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Interview no. 174

Arleigh B. Templeton

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Arleigh B. Templeton
INTERVIEWER: Dale L. Walker
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

President of UTEP since 1972.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Assessment of his administration.

45 minutes.
19 pages.

W: Dr. Templeton, looking back over your two years as President of UTEP, could you single out some of the events that you have created or solved that you think would be the outstanding accomplishments of those two years?

T: Well, Dale, you never really solve anything in higher education. You take what you have and try to make a better situation out of it. You try to improve the quality of academic programs. You try to improve the quality of student life on the campus. You try to improve the faculty benefits, faculty morale; the administrative benefits, the administrative morale; hoping that out of all these things will come a better delivery of educational services to your students.

W: What were some of the problems you had to face when you came here?

T: I started first with the financial problem. It apparently had been ignored by the people in Austin and the people here. I don't ever like to start managing a business without knowing what resources we have. When I found that we had 102 professors teaching from zero hours to six hours, I knew we were in trouble. I traced that on down and found out that we could not make the August 1974 payroll if we didn't "pull down our horns." Then came the cutting down of services. The administrative budget was about \$140,000 over spent. We balanced that immediately. I took on more administrative duties. The business office took on more administrative duties, and other administrators did. Then we began to get that financial picture in line. The athletic budget was about \$341,000 over spent; that was unpaid bills and

personal notes all over town. Those we reconciled. The Tartan Track, for example, had never been paid for. That was an outstanding deal, something like \$50,000. Looking at the whole picture now, if we are fortunate this year, we will balance our athletic budget and give our three fine new coaches an opportunity to work within a balanced budget structure, a budget in which they will be comfortable to do their job; and we can know what they're doing. I'm in the process right now of getting together all the athletic figures. I'm going to call the head coaches and athletic directors in, and I'm going to go over all these figures with them and teach them where they are and what they can do; and then give them latitude to go out there and do their job. I've done the same thing with academic people. We have a balanced budget now; we hope to be able to put some merit money into teachers' salaries at the beginning of the next year.

W: We've had a little bit [already].

T: Well, we've already put \$30,000 in merit salaries, which is the first merit money in about three years. These are things that we have to do. I also look back to that [time] after I got through with the financial part. I got a list of all the people who were unhappy: the student leaders, the faculty leaders, the faculty council; I had them all in this office. I simply asked them the question, "What's wrong with this University?" They told me what was wrong, and I said, "What do you think the President should do?" I started with the premise that what they told me was correct, and I found [that] many of the things they told me was incorrect. I opened the doors

to this office and the Vice Presidents' offices, and students began to come in and air complaints. When we were right, we convinced them that we were right; when we were wrong, we corrected them. We did the same thing with faculty. Then we tried to give over all the problems to the administrators. I took all the administrators for a two day retreat off the campus, and we did nothing then but try to teach them budgeting, budget controls, appropriation requests, and the whole bit. Out of that also came a chance for them to tell me what was wrong out there in the academic community and what needed to be done. We've had two of those, and I'll have to admit that this last year we had a much better one. People got down to the subjects that will improve this university.

These are some of the highlights. Of course, there was no equipment for the Fine Arts Building; we raised \$400,000 for that. There was no equipment for the Engineering Building; there wasn't any money to build an Engineering Building.

W: So this was simply a plan two years ago, for the Engineering Building?

T: Well, nobody knew it was a plan. It was a thoroughly confused situation. I still can't find out why nobody knew. They were building the building, [and] didn't have the money to build what was to amount to a \$12 million building. There was no equipment in it; so we have put roughly \$800,000 of PUF money in the Biological Science and Engineering Building. We had two computers on campus that didn't serve the people. I bought a new big modern computer, we remodeled Bell Hall, and we opened the computer up to students for the first time. We're buying ten student terminals to be placed in the various colleges, and we 'll follow it up with the purchase of ten more. We've purchased one mini computer, and a couple of new machines that will

somewhat computerize instruction--one in Physics and one in Chemistry. These are things that we've done. Of course, it was a thrill when the University of Texas system lived up to its commitment to finance these programs. They have financed roughly \$28 million for the program since I've been here. The Special Events Center now is wrapped up. The ribbon is tied, which includes everything that we need, including all the lighting, sound, a stage for special events, etc. Together with landscaping--a beautiful landscaped mall that opens on to Mesa Street--I'm very proud of this building. This building will seat roughly 13,000 people. It's going to cost a total of \$10 million. This includes architect's fees and everything. The one in Austin seats 17,500 and that's going to cost about \$30 million. So we've done some good planning.

