On Friday, May 18, 2007, I contacted a local musician named Christine Schultz, and we spoke briefly about the field school and the oral history project. Christine agreed to be interviewed on Sunday, May 20, 2007 at 7 pm. On the day of the interview, Nelson Griffin and I left Oxford, Mississippi for the small town of Taylor, located just seven miles from the Oxford city limits. Nelson and I agreed previously that I would serve as the interviewer, and he would work the audio. We arrived several minutes early, which allowed us some time to drive around the small town of less than 300 people. Of particular interest was the new housing development intended to attract more people to the unique town of Taylor.

As usual for Taylor on a weekend evening, the town was busy, and people congregated in front of Taylor Grocery. Two men directed traffic and pointed to available parking spaces. Christine and her husband Mark DeLoach own a white wood-framed house which they converted into an art gallery aptly named, Taylor Arts. Here, Christine displays her paintings and photography and Mark places some of his woodwork. As we entered Taylor Arts, I quickly noted that the rooms contained mostly framed art with few chairs and tables. Thus, a predictably hollow sound resonated as we spoke inside the structure.

Christine introduced herself. She wore black cowboy boots and a bright smile. A middle-aged woman, she allows her dark hair to gray naturally. Christine Schultz carries herself with a confidence and attitude that says, “Here I am.”

Christine offered to show Nelson and me the “Big Truck Theater” that she and her husband operate behind Taylor Arts. We walked outside and around to the theater. Made from hand-sewn lumber and used tin, the structure had an earthy feel. We walked across the gravel floor of the theater to where the big truck stays parked. The large bed of the rusty old Ford served as a stage for musicians and could be wheeled in and out of the theater through a side door. The theater came complete with professional lighting and sound systems. Christine later explained that her husband first saw the broken-down truck and thought it could be repaired and used as a mobile stage – driving from gig to gig. Christine bought Mark the truck for his birthday, but it was beyond repair. So, it sat in their yard. Mark eventually began constructing a stage around the old truck. The big truck could not travel to a jam session, so the jam sessions would have to come to the Big Truck Theater.

Making our way back to the Taylor Arts building, we began to prepare for the interview. Nelson began unpacking the audio equipment, and I tossed some general
questions to Christine. We chose to record the interview on the front porch. This presented several audio concerns, because a number of different sounds could be heard outside. Because Christine and Mark continue to see the front porch as a sacred place where neighbors and community members meet it seemed to be a natural choice. The ambient noises of singing birds, and passing vehicles, and footsteps of visitors, and voices from across the street added to the mood. For such a tiny town, the community bustled on this Sunday evening. During the interview, a small number of customers approached. Christine would tell them to go on in, look around, and let her know if they needed anything. These interruptions present themselves in the audio tape of the interview. A few times, passers-by could be heard. At one time a green suburban vehicle drove down the street and stopped at the stop sign. The vehicle loudly played a rap song and the passengers shouted to us on the porch. Christine rolled her eyes, smiled and commented that you never know what you’ll see going down the streets of Taylor. She gave examples of people driving their riding lawn-mowers to Taylor Grocery for lunch, others driving tractors or riding horses. Several times motorcycles passed by – a dirt bike first, and two loud Harley Davidson’s later on. When the sounds got louder, Christine would smile and say, “There’s some of that Taylor music right there!” It’s clear to me that Christine Schultz is connected to her community and enjoys the variety of people and sounds found in the town of 288 people.

We concluded the interview after nearly an hour. I asked Christine to sign the consent form. She took it inside the building to read it, because it was getting dark outside by this time. She returned and voiced some reservations about the form and asked to make an amendment. I agreed, wanting her to be comfortable. She noted that the narrator must be contacted before the interview was for publication or presentation. Satisfied with the consent form, she signed it and asked for a copy of the audio tape. I agreed to bring her a copy. Nelson and I visited with Christine and Mark for about thirty minutes on the porch before returning to Oxford around 9:00 pm.