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Corps of Cadets. He was a Ross Volunteer
and was on Corps staff as a junior, then
was selected Corps commander for his
senior year. “Van is one of the Corps’
biggest believers,” Carole Taylor says, “and
he credits the Corps with much of what
he was able to do with his career, due to
the leadership and teamwork skills that
he learned.”

Van was born in McKinney but his
family moved to Temple when he was
still a boy for his father’s job with the
Veterans Administration. It was in Temple
that he first met Carole; they dated as
teenagers and were a couple throughout
their college years. She points out that
becoming Corps commander was quite a
turnaround for a young man who at times
early on wasn’t sure he would make it
through his freshman year as a cadet.

“That first year, being miserable as a
fish, I think I was pretty typical as far a
freshman in the Corps goes,” Van says
today. “You’d have good days and bad
days, but as you worked through it and
made progress and accomplished some
things, you started to see the value in it
and that just grew with each succeeding
year. As time went on, through those rich
experiences in the Corps that were about
leadership and teamwork, I realized
that whatever I was going to do with my
career as far as engineering, I wanted to
combine it with working with people.”

One of his formative experiences on
campus was when University President
Gen. Earl Rudder passed away during
Taylor’s junior year. “President Rudder
was a significant memory for me, and his
death sticks out as a significant event,”
he says. “I didn’t know him well, but he
just seemed bigger than life to all of us as
students at the time. I always wished I
had had a chance to know him as a person
rather than just as President Rudder.”

Carole Taylor points out that Van
later became the first recipient of the
memorial Rudder Award, presented
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senior. “Certainly receiving the award
was a highlight of my college life
because it carried his name,” Van Taylor

Connecting With
Carole and
Van Taylor ’71

Carole and Van Taylor ’71 believe that
students get the most benefit from their
time at A&M only if they take full advan-
tage of “the other education” offered by
involvement in any of the hundreds of
student organizations on campus. To that
end, they are supporting The Association
of Former Students’ building enhance-
ment project by funding a state-of-the-
art, multimedia-equipped meeting room
that will be used by many different
student organizations.

“It’s about trying to ensure that each
and every student has the best chance
to get the full experience of A&M,”
Van Taylor says. “I certainly think we
have great academic programs to offer
students here today, but if that’s all they
take advantage of, then they’ve left on the
table a lot of education that they could
have gotten.”

Taylor himself was active in many
organizations as a student, from MSC
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because it carried his name,” Van Taylor
says. “It was very special.”

The qualities that the Rudder Award recognized in Taylor would prove beneficial to his 34-year career with telecommunications leader AT&T, which was also known as Southwestern Bell at times during his career. “I started as an engineer, migrated over to operations, and from there I stayed in the network operations end of the business for most of the remainder of my career, with the exception of stints in marketing and research. But really I think it was all part of AT&T’s plan for grooming and growing me as a manager and executive in the business.”

Throughout his career successes and the family’s many moves around the country, the Taylors have remained dedicated to their belief in giving back. “Both of our families set very good examples that encouraged us to be involved,” Carole says. “You have to always remember that the next generation is counting on you. And it doesn’t go on unless you pay it forward.”

Van Taylor has served his alma mater in many ways. He is a past Chair of The Association of Former Students, currently serves on the Dwight Look College of Engineering Advisory Council, and was a member of the the University’s Vision 2020 Task Force. He is also a past president of the Arlington A&M Club and a former Muster chairman for the St. Louis A&M Club.

Van adds, “One of the most important things that hangs in my office at home is my Century Club plaque that I got in 1971. It’s not the plaque itself but the fact that I haven’t missed a year in all those years. I think The Association makes it easy for former students to give back in a way that benefits the entire University and keeps us connected to A&M.

“All Aggies can take a lot of pride in what a great University we have today, and what it offers all students, undergrads and graduate students, in terms not just of academics but a very rich student life experience. And as a University we still very much value and cherish our traditions that are respected by a broad and diverse student population today. Silver Taps and Muster on campus ... there is just nothing that can describe what it means, from your very first Silver Taps as a fish to the last one your senior year, it’s just indelibly etched in your mind forever. And now we have a student body that is diverse and increasingly more so, and I think it is so great that they truly value those traditions, whether it’s standing at football games or attending Silver Taps or Muster. These are valued traditions and our students are great protectors and preservers of them.”

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**At A Glance: Carole & Van Taylor ’71**

**FAMILY**

Four daughters: **Suzannah Taylor ’97**, who also has a master’s from Columbia; **Sally Taylor Reyes**, a UT graduate who also has an M.B.A. from Texas State; **Kaycee Taylor ’05**, who also has a law degree from UT; **Melissa Taylor**, a Tulane graduate; and granddaughter **Annie Rebecca Reyes**, who will be Class of 2027.

**EDUCATION & CAREER**

Carole is a 1972 education graduate of the University of North Texas. Van received his Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from A&M in 1971 and subsequently earned an MBA in 1975 from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. After a 34-year career with Southwestern Bell /AT&T that took the Taylors throughout Texas as well as to Kansas, Missouri and New Jersey, he retired in December 2005 as president of network services for the Southwest Region of AT&T.

**KEY INFLUENCES**

“Dr. Clifford Simmang ’36, head of the mechanical engineering department, certainly showed an interest in students well beyond just being in the classroom. **J. Wayne Stark ’39** at the MSC was very much active in trying to help young men realize what their full potential could be in life. He didn’t pressure you but he encouraged you and made you realize the sky’s the limit here; you literally can do anything you want to do. **Dr. Haskell Monroe Jr.** was a very demanding freshman history professor who went on to be a very successful college administrator. You did not want to fall asleep in his class, because there would be chalk or erasers or something coming at you, after which you would be asked to get out of his class. **Frank Nicholas** was assistant to the commandant, a behind-the-scenes kind of guy. I saw him nearly every day and he always had a smile and was willing to take his personal time to give you that pep talk or mentoring session.”

**THE TAYLORS’ ADVICE FOR ENTERING FRESHMEN**

“1. Take the time to really learn about and understand the important traditions at A&M. It’s not just a bunch of hoopla, they all have very deep meanings. Value those traditions. Living on campus enables you to do that much more easily because it’s part of your everyday life. 2. Remember the primary reason you come here is to get an education, so don’t sacrifice your academics for something else, but get involved in other things to round out your overall education. Find that right balance that allows you to be academically successful and to be involved in other activities. 3. Get outside your comfort zones, whatever they may be. Have some friends like you, but befriend someone who is totally different from you in background and everything else.”

**THE TAYLORS’ ADVICE FOR GRADUATING SENIORS**

“1. Be open; don’t narrow your thinking so much that you think I only can do this and I’m only going to live here in this one location. Be open to what opportunities there are. 2. Don’t be afraid to work hard and prove yourself. You are not going to start out at the top. You are going to be a fish again in a great big sea. 3. Understand that education is lifelong. You’ve got a college degree, but that is really just a license to start learning. If you stop learning, you might as well stay home.”