

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU History

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Patricia Taylor
Interviewed
by
Jack Lorenzini
on
February 19, 2004

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INTERVIEWEE: Patricia Taylor

INTERVIEWER: Jack Lorenzini

SUBJECT: YSU History

DATE: February 19, 2004

P: This is an interview with Patricia Taylor for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on YSU History, by Jack Lorenzini, at Mrs. Taylor's house, on February 19, 2004. At 6:30 p.m. This project was funded by the Ford Foundation.

L: When and where were you born?

T: I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, on October 25, 1951.

L: Do you have any siblings?

T: Yes, I have two sisters and three brothers. Do you want to know their names?

L: Are they younger or older?

T: I have one older sister and one older brother, and the rest are younger than me.

L: What were your parents' names?

T: Eugene Krystek and Barbara Krystek.

L: What kind of occupations did they hold?

T: My father worked at General Fireproofing as a press operator for I think 30 to 40 years, I don't remember exactly, in Youngstown, Ohio, and my mother was a homemaker.

L: Where did you live?

T: When I grew up I lived at 4006 Risher Rd. Boardman, Ohio, and when I got married – should I continue with the whole history of where I lived or where I grew up?

L: Sure, where do you live now?

T: Right now I live in Beaver Township, Mahoning County, on Detwiler Rd.

L: When you were growing up, can you describe your neighborhood, your childhood home?

T: Well, it was a small, two-story house, it was pretty crowded with six children in it, most of the houses on the street were pretty much the same, but there were a lot of children on the street, and we had a lot of fun playing with all the neighborhood kids, and we had a pretty good neighborhood for growing up.

L: What kind of games did you play with the neighborhood kids?

T: We played Baseball on the street, we had a dead-end street, so we would set up the bases right out on the street. We played Red Rover-Red Rover, we played Monopoly underneath our neighbor's tree in the back yard, and we used to have Monopoly tournaments.

L: Neighborhood kids always get in trouble; did you ever get in trouble as a kid doing something outrageously bad in your neighborhood?

T: No, I was one of the good ones. There were a couple that were known for being in trouble all the time, but I was pretty good.

L: So you didn't run through sprinklers madly like my mother?

T: I don't believe so. I was kind of inhibited by my older sister Barbara.

L: Care to say anything else about her?

T: Well, we didn't get along as we were growing up; luckily we have rectified that situation.

L: Typical sister-sibling rivalry.

T: Yea, she was a couple years older than me and she didn't really want to have anything to do with somebody that was two years younger, and unfortunately most of the kids who were my age on my street were boys, so I really didn't have a girl-friend that was my age, I did hang around with a girl that was like two years younger than me, her name was Joan, and we were pretty close.

L: What was your ethnic background?

T: Both of my parents are Slovak, and my father has some Polish also.

L: Where did you attend grade school, kindergarten through twelfth?

T: Well, I didn't go to kindergarten, when I grew up Kindergarten wasn't required, so I started first grade at St. Christine's Catholic School in Youngstown, Ohio, and went there through eighth grade, and then high school, Boardman High School in Boardman, Ohio.

L: Can you describe any influential teachers? Your favorite teachers and subjects?

T: Well, I remember being really...really idolizing my fifth grade teacher, her name was Miss Kish, and everyone thought she was really pretty and she was young, and she was nice, and actually she was kind of a welcome change from the nuns, so that's probably why she was so popular.

L: What subject did she teach?

T: Well, at that time she was like the homeroom teacher, so you had her for most of your subjects, except I think we changed rooms for a couple of subjects like reading or math.

L: What was your least favorite teacher and subject?

T: Well, everyone remembers the infamous Mrs. Williams, she was not a very nice teacher; she was intimidating, she just...everyone was afraid of her, like if you were in church, and you were saying the *Our Father*, she would correct you because if you mispronounced "trespass," it's supposed to be "tres-piss," not "trespass." And also if you would say, "Can I go back to my room and get my book?" She would say, "May I go back to my room and get my book," so she was known for being not a very nice person.

L: How did your parents influence your education?

