ARNOLD TAYLOR, Hopi

December 18, 1975

Tucson, Arizona

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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Sam Myers:
Today I'm at the University of Arizona, in the American Indian Student Advisor's office, talking with Mr. Arnold Taylor, and, Arnold, you're from one of the Hopi villages up on the mesas?

Arnold Taylor:
Yes, I'm from Shungopavi [Shun-o-pâvē] Village on the Hopi Reservation.

SM: Did you go to school up there?

AT: I went to the BIA day school, which is no longer a school. It has been torn down. I did go to school on the Hopi Reservation up to about the third grade, and then from there I went to a mission school in Holbrook. It's one of the Seventh Day Adventist mission schools, and I was a student there for a number of years, until, I think, my ninth grade year. Then I went back to the Hopi Reservation to the high school there for my tenth grade at New Oraibi.

SM: New Oraibi is at the foot of the mesa, below Old Oraibi?

AT: Which is also now defunct. It's no longer a high school, it's a day school.

SM: It was a BIA day school. It's gone now?

AT: It's gone now. Then I went back to Holbrook for my junior year, and after completing that I went to Ganado mission school, a Presbyterian mission school, which is also no longer a school, no longer a high school. It's what they call the College of Ganado now.

SM: Great place.

AT: That's where I spent my high school years, my elementary and high school years.
SM: Did you come here to the University of Arizona too?

AT: I went to Phoenix Junior College back in '61, and spent a year there, then went back to the Hopi Reservation and worked on the Hopi Reservation, came back. Well, while I was workin' there I went into the Armed Forces, served in the Army. After my service I transferred from Phoenix Junior College down to the university here, and I graduated here in '73. I did my graduate work here, and due to complete my master's degree next semester.

SM: You'll have it done then. That will be a nice milestone to have reached, won't it?

AT: That will be a breather for me for a while.

SM: Are you going on then?

AT: Well, not at this point. I'm not thinking too highly of the idea of going on yet.

SM: It gets tiresome, doesn't it?

AT: Maybe at some point.

SM: You can get some time off and then go back maybe. Well, I got an impression talking with you before we started this tape, that you were more familiar with the whole overall picture than some people I have been able to reach so far, so I want to ask you some questions. The Hopi villages up there now, are they doing pretty well economically or are they having problems?

AT: Oh, like everybody else, I think we still have problems. I don't think we'll get there as quickly as some of our representatives
might think. It takes a little time, especially work in economic development, and that seems to be the big push right now—to find employment for a lot of our people on the reservation.

SM: That culture center up on top of Second Mesa. I used to think that was tribal, but it's run by one man named Kabotie, isn't it?

AT: No, it's not run by him. The culture center is a joint effort, I believe, between the BIA, but, I think, the tribe has a big part in it. They've sub-contracted to the present managers, and they have, I believe, three people that are managing the cultural center.

SM: Oh, they're managing the motel?

AT: The motel complex.

SM: I'm sorry. I said culture center, and they used to call the building that they have the store in the culture center but now it's the motel and museum that make up the culture center.

AT: I believe the one you're talking about, where Kabotie is, is the cooperative guild.

SM: That's the cooperative guild of the tribe? They had some beautiful things there.

AT: This was started by Kabotie when a lot of the servicemen from the Second War came back and those veterans weren't trained in things, so they trained them as silversmiths. This started down actually in Oraibi in the quonset huts, in New Oraibi, right by the school there. And then there was a push for new facilities for these people that wanted to go into this type of work, and so they've constructed this building up on top of mesa there, right across from the cultural center, and
you have quite a few Hopi members there working as silversmiths.

SM: I've seen them working, cutting out those delicate designs and then sweating the two pieces together to make the overlay. They usually use traditional designs, don't they, in most of those?

AT: Most are traditional designs, right.

SM: And once in a while depart a little. The Hopi work is spectacular, some of it is just beautiful. The baskets are amazing.

AT: The baskets, they're very nice. A lot of them are probably collector's items. The price of those things today, I would say they are collector's items.

SM: You couldn't afford to use them for anything, because they're too precious. Some of them $1,000 and more. You knew Don Talayesva too, the subject of the book, Sun Chief?

AT: Yes, I do know Don Talayesva.

SM: Is he still alive up there?

AT: He's still alive. He had been into New Mexico, I believe, with a sister, and I believe is back on the Hopi Reservation now.

SM: Someone said they thought he was back up in Old Oraibi.

AT: He may be up there now. The last I heard he was in New Mexico with his sister.

SM: He must be in his middle 80's now or late 80's?
AT: Well, probably around the middle 80's, I would say.

