

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSIONER

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Michael Moore**
Interview Date: 05/15/2019
Interviewer: Karl Baumgartner
Transcriber: Sylvia Vacek
Location: Richmond, Texas

36 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2014, by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. All Rights Reserved. For information contact: Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Attn: Chairman-Oral History Committee, 301 Jackson St., Richmond, TX, 77469.

Terms and Conditions

This file may not be modified or changed in any way without contacting the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

This file may not be redistributed for profit.

Please do not 'hot link' to this file.

Please do not repost this file.



Transcript

BAUMGARTNER: Today is May 15th, 2019 and my name is Karl Baumgartner and I am interviewing Mr. Michael Moore in Richmond, Texas. This interview is being conducted on behalf on the Fort Bend County Historical Commission and is part of the FBCHC Oral History Project. By way of introduction Mr. Moore came to Richmond as a young man in 1984 and was hired to lead the Fort Bend County Museum. He served as Executive Director of the Fort Bend County Museum Association for over twenty years and was responsible for overseeing much of the development and growth of the museum in its earlier days.

Michael what is your full legal name?

MOORE: Michael Rugeley Moore.

BAUMGARTNER: What is your date of birth and where were you born?

MOORE: December 13, 1957, and I was born and raised in Seguin, Texas.

BAUMGARTNER: How long had your family been in Texas? Did you have roots here?

MOORE: I did. My mother's family arrived in the early years of Texas. One branch down by Refugio in 1834 and in Matagorda County in about 1840 and the other branch came to Bastrop in 1835.

My father's family is from Georgia; they were post-civil war immigrants. Theirs was an interesting story. They took the train from Georgia to Texas and a con man swindled them out of all their money in the Temple area, so that was where they stopped. They settled down in the area and began farming, and my father was born and raised there.

BAUMGARTNER: So later the family descendants moved on to Seguin.

MOORE: They did. My father is a physician, and after my parents were married in the 1950's his first permanent position as a doctor was as a general practitioner in Seguin. I was born there about two years after they moved there, and that is where I grew up.

It was a nicer place than I appreciated as a youngster. I had an interest in history from an early age; the town had a nice sense of community and the people were very kind to encourage my history interest. In fact, I was appointed to the county historical commission

as a high school sophomore, just fifteen or sixteen years old.

BAUMGARTNER: How did you get interested in history at such a young age?

MOORE: There were several root sources of the interest. My grandmother, my mother's mother, was a semiprofessional genealogist living in Austin. She edited the Austin Genealogy Society Quarterly for over twenty five years.

BAUMGARTNER: That was before genealogy became so sophisticated...

MOORE: It was so primitive. I have her files still. She would research the courthouse records and we would drive her to courthouses in various states looking for records and she meticulously went through old microfilm. She would stay at the State library for hours on end looking at old microfilm and old records, and compiling all these family histories.

BAUMGARTNER: She would be in high cotton now with all the technological development.

MOORE: It is so easy, just push a button on Ancestry.com and here is your family tree. I remember when I was a youngster I would write her a note and she would send it back proofed and corrected for me. She had a real strong influence on me in my interest in history.

And my father was an amateur historian. He loved books, and the love of collecting books came from him. When I was about ten or twelve years old he gave my older brother and me part of his book collection, and he wrote a wonderful note with it for a Christmas present. He talks about the value of learning and the role of book learning and how this access to knowledge is so precious and we should not take for granted the power of books. It just had a huge impact on me.

Around 1973 our parents let each of us four siblings select a trip where we would want to visit. My choice was to go see history sites in Virginia and Pennsylvania and places like that. Fredericksburg, Williamsburg, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, all of these places. It too had a major impact on me.

BAUMGARTNER: What was high school like in those days? Was it so different from today?

MOORE: Here is how I would say it: "I wouldn't know" because it was like I was checked out of high school. In my history interest I came to have access to things beyond my age. I

got involved in historical reenactments through the Historical Commission, and I was involved with clubs and groups and people of college age when I was in high school.

They set up a program in high school for teachers and high school students who wanted to experience teaching to determine if they wanted to become a teacher. It was designed for a high school senior to go to a third grade class like a teacher's aide to get some hands on experience. But I chose to go with one of my history teachers, and I was the student teacher of high school sophomores when I was a high school senior. I was frequently gone on the weekends to an historical event or reenactments and stuff like that. I played tennis and I went to some football games, maybe, but I was generally gone from there.

BAUMGARTNER: That is interesting; I thought your interest in history was probably something that evolved when you went to college but it is more like a lifelong experience.

MOORE: It was the early influences from family, cultivated by a wonderful couple on the county historical commission who influenced me to volunteer, and a high school history teacher who was just remarkable. She was a wonderful influence and later served as the mayor of Seguin.

Her name was Betty Jean Jones. She taught American and Texas History and Advanced Texas History. She demonstrated how motivational our teachers could be in getting people interested and excited to learn about history.

It was a different day back then. With the Advanced Texas History class, eight or ten students would pile into our cars and drive to places, go to the old cemetery, go to the old historic courthouse, drive around Seguin and look for history. We didn't just have to stay in the classroom -- we got to get out and go experience it; go find it, go uncover it.

BAUMGARTNER: How big was Seguin in those days?



Betty Jean Jones
(Wikipedia list of Mayors of Seguin,
Texas)

MOORE: It may have been twelve or fourteen thousand people. There were some three hun

dred students in my high school class. After graduation, I went to University of Texas-Austin as a History undergraduate. I was mentored; I guess you would say, by one of my professors, Louis Tuffly Ellis. He taught on campus a little bit while primarily his job was as CEO of the Texas State Historical Association. He helped me in various ways while I had a permanent temporary job there as their mail clerk.

BAUMGARTNER: Was he aware of your interest and your involvement with history in high school?

MOORE: He was and he cultivated it. My grandmother had proofread his dissertation when he was in graduate school so he knew the family a little.

In a previous generation when my father went to school there, history in general and Texas History in particular was a really big deal at UT. By the time I arrived it was no big deal. They had been hiring all their professors from Berkeley University of California and Yale. They thought that to be more academically rigorous you've got to get people from far away to bring new ideas. Those profs didn't just bring new ideas; they changed the culture of the place. My guy, Dr. Ellis, was kind of old school who said we do not want to be like Berkeley, we want to be like Texas. That appealed to me as well.

BAUMGARTNER: Has it stayed that way, or has the pendulum swung a little bit?

MOORE: I don't think it has. I think once it goes it goes for good. The first profs who got their job there in the sixties and seventies with their PhD's immediately volunteered to be on the search committees, and they would start searching for other professors who thought like they did and they just turned the tide of the place in not too many years. Some of the professors were really nice and very interesting to me, some weren't, and it is a mixed bag. I had a fairly good time there.

BAUMGARTNER: When did you graduate?

MOORE: 1984.

FOLLOWING GRADUATION

BAUMGARTNER: Did you do postgraduate work?

MOORE: Here were my plans. This will tie in with how I got involved with historical reenactments and living history events and that sort of thing, even at a younger age.

BAUMGARTNER: Excuse me, please comment on and explain reenactments.

MOORE: Well, when people dress up in historical clothing and perform and portray historical events. For example you've been out at the George Ranch for weekend events like Texian Market Days where volunteers portray major historical events and activities that took place in early Texas history, and perform for visitors.