T: Well, I was happy they had sent me to a Catholic school, I thought that was good to have a solid background, religious background. I didn't like when I had to switch to Boardman High School in the ninth grade because I didn't know anyone, and most of the kids who went to the Catholic grade school went on to either Ursuline High School or Mooney, so I felt pretty alienated in my freshman year, there weren't very many people that I knew or could make friends with. So my freshman year was kind of a nightmare. But then I met someone in tenth grade that kind of took me under her wing and she knew a lot of people and we were close through the rest of high school, so that was good.

L: In school what kind of extracurricular activities did you participate in?

T: Not too many because we lived very far from the high school, and my mother didn't drive, and my father worked turns, so he worked afternoon turn, which meant that if you didn't take the bus home, you didn't have a way home, so I remember being in the Hi-Y's, or something, it was like a girls' organization, I remember being in that, and I think I was in the Spanish club, but other than that, not much, and I kind of regret it, not being more involved in the school, that probably would have helped with meeting more friends.

L: Do you remember any Spanish today?

T: Yea, I mean like "El mosquito es chiquito," which means "The mosquito is small," I can remember some words, but amazingly enough I had four years of Spanish and I really don't remember very much of it.

L: Now we're going to move to the faculty and YSU questions. Where and when did you go to college?

T: I went to Youngstown State University right out of high school in September, 1969, and attended until March of 1972, where I got an associate degree in Applied Business, at that time with a management specialty. And then I got a job for a couple of years in a bank, and then started working at Youngstown State, and at that time I started taking additional classes on a part-time basis.

L: And this May, 2004 Semester you will be graduating, what major are you in now and what degree will you earn with that?

T: I'll have a Bachelors' of Science in Business Administration with a major of Accounting.

L: Currently, where do you work at YSU?

T: I work in Kilcawley Center Staff Offices, it's the main office, and it's in charge of the running of Kilcawley Center, which is the student activity center at the university.

L: What exactly do you do at the university?

T: I'm known as the Bookkeeper, Account Clerk, I take care of keeping track of all the accounts for Kilcawley Center, Housing Services, and Student Health Services.

L: What kind of training was required for your particular job in Kilcawley?

T: Well, when I first started at the university I worked in the Graduate Admissions Office, and I had typing skills at that time, and I was taking some accounting classes on the side, so basically it was just to have some accounting experience and accounting background.

L: What is the most favorite part of your job?

T: Probably just the ever-changing personnel in the Center when it comes to students. Kilcawley is, I guess, the main hub of the university where things are always changing, and there's always different people coming through, so it never really seems to get dull.

L: You mentioned not only in your work but with your colleagues ever changing, when you first went to school at YSU, how would you compare this center of student life then from what it is today?

T: Well, I remember when I started, when I went to school there, they just had a cafeteria, they really didn't have a student center. And students pretty much were just interested in going to school and then hurrying off to their jobs, because most students worked in addition to going to school, and at that time there really weren't that many residential students at YSU, it was pretty much a commuter school. So things have changed in that there are a lot more students living on campus now, and more activities involving students I think.

L: On the contrary, what is the least favorite part of your job? If you have one.

T: I really can't say that I have one, I guess that's why I've stayed where I am as long as I have, I've been in Kilcawley since 1981, basically doing the same job, but it never really seems to get old or boring.

L: So you started work in what year again?

T: I started in 1974, and I worked in the Graduate Admissions Office for seven years, and then I moved up to Kilcawley in '81.

L: How were you hired by YSU?

T: Well, my sister-in-law was working at YSU in the Media Center, and she said, "Why don't you come up and apply at YSU, they're taking applications." So the only skill that I thought I could market was my typing skills, although my accuracy was not that good. I went to the personnel office, filled out an application, had to take a typing test, and I actually failed the typing test because I had too many errors, but luckily the lady that was

administering the test was pretty helpful and friendly and she said, "Oh, I think you're alright," so I think shortly after that I got a call that there was an opening in the graduate school.

L: Why did you stay at YSU overall?

T: Well, because it's probably one of the best employers in the Youngstown area, they always paid more than the average job; the benefits have always been good, health care coverage, fringe benefits such as free tuition, bookstore discounts, and all that kind of stuff.

L: How has the administration changed over the thirty years in which you worked at YSU?