W: Another thing that will be remembered for 1974 in particular, and many people not necessarily associated with the campus consider this to be a landmark, is the Doctorate [program] in Geological Sciences. Can you trace the history of that? What was the progress on that two years ago?

T: When I came here, the program was bogged down in committees. It was shuffling between the Academic Vice President's office and the Dean of Science in the Geology Department. As I began to move around Denver, Dallas, México City, Los Angeles, and Houston to meet with various alumni groups, I found that this school had a very distinguished history in Mining. That [is] mining, metallurgy, microphysics, geophysics, and all the things that go into it. I found that we had quite a distinguished group of people out in the world. Our people in México practically

run the Mexican mining industry. They're all UTEP graduates. From there I decided that here is where the school made its name. This is the day and age where you need Geology, where you need Microbiologists, where you need Geophysicists, where you need Metallurgists.

W: Mining itself is a "comeback" industry.

T: Right. Just plain old hardrock mining is back. So we then began to dig this thing out. I'll have to say that a local El Paso banker on the coordinating board had much interest in this; Sam Young, Jr. [He] encouraged me very much on it, and we just caught it when the iron was hot. We just ironed his shirt right there and got the Ph.D. in Geology. We had one more hurdle on it. That's a committee of three that will be out in the Spring to review the program. So now it is up to the Dean of Sciences, the Academic Vice President, and the College of Science. This program should be stretched to cover a bunch of thing. I have done my thing. It's up to these people to make this program an imaginative, modern, up-to-date, far-reaching Ph.D. program in Geology.

W: Is there a description of that program as being a practical one?

T: I like to think of it as an applied course. For example, there is a 6 month industrial internship in it. We'll have these kids spend 6 months in the mines in México; 6 months in an oil refinery; 6 months in the oil field; 6 months in a steel mill; someplace in the program of coal de-gasification in New Mexico and Arizona.

W: You've described our role and scope work when the Ph. D. was approved by the Coordinating Board. Approval of this Ph. D. was not to say that our role and scope had changed all that much.

T: No. Dale, I frankly never read the role and scope. I am better off without it. That closes me in and wipes out any imaginative thinking I might have for new programs. To me, our role and scope is to serve this segment of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and México; wherever we serve. Whatever programs that are appropo to this segment of our modern society, this University should be involved in. My attitude is to get the programs and then bring the role and scope around them. I don't feel the pressures of having any closed perimeters whatsoever. The role and scope just says "this is your role, this is your scope." You're supposed to do these things in these bounds. I don't know any bounds.

W: The fact of the Doctorate in Geology proved that it could be done.

T: We are not approved to award a Doctorate degree. If you look at the catalog next year you'll see that we are awarding Doctorate degrees.

W: One question that comes up frequently in looking at our enrollment figures and other data that we have [is this]: what would you say to be the relationship between this institution and the Community College? What impact does the Community College have now and might have in the future?

T: We serve two different populations; it's really for both in the community. We simply could cooperate with the Community College in educating the academic transfer students that have completed one or two years over there. I see no big thing about transfer of credits between the two schools. There's a new hot thing in this country today, and that's the academic university getting involved into some of these technical programs. For example, Houston has opened a big restaurant/hotel management school. The Job Corps is

involved in that. The Job Corps is a program for drop-outs. Here is Houston into this thing, in a sophisticated program. Oklahoma State University has been in it for years. It's one of the best programs in the country. Universities now are taking on the responsibility, for example, to train some people who will teach in these technical schools. The Data Processing business--the university has never fulfilled its obligation there. We take the position to train a sophisticated programmer, for example, is a thing the Junior College ought to do. So today you can't hire a programmer. We're training people who are going into a field where there's no demand for them, where there is a big demand in the very technical aspects of data processing.

