

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Jack H. Moore**

Interview Date: 04/20/2013

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Project / Group: Henderson-Wessendorff Foundation

10 Pages



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Transcript

PENA: Today is April 20th, 2013 my name is Amy Hardin Pena I am interviewing Mr. Jack Moore at 611 Morton St. Richmond, TX. This interview is being conducted by the Ft. Bend County Historical Commission and is part of the Ft. Bend County Historical Commission Oral History Project. We are here today at the request of the Henderson Wessendorf Foundation taking interviews related to family members.

Please tell us your name and date of birth.

MOORE: My name is Jack H. Moore. Date of birth is August 2nd 1951, which is about six weeks prior to Joe D. Robinson's date of birth. We knew each other growing up as long as either of us can remember.

PENA: Could you give us a brief outline of your connection to Ft. Bend County?

MOORE: On both sides of my family, father and mother the connections to Ft. Bend County go way back, particularly to both grandfathers; both my Father's father and my Mother's father. Both of my great grandfathers on each of those sides were born in Richmond and lived in Richmond their whole lives. So it goes way back. My parents both grew up in Richmond. They were childhood sweethearts; they got married and had their family here in Richmond. I am the youngest of three boys and I spent all, I have thought of this before, but ten years of my life in Richmond. And really have lived within just blocks of the same place my whole life, except seven years of college and law school and three years I lived in Tyler after law school. Except for that, for my sixty-one years it has all been in Richmond, really.

PENA: What kind of work do you do?

MOORE: I am an attorney.

PENA: Could you tell me a little about your community involvement?

MOORE: Quite a bit of it has to do with Mr. Wessendorf, really, because I was on the hospital board when he was. He asked me to be on it. I was on the local bank board. He asked me to be on it. I have been active on church activities at Calvary Church and St. John's Methodist Church. I was in Rotary for a long time, but am not currently in Rotary. I am on the Henderson-Wessendorf Foundation Board now. I am on a couple of other boards.

PENA: So your connection is primarily with Mr. Wessendorf?

MOORE: A little bit like Joe D., my connection is pretty definitely with both of them. I am not related to either one of them, and I never did call them Uncle Joe or Aunt Loise. But they were like a real close aunt and uncle to me, both of them were. Loise and my mother, Kelley Pearson Moore, were best friends. Joe Clyde and my Dad, Hilmar Moore, were very, very close friends. Now, they were about three or four years apart age wise. They were friends from when they were little boys; my Dad lived out in the county. Joe Clyde lived in town. Dad told me they would spend weekends with each other. Either in town or out in the country or half way... you know both ways really. They spent a lot of time together growing up.

My mother lived in Richmond. Loise lived in Houston, but because of Loise having relatives in Richmond my mother and Loise knew each other real well growing up. They went to camp together at Camp Mystic in Hunt. Mom told that Loise, at times, had kind of a hard time getting along with some of the other girls. Some of the other girls picked on her. Loise told me this, too, that Mom was a little older and was real popular. She kind of took Loise under her wing and that helped or that caused other girls to give Loise more of a chance. I think Loise never did forget that. So they were just very close friends.

PENA: So you grew up with Loise and Joe Clyde.

MOORE: I did, yeah, I really did. It was just like an aunt and uncle, really. They came to our home and we went to their home. They had one of the two first swimming pools in Richmond, other than the public pool. Children always really wanted to go to their house partly just because it was so much fun. Loise had a player piano, the only one I knew of at the time. You put these music things in and then you pumped...all you had to do was pump the pedals and it played this really, really cool music. It was really a lot of fun.

PENA: Will you describe for me what kind of man Mr. Wessendorf was?

MOORE: Joe D. described him really well in terms of strong and dependable. Almost like a hero...almost sort of mythic man. In fact in looks I think Joe Clyde was more handsome than John Wayne. Joe Clyde reminded me a lot of John Wayne. But he wasn't country and western like John Wayne was.

Joe Clyde had that side of him, but then as Joe D. mentioned, Joe Clyde could spend the morning working cattle and then in the afternoon go to a board meeting in Houston. He could be two different people in the same day.