T: Well, I was never really that close with the administration, so I don't have a very good picture of it. I just kind of remember when I first started there that Pugsley was the President, and I have a feeling that maybe in the early days the administrators were more of a one-man show as in contrast to now where a president comes in and then he decides that he has to hire all kinds of assistants to help him out. So I think that the hierarchy of management has kind of expanded.

L: How have the students changed over the thirty years?

T: Well, we've noticed, just as an employer of students in Kilcawley, that it seems like it's more difficult to find students who are willing to really work and do a good job. I really think the work ethic has changed a lot in since I was a student and since I started working. Most of our parents were really hard-working people that instilled a work ethic, and I think that some of the students now are kind of spoiled at home and really don't have to do as much as we may have been required to do at their age.

L: How has the community in Youngstown changed since you started working at YSU?

T: Well, of course there's the fact that there really is no longer a downtown area. When I started working at YSU there were still stores that were open in the downtown area, and we would walk downtown for lunch, one of the biggest places to go to eat lunch was in the Strouss' grill, and I mean it used to be so busy that you had to wait for a spot to eat your lunch. And we also used to go down to Woolworth's to get their chicken, they had really good chicken, so we used to go down there all the time for that. So I think that's one big change in the community.

L: How did the closings of the steel mills in the late seventies affect or impact YSU?

T: I'm not sure, it probably made more people want to go to school because they realized that the steel mills were not going to be there for guaranteed employment, I mean up to that point the mentality was that, "Well, I can always go and get a job at the steel mill and make pretty good money," but after that happened I think everyone realized that they

needed to get a good job and get an education first to get that, although I think that the mentality now is that they have to go out of the Youngstown area to find a good job.

L: Describe the campus as it was when you first came to YSU.

T: Well there really weren't very many buildings, and Jones Hall still was used as a classroom area, the bookstore was a small building between Jones Hall and where the library is now, you used to have to stand outside in line to get your books. You used to register up in Kilcawley Residence Hall basement, and the lines would be out the door, you know, you had to wait in line to register, and then by the time you got there, you'd find out that the classes you thought you were going to take were closed, then you'd have to go back and try to figure something else out, so registration was pretty difficult because we didn't have the electronic technology that they have now for registration. Physically they added a lot more buildings, the landscaping has really changed a lot, I mean when they first did the landscaping they added all the trees that are there now and the trees are huge now, they're twenty feet high at least, twenty to thirty feet high, so those were all added in the last twenty, twenty-five years.

L: What about the infamous rock?

T: The rock, you know, I don't really know too much about the background of the rock, I believe it may have been moved, I don't think it was there where it was originally. Where it actually came from I really don't know, I know that organizations paint over it with their different information and that kind of thing, and I think that they chipped off some paint when they were moving it and the layers of paint were huge, I mean it was like five inches thick of just layers of paint, but where it actually came from originally, I don't know.

L: What was the most interesting painting of the rock that you've ever seen? What stood out to you?

T: Well, just a couple of years ago someone did a pumpkin and I thought it really looked neat. That's one that I thought was really nice, and I think recently someone actually proposed marriage on it.

L: Really?

T: Yea.

L: Interesting. Can you describe for us a typical day at your job?

T: Well, I start around seven-thirty, I'm in charge of the money drawers for the areas that Kilcawley has; Candy Counter, Graphic Center, and Bytes and Pieces. So I count the money, I have a daily deposit that I count, after all of the routine duties of money counting, I go on to doing a lot of record keeping, report writing, a lot of paperwork and computer work.

L: Can you describe the impact of technology at YSU? You mentioned earlier about the registration process, but with the implementation of the computer?

T: Well, I know that when I took a computer class in the early eighties I still was doing the key-punch cards, and you had to type your own cards up and submit them, they had a desk where you would go and hand in your bunch of cards and they would process the cards and spit out these huge papers of what you program, so that was very tedious. When I started at the Graduate School we had what they called a Mag Card Typewriter, which was like the precursor to a computer where it had a memory and you could type in like a template letter and just fill in names and that kind of thing, but for report writing, you know, you used to have to do everything by typewriter, and now everything's filed in computers and you can make such easy corrections, and everything's just so much easier obviously.

