

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Cecil G. Taylor

COLLECTION: 4700.0071

IDENTIFICATION: French professor (1936 - 1949), assistant to President Campbell Hodges (1941 - 1943), dean of Arts and Sciences (1949 - 1965), first chancellor of LSU (1965 - 1974)

INTERVIEWER: Pamela Dean

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Faculty & Administrators

INTERVIEW DATES: 10/8/1991, 10/15/1991, 4/8/1992, 4/22/1992, 4/29/1992, 5/12/1992, 2/18/1993, 3/3/1993

FOCUS DATES: 1930s - 1970s

ABSTRACT:

Session I

Tape 81

Family background; early education; growing tobacco; family outings; games played as a child; learning French and Spanish in high school; meets Mr. Carnahan (editor of French text used at Chapel Hill); attending University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; living in dormitory; working for faculty members to pay for college; professor of Victorian Literature Johnny Booker; Chapel Hill opens women's dormitory; encountering Catholic church for first time; becoming a social creature; financial difficulties while a student; writing masters' thesis; roommate during graduate school Archie Shields

Tape 82

Influenza epidemic of 1918; ancestor Eli Taylor served as courier during Civil War; Taylor family heritage; parents' educational history

Session II

Tape 83

English professor John A. Thompson recommends him for position at LSU; playing poker with "old guard" faculty members at LSU; boarding with French professor H. A. Major; changes in Baton Rouge since 1930s; changes on campus since 1930s; establishing requirement of Ph.D. for professors; Huey Long's impact on LSU; LSU football in the 1930s; impact of Depression on LSU; *The Southern Review*; flourishing of LSU's Music School; Henry Howe's role in developing School of Geography; development of School of Geoscience; Marcus Wilkerson as founding head of the LSU Press; entering administration in 1943; bringing French films to Baton Rouge; *Maison Française*; Dean of Agriculture Jordan Lee; James Monroe Smith as LSU's president; LSU Scandals; English professor Robert Heilman's review of T. Harry Williams' *Huey*

Long; James Smith's methods of acquiring funds; restructuring the university following the scandals; attempts to establish Phi Beta Kappa chapter at LSU

Tape 84

Role of Paul M. Hebert (interim president and dean of Law School) at LSU; Dean of Arts and Sciences Fred Frey; served as assistant to President Campbell Hodges from 1941 - 1943; Dean of Men Arden French

Session III

Tape 156

Student criteria for inviting speakers to campus; controversy surrounding speaker Paul Boutelle (Communist Party candidate for president); appointment as assistant to President Campbell Hodges; James Broussard's (head of Romance Languages) role in securing the appointment for Taylor; finds James Monroe Smith memorabilia in his office; duties as assistant to Hodges; describes co-workers in president's office; Paul Hebert as policy maker; joins Navy at outbreak of World War II; describes Dean of the Junior Division Ben Mitchell; attempts to discontinue the Junior Division; conflict between Dean of Arts and Sciences Wendell Stephenson and Dean of the Junior Division W. B. Hatcher; Junior Division separated from Arts and Sciences; role of the Junior Division; low status of introductory (general) courses and difficulty finding professors willing to teach them; opposition of different colleges to the Junior Division; demise and rebirth of *The Southern Review*; efficiency of Board of Supervisors secretary Kitty Strain; loyalty oaths; faculty of the Department of Sociology; switch from department heads to chairmen; imminence of Botany professor Claude Edgerton; Department of Botany; tie in selecting chairman for the Department of Speech; problems with Department of Philosophy's head Peter Carmichael; difficulty attracting philosophy professors to LSU; strength of the History Department; reviews of departmental chairmen; ability of chairmen to resign their position; term limits for deans

Session IV

Tape 163

Decision to study French in college; describes graduate and professional careers while a student at Chapel Hill; receives American Field of Service Fellowship to study in France; dissertation defense; socializing with professors at Chapel Hill; describes studies in France; recommended for job at LSU by English professor John Thompson; shipboard romance on the trip back to the United States; describes the members of the Department of Romance Languages at LSU; French courses offered at LSU; French in Louisiana absorbing other cultural groups; Cajuns taking French courses; class divisions in Pointe Coupee parish; *Maison Française*; James Monroe Smith fleeing Baton Rouge; masters' theses on French in Louisiana; variations of Cajun French; directing master's candidates; describes course that he taught; teaching French at the Naval Academy during World War II; reaction of career Navy to academicians; training translators; return to teaching at LSU after the war; describes his course load; describes his teaching assistants; appointed dean of Arts and Sciences in 1949 by President Harold Stoke; switch from teaching to administration; creation of CODOFIL; formal vs. informal in French; inferiority complex of Cajuns; French writer Maurice Denuzière awarded honorary degree from LSU; Center for French and Francophone Studies at LSU

