

Interview with Dr. Walton D. “Pete” Hardesty

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**Location: Dr. Hardesty’s office, 216G, Psychology Building,
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX**

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Kristi Faulkner: My name is Kristi Faulkner, and I’m here with Dr. Hardesty, a psychology professor here at Southwest Texas State University. We are in his office at 216G in the Psychology Building, which is a drab corner office, but it has some very nice pictures of his children and his various awards and trophies—Dr. Hardesty, are there any opening statements you’d like to make?

Walton D. “Pete” Hardesty: Well, for one, it is a pleasure to be asked to participate in this program, and I am not only honored, but I am also impressed. Little did I know that such an exciting thing might happen that the activities of mine or words of mine might be left for posterity. Many of us try to remain as anonymous as possible, but we do enjoy, of course, being honored in situations like this.

Faulkner: Dr. Hardesty, would you like to tell us how you became a professor in psychology, and also how you came to San Marcos and Southwest?

Hardesty: Well, let us start with how I came to Southwest Texas. Back in 1965, I left Texas A&M, and I signed a contract to work with the job corps program out at Camp Gary here in San Marcos. I was there for almost two and a half years, whereupon a high school classmate of mine, whose name is Billy Hinton, was Dean of the Professional Schools at Southwest Texas, called me one evening on the phone while I was at Gary and asked if I would be interested in teaching a course in industrial psychology for the business department here at Southwest Texas at night. I told him that I was very excited about doing that, but I would have to get permission from the people with whom I worked at Gary before I could do so. Following a couple of days of negotiations, the people at Gary said yes, I could teach if I wanted to, providing it didn’t interfere with my duties at Gary, and I called Dr. Hinton back, and he said, “Come on up, and let’s talk about it. I may have a better deal than what I’ve offered you.” So, when I got there, Dean Hinton had a full schedule of classes for me to teach with a significant raise from my work at Gary, over my salary at Gary, and summers off. I couldn’t turn it down, so in September 1967, I joined Southwest Texas State University in the School of Education because at that time there was no

Department of Psychology; however, the School of Education had courses in psychology plus courses in educational psychology within their curriculum at that time. As to how I got to be a professor, that's a considerably long and involved story, so just let me say that when I joined Southwest Texas, I was Assistant Professor, and when I achieved tenure some three years after that, you normally go through a waiting game and a publishing game and a good teaching game and a community service game before you are promoted, and I went—through the channels of assistant professor to associate professor and then to full professor. A couple of years after I received the promotion of full professor I retired, and to this date I am teaching half-time as a retired professor.

Faulkner: What classes are you teaching right now?

Hardesty: I am teaching courses in human sexuality. The official name in the catalog, however, is the "Psychology of Human Problems." My actual count on my various rosters, which I've had since 1967, almost twenty-two thousand students have passed through my classes. I've taught in auditoriums. I've taught in large lecture rooms. I've had on several occasions six hundred students in four classes each semester.

Faulkner: Well, that's quite a few students and classes to have.

Hardesty: You're right. Don't misunderstand me. I've had a very helpful department. The psychology department has been extremely helpful on giving me adequate student assistance. They help me grade papers, record grades, and basically be sure that I meet my appointments and so forth. It has really been the most pleasant fifteen–twenty years of Mrs. Hardesty's and my life to be at Southwest Texas. We have been in an educational environment since our marriage in 1951.

Faulkner: What is your wife's name?

Hardesty: Billy. Billy Hardesty. It is spelled like a boy, B-I-L-L-Y. She is insulted if you spell it I-E. She has informed me that her parents had planned to have a boy, but it didn't work out that way, and they refused to change the name. Mrs. Hardesty was born in Enid, Oklahoma.

Faulkner: What do you think is the reason for the success of your classes and such a turnout of students?

