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Richard Taylor oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, May 9, 2003

Richard N. Taylor (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
Oral History Program
USF 50th History Anniversary Project

Narrator: Richard Taylor (T)
Current Position: Associate Professor
of Philosophy
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Interviewer: Yael V. Greenberg (G)
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TRANSCRIPTION

G: Today is Friday, May 9, 2003. My name is Yael Greenberg, oral history program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. We continue a series of interviews in our studio here in the Tampa campus library with USF faculty, students, and alumni in order to commemorate fifty years of university history. Today we will be interviewing Mr. Richard Taylor who came to USF in 1969 as an assistant professor of philosophy. He is currently associate professor of philosophy. Good morning, Mr. Taylor.

T: Good morning.

G: Let's begin by you taking us to the year you arrived in Tampa and what circumstances brought you to the University of South Florida.

T: Well, there was a job here that was of primary importance. The department of philosophy, at the time, needed someone to teach Philosophy of Religion. I was in the process of completing my Ph.D. at Yale University, writing the dissertation, and was invited to come down. I gave a lecture, they seemed to like me. My suspicion is that what Jim Gould, who was the chairman of the department at the time, really needed was a tennis partner. I played tennis fairly well even though, at the time, my hair was down over

my shoulders and I had a full beard, which I shed very quickly, as soon as I got here. I came to teach Philosophy of Religion, primarily, and to play tennis.

G: Describe the first time you saw the USF campus. What did it look like and the surrounding areas look like?

T: Well, my first impression was that it looked like an effort to turn a minimum-security prison into a university. The dorms in particular were kind of austere. Mostly it was sand. There was very little grass. The walkways were long. [It was] awfully hot. I arrived here in July of 1969 and it was so hot and muggy.

G: I want to talk a little bit about the philosophy department. How many people were here in 1969 and what, in terms of diversity and faculty members, did the department consist of?

T: I believe I was either the fifth or the six-faculty member at the time. In terms of diversity, we were fairly diverse. We had Dr. {Chung-Hwan] Chen who was a noted scholar in Kant and a whole bunch of areas, Aristotle in particular. He was an amazing man. We had no blacks on the staff and no women. So come to think of it, we weren't very diverse at the time.

G: What kinds of courses were being offered in the department of philosophy in 1969?

T: Pretty much the same sort of courses that you have today. The interesting thing about philosophy is that the curriculum doesn't change all that much over the centuries: Plato is still Plato, Kant is still Kant, Hegel is still Hegel. There was an interesting thing. I came shortly after the Johns Committee had done all of its damage to the university as a hotbed of communism and homosexuality and all the rest of that, so people were fairly sensitive to course offerings, particularly in anything that had to do with Marxism. Wills H. Truitt,

who was a member of the department then and is still a member of the philosophy faculty, his specialty is Marxism. When it got around to offering the course it was first titled Marxist or Marxism, or something like that; but the officials here at USF felt that wouldn't fly, so he was asked to re-title the course. He came up with the title Post-Hobbesian Materialism, which just seemed to do fine. In response to your question, it's essentially the same kind of classes that we have today.

G: In terms of divisions, what was the department of philosophy under? Was it part of the College of Arts and Letters?

T: There wasn't a College of Arts and Letters at that time. We were organized into four separate divisions, I guess they were called colleges. The one we were in was in the College of Language and Literature. Irving Deer was the head of that. All of that was coordinated, the four colleges, by Russell Cooper.

G: You mentioned that you had come to USF right after the Johns Committee, what kinds of things were you hearing faculty, students, and staff talk about in regards to the Johns Committee?

T: I don't think the Johns Committee itself was that much of a focus of discussion. It was also, of course, at that height of the Vietnam War. Young faculty such as myself were much more interested in dealing with questions of draft resistance and counseling students on conscientious objection. USF was a hotbed of anti-war activities and demonstrations. Again, young faculty such as I tended to play a kind of a role of mediating between the student radicals and the university administration. We spent a lot of time talking to students, holding teach-ins on the war and that sort of thing. Those really became the topics of discussion. The issues that the Johns Committee was so

focused on, subversives and homosexuality and other kind of deviant behavior, that had pretty much passed in terms of real interest. Most of the focus was on the war.

