Dr. Taylor was born in Horton, Kansas in 1943. He earned his bachelor's degree at Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas and his master's and Ph.D. from Kansas University in Lawrence.

Dr. Taylor was a respected scholar who cared deeply about human rights. As a member of the MSU faculty from 1969 until 1985, he was a history professor specializing in American Economic and East Asian history. Dr. Taylor became interested in American Indian history while at MSU, and studied the impact of capitalism on their ethnic group. Dr. Taylor was a former director of the Social Studies program, and coordinator for undergraduate advising for the history department. He was a staunch supporter of Amnesty International, and a member of the Organization of American Historians and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Dr. Taylor died of kidney failure at the University of Minnesota Hospital on December 12, 1985, at the age of 42. Following Professor Taylor’s death, relatives, colleagues and friends established a memorial scholarship fund in his honor. In 2000, a bequest from David’s father, Gene Taylor, endowed the fund. Scholarships for history students will now be funded in perpetuity, in honor of someone who exemplified the highest ideals of historical scholarship and college teaching.