Hardesty: There can be no question about the fact that human sexuality is an interesting subject. Now, please don't misunderstand me. When I first came here, I taught the traditional course in the curriculum of education and psychology. I've taught mostly psychology classes. But because my colleagues and myself began to note an extreme lack of just normal sexual information on the campus, after many conferences with the personnel at our infirmary, medical infirmary here, it was felt that perhaps sex information might be one of the ways to help prevent some of the more

traumatic experiences that a young woman and a young man can have as they matriculate at Southwest Texas without pulling any punches. When I first came here, the abortive procedures were not legal, not legal at all, and we were seeing young lives destroyed. Certainly young academic lives destroyed by unwanted pregnancies. We felt that if we teamed up with the infirmary and we taught this course that students at least would take the course and would be better informed about matters than those who did not. Under that set of circumstances, I gained popularity for the course in as much that we did not moralize, we didn't condemn. Our approach was to educate, and therefore do what we could to prevent unwanted pregnancies, unwanted venereal problems, and those kinds of things, and encourage the students to feel more positive toward this kind of medical ____ (unintelligible) and offerings of the infirmary, in this particular area. We think we've been highly successful, incidentally. My current colleague, Dr. Joe Wesp at the infirmary, keeps me posted, and he feels that as we go into the dormitories as well as in our classrooms and we discuss these matters pertaining to dating and to serial monogamy, living together of our students, ways to prevent conception, as well as contraceptive devices available to your age group, we feel we've made a contribution, certainly in eliminating the large number of unwanted pregnancies which we used to have. Please remember also that there are contraceptive methods on the market today that are for sale that were not on the market when we first came. So not only do we feel that we have made progress in educating young men and women in the responsibilities of being adults, and we certainly are not through as far as success in this area, we still have a smaller number of unwanted pregnancies, and in today's world they can be dealt with more satisfactorily than they could when I first came here.

Faulkner: Well, how do you think that you've seen the population of Southwest Texas change in terms of the Sexual Revolution, the way things have changed from the morals of yesterday—?

Hardesty: That would be a very easy question for any of us who came here during the early sixties and are still here. When I first came, young men wore shirts and ties and frequently coats to class. It was rare that you ever saw a young man, except engaged in some recreational activity, have on a pair of shorts in class. Young women dressed in dresses and were actually terribly concerned about their appearance. You rarely saw, if ever, a woman in shorts, except on athletic fields, intermurals, and so forth. When I first came here, there were terrible restrictions in the dormitories, like when a person had to be in, basically the females, primarily the females. The doors were locked at 10:00 pm, and if you spent too much time kissing your boyfriend good night, you could easily be "called down." A slip would be written with your behavior on it that would have as its title [your offense]. You were given, more or less, this demerit, this "called down" for an over-displaying of emotions in public. You had to have almost a notarized letter signed by both of your parents that you were allowed to go home for the weekend. I have it on reliable authority that in the dormitories, the females, about every third or fourth young lady would be called after she left campus, would be called at home to be sure that she made it home okay and to see if—you do also remember there was only one motel, one or two motels out on

the interstate freeway when I first came to San Marcos. so—there were no large buildings—
(telephone rings)

Further, I feel that the temptations that are available today, the places where students can be alone, the places where students can go and drink. You must remember that there has not always been a mixed drink ordinance in San Marcos. When I first came here, one couldn't buy beer comfortably. You could, at the same time, not buy a mixed drink, you had to go out towards Seguin to the county line to a package store to buy your drinks in a bottle [and] then bring them back into San Marcos. There were no bars, per say, there were just a very few dance places; there were no great number of motels. There weren't any houses like we have today, and so the student almost had to totally confine themselves to doing much what we did in the seat of an automobile. Five Mile Dam was a popular place to go and—became “*Lover's Lane*,” if not all over town could you find places to—where students could enter another home as a colleague or another student. I strongly suspect that the national atmosphere of the late sixties and early seventies had a profound effect upon our student body. We saw hippies here for the first time, long after I came. A more relaxed atmosphere began to come upon the campus because the state changed the age of maturity. For years in Texas, the age of twenty-one signaled the time in which you could buy beer. You could be considered an adult. However, because so many young people were being drafted into the Army, Navy, and Air Force, at earlier ages than twenty-one, the state of Texas elected to drop the legal age of voting and drinking to eighteen. Under that set of circumstances, many of our sophomores, juniors, and seniors were adults. As a result, we had to take that into consideration, change the rules in the dormitory. We could allow visitation to occur. Because, again, you could deal with adolescents.