BAUMGARTNER: That was part of your college experience?

MOORE: I did that even before college. I became interested in that in high school. That became my history outlet and led to connecting me to people older than I was, going to places on my own, traveling at age fifteen or seventeen.



Michael Moore at Cedar Hill
(Vicksburg) Reenactment, 1981

It really kind of gave me a vocational skill. To round back to college, I learned a lot of academic history there but history programs do not teach you much of a vocational skill. They equip you with knowledge but no real vocational ability to accomplish anything. The idea is that you will pick up the skills; someone is going to train you in the future.

Anyway, in 1984 when I graduated, the Texas Sesquicentennial of 1985 and 1986 was on the horizon. I had done some volunteer work and done up some reenactment programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at Washington on the Brazos State Park and San Jacinto. I was trying to improve on what I considered the quality of the reenactments that were going on, and I did a term with the Historical State Association. I wasn't in the driver's seat; I was just trying to become involved.

I had intended to go to graduate school out of state like all good academic people are supposed to do. The mindset is, gosh knows Texas people cannot teach you anything, you have to go to Massachusetts or California where there are smart people that can teach you something. But I decided I could not go to graduate school because I would be out of

state and I wanted to be here for the Sesquicentennial celebration, the 150th anniversary of Texas.

I decided to take a job for a couple of years and so I started looking for jobs. I got kind of a part time job to get me by at the LBJ Library, collating stuff on LBJ history while I was looking for something permanent.

THE MUSEUM BECKONS

MOORE: Toward the end of the summer of 1984 the Fort Bend County Museum advertised for a director. I thought ok and so I applied for that. It would be kind of a temporary place to park myself while I was working on this Texas Sesquicentennial and so I came to Richmond for an interview.

Editor's Note: The Fort Bend County Historical Association (which included the museum) is now known as the Fort Bend History Association.

[Click this link to view a timeline of the organization's development.](#)

It was exciting. The people involved at the museum were Virginia Ott, who had been a previous director of the museum and became a volunteer on the search committee, and Bettye Anhaizer from Sugar Land who I think was the president of the museum that year. And so Virginia and Bettye were kind of the search committee.

BAUMGARTNER: Bettye is still a leader of the Commission.

MOORE: She is. So coming out of college with no vocational skill, you come to an interview hoping to have some miraculous ability to bluff your way into a job where you can actually do something. What I could do then was that I could type.

And I got the job. My thinking was, I will be here for two years and then I am gone, I am out of here. Like many things, two years did not happen, two became four, four became six and six became twenty.

BAUMGARTNER: That must have been exciting to get the director's job at a pretty new museum; to get the position and the opportunity to do something. Richmond is a historical place.

MOORE: A very historical place.

BAUMGARTNER: It seems like that would be fun.

MOORE: It was. You know it was fun and I was very thrilled

BAUMGARTNER: Did they have an idea what your job would be, any kind of expectations?

MOORE: In small museums at the time, and maybe still I guess, there is this fairly large expectation expressed in a fairly small conversation followed by a small level of help. The museum had a staff of one part time person and the director. A staff of one and one half or maybe two people ultimately.

BAUMGARTNER: So it was you plus another body. What was the museum like then? How long had it been there and was there a big building yet and so forth. What was the status of the museum when you arrived?

MOORE: The Fort Bend County Museum was founded in the late 1960's and opened in 1972 as part of the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary, the Sesquicentennial of the settlement of Fort Bend County which occurred in 1822. It had a wonderful collection of things that people had contributed; really important and interesting items of Texas that people had donated that came from the early years.

BAUMGARTNER: These are things that in many cases came from the families of the Old Three Hundred, the original three hundred settlers who received Texas land grants in Stephen F. Austin's first colony?

MOORE: It was. The Dyer Family, and the Moore Family collections; some wonderful stuff. The volunteers who put the museum together did a really excellent job. The Moore Family was the catalyst of this. They allowed the museum to be built on the grounds of the Moore Home even as Judge Moore, the second generation of the Moore Family to live in the house, was still alive. He lived there until he died and then the house came to the museum as well. The Moore House was already designated a Historical House when I arrived.

BAUMGARTNER: The Moore Home and the 1972 Exhibit Building were on the grounds of the Moore Home.

MOORE: Yes, the Exhibit Building is the one that is still there, the brick building that was built in 1971.

BAUMGARTNER: So it had artifacts in it when you arrived that were donated, and there were exhibits.

MOORE: A series of wooden cases, exhibit cases and glass front cases. The volunteers who created the place did a really good job. The Texas Historical Commission put on a museum seminar there. They used to come visit with their class each year to observe how a volunteer museum could be created. It didn't get as well done as in other places so they stopped coming and they began to say, don't do it like that place, and it got off the cutting edge a little bit prior to my arrival.

There were a couple paid directors before I arrived and key volunteers.

BAUMGARTNER: Who were some previous directors?

MOORE: Virginia Ott I mentioned; Mark Price who was maybe the first director.

BAUMGARTNER: These are names I don't immediately recognize; who were other Richmond civic leaders that were on the ground floor? The Moores, of course.

MOORE: Colonel James Prowell was the driver of part of the Decker Park Project. It was a nearby property to which historical buildings were relocated. He worked for Mr. Joe Wessendorff on the real estate side. He had a real strong interest in history and during the late 70's the museum was given several historic buildings. The McNabb House, The Depot, a Log Barn, were ultimately moved to Decker Park, and there were ideas of developing Decker Park into kind of like a historical village. It adjoined a rough neighborhood, not so much now but back then.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, notorious Mud Alley along the railroad tracks.

MOORE: Prowell was a retired colonel and he was not as involved when I arrived but he had done a lot of work on those buildings. Adele Hauger from Rosenberg was very interested in the history and her daughter Priscilla "Prissy" Hauger worked at the museum in museum exhibits when I was there.

BAUMGARTNER: How about those who followed, Virginia Scarborough, the Wendts, those of that era?

MOORE: They are a little later. For the people of my era, Bettye Anhaiser was the first

Board President that I served under and the second one was Bob Vogelsang in 1985 - 1986; Billy Wendt in 1987-1988, I believe; and from each of these I learned a great deal. It was sometimes not easy learning. I was particularly young when I got the job.

BAUMGARTNER: Wise beyond your years no doubt.

MOORE: Well I was brash beyond my years but a combination of confidence and uncertainty. A combination of thinking that I had to act like I knew what I was doing even when I didn't.

BAUMGARTNER: When you started, where do you begin, what were you going to do? You are now the leader....

MOORE: I have a short anecdote that relates. Among the other buildings that the museum owned at that time was the old Fort Bend County Jail which is now the Richmond Police Station. One responsibility was trying to keep pigeons out of it that local residents in Mud Alley would shoot out of the windows.

BAUMGARTNER: With what, a 22?

MOORE: With whatever fire power they had [chuckling], from rocks up to a fully automated weapon. I wasn't sure what my job expectation was. I remember one summer, this would be the summertime of '85 and I was in a light colored suit. Back in those days we dressed up to go to work.

BAUMGARTNER: That was like your work attire?

MOORE: Yeah, and I climbed up the cupola of the old jail trying to keep the pigeons out and I remember thinking why am I wearing a light colored suit in the hundred degree weather in the cupola of the Old Jail trying to block up the windows to keep the pigeons out? I wasn't sure if this is a thinker job or is this a doer job and it needed a lot more doing than thinking.