G: Let's talk a little bit about the Vietnam War. You mentioned that USF was a hotbed of anti-war activities. Can you go a little bit more into detail about those activities? What were students' concerns? What were professors' concerns?

T: Interestingly enough, a lot of the leaders of the anti-war movement were philosophy undergraduate majors. For some reason that seemed to be some kind of a natural fit. The concerns that had to do with the draft had to do with the morality of the war, had to do with questions of whether or not the American public was getting accurate information about what was happening in the war. We even, in a couple of years, had students here who had been soldiers in Vietnam who came back to the university for their degree. They also were tremendously against the war. I remember one time there was a huge rally on the campus where the playing fields now are, the soccer fields. There was a rally. Malcolm Beard, who was the sheriff at that time, instructed the students that they could not have loud speakers, they could not make noise, and they had to be gone by midnight or something like that. So the students, and there must have been 1,000 or so of them at that time, marched over there and held a rally. There was a group of us young faculty members who were standing on the side trying to be sure that nobody got hurt and that things were peaceful. We noted at one point very late in the evening, as we were kind of negotiating between the students and the sheriff's personnel, that the students were attempting to throw a Molotov cocktails at these sheriffs who were there in riot gear and all the rest of that. But the students apparently had not been instructed on how to make Molotov cocktails and they couldn't get the things to work. I remember I was

standing on the side there about midnight as a student was trying to throw one of these things at a sheriff officer. A faculty member by the name of [Richard] (Dick) Gagan ran out on the field to try to stop the student from throwing it, and professor Gagan was arrested. So, the headline the next day was “*USF Professor Arrested at Anti-War Rally.*” Poor old Gagan was just trying to keep the kid from hurting himself, but he only wound up in jail. We went down and bailed him out. [Richard] (Dick) Gagan still is on the staff here, by the way. Those were the sorts of things that were going on. This was quite a time.

G: Can you tell me what a Molotov cocktail is?

T: I’ve never made one but I have seen them. You fill a bottle that will break on impact. You fill it with gasoline or some other highly flammable substance; stick a rag in it that serves as a delivery vehicle for the flame, stuff it down so that you don’t ignite the thing; set the end of the rag on fire; and throw it so that when it breaks there will be flame there with the gasoline that causes an explosion. Not a pretty thing to do. Those were very, very tense times. I certainly wouldn’t want to say that students should have been doing that. I just found it kind of humorous that they didn’t know how.

G: In addition to Vietnam, were there other kinds of demonstrations that were going on at the university during that period?

T: One of the most interesting ones, and one that has really little remark on as far as I know in history books, is that USF was an absolute hotbed of the women's consciousness-raising movement. It’s my understanding that the first women’s consciousness-raising group was established in Gainesville, Florida in about 1969, maybe 1968. The second in the entire country was established here at USF. It was established, in part, in my home

where my first wife was one of the founding members of the women's consciousness-raising activities here. They did all sorts of interesting things in the area at the same time.

A lot of it had to do with anti-war as well because the women's movement was very much a peace movement, but it also had to do with the oppression of women and women's rights. A lot of that was going on. That kind of history seems to have disappeared somewhere.

G: Was the administration of USF, I don't want to use supportive, but were they kind to these protests? Were they okay with having these protests? Did they support these protests?

T: At the time I doubt that many of us would have said that they were particularly supportive. In retrospect I think they were far more supportive than we might have had reason to expect. John Allen, who was the president when I came, was deeply committed to a traditional liberal arts education which included such things as ensuring that contrary voices, controversial issues could be debated and discussed as openly as possible. At the same time, President Allen was under intense political pressure. That came out in the case of a USF faculty member who had renounced his American citizenship and taken citizenship in Iran, who was basically fired by the university. The firing was done under circumstances that led to, or was part of, an attempt to censor the university. So, there were those sorts of things going on as well. I think Allen was trying to walk a very thin [line] between his ideal of what a university should be - which would be a forum for the free and open expression of ideas, even those that were unpopular - and the intense political pressure that he got from a very conservative political climate here in Florida. So, the answer to your question of whether they were supportive was yes and no. In

some ways I would say they were much more supportive than we would find today.