W: At one time those kinds of technical programs were considered taboo for a university.

T: Well, role and scope of the Community Colleges in Texas include technical education--vocation technical. Back in 1964 when I made the study and I recommended to Governor Conally, and the two of us wrote Senate Bill #1 to set up the coordinating board and bring the Community Colleges in, the universities didn't handle technical vocational education. Now the Community Colleges are finding the need for some support, so it's up to the universities to get into this century and look into the next century. The next century is just right down the road. It's training people to live in the new world, a new environment.

W: You wouldn't see, then, any spirit of competition between universities and [community colleges]?

T: None whatsoever. I don't even feel it. We have regular meetings with them, monthly meetings and any call meetings, simply to iron

out programs or articulate programs to coordinate activities and do all the things that we should be doing together.

W: People have a tendency to look at our enrollment and the Community College's enrollment and draw some kind of conclusion from it.

Would you say that this past semester, when our enrollment came back up again to a level we didn't really expect, there was some kind of a trend working there? Can we expect some kind of a leveling off, perhaps, and not another drop?

T: This is the end of my fourth semester here. There has been an enrollment increase every semester that I've been here. I think-- and certainly I don't take credit for it--we've had a steady increase. We will have a steady increase if we have the programs that interest people and the programs that serve the needs of the modern day youngsters. It's that simple. In other words, there are no businesses today that are serving people and that are serving the needs of this day and age. If you start trying to run one of these old type general hardware stores in a place like El Paso, you're not going to do very good with it. Now the modern hardware store is selling everything. The filling stations, for example, are into the grocery business and hardware business and everything. Those that are doing this are staying open; the rest of them are being closed and turned into other things. The university is no different; it must serve the modern needs of people. We cannot live in the design of the university that was made a hundred or so years ago. We've got a new world.

W: Among the programs that we have that seem to be answering the needs [of the students] are the Criminal Justice program and the Industrial Engineering program, and the MBA. What would you look for in the

next year or so that we might be adding to our curriculum here?

T: We've got some programs. Master of Liberal Arts is in the Faculty Committee stage now. As soon as they get through with it, we'll have it on the road to the Coordinating Board. This is a general, broad-base Master's Degree program. Anybody with a Bachelor's Degree can come in and enroll for 36 hours, no admissions requirements, no GRE scores; but they take whatever they want--36 hours. If they complete it to the satisfaction of the University, they are awarded a Master of Liberal Arts. These are the Bachelor's Degree people--housewives, retired people, who always want to study. This gives them an opportunity to study across the broad spectrum of the University.

W: Will there be a thesis required in that?

T: No thesis required. Then there's the Bachelor of General Studies that I'm very careful with. We haven't moved into that because it has a bunch of problems. It is for the adult who always wanted a Bachelor's Degree and couldn't get it. You might call it continuing education. Then there are programs, cooperative programs, that we ought to be into: short seminars, banking, saving and loan business, industry; we ought to be in those kind of programs.

W: In terms of credit now, not necessarily continuing ed...

T: Most everything I think of is residential credit. The only reason you have continuing education is because these are programs the universities don't serve. There's no reason for that continued education. The university ought to be a system of continued education period.

W: We have some figures that show that we have some terrific resources in retired people and others that we could attract back to this campus.