When you are a staff of one and one half, you do everything, and if it is broken you fix it, and you do whatever you have to do. You depend so much on volunteers, and I will say that the volunteer group then was extraordinary, just a wonderful group of people. They were really the drivers in the museum, organizing events and doing school tours and demonstrations, and they were very well organized.

BAUMGARTNER: Who were some of them?

MOORE: Donna Kay Tucker was President of the Docents in 1984, with Charlotte Hartledge her running buddy. In my early first summer working here, probably the first time I met them, these two women, both married to ranchers, had a wheelbarrow full of mortar mixed up and they were laying a brick step between the museum and the walk, and I thought what kind of woman is this who is out here laying steps? Whatever it took they would just do it. Just extraordinary.

BAUMGARTNER: That is interesting about Donna Kay; recently she was appointed to the Fort Bend Subsidence District board of directors. Thirty five years later she is still in the middle of activities.

MOORE: I still see her regularly, and I really like her. I went with her one time to pick up some supplies for exhibits; her family had the Blaze Dry Good Store in downtown Rosenberg.

BAUMGARTNER: Really. On Third Street, I didn't know of that background.

MOORE: I remember she was cleaning out something and I went over there to see what might be of possible use for the museum, flour sack clothing, flour sack towels, depression era kind of things. My impression is that she is from a long time Rosenberg farm family. In my early years Donna Kay and I were not always perfectly in agreement on things. If history is about changing continuity obviously Richmond is about continuity, and the museum volunteers and leadership were a lot about continuity and they wanted it to be like it was. I was young and brash and I wanted it to be different and I wanted to change things, and that is the formula for conflict. We had some conflict in 1985 and 1986 and I am very proud to say that we each kind of got beat up a little bit but we came to realize what we shared in common with our connection to the museum was bigger and more important than the disagreements. The same occurred when Billie Wendt was selected as Docent President in 1986 and we worked through some issues and became close. Donna Kay likewise, when she was the Docent President, we had some conflict but we overcame that and became good friends.

BAUMGARTNER: Well, they were in a different generation than you. Looking back on it you know you were fortunate to locate in a city like Richmond with the makeup of the community, the old timers and the historical interest.

MOORE: It was and the people who were involved in the Fort Bend Museum were kind and generous and a giving kind of people and that made it a wonderful kind of people to be involved with.

EARLY DAYS AT THE MUSEUM

BAUMGARTNER: Where did you office when you started? What were the physical buildings that the museum operated out of?

MOORE: When I showed up for work in the summer of 1984 the offices were in the old brick Exhibit Building which is now the current museum building. Half was for exhibits and half of the current main exhibit was enclosed as a collection storage room for artifacts and also the offices. All in that 1000 square foot space.

The Moore Home was of course on the property and was opened for tours, and the Decker Park Project had been started but never got to the point that it could be used much. The museum experience at the time was to come to the museum and take a Moore Home tour.

BAUMGARTNER: The Moore Home tour was the main feature. Was it more for adults or for children who were going to the museum?

MOORE: It was kind of half of the total experience if that makes sense. Adults visited both but children would often tour the museum. It was a hands on program. There was a summer history program for kids and it was really popular as well as school groups with certain theme tours.

BAUMGARTNER: Who designed the exhibits originally before you got there?

MOORE: The museum had opened in 1972 with a community volunteer-based effort to ask people to donate artifacts, and then self-trained volunteers put them into exhibits.

BAUMGARTNER: Was that the docents volunteers or was it others connected to the museum?

MOORE: The docent organization became a driving force for the organization but this was kind of before the docents existed. I was learning this background on the job, second hand, from newspaper articles. As a historian when I started with the museum I went back into their own publicity files to try to learn the history of the institution and the different people

and all. Regarding the exhibits from the 1970's, Carmen Willey who was very artistic did some drawings of historical buildings in Richmond, and Adele Hauger and several others were involved with the cataloging of artifacts. When I got there Mrs. Lampkin and Dorothy Fisher were the cataloguers and they had their two desks and typewriters and they would type out the artifact cards.

It was just remarkable how committed people were to helping. They might lag today's professional standards but they really made a jump forward from the old museums. They had already made that jump to try and do things better and have a system for recording the information to go with an object and try to put together the exhibit for display. They did some remarkable things. It was just a very well done volunteer kind of operation.

BAUMGARTNER: What were the objectives or the goals of the museum?

MOORE: It had a collection and exhibit kind of focus that was the first century of Fort Bend County's history. First Century was what they called it. It was from the time of the 1822 First Settlement, when the ship named The Lively came up the Brazos River and arrived and an expedition built the fort at the bend. The museum covered Fort Bend from then up through the 1920's. A lot of their exhibits were themed in that bracket of 100 years, and especially since the museum was created at the 50 year earmark past that in 1972 which formed a convenient metric of dates. They focused on pioneer life thru the first part of the twentieth century.

BAUMGARTNER: Was 1822 a specified date that they went back to in particular, or is that just a historical era when settlers moved in?

MOORE: It is pretty much an established date. Stephen F. Austin, who had permission from the Spanish Mexican government to settle this part of Texas, was living then in New Orleans. He co-purchased The Lively and he contracted with a certain number of men to come as the first expedition, and they were supposed to arrive at the mouth of the Colorado River and take their tools and build a fort to be like a way station for settlers arriving later. Austin went to go meet them at the mouth of the Colorado River, but in fact they had landed at the mouth of the Brazos River. They missed each other in the confusion but eventually they came up to the bend of the river upstream, and there they built this first log cabin or fort stockade which it was originally called and stayed there for a little bit. That formed the beginning of the settlement of Fort Bend County.

BAUMGARTNER: The fort location is pinpointed?

MOORE: It is not pinpointed.

BAUMGARTNER: Estimated?

MOORE: Estimated. It may probably have eroded into the river but it is generally viewed in Richmond as where the Highway 90 Bridges crosses the Brazos River. I think there is a marker for it between the two bridges but the actual location may be a little south from there. There is some evidence in early field notes about how many yards from this bayou it was.

BAUMGARTNER: Was there ever a photo of it?

MOORE: No. It did not survive long at all. Even by the time of the Texas Revolution (1835-36) it was long gone.

THE DOCENTS

BAUMGARTNER: The docent organization has been an important component of the Fort Bend County Museum. When did the docents start?

MOORE: After the museum was first created but before I was hired. According to the docent handbook, several volunteer leaders who were precursors to the organization were Adele Hauger, Mildred Wallace and Carmen Willey in 1967. The organization was formally organized in 1975 at which time the first official meeting was held.

BAUMGARTNER: What did the docents do going from there, what did they do as far as the relationship with the museum and what did they contribute?

MOORE: They were tremendous contributors. They had a very strong organization where they would recruit people to join. They had officers who were very active as the volunteer auxiliary to the museum. In fact they were so successful that there were some early conflicts between me and them for my first weeks, months, and years in the job because they were so successful.

They had their own organization bank accounts. They were collecting money and they were driving so many things; I was like yeah but the museum itself needs the money. We had some struggles over what's the relationship between the museum as a business entity and

the volunteer auxiliary. There were questions related to membership, i.e. could museum members also be docent members and vice versa, which organization to join, who got the money. It was a case of trying to find a logical structure and how the pieces fit together. The problems were more because they were so successful, so dynamic in recruiting people.