G: I want to go back and talk about John Allen a little bit. What kind of a person was John Allen?

T: You know I only met him in some formal sort of areas. He used to come to the all-university senate. At the time, as a young liberal, if not radical, faculty member, it was to my benefit to kind of fly under the radar. I didn't have that much dealing with John Allen. His bearing was very aristocratic. [He was a] very polished, very civilized sort of person. Some of his administrative actions I think were considered to be fairly harsh and abrupt, as with all the presidents, a mixed bag.

G: In terms of the philosophy department, when you first came was there a university mandated way that you should be teaching or of curriculum?

T: No, that was one of the kind of shocking things to me. This was my first job out of graduate school, and I received absolutely no instructions as to what I ought or ought not to do. I was simply told these are the courses you're teaching and go do it. So, I stumbled around and found a way of teaching courses that I thought was reasonably okay. There was no pressure on curriculum, on content, or on anything else like that.

G: Why were students interested in taking philosophy courses in the late 1960s, early 1970s?

T: Or for that matter, anytime . . . I think philosophy is a bit like a virus. There are certain kinds of students who get hooked on the life of inquiry, the life of the mind. Inevitably, that's going to take you back to the great thinkers of Western civilization, or civilization anywhere for that matter. So, philosophy courses are a way of kind of putting some form on to that. In the late 1960s [and] early 1970s the philosophy department, the sociology department, the history department, [and] political science were the only departments

where there was really a free floating, thorough discussion of issues like the Vietnam War, of issues like communism versus capitalism and so on. So that also attracted a certain kind of element within the student body. It's hard to pigeonhole those students. One of my first students was Dennis Ross who of course later turned out to be not only a vice-president of one of the largest companies in town, the Jim Walter Corporation [currently Walter Industries], but was the chief of staff for Governor Graham and served with distinction on the board of regents for several terms. He was in my very first class as I recall.

G: How many students did you teach (on average)?

T: About twenty-five, and that's been consistently true throughout my tenure here except for this summer. I find that I'm teaching a class - that ought to be taught to 25 - to 169 students. Three papers to grade for each of them, three exams; it's going to be an interesting summer.

G: How has the philosophy department changed since you first came in 1969?

T: That's a little hard question to answer in some ways. In some ways it's remained quite the same. It's a department that values independence of mind and research. It has always been a department that has had faculty in it with some of the very best training and philosophy in the country. We have people from Harvard, Michigan, Yale, and that has been true throughout the life of the department. Probably the biggest change is that a number of years ago we started a Ph.D. program. So that has kind of changed the focus of the department. It has become much more research and publication oriented than it had been earlier, but in large part it's the same department that it's always been.

G: In terms of faculty interaction, was there a lot more faculty interaction between different

departments in those earlier days than today?

T: Undoubtedly, and I think that has been one of the biggest shift. In 1969 and 1970, with all of the kind of social upheaval going on, the Young Turks of us would get together on a regular occasion, almost on a monthly basis. On occasion we would reserve Chinsegut [Hill] and just go up and spend the entire weekend there. There would be people like [T.W. Graham Solomons from the chemistry department, Stanley R. Deans from physics, Jim Spillane from humanities, several people from the English department, some from the philosophy department, some people from sociology; and we all would just go out there to just Chinsegut and hang out and stay over night and drink beer and stack them in front of the signs that say no alcoholic beverages allowed, that sort of thing. [It was a] great time. I'm not aware of that kind of interaction across the campus these days.

G: Being that you came in a very volatile time in history to the university and to the larger perspective, how did the social climate and the political climate affect the way that you taught? Did it affect the way you taught and your overall being at USF?

