Robert Moore Memoir

Moore, Robert
Interview and memoir
digital audio file, 38 min., 11 pp.

UIS Alumni Sage Society

Moore, a former Illinois State Police trooper and Equal Opportunity Officer discusses his educational experience at Sangamon State University. He received an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and graduated with a master’s in public administration in 1985. Moore describes the “cornfield divide” that existed between the university and the community and how the community involvement of some of the early faculty helped bridge that divide.

Interview by Bruce Strom, 2010
OPEN
No collateral file

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Q. Ok, doing the interviewing today is Bruce Strom and the person being interviewed is Robert Moore. And today is April 1, 2010. Well, Bob, prior to coming or enrolling at SSU, what was your educational background prior to that?

A. I was born in a place called Pontotoc, Mississippi. My high school, I went to high school there in Pontotoc, Mississippi and graduated in 1962 and went into the army and then found myself coming to Illinois. And several years later wound up in Rock Valley College in Rockford, Illinois where I started to work on my associate degree. That was my first stab at going to college.

I had been kind of afraid to go to college because I didn’t think I could handle English. And so but I found myself doing very well in it and went two years to Rock Valley College after graduating from the Illinois State Police Academy. And that’s where I really got my first taste of college because Lincoln Land Community College was offering some college credits during my twenty week stay in the State Police Academy, so I gained some college experience, credits while attending Illinois State Police in 1972.

And once I graduated from the State Police Academy and I enrolled in Rock Valley College in Rockford and graduated there in 1976 with an associate degree in administration of justice and wound up being graduated with honors after being afraid of a lot of the subjects that I thought that I was not going to be successful at. And then when I graduated from Rock Valley, I went on to Northern Illinois University for the summer of 1976 and studied criminology.

And so and I got... it seemed that every time I got at some point I got a degree I got called on to make another move in my career and so I got selected for the EEO officer for the Illinois State Police, which required me to transfer to Springfield from Rockford, Illinois. And in the fall of 1976 I enrolled in Sangamon State University where I eventually wound up getting both my bachelor’s and my master’s degree.

Q. Ok. The EEO being the Equal Employment Opportunity Office?

A. Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action for the... Those words were used during the 1970s.

Q. Did you have some particular objective or goal in mind when you enrolled at Sangamon State University in 1976? Was there something particularly you were thinking about?
A. Well, yes. Criminal... I guess I had put off the educational process and some things that prompted me I guess I was getting ready to lose my GI bill, a few of those other things. And I thought I better get myself in gear in order to get that education because really, what really around me all my friends and around me, my wife, she had a bachelor degree and was teaching and all our friends had degrees. And so I was getting feeling quite uncomfortable being around all of my friends with the college degrees and I wasn’t, I didn’t have mine.

So I thought that perhaps I better get mine so that I could start to advance my career as well as to get educated so that I could you know at least be in the conversation sometime with some of my, some of my colleagues. But I had looked around and saw that people were advancing and things that were, you know education was becoming necessary, and I had procrastinated for quite some time in not going back and getting my degree.

Q. You may have mentioned it, but when was it that you graduated from Sangamon State?

Q. Ok in 1985 and your degree or area of study?
A. My degree... is two degrees, one in... my bachelor’s is in criminal justice and my master’s is in public administration. So we had been fortunate enough to stay within in the field of my expertise of which I graduated with, and I’m quite pleased to say that that education had you know allowed me to move far beyond anything that I ever dreamt in my lifetime.

Q. Sometime you don’t know what’s around the corner.
A. We do not.

Q. In fact, most of the time we don’t (laughter). Could you give me some impressions... do you have any impressions of what it was like to be on campus out there? And when I say on campus, I know that everybody was going to and from campus; they weren’t living on campus. But what were your impressions about that experience?
A. Cold weather first comes to mind in terms of and I talk so often about the years that I went to the college and walked through cold and night and then being out there in the classrooms and really what it felt like to be in the mix of an educational environment. And I think that’s the most profound thing of which I found myself being able to really navigate the educational system, which I thought was much more difficult than what I perceived you know in terms of that.

But being as I say a full time worker and with the state and going back and forth with some after class, doing class and then in my Rock Valley days and then I would work till midnight, get up and go to school the next morning. I had all kinds of shifts working and getting that education and et cetera. But the Sangamon State experience, I guess it was straightforward.
that’s the best that I was going to get an education. I knew what I was there for. I wasn’t there to go to parties. I wasn’t there to go to join student associations. I was there to get the best thing I could get was that education.