They volunteered with school tours that did special events like the Moore Home Candlelight Christmas which was their very popular signature event. They also did a 100th Anniversary Party for the Moore Home in 1983, the year before I started. It was a real threshold of a different kind of event that kind of morphed into Texian Market Days which became our prominent event.

BAUMGARTNER: They must have had special enthusiasm in thinking about the museum's importance to Fort Bend County.

MOORE: Yes, and with the popularity of the group there were numerous different interests and motivations. The docents took a summer trip that provided extraordinary heritage travel opportunities to visit history museum kind of places on the east coast or elsewhere. That was a great learning opportunity in travel which was very appealing to many members. Among their different motivations, some were also interested in serving, some were interested in teaching, some were kind of interested in the social element and wanted it to be a high society group. They had different motivations but they all really connected through their interest in the museum and its functions.

BAUMGARTNER: Who were some of the leaders' way back then when everything was getting off the ground and moving along?

MOORE: Well let me see, I hate to cut off the list for fear of leaving people off. I mentioned Donna Kay and Billie Wendt. Others include Nancy Montoya who was a teacher and was president for one year, Rosemary Buddecke who was very active with the Moore Home Centennial Celebration, Mary Jane Kocurek and other docent presidents in those years Patsy Sabrusula, Evalyn Moore.

FAMILY

BAUMGARTNER: You came in at a time when a lot of activity was taking place. By the way, to fill in your family background, when were you married?

MOORE: 1991.

BAUMGARTNER: What is your wife's name?

MOORE: Sharon. My daughter is Catherine LaDell Moore and goes by the name of Katie, now married to Jacob Williams, so Katie Williams. She is a new veterinarian and has gone into the family business.

BAUMGARTNER: Is she having fun?

MOORE: She is doing very well. It is just remarkable to see how Texas A&M Veterinary School prepares kids. When they come out they are not kids they are fully capable and trained and it is remarkable. We have hired a number of young graduates from there and they are just so well prepared.

So yes, I was married March 9, 1991. The docents created and catered my wedding reception.

BAUMGARTNER: Really.

MOORE: Young and poor.

BAUMGARTNER: You weren't too young then.

MOORE: Thirty, I was moving along. I was married in the Moore Home which is kind of neat. The museum gave me the wedding. I was married there with about twenty members of my family in attendance, and reception was at the George House at the Ranch. Kathy Graeber (now Kubelka) baked a cake and the docents came and provided food and they served and they treated my family and friends to a wedding reception. It was very special; it was tea for my bride and they gave her a teapot. It was just so welcoming to Sharon for the community to host this event.

BAUMGARTNER: That was neat.

MOORE: Especially after I told you initially there was some early dissension. I am very appreciative of the occasion.

BAUMGARTNER: One other thing that I meant to ask about. How did the museum's purchase of the Moore Home take place? This was before you showed up but what was the history on that? When did it happen and by whom, was that Hilmar I guess?

MOORE: Hilmar Moore was probably the broker of the deal. He had been the president of the museum early in the history if I remember that correctly. Later when I interviewed him I think he talked about it as his favorite. He didn't seem to accept that his family house might go into someone else's hands, be torn down or fall into a rut.

BAUMGARTNER: Did he grow up in that house?

MOORE: His father moved into it when Hilmar would have been eighteen. His grandfather, Congressman John M. Moore was still living there and then his father, Judge John M. Moore, Jr., moved in. The Museum Association was founded In 1967 and members began looking for a place for a facility. They made the deal probably in late 1969 or 1970, I guess it was. Judge Moore, the second generation of the Moore family, would continue to live in the house until he died but the family allowed Fort Bend Museum to build the exhibit building. They deeded the whole thing with a life estate and the museum was able to be built and opened even though Judge Moore was still living in the house. In fact it was a great opportunity that allowed the director Mark Price to go over there and do a lot of taped interviews with Judge Moore. I think Hilmar is the one who came up with the idea to preserve the family home for the museum. Of course the impact of the Moore Family on the museum is huge.

One more anecdote. Hilmar used to tell a funny story about me. With my last name being Moore and his last name being Moore, I had several encounters with people who assumed that I was part of the family and I was supposed to be the son who couldn't get anything else so they set me up at the museum where I couldn't do much harm. Sometimes it was kind of funny and sometimes kind of sad. A woman came up and said that she knew me from this big farm on which my mother died. The funniest part is that I am really kin to Hilmar's first wife and to his son Jack, Jr. through the Sargent and Rugeley family. My middle name is Rugeley.

BAUMGARTNER: As was a family name of Hilmar's first wife.

MOORE: Rugeley Pierson was Hilmar Moore's wife's grandfather. Jack Moore's great grandmother and my great grandmother were half-sisters and their great grandfathers were brothers. Not real close relationship, but from Matagorda County and Wharton County where my kin hailed from, so there was some connection. So Hilmar would tell this story on how I am not kin to them through the Moore's but through his wife and he made me feel somewhat part of the family. It was just more than I expected.

BAUMGARTNER: Hilmar no doubt knew the genealogy forward and backwards.

MOORE: Returning to the time when I was first hired, I inherited all the administrative files even the job search file. Out of curiosity I checked that folder to see who else had applied for the job. One of the search team committee members had written on my application envelope, "Look at the full name." So of course out jumped Rugeley. Did they hire me just because I was somehow kin to the family? Is that how I got the job, by my *name*?

BAUMGARTNER: You never know it might have been what triggered the interest. If it would have been Michael Smith Moore they might not have noticed the app and your entire life would be different.

MUSEUM OPERATIONS

MOORE: Anyway, the Sesquicentennial of 1986 and the local Sesquicentennial history reenactment of 1987 were both key events of my early time here, and during that period I was committed to State Parks programs that were encouraging local communities to develop their own programs. I am not sure when the Richmond Sesquicentennial Committee was formed but Rosenberg had a committee, Richmond had a committee, Sugar Land had a committee, and various ones did various projects.

The Richmond Committee got an effort to restore the McFarland Home as a headquarters and open it as a visitor center for the Sesquicentennial. They wrote a book "The Richmond Pictorial" which was a collection of Richmond photographs going back into the late 1800's. Many of them were from the Fort Bend Museum archives but a lot of them were newly collected from local people. That was a real important contribution. Rosenberg produced a good history book as well of their history during that time as did other communities. It was a real history conscious kind of era. It was a very nice group of people. Mildred Walker was one of the drivers on the Richmond Sesquicentennial, and Franklin Schodek chaired it.

BAUMGARTNER: Of course you were a key driver of the museum's exhibits and programs. What are some examples of displays and educational projects that the museum presented over the years?

MOORE: There are several really good educational programs that the museum had in the early days. One was called "Grandma's Kitchen." As I remember, a woman from Needville named Olivia Warnecke was the original grandma. She had lived her whole life churning

butter and spinning cotton, you know all these traditional kitchen crafts and skills of farm families in the early twentieth century. The kids loved her. She was so compelling and so genuine. If you wanted to talk to a farm child from the 1920's, here she was.

BAUMGARTNER: You know this is really interesting when you consider that this was taking place not that long ago, it was only about forty years. You compare it to the way the community is today and the changes that have taken place and the people, it is pretty dramatic.