T: Heavens yes! I'm working now on what I call "Presidential Seminars." This is a lecture series for credit--I don't know where I'll put it--I don't know what you'll get credit for. It's a three hour course where we bring lecturers in here. We would have Art, Music, Military History, English, Government; great scientists, practical people, but [all] reknowned people. This would be a one-semester-a-year program--probably in Magoffin Auditorium to hold all the people that would want to take it. Of course, again, this is going to take some thinking on the part of these faculty people. Look at Yale. A lot of folks think that it's a pretty good school. At Yale, a youngster can do anything he wants to. He can go enroll in a course, go to the professor and say, "I want to go to Madagascar this semester. This is what I want to do." The professor approves it, he goes to Madagascar, comes back, he has an oral or written examination, and he passes the course. In other words, there is latitude for all types of things at Yale University. The University of Chicago has done many of these things. They've got all kinds of "Presidential Seminars." They've got programs in Criminal Justice that are attached to their law school. They've got some of the greatest people that I've ever listened to in my life lecturing on crime. These are the things that we've got to get away from--this stereotyped hundred and twenty-six semester hours, hundred and thirty-four semester hours--where you can't take this, you can't do this. We've got to get away from this and break it down.

W: Is this a trend in other universities?

T: This is a trend of the people that our faculty looks up to.

W: Looking ahead, could you put the spotlight on anything in the 1975

calendar year that you're looking forward to, that you think will be a significant factor in your presidency here?

T: This very well could be my last session in the legislature. There are a bunch of little wrap-up projects that I want to do. There are some beautification projects that I want to do on the campus. I want to leave this a beautiful campus. There are some rehab and repairs that need to be done on the campus. I want to wrap these up. There's some equipment that I want to see here. I want to see faculty salaries increase, which I intend to see. I have a burning desire to see my lower paid people get substantial increases where they can raise their standard of living, at least balance off this inflationary pressure that's on them. I hear the President is pushing now for a 40 or 50 cent gallon tax on gasoline. This will set these people back because these people are not on welfare. They come to work every day. I have deep and abiding and sincere desire to improve these people's plight in life, and I'm going to do it. I'm going to spend many days out in Austin this time in the legislature--two and three days a week for a while--till I get the feel of what's happening down there. I'm going to have my two cents' worth in. I want to end up this next year with a sum of money so that we can make some substantial merit awards to the faculty. These are for people who are teaching better and working harder and doing more than others. We're going to reward them. A lot of the inequities that we have on the campus--we're in the process of eliminating them, and we'll do more of that. I want to leave this university with a good feeling for it in my own mind. As you know, I'm my own worst judge; I'm my own most severe critic. I want to

leave here with this university functioning, I want to know that my faculty is paid well, that they are functioning well. I want my students to be a part of the university, and I simply want to feel good about it. I don't know when I'm going to retire; I work about as hard as anybody I know in El Paso today. As long as I feel like working, I'm going to continue. I think I'm smart enough to know when I'm not doing my job. That day, I'll simply pack my briefcase and walk out the back steps, and that's it.

W: Is there anything significant about this being the last time you'll work with the legislature?

T: No, not at all. I just said it might be. The legislature won't convene again till 1978. That's a long ways down the road. When you get my age, you don't live that far ahead. There's no significant ideas about any retirement ideas that I have. You know me well enough to know that I can't retire. I've got to retire to something that keeps me busy and keeps me occupied, because I can't afford to sit around and whittle; that's not my cup of tea.

W: You have wide experience in all fields of education, from the elementary school level to the junior college and major university level. When you came to UTEP two years ago, and after you got yourself entrenched here, what differences did you find about UTEP from other universities?

T: I'd rather not think that I'm entrenched, but what I found different here is a different student body. I found a more serious student body than you find out at UT Austin. These kids are not so wrapped up in the apartment complex thing. We have a lot of commuter students, a lot of working students, a lot of serious minded students. These kids get to be a part of you. I

have great admiration for them and I love the student body here.

The community is different. I would have to say that El Paso is the most unfoolish society in America. People out here say it like it is; I don't see status consciousness like I find in other cities in which I've lived. I just find it a wonderful bunch of people.

They're an appreciative group of people. This university could have a unique position by being different. I think today that the society is looking for a university that dares to be different. I see an opportunity here to build. We're on the border here, and we have more programs: the Peer Counseling program. It doesn't just serve the Spanish-surnamed youngster, it serves any youngster who is in trouble and who needs some help.