To the invasion[?] of the presidents' offices of many universities throughout the country, during the student riots clearly pointed out that the lull *in loco parentis*, or the university replaces the parents when the students comes to school, was quickly bypassed. The university was forced into a position where they were educatable. The law, freedom of speech, freedom of rights, which could previously be denied to the individual, under the rules of local authority denied the university. Students, or the majority, were considered adults and would be handled by the police downtown, just as though, say, you had committed an offense in San Marcos. If you committed an offense on our campus, to that—this was kind of a sanctuary where you could expect more parental care than you could in downtown San Marcos. But even in today's world, as you know, the juvenile is given a break. They can commit all sorts of crimes, and they are turned over to juvenile authorities, and their names are not printed in the paper. Whereas, if you are an adult, you are dealt with altogether differently, with the rule of local authorities having been sidestepped, so it became, I guess, a matter of just national movement that young people who were considered adult legal entities, on their own, perfectly capable of entering into contracts, and under the set of circumstances you could not, it seems to me, in a public-supported institution such as Southwest Texas, meaning money coming from Austin rather than student

fees only, you could not set up restrictive rules which were basically—could basically violate a person’s constitutional rights. Now private institutions, where student fees pretty well determined the professors’ salaries, that might well be an altogether different situation. But, the Constitution as it was, and under the set of circumstances, less and less emphasis was placed on your wellbeing as far as your social life was concerned. As a student at Southwest Texas, you were kind of your own boss: you were of age, and you were of the majority. Therefore, the decision-making, we had to leave that to you. So, the Dean of Students’ office had to completely change our student regulations because now we were dealing with students who are adults. So as time went on, it was decided that perhaps you young people could be the masters of your own fate and make decisions, social decisions, as well as sexual decisions. At that early time we had not yet started teaching “Human Sexuality” on this campus. So, I guess a gradual process of growing up in a pretty violent, emotional time, universities didn’t stand still either. They made changes just as students all over the United States were demanding more freedoms and more changes and the way we approached their social behavior. I’ve got to believe, too, that what national attitudes might be, it takes a while, for them to naturally—changes in things begin on the West Coast or the East Coast, and it takes a while for them to get into the heartland of America. Rarely do we start student changes—are started usually elsewhere and eventually, just like music—music filters inward from the coasts to Texas, and then the songs that are popular out there—it takes a little bit of a while. Certainly it did for television. Incidentally, when I first came here, there wasn’t a television in every dorm. There were not all these beautiful lounges that we have in dorms today. For a man to appear in a female’s dormitory, restricted areas, was an absolute invitation of dismissal from this university, and every female resident in that dorm would scream her head off. The usual verbage was, “MAN ON THE FLOOR!” and the doors would slam all over. I remember on one occasion being invited as a speaker to the dorms in the evening. Many times because there was not adequate place for a man to be, we would have our discussion out on the lawn outside the dorm. But that, of course, is not the case today.

Obviously, the university has changed tremendously since I first came here. The acquisition, under the Dr. Lee Smith regime, of the West Campus, formerly the Baptist Academy, has in my opinion been one of the major bold steps taken by the leadership at this university. It has allowed us to expand, and I firmly predict that, if growth patterns continue in the future as they, that I have observed in the past, that it will not be long until this is the major university in the State of Texas.