SM: He was an interesting person to talk with. I wanted to drop back and see how he was, but then I drove up to the entrance to Old Oraibi and there was a sign there that says the white people have not obeyed their own laws nor the Hopis, and have desecrated some of the Hopi buildings, etc., and are no longer allowed in the village. So I didn't go in.

AT: I think the sign is probably legitimate.

SM: I resent the people who caused them to take the action, you know, those who came in and took pictures when they weren't supposed to, and even picked stones out of peoples' houses as souvenirs.

AT: But I think, you know, just driving in and asking people that you would like to see Don, you might have been able to see him.

SM: Well, I didn't want to intrude. I didn't feel I was welcome, the sign said I wasn't, so I didn't. Well, anyway, as far as you know he's well and still getting along O.K.?

AT: I think he's doing well.

SM: Do you know the leader of the village?

AT: Myna Lanza? Yes, I know her.

SM: Someone said that her taking leadership of the village, the tribe there, has caused a split among the people, and that some are anti, some pro, her leadership. Do you know about any such argument?

AT: This has been a problem they've been dealing with there for a long
time. Traditionally, a female cannot be made a chief.

SM: She's from the right clan, though, isn't she?

AT: Well, she's with the right clan, but still it doesn't give her that right to become chief. Others have accused her of being a self-claimed chieftess, but the traditional Hopi founding of a chief is not done the way she has become chief. It takes the One Horn Society who comes in and selects a chief. This is the way it's done in my village. It was not done that way in Old Oraibi, because they no longer carry on the traditions that we still carry over at my village.

SM: Your village is more careful to preserve the old traditions?

AT: Well, I like to think we are more careful with that, and I think we probably are, because we are the only village that still carries on this tradition.

SM: The situation in Old Oraibi, then, has it split the town pretty badly?

AT: It's hard to say that there's really that much of a split there, but I think if I went in there knowing what I know, I would probably think that there is some split, but maybe not deep enough that the people there themselves, the residents of Old Oraibi, couldn't settle this thing, you know, the split.

SM: So it might not be as bad a split in the town as in half, but just like a political faction anywhere?

AT: It is a political faction, and it's like anybody else. If people can get together and talk about their problems, you know, what the differences are, and they can lay them out and get back together, I think it will make it a stronger village.
SM: It should. Was Myna Lanza's father the chief there?

AT: I don't think it was Myna Lanza's father. I think it was somebody else. Now I'm not too familiar with the clanship there at Old Oraibi.

SM: Speaking of Don Talayesva, have you read his book, *Sun Chief*?

AT: Yes I have.

SM: Do you think it's a typical picture of life during those years in a Hopi town?

AT: It might be a typical life during that period, but today, maybe the way I grew up, it wasn't a true picture of what I had read in that book.

SM: It didn't fit your own experiences?

AT: Not my own experiences, so maybe the book is right during the stages it was written for that period, but the period that I grew up in, it didn't fit too much.

SM: 'Cause you're a good deal younger?

AT: That's right.

SM: Well then, if I recommend the book, or one of my students wants to read it, I would have to qualify, saying that it doesn't necessarily hold for all the Hopi people.

AT: That's right. I would probably recommend that to a student reading the book.
SM: Have you any others in mind that might be a companion to it, showing another side, or maybe a better overall view or something?

AT: No, I don't offhand remember any of the books that I've read that would be a companion to this. Going back, I can only remember this book as really the only biography of, you know, a Hopi.

SM: It's a very extensive, detailed one.

AT: Not the other, what you would call a true companionship to a book.

SM: The book relates that Don Talayesva had gone away to the white man's school for ten years, but then he had gone back to his home, and had decided to go back to the old Hopi way and did, leaving the Anglo world. Do most of the people of the Southwest refer to non-Indians as whites or Anglos?

AT: Well, I'd probably call you Anglo. It's probably a nicer term than using "white man."

SM: Well, anyway, as I understood this comment in the book then, he had decided to go back to the old Hopi way, and did, and became one of the members of one of the clans, and entered into the ceremonies and a full Hopi life all the rest of his life. But then, when I was up there, about six weeks ago, somebody said I might find him on Sunday over in a little Mennonite church in New Oraibi. It surprised me, because I thought he had left all that, you know, to go back to the old Hopi way. Do you know anything about that?

AT: I have heard he had been baptized into one of the churches, I wasn't sure which one it was. I think, like all people, he has a right to choose his lifestyle, and apparently that's what he wants. But going through the initiation rites that most men, you know, about
Don's age would normally go through, most of these people have later on written about the ceremonies, which goes against, more or less, an ethic.