He was just a very impressive man. A very impressive man. He had incredibly strong hands and he liked to tickle kids. You know, make them laugh and all. He would tickle you so hard it would hurt, really. But you liked it anyway. He could grab your thigh and it felt like a horse was biting you. He's just a really cool guy. Somebody you really, really looked up to. On the other hand, you knew you needed to act right around him because he sure didn't put up with any rudeness or bad behavior. You wanted to do right when you were around him. You really did.

PENA: Can you tell me what you know about his work life?

MOORE: Well, I got to see a lot of it when I moved back here in 1979. Being on different boards with him and all I got to see the kind of leader that he was. He was a quiet but very effective leader. He had a real good sense of doing the best thing for the organization. More so than for himself; he wasn't trying to gain a personal advantage in his business or civic activities. It was really a lesson watching how he participated in the different boards he was on, and how he tried to guide those organizations to the best result.

PENA: Being so much a part his family life, you must have spent a lot of leisure time with him. Can you tell me about some of those times?

MOORE: You know I can... but strangely not as much leisure time with him. If I could go back in time and change something I would spend more leisure time with him. I did, though over a long period of time, get to spend leisure time with him and always enjoyed it very much; particularly bird hunting, either doves or quail or ducks. It was always really fun being with him because he was an incredible shot with a shotgun. Just almost never missed. He used a smaller gun than most people did.

When I first saw him shoot, he'd shoot with a 410 when everybody was shooting with a 20 gauge or a 12 gauge. As he got a little older he relented and started using a 28 gauge. But, still that is a very small gun and if you are not accurate...if you are not really accurate you don't hit your target. He was amazing; besides that though, just fun to be with. He was left handed like I was, and my Dad is also. So, if we went hunting there would be three left-handers there, which is kind of unusual, really. His father had hunted quail with my grandfather and great uncle for just years and years together. All this continued a really, really long tradition.

PENA: What would you do with all those quail you shot?

MOORE: We would clean them and either eat them or give them to somebody. There were a lot of people around town that were really glad to get quail if you got them. We always made use of them.

PENA: You were members of organizations with him I believe you said. Can you tell me about that?

MOORE: Things worked smoothly generally in whatever organization he was in. He was actually running the organization but it didn't appear that he was. Someone else might even be the president but he was guiding things in a very effective sort of way. I feel like I really learned a lot from being on boards with him. He had a very strong instinct of duty and service. Which I think probably started when he was a little boy. It definitely followed through when he went to A&M. He was in the corps and later in the military. He didn't talk about his war experiences much. He was a man of service really.

PENA: How did you see his influence in the development of Richmond and Ft. Bend County?

MOORE: Well, particularly on the residential real estate side as Joe D. mentioned, Winston Terrace and Long Woods and Laurel

Oaks. They might have developed otherwise, but they developed a lot quicker and a lot better because he was behind that. There was a real nice man in Calvary Church for a long time. He and his wife had come here, well, he had grown up in New York, but they had come from somewhere out of state. He told me, "the first person I met when I came out to Richmond was Joe Wessendorff and he sold me a lot over here in Winston Terrace where I built my house. He helped me get the loan at the bank and the lumber from the lumber yard" And he said, "That's how I got setup in Richmond and it was just a very pleasant experience."

PENA: Do you know anything about his land in Kenedy?

MOORE: Yeah, I have learned more about it in later years than at the time he had first bought it. One thing about his buying it is, he and his family had sold some land out near the freeway here in Richmond. I think part of what either became Canyon Gate or Greatwood or maybe part of both. He used the money from that land to buy the land in Kenedy. If you used that money within a certain period of time you would not have to pay any tax on having sold the land. So he did that. I think he looked long and hard to find the place he really wanted in Kenedy. He was real happy with it I know that.

The only thing he was disappointed in was, I don't think the quail ever did quite as well as he wished they would have. I think about that time quail habitat in general in that part of Texas was kind of declining, and I think he was a little disappointed with that. He only saw a little bit of oil and gas production from there, but he always felt very strongly that there was going to be a lot of oil and gas production there. It turns out several years after his death it is very prolific.

PENA: So he was right again.