Faulkner: How do you feel about the school’s growth—not just our school as a whole, but our school as individuals, the students as individuals—?

Hardesty: Of course, in almost every facet of human behavior, this is a very contemporary university as far as curriculum is concerned, and I am terribly disappointed that we have elected not to be more aggressive in acquiring satellite institutions. When I first came here, we could’ve

easily opened a Southwest Texas at Victoria; we could've easily opened a Southwest Texas at San Antonio. We could've easily opened a Southwest Texas at Uvalde. And we could have virtually become a system being several universities in a collection, like the University of Texas and A&M. I feel that this university probably answers the challenge of producing teachers as well as any other university in the state. I wish we would require a master's degree all over the state before any person was allowed to enter the classroom as the teacher. I am disappointed that this university hasn't made bigger strides toward achieving the terminal degree. A great number of master's degrees have been instituted since I've been here, but I feel that there is great need for advanced degrees to be offered, particularly to those people who plan to be in the care of others. I would like to refer to those more knowledgeable in the area of accounting, as an example. If a person is trained anywhere at the bachelor's level in accounting, they may of course take the exam, the bar-type exam, to become a certified public accountant with a bachelor's degree. I'm most reluctant to recommend that young people enter the classrooms as teachers and not be kept on for an additional thirty-six to maybe even forty-eight hours beyond the bachelor's. The State of Texas regulates that, and they tell Southwest Texas, along with the other educational institutions, the number of hours required for them to certify a teacher. We recommend certification to Austin, and Austin certifies the teacher.

I have so few disappointments here at Southwest Texas. This has been probably, as I have said earlier, the happiest work experience of Mrs. Hardesty's and my lives. I am convinced, the young people here, as I have watched them come and go, the memories that I have of Southwest Texas seem to be more centered around the exciting young people that we have come to us as freshmen. Most of them come from middleclass homes, most of them middleclass, socially and economically speaking. They seem to have a pretty tough time at first, but I seem to be able, like they do, I think to forget the freshman year, sometimes even the sophomore year, and concentrate more upon them as juniors and seniors. I frankly am delighted to see the changes in their behavior, in most cases, from the point of view at Southwest Texas has done for them toward making them more adult individuals. Behavior-oriented, I suppose that our young people can go out and compete in any activity once they are through here. The job world seeks our graduates, and as an example, I know of an accounting major who won a job that is working, even at the toughest times. I think we somehow or another attract a group of students that want to achieve. They are a bit slow taking off as freshmen. Many of them come to us unable to study and can quickly blame the high schools for that inability. Somehow or another, they seem to learn by the time they get to graduate how to deal with our—

I have a great many reservations that I'd like to see happen—but they come from experience and from past knowledge of what is the best thing to do. That is, if you intend to knock success. My files contain hundreds and hundreds of letters, cards, and notes of appreciation, as I am sure many professors on this campus have files even thicker than I do. If the professors at Southwest Texas stand for anything, they stand for cooperation with the student, and they seem to be more

on the side of the student, meaning recognition of the student's problems, than any other institutional job I've ever worked at. I've worked at three major institutions in Texas. I'm convinced that most of the professors here have time for students. We have a very rigid office hour program that must be maintained in most cases. Students are perfectly comfortable, and they are not a bit bashful about asking for special time from the teacher. I'm delighted to know that I join many of my colleagues in giving as much time to the students as the student needs and frequently to the disadvantage of our own home lives, but my goodness, there is an excitement. In my opinion, there is an excitement about the young people on this campus. If you care anything about young people and their future, you will work like the devil to be a good teacher, and to, at the same time, keep it as current as you possibly can as to not penalize the graduate.

Faulkner: Dr. Hardesty, you've been talking about changes and the changes that you've seen come from the early sixties to now. Why don't you elaborate now on the "party school" image of Southwest Texas, and how you saw it come, and how you see it go?