T: I don't think it affected the way I taught one bit. I think I would have taught the same way if I had gone to be a faculty member at some Southern Baptist school in Tennessee or something. Certainly that time affected all of us, I think very deeply for all. My colleagues, I think, have expressed throughout their careers a great level of social concern and social awareness than I think you'd find now, a much greater degree of community involvement. One of the things that several of us had done back then was to become [involved] in the civil rights movement in Tampa. In fact four or five of us were directly responsible for integrating the ABC Liquor Lounges, which may or may not have been a good thing. This is the sort of thing that we kind of routinely did. I think a lot of that

carried over into the classroom so that the students received not only the material that was being talked about, but it was often translated into a kind of social awareness or social activism or the notion that we all have some responsibility to our communities. I kind of miss that these days.

G: Let's go back and talk about the civil rights movement in Tampa and on campus. How did USF handle integration and the civil rights movement? By the time you had come, I believe, USF was already integrated.

T: Yes. You're going to get a different answer from me as a white male than you would from any number of black leaders at the time. I think it is to USF's credit that, at least over the more than thirty years that I've been here, the university has consistently and conscientiously and deliberately made efforts to improve access and opportunities for people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, religions, and all the rest of it. But it's an uphill battle at the very beginning. The Hillsborough County schools had just come under a desegregation order when I got here. I believe that's the case. I didn't have kids in the school system, so I really wasn't watching it, but I was absolutely dumbfounded to go with my friends out into the surrounding farm communities and find, in fact I have pictures of signs on establishments that say no niggers or Jews allowed. That sort of thing was still out there. There were still restaurants and establishments that simply would not patronize blacks. A number of USF faculty, I was one of those, kind of got together with some of the agitating liberals on the newspapers and TV stations and did our little part to try to erase some of that, some of those barriers. Again, those were very, very heady days. I remember being in meetings where we would come out and discover that the sheriff's department was out there photographing our cars and license tags, that

sort of thing. A lot of us built police dossiers within that period of time.

G: In terms of integrating ABC Liquor Stores, can you talk a little bit about that?

T: It's kind of fun. There was a large ABC Liquor Store on Hillsborough Avenue. As far as I know, it's still there. It was kind of the typical arrangement. They had a package store and then they had a lounge. That part of Hillsborough Avenue, my guess it, is ninety-nine percent African American in terms of the residence of people around there. This was in 1970. They [African Americans] were allowed to go into the package store and purchase whatever they wanted to, but they could not go into the lounge. There was a reporter for the, now defunct, *Tampa Times* by the name of Abby Kagan who kind of alerted us to the situation. What we discovered was that there was a law that said that any establishment then engaged in interstate commerce, and food products that would be brought in to a bar would count, fell under the federal anti-discrimination acts of the time, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 I guess it is. What we did was we staged - it was Lou Penner, Max Dertke, Harold Hawkins, and I - we staged a deliberate kind of incident at ABC Liquor where we each went in as white people. [We went in and] got a seat, sat there, ordered as much food as we could get out of the bar, and as I recall Mr. Tom's peanuts were our favorite there because they came out of Atlanta. We ordered as much food as we possibly could, and then our black friends, that we arranged, came in to sit down at the bar with us, in the lounge. Of course they were immediately told to leave. About that time we had arranged for the local TV cameras to come in and they filmed these people being thrown out of the bar with us clutching our bags of Mr. Tom's peanuts and so on. [This was] a major story in the paper and on the evening news. A couple days later the ABC Liquor attorney, having checked the thing out, ABC statewide

desegregated their lounges. It's just a small thing and in the end I'm not entirely sure that freeing up the lounges is really the highest calling for a civil rights movement, but it was fun.

G: As a USF faculty member doing these significant things in the community, was there any point where the administration said Mr. Taylor you can't do that, or I'm upset about it?

T: Absolutely not. My impression was that they were, you'd asked a question about supportive before, I think they were supportive on those sorts of things. They were not really keen to have certain kinds of press I think, but we all looked like wild people at the time anyway. There was a kind of cache to having liberal intellectuals on campus and that sort of thing. So we could get away with a lot.