MOORE: He was right again. Joe D. said he didn't think he was lucky, but instead he was always prepared. That is probably true, but Pat McDonald and I have said it seems like to us that he was [lucky]...too many things have gone well and sort of unexpectedly well. I think he did have a certain amount of luck. I really do.

PENA: Tell me of your most vivid memory of Mr. Wessendorf?

MOORE: I can't just do one. I have three. Joe D. mentioned the first time he could remember Joe Clyde helping him...the first thing I remember is I fainted several times in church. One time I just fell completely out. I remember when I came to he and two or three other men were carrying me out of church, but he is the only person I saw. I thought, "I am not dead and looks like I am in good hands, Joe Clyde is taking care of me." [chuckle]. So that is one from early memory.

A second one is from when I was in high school. I had worked for my Dad most all the summers, but I was tired of working for him. I thought he criticized me too much but I really didn't think he was too hard on me. But, I just thought it wasn't much fun working for him, and I would rather work for somebody else. So, I asked Joe Clyde for a job. He gave me a job. It was a harder job than I thought, and he was a whole lot harder boss than my Dad had been. I remember he had us poisoning Huisache with distillate. This was in the middle of summer and the distillate would get hot and the whole thing was just like a furnace. You couldn't apply that distillate without getting some of it on you. It would eat up your shoes and burn your hands and all. So, I thought, 'I need some gloves and some better boots.' One day at about 4:30 I decided to quit early and come into town and get those things. As I was leaving the property, Joe Clyde was coming in and he said, "Jack, where are you going?" I said, "I need to get some gloves and some boots because this distillate is just eating both of them up." He said, "Well paadner, you need to do that on your time. You're supposed to work until 5 o'clock. That is what I am paying you for. I am not paying you to go to town and get boots and gloves."

I thought to myself, you know, this guy expects things to be done right. Well, that was the last summer that I worked for Joe Clyde. The next summer I was back working with Dad. I decided it was a lot easier working for Dad than for Joe Clyde. A lot of people would have thought otherwise, but I saw a very direct comparison with them. So that is number two.

The third thing is business-wise. Fairly late in his life some of the lawyers he had used retired. I became his lawyer for certain business things. I learned a tremendous amount about him. He didn't let his emotions get into business at all. I remember in particular there was a guy that was buying land from him. Things weren't going well for the guy and he was having a hard time paying. He was late all the time paying. He would make up excuses as to why he couldn't pay. He was just stalling the whole time and it was getting on my nerves. I was really getting irritated with the guy and angry. I was amazed that Joe Clyde was as calm about it as he was. Then I realized what was happening. Joe Clyde was keeping his emotions completely out of that. Finally, when the guy would come see him and play up to him, and try to sweet talk him and all that, Joe Clyde just listened to all that. The only thing Joe Clyde was looking for was- how can I get myself in a better position, so if this guy finally can't pay me and I get the land back, I am in a better position than I was. Joe Clyde played it just like a chess match with no emotion at all. It was a real education for me to see how someone, when he wasn't getting treated well, didn't let the emotions of it get to him. But instead just focused on the real objective, which was to make a good sale of that land. It was an education that you couldn't get at graduate business school. It was really something.

Joe D. said he thought Joe Clyde liked making money and I agree. He liked business. The interesting thing was he didn't want to make money to pile it up and look at it or to buy a bunch of things with it. He just liked the activity of being successful in business, almost the sport of it. Then when he got the money he would be as likely to give it away or just invest it well. It wasn't so much that he wanted things that he could get with the money. He just liked the activity that it took to be successful enough to make the money. That was real interesting, too.

PENA: You told me a little a bit about your connection with Loise. I am going to ask you if you could describe what kind of woman she was?