Hardesty: Well, as we said earlier on this recording, when I first came here, there was not much of a place to party. Parties were pretty well picnic lunches down at the ponds, where the administration building is now, and they limited themselves pretty well to such activities as "Eat and Street Beat," of which the food service had contract to provide food for the students. They would portion off a part of the street, and they would dance in the streets. But as far as the kind of party that would appear here: drinking and highballs, alcohol. They were just nonexistent when I first got here. Now, that does not mean to say that students would not go home at Christmas and party. My goodness, I came from an institution where there was far more a party school, but it did not have a reputation as such. I feel that in most cases, Southwest Texas places less emphasis on after-hours studying because there are so many places to go for entertainment. May I use A&M as an example, where I was on the staff for many years? There was just no place at A&M where you could party. The students had what they called "corps trips." The corps cadets would leave and go to Dallas and march down Main Street, and they would leave and go to Austin as a group. I can guarantee you that per student there was an awful amount of partying going on there, but when "party" is mentioned at Southwest Texas, this means, of course in today's world, getting together for beer and for highballs, and frequently it means a great number of people will be there. All-campus parties are just exactly what they mean. Southwest Texas may have a reputation for a party school, but I strongly suspect that it is no more of a party school than is the University of Houston. However, it is so difficult to find the party, as in the example of Austin. The University of Texas is surrounded by Austin, the University of Houston is surrounded by Houston. As a matter of fact, you have a heck of a time arranging a party at those schools because you could never find anybody to come to your party. But Southwest Texas is surrounded, much like Denton, or North Texas State, by a small community, and so when there is a gathering of students, it is easier to find that group because they are, of course, enjoying music and making a lot of noise. And so it is not uncommon for that kind of activity to

break the tranquility of the quietness of a small town. So, I frankly do not feel that “Southwest Texas, party school” truly describes Southwest Texas. As a matter of fact, much like A&M, a great number of our students leave the university on the weekends. They go home. If it is was a real party school, as I see it, there would be a far greater number at the football games than there are, or else, for all I know, they are all out partying. I am not at all convinced that Southwest Texas is all that different. I am sometimes irked a little bit at the comments I hear. I doubt very seriously that students come to Southwest Texas because it is a “party school.” You may rest assured if that is the reason they came, sooner or later, usually sooner, academic activities begin to sway them from spending all of that time in recreation.

Faulkner: Okay, Dr. Hardesty, this is the year of our sesquicentennial, and also, right now we are celebrating homecoming, and we’re talking about different types of transitions—you’ve just reviewed us over a few transitions that you’ve seen happen at Southwest Texas. But what do you consider the most significant transition and where do you see it going?

Hardesty: It seems to me that most probably the greatest transition at Southwest Texas has been that of an attitudinal one. When I first came here, the total purpose of this university was to produce a teacher at the end of four years who would go out and conduct themselves in such a way as to represent the university positively, not only in the way as to represent the university positively, not only in the way they taught their material, but also the material that they taught. The transition came between that attitude and the one that prevails today. The School of Education is not the number one producer of graduate on our campus anymore. It seems to me the School of Business has taken over, and even Liberal Arts has taken over as far as numbers of graduates are concerned; so, the primary purpose of Southwest Texas, originally both as a normal school before I came and a university after I came, was to produce teachers. Almost everything you took at Southwest Texas was designed to produce teachers—qualified you for a teacher’s certificate. However, in today’s world, at Southwest Texas anyway, a great number of people graduate who obviously have interests other than teaching, so I’ve got to believe that our logo as “A Proud University” certainly is true. We are still a proud university, very proud, and I’ve got to believe that if there has been much change, it has, number one, been gradual. But certainly it is evident on our campus today.

It has been a pleasure to have been interviewed by such a charming young student as yourself. I sincerely hope that this makes a contribution to your coursework, and you have my permission to do anything with it after the course. I read the copy. Bye-bye.

End of interview