MOORE: It is. When Olivia Warnecke would give this program she was talking about cooking on a wood cook stove, and a few years later I had this realization that this stands out not because it was dated by wood cook stove --it is before microwaves. Kids, as we have advanced in time, kids don't understand what happened before microwaves.

BAUMGARTNER: You made that comment about looking for a piece of clothing at Donna Kay Tucker's family department store made from flour sacks and it reminded me of my mother making shirts out of it for me and my brothers and sister. We had chickens back in Oklahoma where I grew up and that was a standard deal with chicken feed sacks and she would make us matching shirts out of Purina feed sacks. We each had our little matching t-shirts. Things have changed.

MOORE: They have. The museum was a very vibrant place. They had a spinning and weaving program and there was this woman, Mrs. Winn, who donated the spinning wheel in the museum exhibits. Back then she used that spinning wheel for demonstrations. She was raised in Mississippi in the 1920's and she taught other volunteers to spin and we did these programs about spinning and weaving.

The volunteers wanted to learn the skill because at the time textile handicraft was becoming more popular. We had a number of people who took to it and learned to spin and weave. Lois Nickleson who was one of our wonderful volunteers during that time became active in spinning and weaving; a woman named Gail from Houston and Kathy Hawkins did the weaving program.

BAUMGARTNER: Has that largely been lost today as far as those kind of exhibits and activities?

MOORE: People still do these kinds of things. I don't know if the Fort Bend Museum has

that interest anymore, but we set up a spinning wheel at the George Ranch in the Jones Stock Farm area. There is a loom and spinning wheel there that was a big deal in the eighties, one of the better programs that volunteers gave.

BAUMGARTNER: Is it too far away in the past that it is not as relevant now as it was in the 1980's?

MOORE: It was a better opportunity when you had volunteers who were interested in these things. The volunteers were wonderful people, and they were passing down the genuine skill to people that did not have the experience.

DESIGN OF THE MUSEUM EXHIBITS

BAUMGARTNER: What did you start doing at the museum? How were you involved in setting up the layout of the museum, the exhibits and organizing things and seeking out exhibits that were to be put there and historical archives.

MOORE: Sometimes I did not know what I did. I did a number of exhibits. I did one on fashion that was called "Frontier Fashion of Fort Bend County," where I borrowed clothes from several institutions and some from my own archive collection.

BAUMGARTNER: The ladies must have loved that.

MOORE: It was fun and we had some pioneer stuff up to the 1920's. I did an exhibit on Dilue Rose Harris, "Recollection of Lives of Fort Bend County. "

BAUMGARTNER: Who was she?

MOORE: Her name was Dilue Rose Harris and she was a little girl in the Stafford area in the 1830s. She created a recollection, a memoir, in the 1890's which was published and

Editor's Note: For more on Dilue Rose Harris and her remarkable life, [click this link to view an article in The Houseon Chronicle](#).

provided wonderful, wonderful insights and quotes of early Texas life. I used her recollections. It was like a narrative script on what it was like along the Brazos River community in the early days. My exhibits weren't necessarily so good. Priscilla Hauger who was the exhibit person had gone to work out at the George Ranch. She came back and

helped me learn some of this, and I attended a special museum seminar, The Winedale Museum Seminar in the summer of 1985. It really was a remarkable experience that gave me a lot of vocational skills. It was just transformational. Some of the best museum practitioners come to this little town where the University of Texas historical buildings were sited.

BAUMGARTNER: Where was it?

MOORE: It is a little town called Winedale near Round Top. Ima Hogg “The First Lady of Texas” (Governor Hogg’s daughter) had created this place to bring some historical buildings together which she donated to the University of Texas. For a time the Texas Historical Commission used it for a two week training workshop about museums. Their vision was

Editor's Note: [Click this link for more on Winedale.](#)

that all these volunteers running the museums needed some professional training. Now these programs are offered by the universities.

BAUMGARTNER: Now there is a curriculum that covers that?

MOORE: There are museum studies in several Texas universities, public history programs and that sort of thing. I went for exhibits and they also did programs, summer history programs, summer kids programs. It was hugely attended; they had hundreds of kids a day three or four times during the summer. It was a great summer history camp/workshop series.

TEXIAN MARKET DAYS

BAUMGARTNER: Texian Market Days became a staple of the Fort Bend County Museum program offering. How did it get started?

MOORE: In the summer of 1984 I had just arrived and the previous year the docents had organized an event at the Moore Home celebrating the 100 year anniversary (1883) of the Moore Home. They had booths, food and stuff and we were looking at doing something similar and I was trying to find something to do with Decker Park because it was sad over there. The docents agreed and we created a one day festival for Decker Park called Texian Market Day in October, 1984.

BAUMGARTNER: That was just after you began your career at the museum.

MOORE: The first three months. I named it and I always wanted to have a better name but I never could come up with a better name, so the name kind of stuck.

It was a one-day event. The first scheduled day got rained out in October and got pushed to November and it barely happened. We had different people with food and Sheriff Milton Wright before he was sheriff played an accordion, an old Cajun fiddler came. Rosemary Buddecke organized the booths as she had done the previous year for the Moore Home. We had this wonderful little festival. The next year we did it again, in Decker Park, and likewise we did ok.

GEORGE RANCH “BREAKTHROUGH”

But that year, it was the summer of 1985; we had a meeting which changed the course of the organization. I had been at the job for a year. Bob Vogelsang, who was the museum president then, and I got a call from Roland Adamson, Director of the George Foundation.

BAUMGARTNER: He was already there in 1985? I did not realize that. He is a good man. They contacted you and came to you, right?

MOORE: Yes, Roland drove us out there. I had obviously heard of the George Ranch but I don't know if I had been out there before. Roland took us out to the ranch to meet with the George Foundation trustees. Arroyo Seco Historical Park was the name of the ranch then. That is the name of the old creek that runs through the George Ranch and there are a lot of stories that other people could tell about that.

Editor's Note: The George Ranch was an enormous property, 25,000 acres with substantial oil and mineral values. Previous owners Albert and Mamie George (she was a descendant of Henry Jones, the original settler of the ranch in 1824), with no living heirs, created a charitable foundation and following their death the trustees of the George Foundation manage and direct the activities and assets of the foundation.

MOORE: Our little museum had a staff of two and served a local audience with volunteer labor. The Trustees wanted to meet with us! To think we might have some opportunity or way to help them to get this huge property opened to the public was a very exciting thing for me personally. It was kind of catch the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow kind of thing.

BAUMGARTNER: A profound opportunity.

MOORE: It was. Around the original family headquarters of the ranch, the George Foundation had started creating what was very popular in the 1970's, a concept called museum villages, where they moved in a bunch of buildings. Under the guidance of one of their trustees the foundation was doing that around the original George Ranch home and complex. They moved in historic buildings and structures from around Fort Bend County and started buying furnishings to put in them.

BAUMGARTNER: The George home, Albert and Mamie George's home, was already there?

MOORE: It was and it always was. So a hodgepodge of buildings was created in places without a real plan. The foundation bought a lot of things and spent a lot of money. By the mid- 1980s it became very controversial. There were articles in the Houston papers about where was the money going, and the George Foundation, which had not gotten the place open to the public, was looking for a different path for the ranch.

So they approached the Fort Bend County Museum to take it on and be their partner, or whatever kind of collaboration could be worked out. We started out in 1986. We opened up and the docents went out there and we set up a tour of the George Ranch Home during the summer, and one thing led to another.

