that sense of community. I also felt that those people, particularly mainly some of the men down at the Y, those people that were laughing would be the first ones to do the most outstanding thing to help. But at this position, the average American under these circumstances is pretty (unintelligible).

INT: So you think they lightened it a lot by laughing about it?

NAR: I think we became a strong team in the area. You know what I mean.

INT: You think it brought people together then?

NAR: Yes.

INT: By laughing about it?

NAR: Oh, I do.

INT: Do you remember any particular jokes?

INT: Oh, those dumb T shirts. They got terribly dumb. But in the beginning they were kind of fun. It was a smart kid that just quickly went to press with those. I mean the typical American, yet he'd be the first one that would turn around and carry you on his back to get you out of trouble. But as far as, I don't know. I began to get tired of the Three Mile Island. I guess everybody else was too, but I guess I'm still concerned about it because I don't mind. My answers aren't satisfied but my questions are so. I don't really know what my questions are. Short of... (unintelligible phrase)

INT: Why do you think there was so much joking going on?

NAR: That's the way we keep standing up.

INT: Do you remember any joking from other crises? Say?

NAR: World War II, sure. I don't know very much about the Vietnamese War, but World War II there certainly was lots.

INT: How about Jonestown or the invasion of Cambodia?

NAR: Well, there was nothing fun about Jonestown, no joking there. But that was different, that happened. I think that was very different, you can't compare the two. I'd hope people weren't joking about Jonestown.

INT: How about, say the invasion of Cambodia?

NAR: Same thing, I guess, not much joking there. Not much joking about the Vietnamese trying to get, get away. Getting where they're free.

INT: Have you developed an opinion about nuclear power, nuclear energy?

NAR: No.

INT: You haven't?

NAR: No, and isn't that awful? Because you would think you would begin swaying but I have not developed an opinion. I have a belief that God knows what He is doing. I have a belief that it's probably needed. You can't believe what something could probably suppose. I would hate to see us go backwards and yet I have a fear that we don't know enough about it. No, I'm on both sides of the fence. I, you just pray that the guys that's supposed to know what its all about really do. And if they say we needed it, and we can have it and it is, will be safe then I guess we should have it.

INT: Is there anything else that hasn't been covered that you would like to say?

NAR: I am interested in, all the curious scenarios the cases that have been coming up. People who are suing and all this sort of stuff and I am curious to see what happens there, and am curious who is going to pay for all this. And I am curious when it is going to re-open if it ever does because, of course nobody is saying.

INT: How about your husband's reactions? Were they basically the same as yours?

NAR: I would say they were basically the same.