L: Did your department have any particular problems adjusting to the technology over time?

T: Well, I remember when computers were first initiated for the secretaries, you know, there were obviously some people who weren't too keen about switching over from the typewriters, in fact we still have a typewriter in our office that we use for typing like envelopes, and just kind of like little things like a file tab, or something like that, so there is still a typewriter in the office.

L: Can you describe your most memorable colleagues in your department?

T: Well, my boss for most of the time that I worked in Kilcawley was Phil Hirsch, and he and my other boss, K.J. Satram, were kind of like the founding fathers of Kilcawley Center, they were hired when Kilcawley Center opened in 1974, and they pretty much made Kilcawley what it is today, and it's known for being one of the nicer student centers in the state of Ohio, if not in the country, it's very clean, and people always comment about how well-kept it is.

L: It's definitely better than Kent State University. Can you tell us about some interesting anecdotes in your department?

T: Well, in the earlier years, when everyone was still pretty young, we used to have staff parties, the end of the year we would always have a party where we would invite all the student employees, and we'd have a band, and you know, we'd have a good time. One year we had a talent show where we dressed up like the California Raisins, so it seems like we used to have a lot of parties, birthdays parties, that kind of thing, surprise parties, and that kind of like has been put off to the side now, and we don't seem to do much of that anymore, so I kind of miss that kind of thing.

L: If you could bring back a particular event, activity, what would you bring back that you used to do? You mentioned your different parties...

T: Probably just even recognizing people's birthdays, we used to do that, or we used to have a party each month for the people that had birthdays in that month, that kind of gives you a more personal feeling of involvement in your office, rather than everyone being separated in their own little cubicle, so probably something like that, recognizing birthdays.

L: To the student who says there aren't enough dining facilities available in Kilcawley, what is your opinion on that? And where is your favorite place to eat at Kilcawley?

T: Well, I think there's probably enough eating facilities in Kilcawley, but I'm not sure if they all cater to what a student would like. Arby's has been in Kilcawley since I started there in 1981, and I think you know, we could be due for a change in getting some other kind of a fast-food company in, like Wendy's, that might offer salads and that kind of thing. I feel that sometimes the university dining company that runs Marketplace and Bagel Stop, I think they overcharge the students. And my favorite place? Actually I don't eat a lot of lunches because I take my classes during the day and I skip my lunch and I usually bring my lunch and eat it in my office, but I do occasionally like to get sandwiches at Peaberry's or their muffins, I enjoy their muffins.

L: Switching from Kilcawley to some other questions, who do you consider to have been the best President of the University?

T: Well, I didn't know him personally, but I heard that President Jones was like one of the...he might even have been the first president, and I think he was probably pretty instrumental in turning YSU into a State University, I believe, I'm not sure, I'm not real accurate on the history of that. I didn't get real close with the President, so I really didn't know too many of them personally.

L: As a worker of Kilcawley, how has policy changed since you've started?

T: I don't think our policies have changed much at all, probably because our administration hasn't changed much. Like I said, Phil Hirsch was Director from 1974, and he just retired last year, and K.J. Satrum is still Executive Director, so they have had the same philosophy the entire time they've been there, and that is keeping the building maintained, being friendly to the customers, and trying to offer what the customer wants, so pretty much – and they've always been good supervisors and been very understanding with their employees.

L: Have you seen a broader diversity in staff over the years?

T: Maybe slightly, but not really as much as you would think it should be, I don't believe that it has changed that dramatically over the years. In fact because YSU is such a good place to work, most people stick around for a very long time, and it's pretty hard to...there aren't very many openings, so it's kind of hard to even bring in new people because most people stay with their job for a long time.

L: What was the general reaction to the first minority faculty member hired in your department? Both in 1974 and in 1981?

T: Faculty member? Or just staff member?

L: General staff member.

T: Okay. I think, you know, our office is pretty well-receptive of any new staff member that we got. We never really seem to have any problems with that.

L: Even in 1974?

T: No, I don't think so.

L: Do you have any advice for your younger workers, your younger colleagues, or anyone interested in your profession?

T: Well, I still believe in working hard and doing a good job and really caring about your performance, and I think that in the long run, that gets you where you want to go and makes you feel good, even though sometimes it takes longer to do something the right way.