G: In terms of reaching out to the larger community, was the community supportive of the university in those early days, how did USF reach out to the larger non-university community?

T: There really was not an organized approach at this. There was certainly no office or community outreach or official sort of thing. This was mostly on a basis of individual faculty members who saw something that they wanted to become involved in and did something about it. On occasion we wound up in a public eye perhaps more than we would have wanted to. There were a number of fascinating issues at the time. One of the ones that I remember from the early 1970s, when USF students were being particularly monitored for drug use. It was a period of time when the law stipulated that the possession of even one seed would constitute a felony and our students would be arrested and look at the possibility of three years in jail for the possession of very, very small amounts of marijuana. The police were making these kinds of arrests. What I and some

other faculty members became aware of was that there was a pattern that the local sheriffs department had gotten into with both minorities in town, young men and women, and USF students. What they would do is they would arrest somebody, sometimes with planted stuff, but quite frankly most often they didn't have to plant anything, students had them. They would take them down. They would put a huge bail bond on them, say a \$10,000 bail. On a \$10,000 bail what you would do is you would pay \$1,000 to get out of jail to a bail bondsman. The bail bondsman kept the \$1,000 and then charges would be dropped. What I discovered was that some of the bail bondsman in town were working with the sheriffs department so that they would split the \$1,000. I felt morally outraged at that. So, I started doing some investigation. There was, at the time, a bill that was going through the Florida legislature for a release on recognizance on people for arrests on minor drug offences, and there was great hue and cry on that. I wrote some letters to the editor and did some testimony before some groups and so on...on release on recognizance. This led to a public forum that had Malcolm Beard, who was the sheriff; E. J. Salcines, who was a local prosecutor at the time, later became a judge; Judge Harry Lee Coe; and myself serving on a panel discussing the pros and cons of release on a recognizance. I remember in that discussion, at one point, Harry Coe went into a rather impassioned argument against release on recognizance with the argument that Sheriff Beard was a fine sheriff and his men were very good. The way he looked at it, as a judge, was they wouldn't arrest anybody unless they were guilty would they? I became outraged at this point and jumped up from my seat and said Judge Coe, what ever happened to presumption of innocence? Judge Coe said well, I presume they're innocent but I know their guilt. E. J. Salcines just kind of buried his head. That sort of stuff was

going on a lot back then, but it wasn't organized. It was just a bunch of young faculty members who didn't know any better going out and having their say. Back to your point, the university never said a word to me to try to inhibit that in any way, shape, or fashion.

In fact I kind of built a reputation as being kind of a troublemaker.

G: President Mackey, very different than John Allen, as we both know. Can you describe a little bit about what kind of a person Mackey was and how he was different from John Allen?

T: Let me tell you a little personal story on that one. I happened to be the speaker of the senate twice when we inaugurated presidents and gave the faculty address. At the inauguration of John Lott Brown, Cecil Mackey was brought back. He and I were sitting on the stage together and I got up and said something moderately inflammatory at President Brown's inauguration. Carl Riggs was sitting there with us, and Carl of course had been brought to USF by Cecil Mackey. President Mackey leaned over to Carl and said you know Carl, he says giving tenure to Taylor was one of my two biggest mistakes at this university. That always kind of summarized in my mind the kind of the difference there. Cecil Mackey, on the whole, was a good president. The university flourished and grew, but he had a fairly strong hand. He administered with kind of an iron glove. He and I tangled almost on a daily basis, because I was at that point one of the local leaders in the faculty union. I was the one who made the buttons that had a picture of Cecil with Mickey Mouse ears on him. It [the buttons] said Mickey Mouse University as we were trying to reorganize the faculty. Unfortunately, that button got reproduced in *Time Magazine* in an article on unionization. Cecil and I didn't [get along], although we actually did some very, very good work together.

G: What kinds of things were you and Mackey working on, what initiatives?

T: Well the most important one, this is probably my finest moment at USF, is back in 1978.