W: We are noted for doing some pioneering work in things like minority studies, ethnic studies, and that sort of thing. Do you think that what used to be said about UTEP, that it had a golden opportunity to be a giant figure in this field of minority relations and Inter-American Studies, still seems to be a viable idea?

T: It is. And that's why I hang on to the Oral History program. That's why I hang on to the program of Inter-American Studies. I don't think we've done a lot with it, but I think it's out there for us. I think we've got to get out of this writing business, this big desire to write something to have your name on, and develop some type of an Inter-American Studies philosophy. I don't think we've ever tied down the philosophy of whether we're going to work with Juárez or whether we're going to work with the state of Chihuahua, whether we're going to work with all of México, whether we're going to take in a portion of Central America, whether we're going to take

in all of Central America, or whether they're going to include South America. We've got to confine ourselves to some programs. We're doing a lot on this campus in bicultural programs. For the first time I'm pleased with our Teacher Corps program. I think we're getting some things done. Our new Dean of Education, Dr. Hernández, is doing a terrific job over in Education, getting some things in perspective. I see hopes here for an International School of Medicine, International School of Law, International Banking. Why aren't we into International Banking? This is going to have to come out. I can't do it if they're not interested in it. There's nothing I can do. We have a golden opportunity for this type of thing. I'm definitely interested in Inter-American programs in every respect. But they must do something. We can't conduct another survey on the border and publish it, and that's the end of it. That's of no value.

W: We have an Inter-American Studies program office here--Dr. Petersen's office--which does a lot of very good work. On a little bit more local level, we have Chicano Studies, Black Studies, and other ones that cut across ethnic ground. Does it appear to you that those kinds of programs are a part of a bigger picture for across-the-border relations, whether it's all of México or all of South America?

T: I doubt that Chicano Studies and Black Studies affect that very much. They affect the Spanish-surnamed people who were born in this country and who've been a part of this country. This is something to help them study their culture and study their

literary programs, their art and music, their government, and all these type things. I think Inter-American Studies has got to go way beyond that.

W: Not only in geographical terms--South and Central America and México?

T: Whatever we can do and do it successfully.

W: In terms of cooperative programs with governments, in the case of México we're going to have to be dealing with the government of Chihuahua.

T: That is correct. Then we'll have the transportation problem.

W: In looking ahead, maybe even beyond your own years here as President, can you visualize any other position this university might have in a decade or so? Do you look for this to be a major component of the University of Texas system, or even a more major institution?

T: We are a major component now. Our programs stand up with Austin or Dallas and Permian Basin and San Antonio right now. I came out here with the feeling that this was a second-rate school. A lot of that comes from the people out here saying that we've been relegated to a second-class citizenship by the Regents. I think that's been said too much, and as a result you get to where you believe them. I have been convinced now, in viewing students' records and follow ups on students in law school and medical school, our kids stand up anywhere. I see our eminent geophysicists and mining managers over [in Denver], I see our people running the whole mining industry in México. I don't see any of the other people that rank any higher than our people.

W: This has been a long standing myth, that we are a second-class institution within the University of Texas system. You never

detected any of that spirit at all with all your dealings with the Board of Regents people at Austin?

T: Let me be completely candid about this. What I have been able to explain to the Regents in a clean, clear, sensible manner, I've been able to get done. I have not had one request turned down by the Regents. The system itself is a type of bureaucracy. There are people within the system that, if you deal with [them], you won't get many things approved. Whoever is President here, whoever is a leader here, must realize that you don't go to the places where you get turned down. You only visit the places where you get things approved. I don't know how popular I am in Austin; I never have conducted a poll, and hopefully will pass from this world before I conduct any type polls. If you have a person who stays on this side of the mountain and who does not get over there to sell his program, you're not going to get anything. It's that simple. I'm a very competitive individual, and I compete with them for everything I can find over there. When I get things to the Chancellor or the Deputy Chancellor I haven't had a problem. The university who lives outside of Travis County, who lives, resides, and is citizen in a county other than Travis County, has problems with the lower echelon of the University system's management. I tell them that, so I see no reason for me not to tell you that. I've met trouble all my life, so I live with trouble. Trouble is something that you go do something about. A problem is something you solve, not turn your back on.