Session V

Tape 165

Decision to become head of the French Department at Emory; Harold Stoke as president of LSU; selection committee for dean of Arts and Sciences at LSU; LSU as an oligarchy; offered job as dean of Arts and Sciences at LSU by Stoke; inability of Department of Political Science to attract top scholars and/or keep; discusses botany professor St. John Chilton; sugar cane diseases; decision to accept position of dean of Arts and Sciences; creation of Honors Program; association of deans of Arts and Sciences; influence of this association on his decisions as dean; family history; Arts and Sciences faculty meetings; slashing budgets to meet state appropriations; attempts to convince faculty members to stay at LSU; university budgets; termination of the Department of Books and Libraries; controversy over expanding stadium rather than building a new library; anti-athleticism at LSU; ROTC; agricultural thrust of LSU in the 1940s; importance of the College of Education; attempts to get a Phi Beta Kappa chapter; role of Tulane in preventing LSU from being awarded Phi Beta Kappa chapter; Honors Convocation to acknowledge outstanding students; selective admissions; role of agriculture at LSU; establishing high school honors programs; setting up the chancellorship and its duties; President John Hunter's willingness to support Taylor's initiatives; compares Presidents Hunter and Martin Woodin; trip to Latin America with John Hunter; Taylor's weekly meetings with his vice chancellors

Tape 166

No summary available

Session VI

Tape 170

The order proposals were presented to the Board of Supervisors (minor items to important items); duties as assistant to President Hodges; Paul Hebert as policy maker; Hodges' staff; integration of LSU's graduate and professional schools; Director of General Extension Walter Brouillette's pro-segregation statement; meeting with federal officials about the integration of LSU; Theo Cangelosi's attempt to thwart the Justice Department's attempt to force integration; eloquence of Theo Cangelosi; role of the Board of Supervisors; James Monroe Smith and the Board of Supervisors; Kitty Strain as secretary for the Board of Supervisors; board member Thomas Leigh's opposition to discontinuing *The Southern Review*; increase in administrative positions at LSU; Harambe (an African American student organization); Black Student Union; Dean of Student Affairs James Reddoch running interference between Taylor and student activists; administrators' relationship with black students; EEOC; discusses his view of African Americans and segregation; *in loco parentis*; role of colleges in development of young adults; English professor Waldo McNeir's run-in with state legislature over issue of school desegregation; President Troy Middleton's view of African Americans; Middleton's relationship with Dan Borth of business affairs; describes Middleton's personality and influence on LSU; 1958 anti-school segregation petition signed by faculty members; being called before the Joint Committee on Segregation; his view of integration; resignation of Waldo McNeir; legislation requiring teaching course on merits of democracy versus evils of communism; role of state politics in university; importance of discussing ideas (including communism) in the classroom

Tape 171

LSU forcing Waldo McNeir to resign; Middleton's view of role of the professor; Forestry professor Paul Burns's support for civil rights

Session VII

Tape 320

James Reddoch's knowledge of laws pertaining to students; Reddoch's role as buffer for Taylor during period of student protests; handling student and employee grievances; Board of Supervisors attempts to censor the *Reveille*; Middleton's integration policy; allowing communist Paul Boutelle to speak on campus; university's view of segregationist state senator Willie Rainach; conservatism at LSU; 1958 anti-segregation petition signed by faculty members; discusses chairmen of various departments in Arts and Sciences; Louisiana history professor Walter Pritchard; lowering American flag on the day Martin Luther King was killed; setting precedents as chancellor; Carl Maddox as Athletic Director; Board of Supervisors insolvent in running athletics; ending compulsory ROTC; faculty committees; meetings with vice chancellors; Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs Daniel Borth; liberalizing rules governing women's housing; grooming standards for students; student protests; meetings with hostile community groups; liberal professors in the English Department; communism; member of John Birch Society speaks at his church

Session VIII

Tape 373

Athletic Director Carl Maddox; role of athletics at LSU; LSU gymnastics; use of "chancellor's box" at football games to woo financial support; athletic career of his father-in-law John G. Albright; School of Music; creation of LSU System; President John Hunter as an administrator; faculty appointments and salary; faculty members working outside jobs; weekly meetings with vice chancellors; writing budgets; selecting Bernard Sliger as vice chancellor for academic affairs; selection of Paul Murrill as vice chancellor for academic affairs; animosity between Sliger and Murrill; James Reddoch as vice chancellor for student affairs; ending compulsory ROTC; conservatism of Board of Supervisors; parents' complaints about assigned reading corrupting kids; Jimmie Davis as member of Board of Supervisors; Ella V. Aldrich Schwing as board member; Schwing's course Books and Libraries; Theo Cangelosi as board member; Cangelosi on segregation; describes board member Red Swanson's support for athletics; George Mickey (dean of the graduate school accused of murder) case; secretary for the Board of Supervisors Kitty Strain's efficiency; making the Agricultural Center a separate campus ; problems caused by creating the Ag. Center; conservatism of Department of Agriculture; Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station Doyle Chambers; reasons for making the Law School a separate entity; Dean of Women Margaret Jameson's relationship with students; discusses qualifications for a good dean of women; Director of Social Recreation Jean Quaw and his duties; Free Speech Alley; Director of the Union Carl Maddox and the offensive art show

TAPES: 12 (T81, T82, T83, T84, T156, T163, T165, T166, T170, T171, T320, T373)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 12 hours, 50 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 461 pages

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