The Board of Regents had taken it upon themselves to come up with a master plan for the state university system, which then was composed of nine universities, called "Role and Scope." Basically, it set out all of the various parameters and mission statements and so on. There was one of those, Role and Scope policy twenty-six, it was a very infamous sort of thing. It's hidden way in the back of these innocuous statements of mission and purpose and so on. What policy twenty-six said was that the university system would have two flagship universities, University of Florida and Florida State, and all of the rest would be regional universities destined never to become graduate research institutions, always to play a second-class role. Mackey of course was completely opposed to that, and the faculty here of course were completely opposed to that, but they couldn't quite figure out how to deal with the issue. All of the legislators were from UF and FSU. The Board of Regents was dominated by University of Florida and Florida State. I just happened, at the time, to also be the head of the statewide group of faculty senates. We met every couple months or so and we discussed these Role and Scope policies, and in particular twenty-six. We passed a motion saying that we strongly opposed Role and Scope policy twenty-six with Florida and Florida State voting against the motion. It was then up to me to take that to a meeting of the Board of Regents in Tallahassee where they were making a final decision on that, with the charge that I was supposed to do so with as much vigor and venom as I could possibly raise. Of course the argument was that the seven, small universities of course did not want to be limited. So, I went up there fear and trembling and made my pitch and kind of made a fool of myself. The chairman of

the board, whose name I'm suddenly blocking on, our College of Business Administration is named for him, was a fearsome sort of guy up there. I remember that I got on an elevator in Tallahassee and he leaned over to me and said Richard, just remember that you can attract more flies with honey than with vinegar. I thought that was really sweet of him except that until you get the attention of somebody you're not going to get any flies at all. As it turns out, the fact that we had this [man] as the chairman of the Board of Regents, and the fact that I had gotten up and made a fool of myself in public was enough to sway just enough of those so that policy twenty-six was defeated in the Board of Regents. Because of that [policy twenty-six being defeated], the University of South Florida was allowed to become a comprehensive, full-graduate research institution. So again, I had a little bit of a role to play in that, and have always been pleased to have the opportunity. I think in the end Cecil Mackey was appreciative of that.

G: Why did USF not want to be officially deemed a regional campus?

T: This place has always outstripped its reputation or what people see it as. Even when I came it was clearly an institution on the move. If you simply look at the demographics of higher education or the state of Florida, it makes no sense whatsoever for us to have our premiere graduate institution in a cow-town like Gainesville where students can't find employment, where there is not the interaction with the major economic engines of the state in terms of reacting with the business community, emerging technologies and so on. If you're really going to have institutions that do what they are capable of doing you really need to have them in major urban centers. USF was, at that time, almost uniquely positioned within the state. Even Tallahassee is a somewhat enlarged cow-town, but

there's not much going on there. Tampa made the most sense in the next emerging powerhouse, in terms of research activities and graduate programs and so on. To artificially put a cap on it in the late 1970s and say this will never become more than a simple regional made no economic sense; it made no sense in terms of education. It made sense only from the perspective of the remnants of the Pork Chop Gang in Tallahassee, which Florida as being primarily the panhandle and everything south of Gainesville as being kind of an embarrassing appendage.

G: I want to talk about your involvement with the faculty senate. I know we talked about the Role and Scope. Why was it important for you to be a part of the faculty senate, and how has the role of the faculty senate changed since you first came here?

T: First of all it wasn't important for me personally to be involved in it at all. Any number of people could have done the same sort of thing. Questions of faculty governance and the protection of faculty rights, I think, are always important for institutions like this. The faculty senate was one of two ways of protecting faculty voice and faculty rights. Curious enough, at the same time that I was the president of the faculty senate, I was also president of the local chapter of United Faculty of Florida. That has some disadvantages; it also had the advantage, however, of the faculty speaking with pretty much one voice. We did not have the senate pitted against the union. That's not to say we didn't have differences of opinions and battles that we had to kind of fight out, but those were done within the faculty governing bodies themselves. We dealt with the central administration and we dealt with the Board of Regents. We primarily spoke with one voice, and I think that was very important in terms of insuring faculty rights in regards to such things as the hiring process, tenure, decisions as to what direction the university would go in, in terms

of the development of programs and so on. So, I think the answer to your question is I think it's critically important that strong faculty, academic, governance bodies be in place. I continue to be a strong supporter of both the faculty senate and collective bargaining.