W: You've had all these years of experience in dealings with Boards of Regents, with high system officials, with low management

people in the system. What's going to happen when we get a President who does not have the experience or ability?

T: I do not speculate on that. Of course, I was not chosen by the University of Texas at El Paso. I was chosen by a committee of Regents and of system personnel, heads of other component Medical Schools and universities. I read just this week in one of the newspapers that I was not chosen by the people out here; if I had been chosen by them I wouldn't have been out here. The funny thing is, I like all of them who didn't choose me. Those that don't want me, I like them. I will be around a while longer to try to make this a better university. We've got a rather hurried process. By the time you get through with getting somebody approved by a bunch of committees, many times you have the seventh or eighth best person on the list. Committees compromise to relegate things to a mediocre position. I put a lot of faith on my committees, you've seen me appoint committee after committee. If they bring me good recommendations, I accept them. If they hurt the University, I reject them. That's my job. When somebody accepts a President who does not function like that, then this thing begins to go to a level of mediocrity because of compromises. You can't compromise right and wrong. I've been told that one of my biggest faults is that I don't understand the gray zone. Well, I'm much more comfortable in the black and white zones. It's either right or wrong. This gray zone is something I don't understand. When I get out there, I find that I have to sacrifice a lot of the things I thought were right and take a lot of the things I know were wrong. Doing this you live in the gray zone. Higher education can no longer exist in the gray zone. We've got to get a positive attitude. I

realize that I'm talking to you in a very candid way, but this is the way it is.

W: Those leaders that appear to be judged strong are the ones that make decisions that are sometimes unpopular.

T: Oh, yes! Any decision you make is unpopular someplace. If you don't ever make any decisions, you're not unpopular.

W: But you're also not effective.

T: That's right. The university falls apart.

W: One final area. The only academic deficiency yet to be filled is in the College of Business. Do you look for a Dean to be selected in that?

T: At 11 o'clock this morning, I'm interviewing one. The committee of faculty and students that I appointed have brought me five names. I'm in the process now of interviewing them to try to determine which one of them is best. I hope by January 15 at the latest to announce the new Dean of the College of Business.

W: Are there any other major positions open now, aside from that one?

T: Dean of Students is open. I'll get around to appointing a committee to do something about that.

W: We have Dean Avila as acting Dean.

T: Yes, and I brought Dr. Judy Solis in as Assistant Dean, and she's doing a fantastic job. Dr. Solis has had great background experience in counseling; she has a feel for the underprivileged, for students who are in trouble. She's a quiet, calm, nice person, and she complements Dean Avila very well. We're solving the student issues over there. They get answers; they don't get bounced around.

W: One thing that was publicized greatly two years ago, and which I still see is in force, is the open door policy. Students are up here all the time; newspaper reporters, faculty people, administrators from other parts of campus. Have you been satisfied with how that works?

T: Very well. The good thing about that is that I'm not getting as much business now. That means the problems are being solved out there where they should be solved. I still get the problems that everybody's turned down. I'm the final appeal. That's the way it should be. Everybody ought to have a chance to have somebody review his case to determine whether he's been mistreated or not. If he's mistreated, I reopen hearings and get it straightened out; when he's wrong, I just tell him he's wrong. He never leaves here without some type of a positive answer. For the first few months, I was here from 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning till 6:00 or 7:00 at night. This office was filled with people who had problems that they wanted to get at.

W: Although the traffic has lessened, you still see the traffic. That indicates that there is some problem solving going on somewhere else.

T: There is a bunch of problem solving going on out there. The faculty is solving a bunch of problems. The Deans out there, the Department Chairpersons are solving problems. And that's where the academic problems should be solved. Most of the problems I have are academic problems. The management problems are simple; they're easy to get at.