L: You've been on the YSU campus for quite a while now, going as a student and as a worker, and you've lived through a number of important historical events. During your first run in school you were around during the Kent State Massacre of 1970, can you discuss the sentiment of the students on campus, how were they affected? And how it affected you?

T: Well, unfortunately I wasn't very well-informed about things that were going on, I mean my boyfriend at the time and first husband could have been subjected to the draft to go to Vietnam, but his number was picked as – he was a pretty high number, so the chances of him getting drafted were pretty slim. I didn't really know anyone personally that went to Vietnam, so we were still kind of – my group was pretty apathetic, but there were people that were demonstrating, but I don't really remember witnessing (End of Side A of Tape). (Side A begins) Like I said I don't really remember too much about any war demonstrations or...there may have been a few so-called "Hippy Types" that were anti-war, but I don't remember any major demonstrations going on at YSU.

L: What about September 11? It obviously affected our campus, what were you doing the day of September 11?

T: September 11 was probably the most emotional day that I've ever had. I was in my office when someone came in and said that they had heard that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center, and so everyone rushed into our conference room where there was a television and so we started watching what was going on, and we were kind of sitting there in disbelief when they showed the films of the planes crashing into the

buildings, and then when they showed a plane going into the Pentagon, that was like, “Wow, it looks like our whole nation is being attacked.” I had a class to go to I think at 11:00, so I went down to my class and some kids hadn’t even heard what had happened yet, and you know, word was spreading of what was going on, and everyone was pretty fearful because they kept hearing that then there was a plane that was crashing near Pittsburgh, and so finally they cancelled classes, so I walked back to my office to get my things and they closed the campus I think around noon or one o’clock, something like that. But on the way home it was just the weirdest feeling, it was like just a feeling of dread and sadness, like “I can’t believe this is happening in our country,” and just feelings like our country would never be the same after that day.

L: Do you think YSU has changed since September 11?

T: You know, they originally put in the memorial the year after it happened, but it seems like everyone’s kind of gone back to a little bit of complacency again. I think maybe the foreign student makeup may have changed, I’m not sure if they have any kind of restrictions on foreign students, but I think a lot of the foreign students that were attending YSU may have returned home.

L: Can you share any funny stories with us today? From the thirty years that you worked at YSU?

T: Hmmm...funny stories...

L: Or embarrassing moments.

T: Well, one time I tripped down the main stairs in Kilcawley with a cash drawer and broke my toe, and the cash drawer went flying, and there was change all over the floor, that probably looked funny to a lot of people. The only other thing I can think of is my boss, Phil Hirsch, one year in the talent show there were a group of staff members that were imitating the group The Go-Gos, and it was an all-girl band, well, the girl who was supposed to be the drummer got sick, or didn’t show up, so Phil Hirsch dressed up as the drummer and all they had on were like towels, I think that was their outfit, they had towels wrapped around them, and he was sitting up there pretending he was a drummer with just a towel wrapped around him, I thought that was pretty funny.

L: Do you remember any famous visitors at YSU over the course of time?

T: Well, you know, there’s been a number of political figures that have visited; (Walter) Mondale was there one time, and I went over to Beeghly Center to see him, just a couple of years ago (Bob) Dole was there, and that was a big to-do because I think he decided to come at the last minute and there was just kind of like a lot of hush-hush about when he was coming and where, but it was pretty exciting because he was right down below the bookstore...

L: Do you mean (Al) Gore?

T: I'm sorry, Gore, yes, it was Gore. Also I was going to say too in the past they used to have a lot of major events where they would invite many big-name bands to have concerts at Beeghly Center. I remember going to see The Grass Roots, The Fifth Dimension, I think even The Rascals were there, so they used to have, you know, more well-known bands coming and playing for the students, I think they may have devoted more money to student entertainment in that regard.

L: If there's anything that can be changed at YSU, what would you believe should be changed and why?

T: Well, everyone seems to get the impression, staff members that is, you know, the general staff members, seem to get the impression that the upper management is too heavy, that they spend a lot of money that they really don't have, or they'll say they don't have money for one thing, but then they go and spend money on something that they're interested in, so there seems to be a lot of control of the money by whoever is in charge and what their interests are rather than the interests of the general University.