MOORE: She was as distinctive a person as Joe Clyde. The two of them are two of the more distinctive unique people that I have ever known. She was definitely distinctive and unique; very different than Joe Clyde in most ways, very much alike in terms of their of very high principles, very, very strong ethics and morals. She wanted things to turn out right for the most people. She had a lot more obvious and demonstrable ego than Joe Clyde did. She had a big ego in lots of ways. That could either be very charming or at some times it could be sort of overbearing. It just depended. A lot of people were intimidated by her. She didn't really intend that, I don't think. She was such a strong personality, and she was so convinced that she was right about so many things. It just wasn't always easy for a lot of people to deal with her. But, if she was your friend and if she was your supporter, and I was lucky enough to have her always to be my friend and supporter, you could totally depend on her. And she wanted the very best for you. You couldn't have a better friend than she was.

PENA: Were you acquainted with her mother and father at all?

MOORE: A little bit. Not nearly like Joe D. was. I didn't spend that much time around them. I do remember a couple of things about her father. You know he died when I was, I guess, nine years old. I always really liked her stories of him. One thing I thought was real interesting was she was an only child, and I am sure if he was only going to have one child the kind of fellow that he was, he would have preferred to have a boy. He didn't let that stop him. He did things with her. He was ahead of his time; he was a generation or two before his time in this. He took her hunting with him and he took her on business trips with him. He taught her business. He had the same experience with her that he would have had with a boy. He didn't let it stop him for five minutes, to think well she is a girl and...she is going to be interested in cooking and homemaking and that sort of thing. I love her and I care about her but we're too different. He didn't

take that outlook. He taught her a lot about business and she really learned it well. Her mother... I don't remember as much about her. Very sweet lady, but I don't remember as much about her.

PENA: Do you think that helped Loise to be more attractive to Joe because she had that kind of a background?

MOORE: Probably so, probably so. She had had other boyfriends that her parents didn't really approve of, particularly her father didn't approve of. But once Joe Clyde hit the scene, then as Joe D. said, her father and Joe Clyde were so similar that they got along well...it just all fell into place.

You know Joe Clyde was a good five years older than Loise. Well, exactly five years older than Loise. I guess at the time they met and got married it was a pretty big distance in age. It just all worked out so well. It really did.

PENA: Were you acquainted with any of the organizations that she was part of or dealt with?

MOORE: Somewhat. As far as locally, Calvary Episcopal Church was the main thing she participated in in Richmond. Until real late in her life she considered herself to be from Houston rather than Richmond. She was very active in a lot of Houston organizations. But Calvary Church was always real important to her, as was the Episcopal Church in general. She was also active with the Houston area Episcopal Church, which is called the Diocese of Texas. Whatever she participated in, you know she was a positive force and did a lot of good.

PENA: Do you have a favorite memory?

MOORE: I have a lot of real good early memories. My favorite may be the most recent which was after Joe Clyde died in 2006 but before Loise died 2008. Pat McDonald and Joe D. and I were all involved in taking care of Joe Clyde's estate and in helping Loise with her business. She would have us come over to her

house about once a month to meet about different things. It was usually some particular topic. We would end up meeting for an hour or an hour and a half. The business part of it didn't last generally but about fifteen minutes and then the rest of it was just...she was so glad to be with us and I think particularly with Joe D. and me because we'd known her so long. She started telling stories and reminiscing about things and it was just...it was just priceless. The thing is, she would serve you coffee and something to eat usually something sweet. You learned after the first time or two that even if you just had lunch and you weren't hungry at all, yes you did [eat]. You would tell her -yes Ma'am I would really like that... because she was not going to be happy until you had something to eat and drink. So that's my favorite memory probably of her. It was so fun to talk to her. She was always so good to me.

PENA: Is there anything else that I failed to ask that you want to add?

MOORE: The only thing I would like to sort of chime in on is what Joe D. said about her founding of the Institute of Religion; to try to get the spiritual community and the medical community to intersect better than they ever had before. Because both of them were trying to help people but from different disciplines.

Generally they like to argue with each other, where instead they needed to cooperate with each other to try to help people. Her efforts in that regard were really world changing, I think. I think twenty, thirty years from now there will be more of that happening and more successfully. I think she had a lot to do with getting that started.

Just one more thing is that...the fact that they decided with their collected wealth to put it all in a foundation to help people is going to have a tremendous effect over the years. It is going to help this community a tremendous amount and it is just a very, very wonderful thing that they did with their worldly goods when they left this world.

PENA: Thank you.