Q. Many people that went to university out there of course were people who are in their work life already. And that has a different sense when you’re in a classroom with adults who have a real serious purpose I think.

A. Absolutely and there were youngsters that were in there. I remember a young lady out of Decatur, I don’t remember her name right now but she was young and she was working in the publishing. She is now a lawyer but I had the experience of coming in contact with younger people that were... knew what their goals where, knew where they were going. And I’m still running into people... younger people that were there when I was there, and they’ve gone on to become quite successful.

But to give a campus life, I didn’t have a campus life. And I sometimes I miss I like to think about because my wife talks about her campus life and other people talk about what it is to be on campus and to participate in the college games and all that stuff. But unfortunately for those of us that was working and trying to feed a family and raising kids at the same time and that just was not part of the environment at that time.

Q. Well, Larry, remember that SSU in its early days at any rate seemed rather desolate out there because there were very few buildings and there really was no trees or anything and there was just basically open cornfields all around there. I can remember the wind all the time.

A. Exactly, the wind. And those buildings and I’ve seen it, the one building where I attended most of my classes. But also one of the things that I remember so vividly about my study habits that I had at Sangamon State that every Sunday afternoon I would go to the library. And I would find the same place at a table there because I would look for that place and I would go there and I’d study and I’d study. And if there was somebody in that place, I just felt that my study space was invaded.

So that is the, probably the one most standout thing that I in terms of getting... but also my experience in writing I guess is the other, other big experience that I came away from there and how much writing I had to do. And I once again was kind of afraid that I couldn’t do that, but I wound up a published author. I’ve gotten several articles published. I’ve gotten many papers that influenced policy nationwide that I have written simply because of that deep and papers that I had to write. And I still have most of those papers somewhere in my house that were handwritten, typed. There are all still somewhere around that, but that was some of the most profound things that I remember.

And also one of the, the other big thing that happened to me while I was there at the university was I attended the National Police Academy at the University of Louisville during my... and those credits there that I got helped me with my graduate degree here. And while I was there
at the University of Louisville during the academy, I wrote my first manuscript that was published. And so we, the relationships in terms of being able to transfer my credits back and to help me graduate from there was just another good experience I had with the university.

Q. While you were there in 1976 through 1985, was there any change in your sort of your impression of the university or the campus or the environment or anything like?

A. Well I saw it grow. I had I guess the relationships that I developed I guess which I knew the presidents. I knew I believe Dr. Long and then. Naomi Lynn and the groups and it was kind of interesting how I, my career evolved and start to seeing all of the buildings, all the different things that’s all the difference and the diversity that started to come into the... Of course that was one of the biggest things that we were all concerned about from my standpoint of view and I got to know all the EEO officers. In fact, it... I became the President of the Illinois Affirmative Action Office Association as a state trooper, and all the university EEO officers reported into me as the president that was involved.

And I’m starting out, you know, I’m just... didn’t have the college when I came in but I rapidly became I guess it started to develop my leadership skills more and those changes, the interactions and... but the changes that started to occur and the buildings, the parking lots, the security, and I even got to the point before I left that I was had been selected to serve on one of the committees that oversaw the public safety piece. And I was named to that, but I never got to serve because I got recruited to Georgia right after I... before I finished my degree. I didn’t get to walk, I didn’t get to march. And I had to... my thesis, my master’s thesis had to be defended on the phone while I’m sitting in the chair as a deputy chief of police in Savannah, Georgia.

And so that was some exciting times for me and Dr. Charles Sampson was my advisor during that period of time. But the paper that I wrote, it was... it’s at the university now. It was called the “A Study of Adverse Impact on the Illinois State Police.” And many of us including myself had been impacted by adverse impact and the performance evaluation system in the Illinois State Police. And so doing that paper, developing that paper and it was kind of a tedious situation because I was writing about the Illinois State Police agency, which I worked in and you know in terms of that and then when you talk about adverse impact, you talk about a bit of discrimination.

So my paper that I wrote, it changed the policy within the Illinois State Police. We had a rule of three and for promotions and the performance evaluation was impacting minorities and females in such a way so that none of us could ever be promoted. So I was a part of that process; I wrote that paper, showed that there was adverse impact and got the rule of three changed to the rule of ten, which is still in effect today. From 1977 that rule in the Illinois State Police is a direct result of my writing my thesis paper on adverse impact within the State Police.