The George Ranch had never been opened to the public before, and then we got permission to hold Texian Market Days there! The trustees authorized us to hold the festival at the ranch in October 1986. That was the breakthrough day for the George Ranch Historical Park. It made the front page of the Houston Post. 10,000 people showed up the first day.

BAUMGARTNER: What an opening day. The public must have liked the idea.

MOORE: They had not been able to go to the Ranch before and it was a beautiful day and it was a game changer.

BAUMGARTNER: So it put you on the map and made people aware of it.

MOORE: A game changer for the museum. That was the beginning of Texian Market Days, the Moore Home, the museum, Decker Park.

It was a big hit. 10,000 people! It had been rainy the week before but it was beautiful weather that day and all these people showed up because of the front page colored pictures in the Houston Post. We could not park them because the ditches were too muddy and we

ran out of food and we could not take their ticket money because they overran every ticket parameter we had. It was just so overwhelming. Everybody had a great time.

BAUMGARTNER: Was that before the board was getting a lot of heat put on them from Austin for the way the money was being handled? It created an uproar for a change at the George Ranch.

MOORE: It was kind of during that time. Austin was investigating the foundation. And we were trying to figure out what the George Foundation would want to do there, and could the Fort Bend County Museum be their partner in trying to make the history site into something.

BAUMGARTNER: Very exciting.

MOORE: So now you know why I didn't return to graduate school after two years. Why go off to New England or somewhere to find a start in a museum on a different scale? Here it is and it has been laid at your feet in many ways.

PLANNING THE HISTORICAL SITE

MOORE: I spent a lot of time trying to figure the George Ranch out. What I thought was important was the plan that I came to ultimately propose, which was to focus on what really happened there and not create a fake New England looking town. The George Foundation agreed with that and they were leading the process of wanting to get rid of some of the buildings that had been excessively collected.

I had a chance to evaluate their most historically significant collections and buildings. For example the Long-Smith Cottage that is next to the museum was out at the ranch and it was important in Richmond and Fort Bend County history. In 1987 it was given to the Fort Bend County Museum and I had it moved back into Richmond. Then we tried to see what was left and moved some things around a little. In 1987, in preparation for the Texian Market Days returning, the Davis House had never been finished so the George Foundation supplied some money and we finished the restoration and furnishings of the Davis House and got it opened that year.

We strengthened the relationship with the trustees and by the summer of 1988 we reached a long term agreement with the George Foundation and opened the park up that summer and

have kept it open since. The format for the agreement took the form of two grants from the George Foundation to the Fort Bend County Museum. One was a Challenge Grant asking the museum to raise more money from other sources. It was a grant for the in-town museum operations. I recall it was called a two to one match.

BAUMGARTNER: Two to one grant; you had to raise twice the amount of money that the George Foundation people would put up.

MOORE: That's right. We had more burdens imposed on us it. It had to be new money; it could not be previous money. They were really challenging the museum to expand its capacity. Get the money generated and get more people involved. You can do things with your town operation, so build it so you don't leave it behind when you go out to the George Ranch.

The second grant was a three year grant or contract. The museum tended to call it a contract, the foundation tended to call it a grant which is really a fundamental difference of opinion that plays out. This three year agreement was to get the George Ranch opened to the public. The assignment was to get as much opened as possible as soon as possible. I kind of hit the ground running and we worked towards getting it opened in the summer of 1988.

BAUMGARTNER: The three year grant, that funding was 100% for the George Ranch, right? One was for Richmond and one was for the ranch.

MOORE: That is right. They are both real grants but they were separate agreements. It was a very savvy thing I think on the part of the George Foundation.

BAUMGARTNER: Who were some of the leaders then of the George Foundation, do you remember any of the names?

MOORE: Certainly in that group in 1988 the trustees included Hill Kemp, Joe Wessendorff, Jim Elkins. Long term administrative leaders included Roland Adamson, Director, and Jack Moore, Counsel. We renamed the park George Ranch Historical Park, which is a historic name but it got some bad press. We looked at anglicizing the former name (Arroyo Seco Historical Park) but that sounded too much West Texas and for my part it was to focus on what really happened there at that place, and the name the George Ranch was what was used.

As I said, the Fort Bend County Museum had a staff of one and a half when I started. Then as we grew in 1986, 1987 and 1988, we added a curator of collections and a curator of exhibits who redid our exhibits in 1988. So by 1988 there were four or five employees in Richmond.

In the beginning of 1988 I set out to hire the employees of the George Ranch. We went with a logical approach but it was one that made things more complicated. Those functions that the George Foundation were doing out there and doing well they would keep doing, so they continued to maintain the buildings and grounds, the tractors and the operational logistics and so forth. What they had not done well was allocated to the museum, to serve the public by opening it up, giving programs, giving tours and history things.

That became our incremental approach. They continued the base line operation, and the museum was to provide supplemental public service, public experience. It made a lot of sense at the time but it also put tourism with different missions. Working as partners and operations, and keeping everybody coordinated and on the same goal of vision, was a struggle.

BAUMGARTNER: Over the years my observation was that there were dips and valleys but that it worked pretty well.

MOORE: It did.

BAUMGARTNER: Twenty years later when I was involved with it, the basic fundamental relationship still endured.

MANAGING THE HISTORICAL PARK

MOORE: So by 1988 we had more staff. The curator of collections I hired was Sue Spearing who had been in museums elsewhere, an oilfield spouse whose husband was transferred to Houston. She wrote the exhibit, and then the museum hired Prissy Hauger out at the Ranch for the George Foundation. She was curator of exhibits; she actually designed it and we all built it ourselves. It was a do-it-yourself project and it was a very good exhibit for its day.

The working concept was that politically we had to do both at the same time. We could not go out there and spend all our effort at the George Ranch and leave the Fort Bend Museum behind.

BAUMGARTNER: Why would that be apolitical?

MOORE: A lot of the leadership of the museum, like the museum docents, were not as excited about the George Ranch as I was. We had to make sure that everybody was feeling that every priority was being made equally.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you play a pretty big role in getting the two of them locked together on this thing and getting George Ranch to be more involved with the Richmond Museum and so forth?

MOORE: I don't know if that was a success. There was a tension throughout those years where the Richmond-focused people dutifully went out to the George Ranch and worked. They worked the summer ranch house tours, Texian Market Days, and they all pitched in, but it was not necessarily their cup of tea. What came about there, at the ranch, it was a little more driven by staff and in town it was a little bit more volunteer driven.

BAUMGARTNER: Was there somebody at the ranch who was in charge out there? Who was involved at the museum in town, or were they separate?

MOORE: They were mostly separate, except for me. I worked a half a day at each place for the first couple of years. Mamie George helped us buy a Compaq portable computer about this big, it was like a big sewing machine, and I would lug it back and forth with me every day. I spent the mornings at the George Ranch and the afternoon at the Fort Bend Museum, taking the one computer back and forth. It was a challenge.

A couple of key people were hired during that time. I found Mark Texel in Colorado and hired him. I was kind of the program leader for the George Ranch and Candy Jones had just got married and was working for Urban Nature Center. She was hired as the administrative leader support out at the George Ranch. Then we started hiring people with the focus on the George Ranch House and the Davis House.

BAUMGARTNER: You said earlier that your primary contribution would be to focus on what was genuine with respect to what the place was originally. How to present that?