SM: Is it possible for a person to participate in both a Christian church and the Hopi religion?

AT: Well, I don't think it's possible, at least at my village, because this is our religion, and I don't think a person could go out and try to believe or make believe that he believes in both religions. Now when you go through the ceremonies for men that we go through, which we call "Wuchima," O.K., when we go through that, we make a solemn oath, if you want to call it that, that none of this would be exposed to non-members of that society.

SM: Did he expose things in that book that you would not have exposed in your village?

AT: Well, I don't think that he exposed anything in this book, but it has been known to happen in some cases, where other people had gone through it later on in their lives, go against this ethic that I mentioned a while ago, and expose a lot of these things that they had vowed not to tell.

SM: Have you ever read another book called The Fourth World of the Hopis?

AT: By Harold Courlander? I read the book.

SM: What do you think of that one?

AT: It would be interesting to a person that's never gone through it.

SM: You can tell me how someone who has grown up there would see it.
AT: Well, this is something that I would probably rather not talk about, because it does go deep into the religion I believe in.

SM: So then another book. The other one is that story, Me and Mine, by Louise Udall, about Helen Sekaquaptewa. It's a sort of biography of Helen Sekaquaptewa and her husband, and tells about their children, and one of them is working here at the university on the staff in anthropology, I believe, Emory?

AT: Yes.

SM: And he has a Ph.D. in Anthropology, is it?

AT: No, he has a jurisdoctorate degree. He's a law graduate, but he does not have a Ph.D.

SM: Anyway, he is a highly successful person?

AT: Yes, he is.

SM: And respected?

AT: I would say so.

SM: Is he from Old Oraibi?

AT: I think her parents were probably from Old Oraibi, but they were probably raised down below in New Oraibi.

SM: Well now, that book, Me and Mine, I want to know if I'm doing right by recommending that as an authentic picture of Hopi life?

AT: Well, I think to a certain degree Me and Mine depicts a little more
truer life of what goes on on a reservation.

SM: It's a deceptively easy story to read, isn't it?

AT: It is.

SM: And you read through and say, "This is a simple little story," and then you stop and think, and you realize you've learned a lot too. It's just good teaching, I guess.

AT: It would be a good textbook, if you want to call it that.

SM: Now I can recommend that one with less qualifications, the other one with a little more qualification. But there isn't anything else, really, that I can recommend to counteract or, you know, to weigh the other side. There are probably several other sides?

AT: I would think so, yes.

SM: Does each village have its own ceremonies and practices that differ a little from the others?

AT: Not as far as the social-type dancing goes, but as far as the religious ceremonials, they differ.

SM: And how many villages are there?

AT: We have, I believe, seven ... well, what we consider the villages, First, Second and Third Mesas, but each village or each mesa has several villages too. Just like our Second Mesa, where I'm from, we have three villages on it, which is my village, Shongopovi, Shipolovi and Mishongnovi.
SM: And each one has a little different accent or different customs?

AT: Well, there's an accent to each village. The further west you go, up Oraibi and Third Mesa, you will notice a slight difference in accent, and when you come to our village you'll find another accent, and even across the way, still on the second mesa, you'll detect another accent there.

SM: This is interesting, because they're not terribly far apart, but still the people have been there so long. Isn't Old Oraibi supposed to be the oldest continuously occupied town in the whole country?

AT: Well, anthropologically they say it is.

SM: But now, how about your town? Is it just as old?

AT: Our village, Shongopovi, is not the oldest if you want to go back on the history, but down below us, which is the old Shongopovi, where the people lived before they moved up on the mesa there, that was considered as the mother of all villages on the Hopi Reservation. Supposedly that's where all the Hopis branched out. Now there can be arguments on that from each village, but this is the way that I knew it or heard it from the elders.

SM: The Hopi people, many of them are still up there, but they have branched out, quite a few have left, and are quite successful in the other society, as well as back home?

AT: I think you would say most people that have left the reservation are quite successful.

SM: Hopis are an industrious people, aren't they?

AT: Well, I hope we are, but going back on the people who have left, they
have become successful because, well going back to your word there, industrious. O.K., they have made it because they have been trained in some area that they feel secure in doing, and can keep their family going in urban areas. I think they've done quite well. Some of us here in urban areas are making it, I think, but I think we've all got our eyes set on going back to the reservation at some point in time.

SM: Do you still feel that way too--that you will go back some day?

AT: Very much so!

SM: I hope it all comes out that way, just the way you'd like it.

AT: Well, thank you. I'm looking forward to going back out there.