So those are just some things in terms of how that university has impacted me. And like I say the changes that have occurred under Naomi and under Dr. Long and now the chancellor that’s
there and of course I’ve had relationships with all of them and so it’s a great... Naomi and I served on the chamber board and United Way Board and so it was kind of interesting to see a college administrator in the same environment of which I graduated from, it’s unique. It’s just unique.

Q. I’m sure it is.

A. And so, so as a kid that started out late scared you know that I’m quite pleased on how that turned out. But now with the, under the new chancellor here, we’ve seen a complete almost change of staffing, administrators out there. People that used to be there when we were there a long time ago, they are all gone basically.

And we’ve seen diversity come, the student body’s changing, and the structural things. I remember the Homer Butler’s that used to be there and what they used to try to do in terms of promoting diversity within the university and those individuals, I remember those individuals have changed that environment out there. And that was a positive thing, very positive.

Q. Were there any other individuals like instructors for example that maybe come to mind either you know in a positive way or a negative way, that just made an impression on you, you know as you went through.

A. Charles Sampson as I say was my graduate advisor, but there was a gentleman I guess that taught management courses and I can’t remember his name for the life of me. But he was a community activist and I always remember him. Of course I used to run into him in the community doing different things, but those are some. And my philosophy teacher, I can’t remember their names but those were classes that I remember it having strangeness to me because of the different things that were being taught and how they were impacting me and what was being taught to me. But I can’t, I just and I knew I cannot remember hardly any of the names except Sampson’s and other people that... they are just escaping me.

Q. Was it basically I guess the sort of general tenor of these individuals? I mean in terms of...

A. Each one had their personalities.

Q. Yeah.

A. The personalities of them and the gentleman that I’m thinking of, he worked a lot in the John Hay Homes with the... He wore a ponytail but he... I just remember his teaching in management so much that had such a... I guess an impression on me because I’m saying, “Here’s a man in the education system that’s out here in the community.” And I find myself in the community and I guess his influence upon you know what he was doing, it kind of helped me to shape some of my community activity I think.
Q. I think there was maybe a little more community focus with faculty and the whole philosophy and the purpose of the university maybe early on.

A. Yes, it has.

Q. Some of that has changed now.

A. It has changed and I think we talk so much about how to connect the Springfield community with the college. I think that that’s an ongoing dialogue and I think that Dr. Holmes... Hogan, who just came in, he just had a conversation with me last week about he wants to start a project to connect the Springfield community with the college because we’re still finding that if... it still has that cornfield mentality from our standpoint of view. And there is a divide, a cornfield... it’s still dividing the university and Springfield community. So that’s one of the things that we’re seeing that someone is addressing. And I think with all the new buildings, the science buildings and all the other... the radio station that we have there and we’ve seen all that change has come about, but it still has not broken down the divide between the community and the university.

Q. In the early years of SSU they had something called University Week. Does that strike a bell with you at all?

A. It does not, it does not. And unfortunately for me, it never really entered my mind to really become active in those university events. It’s only recently lately that I’ve become involved with the Sage Society that has changed me and changed my approach to knowing what’s going on at the university. And I know that I’ve been out there for just all kinds of different things. The university has helped me sponsor minority career fairs, but that’s something that I came back to do later and utilizing the university. But participating in those things just was not a part of my everyday life. It just and I would assume that many state workers were in the same boat, that just did not... the campus life didn’t impact me.

Q. Did you have any classes off the primary campus site? You know there were times when there were classroom set up downtown?

A. Downtown, yes I went to many classes down at the Commerce Building, the building right there on Capitol and Sixth Street.

Q. The old Leland Hotel?

A. The Leland Building, yes. I spent many nights down at that classroom and I remember and for the life of me I don’t know what classes they were but I knew that... I don’t remember the instructors either but yes, we went there and the building now houses I guess the Illinois Commerce Commission police.

Q. I think that’s right.
A. That’s where we… we’ve been in that building numerous times and of course we did a lot of… oh I think that’s the only one that I can remember being off site on. I don’t think there was any other place that I went.

Q. Do have any sort of a preference of one over the other, the downtown classrooms versus the primary campus classrooms?

A. Well I always… we’re creatures of habits and the majority of our comfort was at the university.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And vaguely I think that that’s where, just like me going to the library that was my comfort zone. And so my preference was always at the university because it started to… as I began to get education and began to see the success that you had when you got education, it becomes a part of you. It becomes you know you ask yourself, “Why didn’t I do this earlier?”