MOORE; My concept in the Texian Market Days of 1987, well actually 1986 was the first year it was held at the Ranch, was to bring together programs from these different generations in the history of the ranch: Austin Colony Pioneers, the Plantation and

Confederate/Civil War era, the Open Range Cowboys of the 1880's and 1890's, and the 1930 era. We put out these different program areas.

My vocational training had come from two sources. One was from my early days starting in high schools, the hobby background of reenacting living history by putting on historical clothing and doing programs about the past. The second was the museum workshop at the Winedale seminar. I kind of tapped into those two sources of learning; they had been wonderful and I had been the beneficiary.

Over the next five years I brought forth a plan for the place that would reflect the generations of the family's history that had evolved over the years. That was the concept and the long range plan. I proposed to have a working-farmer ranch for each of the four generations of the family.

BAUMGARTNER: Could you provide just a short thumbnail-- what was the 1830's, the 1860's, the 1890's, the 1930's, the four generations?

MOORE: There were four generations and there were four big history events that were connected, two eras that were out there. We ended up with all four generations.

The First Generation. The first project I got to undertake we did in 1991 - 1992, the building of the Jones Stock Farm, the pioneer farm. It proved to be very popular. It depicted the first generation, the Austin Colony farm of the 1820's and 1830's of Henry Jones and his daughter, Mary Jones. In 1991 I proposed that we get funding from the foundation for this theme, and we built the log cabin and created the era. Some of the exhibits of the Fort Bend Museum and the Jones Stock Farm at the ranch are all manifestation of my research of that time period. One of our long-time employees, Ruth Brooks, would say that the visitors would come to see the cowboys but they would leave appreciating the pioneers and the stories of pioneer life.

Second Generation. The second generation of the family was Polly Jones, Mary Jones' daughter, and her husband William Ryon, who had a plantation there that she inherited from her grandfather Henry. They were kind of the drivers of the ranch at the time of the 1860's and 1870's. They lived in a brick two story revival plantation house that was on the site of the George Ranch house that burned down in the 1880's. When we got involved it took another decade to revive the plantation. It was early 2000 before I brought that project together and found an original building near Brookshire that we could utilize. It was a two

story plantation house that was moved out to the Ranch, restored, and was pretty much still being worked on when I left in the 2000's. I never saw that one completely finished.

Third Generation. The third generation was the Davis House of the 1880's and 1890's. The building was there on site before I arrived. It had been moved from Richmond out to the George Ranch in the late 1970's before the museum became involved. So two buildings were out there prior to my arrival, the Davis House and George Ranch House, so I can't say I dreamed up the whole thing.

The Davis House was the keeper. It was the family home, the town home, and in a project of 1987 the foundation gave the museum a grant and we went through and finished the restoration, the furnishings, and got it ready to open.

The George Foundation had also moved in some other historical buildings nearby there to make a little town, just as the Davis House had been originally located next to a town, and a lot of those buildings went away in the process of the museum becoming involved. Some of these historic buildings from Fort Bend County found good homes; most went away to good places.

It was a good thing not to focus on the town but the rural story. Over the years a number of projects created a sharecroppers farm of the 1890's reflecting African American history. We found an original sharecropper's home from the FM 359 area that was moved out there and we built a small African American farm of the 1880's and 1890's. It became part of our tour presentation and we talked to the visitors about the workers who lived and worked the ranch. Also later that same year we did more on the ranching story. The cattle pens were restored to the livestock pens like those on the farm in the 1890's.

The Fourth Generation. The fourth generation was the George Ranch House. This is the original house on its original site built in the 1890's which was [] in the 1930's. To emphasize that story which occurred during the 1920's the George family built a series of tenant farms coming down that road. By now they are all threatened with deterioration and some have been lost already. There was one complex in particular which contained the original house and original barn. It was lived in during the '20's by the Linke Family. After Mr. Linke died we went down there and the family took the things they wanted and they left a lot of things and we got to go down and catalog all this 1930's depression- era household possessions. We then moved the house and the barn closer to the George house.

Our visitor presentations focused on the German farmers in the early 20th Century, each case trying to broaden the story from the ranch owners to the ranch workers and create the story through the years. If I am proud of anything we accomplished it was coming up with that concept and playing it out over the course of twenty years to make it happen.

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

BAUMGARTNER: What was the public reaction? How would you characterize the impact on the children who were able to go there to visit?

MOORE: I always felt and saw that with the children it had a very positive impact. I remember the summer history program that some of the volunteers ran my first year or two. Some of the docents brought their grandkids to it. Mayde Butler, well-known civic leader, brought her grandkids, and a bunch of people came and they seemed to have such a genuine connection with these kids. I still encounter people who were impacted there.

We opened the door to a lot of people in addition to the school children. Foreign visitors from Houston, international and national conventions would come out there.

BAUMGARTNER: What about tourists from foreign countries?

MOORE: The director of the Houston Museum of Natural Science would bring out international museum people to the George Ranch but these were one-time experiences and I rarely got any input from the actual visitors. From Truitt Latimer and his wife Harriett you would get the sense of what the museum professionals would always talk about-- the quality of the programing and the uniqueness of the place and that the visitors enjoyed and appreciated the experience out there. You couldn't be certain of the impact, but over decades of school kids coming through you feel you lit a spark under a number of them.

But economically the Historical Ranch has been a struggle because the place is so big and expensive to run. It takes a lot of people and a lot of money.

To accomplish this you need a lot of visitors. It is a hard formula and they still struggle at the ranch. It is a difficult business model. All of the major outdoor museums have some of the same problems including sprawling. You have to have a tram to get people around and it takes a lot of people to open the park, a lot of volunteers among the staff so it is a difficult formula.

In my later career I had the opportunity of being connected via the George Ranch to the CEO's of 18 or 20 of the larger history institutes of the country. We would meet twice a year to talk about marketing trends and economics and we would share all our numbers.

BAUMGARTNER: This is a group of large history centers that you were invited to join because of your employment with the Ranch?

MOORE: Right. At that time I got exposure to the highest level of economics and an audience of these kinds of places. They branded themselves as outdoor history museums so it was Colonial Williamsburg, Plumbing Plantation, Conner Prairie. Big outdoor places have fairly poor economics compared to an art museum where everything is inside. You have a lot of employees, you have a lot of maintenance of the grounds and they were struggling to figure out how to rebrand themselves and how to build new audiences._

BAUMGARTNER: They were struggling too?

MOORE: They were all suffering since the 1980's. In fact these meeting came about because the marketing staff and the CEO's were trying to figure out what can we do to turn around the declining attendance.

I don't have a business background but I will tell you my business insight that I learned in this process. In the museum world almost no museums, maybe one or two, make money as you would expect. They all have to be subsidized from another source-- charitable giving, endowments, government or wherever.

I remember that Board Trustee Robert Hanna was the CEO of Imperial Holly in Sugar Land, a Fortune 500 company. He was quizzing me at a board meeting about the economics of the park. It was kind of scary for a historian with a non-business background to have a CEO grill you on your margins and I was trying to figure out how to explain to him there is no profit with most transactions - there is no margin, there is a negative margin. Most transactions you make lose money. I couldn't articulate this very well and that ultimately growth of these places does not equal monetary success. Growth calls for more subsidizing.