G: In terms of significant changes, has the faculty senate gone through any?

T: I forgot that part of your question. It's a little hard to say. The faculty senate really kind of flourishes or not depending upon the central leadership of a faculty senate. The president, a president elect of the executive committee, and so on are going to really determine whether or not it works well. For example Phil Smith, when he was speaker of the senate [he] was very aggressive, very collegial, a very cooperative sort of leader and so the faculty senate really did some very good things under his leadership. That's been true with a number of others, but others, you might prefer not to name, have not been particularly capable in terms of focusing faculty interests on critical issues and bringing those to the administration and serving as a sort of intermediary sometimes. So it really depends on how well that person functions. The present faculty senate leader, I think, has been doing an excellent job of trying to address issues as in the in the Sami Al- Arian case, or budget cuts, or reorganization. I think that's what it takes for a senate to really work well. In the last analysis, however, the faculty senate here or anywhere else in the state of Florida is a relatively powerless entity because it cannot make decisions; it cannot enforce its will. In a large part, that's why I think you need a faculty union as well.

G: You mentioned the Al-Arian situation. Have you been involved with union issues regarding that? How has the university handled this and what steps are the different unions and senates taking to no have these kinds of things happen again?

T: Well, I'm in a really bizarre position in regard to the Al-Arian case. After serving as the head of the local faculty union and faculty senate and so on, I wandered off into academic administration for about twenty years of my career. I spent six and a half years being the longest serving interim dean in the history of the United States, the interim dean of Continuing Education. Kind of as a consequence of that, when I left being the dean and came back to the philosophy department, I was asked if I would serve as the university's official representative, or the president's representative, on faculty grievances. So, I am the one that holds the meetings and makes the decisions on faculty grievances. When the Al-Arian issue came up it was entirely possible that that whole question of whether or not the administration had acted properly would wind up in a grievance of which I would be the hearing master. I deemed it to be unprofessional if I were to take any public position before such a hearing. So, I said not a thing. I sat on my hands during the whole thing, which was a difficult thing for me to do. As it turns out, I was not asked to be the hearing master on that one at all. Do you want other views on it?

G: Sure, whatever you're willing to say.

T: The Al-Arian, clearly, has not yet worked itself out to some conclusion. I would certainly put myself firmly on the side of those who would say that the university did not handle the issue well from the outset. I would draw a big distinction between First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and academic freedom. Those have become just really gummed up in the Al-Arian case. I think that the university overreacted, and probably did so under extreme political pressure in regards to the first kinds of issues. The notion that you would penalize somebody because that individual did not say at the outset or the end of an interview "I do not speak or represent the University of South

Florida” is a bit of a stretch. Clearly there are other things going on there. Quite frankly I think that’s one of the reasons I was not asked to be the presidential representative on the grievance when it came forward, because I had let my views be known that I did not think that was a proper thing for the university to do. With the issuance of serious indictments, with the allegations of criminal activities and so on I think the whole landscape has changed considerably. I still would have preferred the university to place any individual on unpaid leave until such time as your criminal justice system has worked its way, but there certainly could be grounds for termination under existing policies, procedures. I’m not surprised that the university has done what it has done at this point in trying to wash its hands of that. I really hope the university, now, will take some extraordinary steps to get back to the place where I think John Allen started. That was that the university ought to be a place where controversial ideas are welcomed to be expressed freely, to be debated. Allen I think believed in the end that reason and logic and truth would emerge from those sorts of things. It distresses me that the university of South Florida now has such things as free-speech zones. I believe the university is nothing if not the entire place is free-speech zone. We’ve gone backward, not quite to the Johns [Committee] era, but we’re certainly beginning to approach it. It’s a good time for me to retire. Don’t nod your head yes. [laughing]

G: In terms of other presidents at USF, I know you’ve served under all of them. Are there any other presidents - we’ve talked about John Allen, we’ve talked about Mackey - that really stand out in your mind as being leaders of visionaries, or just people who you really agreed with?