L: What do you think about The Jambar?

T: Well, I think it gets a lot of criticism because over the years people have said that it doesn't really serve the interests of the students, a lot of times the writing is poor, but I guess it serves a purpose for the students that are trying to learn more about journalism and practice their art, and it does serve as a means of some free expression.

L: If you can provide me with one word to describe your work experience at YSU, what would it be?

T: Pleasant.

L: Why?

T: Because I never dread going to work, I enjoy going to work. I really have kind of a stress-free job, even though I have a boss, I have my own office where I'm kind of my own boss and when I have to do things and in what order, so it's been a good experience.

L: When you graduate in May, do you consider yourself a YSU success story?

T: Well, I don't know, it sure took me long enough, but I guess so, I mean I kind of represent the people who went to school right out of high school, that maybe didn't know what they really wanted to do when they first went to school, and plus in those days you were kind of pressured to go to work right away to try to make some money, and at that time getting married young was common, so the basic thing was you go to school, you get married, and you have a family, so I got married when I was 21, so after that then I started thinking, "Well gee, maybe I should have finished and got a four-year degree, and where could I have been if I would have finished my degree then?" So now it's just more of a personal goal for me to finish rather than a career path or goal, but I think it's

something that everyone should do is just, if you started, it would be a good thing to finish it.

L: It has been known that you have been a huge YSU football fan; can you tell me any experiences at the YSU football games?

T: Well I don't know if I consider myself a huge fan, I've actually been kind of lax in going to the games in recent years.

L: Well, that's probably...

T: I don't especially enjoy climbing up the stadium anymore. Physically it's kind of challenging to walk up the steps and then walk up to the stadium. But, you know, I think the football team has always been, when it was good, and even now, I think it's still a source of enjoyment for the whole community to still get together and have a place where they can have some fun, and you know, just football in general is a very popular thing in this area, not only college but especially high school football, so it's just a nice community thing I think, going to the football games.

L: When the Penguins won the National Football Championship in 1991, 1993, 1994, and 1997, what was the atmosphere like, going to work during those winning seasons?

T: Well, I think people were a little more enthusiastic in general, like The Jambar had a contest where offices decorated for the Championships and everyone seemed to have more of a school-spirit and wore a lot of the sweatshirts and that kind of thing, so I think it kind of brings the University together when we have a winning team.

L: So there was a sense of pride.

T: Yes.

L: Also it's been known that you have an intensive collection of Penguins, you love Penguins.

T: Yes.

L: How many can you estimate that you have in your office in Kilcawley?

T: Well, I probably have about maybe thirty or so small ones of various sizes and some are glass, some are wood, some are plush toys, but the collection was starting to get out of hand and the space was becoming limited, so I've kind of restricted my collection. But once you tell someone that you collect Penguins, after a while everyone's bringing you Penguins. It was very difficult to find Penguins when I first started the collection, and now it seems like they're more popular.

L: Do you have a famous line or a famous quote that you go by? Like “Fear the Penguin,” or...

T: What’s that again?

L: Do you have a famous line that you would use just in general?

T: For a general rule of life?

L: Yes, rule of life.

T: Well, I’ve always felt that you should take chances, I think that’s the biggest thing that anyone can do is not be afraid to try new things and to take chances.

L: Do you have any advice for future generations going to YSU or working at YSU?

T: Just maybe try to keep what so many people what so many people have worked hard to achieve, keep it going, because like I said, I’m afraid the work ethic has changed and a lot of the things that are like they are right now took a lot of work from a lot of people, and it would be good if the young generation could keep it going and keep it as it is right now.

L: Do you have any regrets?

T: Maybe that I didn’t finish school right out of high school, because if I would have gotten a four-year degree in Accounting back in the early seventies, who knows, I could have probably been a CPA, and even a partner in a CPA firm by now, and maybe I could retire and go to Florida right now.

L: Well, a degree is better late than never. Is there anything that you would like to add that we did not cover today in this interview?

T: No, I can’t think of anything.

L: Okay, well thank you for your time today, it’s been a pleasure.

T: Thank you Jack.