The Fort Bend Museum budget of the George Ranch was generating 77% of revenue, which in the museum world is huge. It is really impressive. The problem is, for the balance it requires 23% subsidy. If we grow attendance fourfold, yes you get a lot more money coming in but you are still getting just 77% of the revenue and the effect is requiring a larger

subsidy. You are still requiring 23% subsidy which has now become four times bigger. One intervention of the ranch operation was a corporation group business, the site rental programs. That was pushed by Roland and the George Foundation because they saw the revenue potential. As an audience and a revenue generator and as a way of getting people out there it was a very good opportunity and it was a driver on the economics success. It was hard to manage because sometimes it was hard bent on what business are we in, the partying business or are we in the museum business?

Overall it is non-profit and it is a cash flow problem. That is the sad part. The only economic solution is the places need a subsidy somewhere. The Foundation wanted to give money for other things, and that created the uncertainty about what is the financial formula. The reason people want to work history businesses is because of the interest, the story, the teaching, the learning. But so much of it is about money, payroll, fundraising, personnel.

BAUMGARTNER: I served on the Museum Board for a number of years after you moved on in 2006, and the museum and the George Ranch operation were going through difficult financial stages following the 2008 recession. At the point that I was slated to become the president the next year, I remember that we were spending all of the time and it seemed all of our effort on fund raising trying to make sure we made payroll and renegotiate our deal with the ranch, etc., etc. and we didn't really seem to do any museum work.

MOORE: The economics of these places are fairly harsh and there is no easy street. You make a good point that I will agree with. You want to be in the history business to do history and not in the history business to do business.

BAUMGARTNER: If the George Foundation didn't have such deep pockets, would the operation be viable?

MOORE: That is a good question. I think the financial intent was that over time their pockets wouldn't have to be any deeper and the revenue would drive all of this additional programing and probably to some extent that proved to be true. There was never enough money to pay for the capital improvements, maintenance and thing like that, but there was often enough money to pay for the programs and staffing and that sort of thing.

BAUMGARTNER: A continuing ongoing problem was the friction between the ranch and the museum.

MOORE: Of course, the nature of the beast is neither of them had enough resources. Neither of them had enough money or staff or volunteers.

BAUMGARTNER: What would you have possibly done differently at both the museum and out at the ranch? You said a couple of times that everything you did was not perfect or whatever. Looking back is there anything in particular that you can think of?

MOORE: Ultimately the struggle in my career was balancing what was good for the George Ranch and what was good for the Fort Bend Museum. Sometimes they diverged in different directions and made it very hard. At that time it was a very heavy experience and I was struggling to come up with an idea as to what would make it viable.

I feel that I put too much effort in the George Ranch and did not successfully bring the other part of the operation along as well. I will not say a whole lot here, but that begs the question of whether the George Ranch Foundation and the Fort Bend Museum have the same mission. What business does each want to be in? Does the George Foundation want to be in the park business and museum business? Yet they are a big player in the park and museum business. That was ultimately the most frustrating.

BAUMGARTNER: It is a business and when you have cash flow problems, it compounds the misery all the way through. Is there a way to resolve the impasse? Perhaps it would take somebody at the top of the Foundation to be really excited about what we are talking about and push for a new approach.

ROLE OF THE MUSEUM

BAUMGARTNER: In your mind what is the purpose and the role of museums and the study of history?

MOORE: I think in the study of history, the market share that museums hold is for three dimensional learning.

There is learning to be found in history books; universities teach it in classes; and you can read a book. That is one place to learn about the past.

There is also memory; you can talk to people, like oral history, to learn about the past. But museums have a unique place where they preserve the tangible things that go with those stories. It is known as Three Dimensional Literacy. To be able to look at an object and

to learn from it. It is a key element to a museum. I find that when I was teaching through the museum, as time went on from the 80's to the 90's to the turn of the century, I was always struck by how less and less students were able to understand three dimensional things. Everything was becoming more theatrical or digital or two dimensional. You give them an object, a farm tool or whatever and ask them to figure out how it works and how do you use this. Those skills are not being cultivated in kids as much as it was before. They cannot do it as well.

BAUMGARTNER: Are you talking about children that come to the museum tours?

MOORE: That is right.

BAUMGARTNER: Do the museums have as much following now as they might have had twenty five or thirty or forty years ago?

MOORE: The formative years of my personal history interest was probably the peak. At the same time the hobby of genealogy came about. People studying their family history and these various popular history things in the 1970's and the early 1980's created a real boom for history museums. The Fort Bend Museum was founded in that same era, as well as some of the larger institutions.

BAUMGARTNER: Who knows, is it because the Internet is changing everything so profoundly?

MOORE: In some things you cannot compete with the Internet, but you can compete in other ways. Just the real tangible experience of holding something, experiencing something, doing some activities. I think there will be a place for museums to preserve traditional activities and let youngsters of the future get away from their computers and experience people from the past.

BAUMGARTNER: What can the museums do now, realizing what has taken place and what's going on? Are there any directions that the museum can take now and try to steer things back? Is there more involvement and activity with the school system to try and reverse the trend a little?

MOORE: School attendance, school field trips used to be the bread and butter of any museum, including this one. As schools became larger, as they became further away, as

transportation cost became higher, and the demands on the class day increased, it was hard for the schools to travel as often. They still do of course but it sometime has been a big struggle for museum educators to maintain the learning experience.

BAUMGARTNER: What about working with the teachers?

MOORE: I had hoped that it would be linked more to what they are studying and they would integrate it to their curriculum, but it is a real struggle, a cultural shift going on about learning. Maybe we can make a connection to get parents involved or grandparents. Often and traditionally it is the grandparents that are the keepers of knowledge of the family history. Maybe there is some spark there that can be reignited to have their share of their grandkids.

LOOKING BACK ON IT

BAUMGARTNER: How do you look back at your role and your involvement doing what you did for 20 years in the community here?

MOORE: There are so many things that were gratifying about it. Of course I had opportunities to learn and travel, and serve and contribute to what I wanted to do. That was just remarkable. To be two years out of school and be shown, "Here is the George Ranch, what do you want to make of it?"

BAUMGARTNER: What an opportunity.

MOORE: Just remarkable circumstances and some very nice people that I remember fondly; some are here and some are no longer with us. They were some wonderfully nice people and very kind to me.

BAUMGARTNER: What about changes you have witnessed and the impact that you may have made over the years?

MOORE : As a professional historian the greatest concern I perceive is that in our modern world, our Twenty First Century world, there is not as much interest in history as in the past.

It is hard to know what your impact is and it is hard to know who you influence. Last September I was at a history symposium in San Antonio. The Alamo had a booth and they were talking about the educational program and I was talking to a nice young woman who

was one of their educators and asked how she became interested in history. She said that when she was in school she went to the George Ranch and saw demonstrations and activities and it really excited her about history. It was wholly unplanned. She is now educating kids at the Alamo about history and I had never met her before and I had some influence on that and that is very thrilling.

BAUMGARTNER: Did I mention, I interviewed Franklin Schodek, who chaired the Fort Bend Sesquicentennial celebration, a few months ago and he brought your name up in the course of discussing the museum, and he said if it hadn't been for Michael most of the museum development here would not have happened.

MOORE: I appreciate that and I am a big fan of his.

BAUMGARTNER: Well I've enjoyed learning more about the background of the museum association. Thank you, Michael.

-End of interview