T: It seems to me that a leader of a place like this university needs to fit the time and the

place and development of the university as a whole. Allen I think was perhaps the most visionary of our presidents. In some way his vision kind of went off a cliff on occasion. The notion that the roads on campus not only be named for trees, but there would be trees planted of that species on each drive is a bit too visionary I think. Mackey, I think his presidency is best noted by the people he brought in. He brought in not only Carl Riggs, but other administrators that served a long time and really built the place into the kind of infrastructure, buildings and all of the rest of that that kind of makes USF amazing. John Lott Brown I think began to move the university in the direction of its research potential, brought a kind of national respectability. Brown was a very patient individual. I admired him quite a bit as a person distinguished in his own field and a compassionate person. Most lot of people didn't know that he had American Friends Society leanings and sympathies in there. I think that expressed itself in things like his agreeing to set up a diversity committee dealing with women's issues and so on. I think he did some awfully good stuff around here. Borkowski, I have not a lot to say about Borkowski, he's kind of a placeholder. Betty Castor was someone that I frankly did not really want to see at the outset as a president because she was the first of the really political appointees in the state of the sort that you see now with T. K. Weatherall and [Lt. Governor] Brogan down at FAU, but as the selection process wound along it seemed to me that Betty was exactly what the university needed. So, when she was making a decision as to whether or not she should throw her hat in the ring I felt compelled to write to her and say she should. By the way, the first political race she ever got into for the county commission was organized in my living room, way back there. Betty and I have known each other for a long time. I think Betty, in some ways, was the most successful of all of the presidents that we've

had. She steered the university through some difficult times, had a sure sense of how to deal with the legislature, [and] was able to get things for the university that we otherwise would not have had. But when the political power base in Florida switched from Democrats to Republicans Betty was a marked person; her usefulness was almost at an end. I think what we have with our current president is continuation in an unfortunate play of more politically influenced selections of the president. Our current president is a cheerleader. Of all the presidents, I think that she may be more out of step with what the institution needs at this point. From my take, what we need is a decisive leader with vision, with some idea of what this place can really become.

G: Where do you see USF in the next decade, the next twenty years?

T: I think USF is absolutely unstoppable for all of the geographic, demographic reasons that I indicated before. We will continue to have a greater demand for our academic services than we can possibly meet, which means that we've become more and more selective in terms of the student body. This is an attractive place for people to come to and work. There are programs going on at the university that are exciting in anybody's view. I don't mean to sound like a member of the Boosters Club or something like that, but it would take extraordinary effort for USF to fail. I mean we would have to try to that, it seems to me. That's been true since I've been here. I remember going into national meetings where people would weep and moan about how hard it was to attract students. I would sit back and think well every year we have an automatic increase coming and there's no other game in the area. I think that's going to continue to drive USF.

G: Now that you've been here thirty-four years . . .

T: Thanks for reminding me.

G: Is there something, a final statement, that you could leave on camera either on your tenure here, of a fond memory, or advice to the future lay leadership, something that you want to recall about your experiences at USF?

T: Boy this sounds like a career summary, I'm not sure I want to be that serious. In fact there's a book by Tom Robbins in which I believe it's a parrot enunciates what ought to be the slogan of the age, which is "People of zee world relax." What I would hope is that USF can finally mature to the point where it develops a genuine sense of humor, a genuine sense of proportionality where we don't take ourselves entirely too seriously, because I think that's what's going to be needed in order for us to become really the kind of nationally prominent institution that we can become. [We need] a sense of our own limitations, a sense that the next crisis won't wipe us out, and an ability to laugh at ourselves some. I brought along some instances of some of the more humorous things that have happened here, and some of the more sensitive sorts of things. This is an institution that I think now has passed through its teenage years. It's entering young adulthood and it needs to cultivate and develop a sense of humor.

G: Mr. Taylor, thank you very much.

T: I'm delighted to do this.

End of Interview