And yes, my preference was definitely on campus because it gave you a sense of accomplishment with being you know a building downtown; that was not the university. That was an off-site thing that was not the university. It was a satellite, we called a satellite place. But the university itself in terms of seeing and in embracing the cold and embracing the library and all those things that makes it a part of the educational process. So that preference was always, and I’m still comfortable out there. I am just as comfortable out there now today as I was when I was a student.

Q. I know you mentioned that you had relationships with some of the chancellors over the years. Are there any maybe students that you knew of or knew or professors that you knew back when you were taking classes that you still have some association with?

A. Dr. Dave Lanier was there. We still… we’ve been neighbors for years. I never had a class under him. I don’t think I ever had a class under him, but we’re still… we’ve gone to church together. But any of the other professors there was not that interaction. And I think that most of my interaction came because of where I was in state government with the upper echelon of the university and not necessarily the professors et cetera. But Dr. Lanier is just… we’ve always just been neighbors and so he’s the only one that I can really say that we really had a relationship with.

Q. Some people... again the philosophy presumably was different when Sangamon State started up both I think in terms of the thinking about the professors themselves as well as maybe even the administration. Were there any campus practices such as the use of pass/fail for grading or the use of casual attire or unstructured class presentations, discussions, does any of that sort of ring a bell or was that even anything you sensed might have been going on down there?
A. Well I think vaguely, the pass/fail stuff was vaguely but I don’t… work experience… I guess life experience stuff was what you get credit for, for life experience and stuff. And I know I got credit for it, for those things. But … and I guess that unfortunately for me and growing up in a college environment and you really was going to college but you really didn’t understand or even care to understand the governance or the makeup of what was, you know students who was going there.

You say, “I got to get these grades.” And you want these grades from professors and such that, but you really didn’t know you know what went to make up the policies of the university in terms of student grading and student dressings and all that stuff. And I guess it all just went by my head, I guess it just didn’t resonate.

Q. Were they… was pass/fail grading an option that was provided to you or presented to you when you were in class or did you always get grades?

A. I always got grades.

Q. Yeah, ok.

A. I always got grades. That was I guess my GPA was over three, 3.2 or three point something there so I really… And like I say, once I graduated from Rock Valley College with honors and I had always… I graduated from high school most likely to succeed and so I’ve always been somewhere up in to the not really having to struggle to do… But the only thing I struggled with was those statistics classes. That was the one that… and I still have somewhere in my house, my papers on statistics.

Q. Yeah.

A. But I do remember I had to pass that particular subject with a C I do believe. And I remember having to... I was, I had moved from EEO to Investigation Internal Affairs with State Police and I was having to go all over the state and still study that statistics, get that statistics class done. And I remember that was probably the most difficult time that I had with college during that particular time doing those statistics classes and having to do internal investigations all over the state. And so it was kind of the roadblock that I had to overcome as for the classes in terms of what I had to achieve in order to get my degree.

Q. Sometimes students would gather either for the purpose of their classes or for the purpose of some camaraderie to places off of campus. Were there any... did you have any, a place where maybe you met with other students?

A. Never did. No, didn’t have that buddy system. As I say I developed a little of that when I went to the Southern Police Institute and I saw where they would get study groups together and… but I never utilized them. And I knew how helpful they are, but once again as a parent, as
a person that was traveling the nation with my job and trying to raise a family, just there was no
time for other people in terms of that.

Q. In more recent years, well you’ve already talked on this a little bit but maybe you could say a
little bit more about it. How often to you get out to campus?

A. Oh, lots in terms of the plays, lots… I get invited out to the luncheons. I’m now involved
with… as a mentor with a young lady. Just recently got chosen as a mentor and I was asked to
serve in that program. So I’m out there for all kinds of reasons now. We were out there, my
granddaughter, one of the biggest reasons we were out there so much is she was in the
Nutcracker last year and we were out there forever with the practices et cetera. But now I’m as
I say, the last time I was there I met with my new mentee.

Q. So would you would guess you’re out there maybe once a week?

A. No.

Q. Every couple weeks?

A. Probably not that often. I’m probably, probably out there every three months I’m out there
for some reason.

Q. Ok.

A. I would think that. But I have emails, so that’s the… See that’s the, I email the EEO Officer. I
email the multicultural officer. I email the young lady that’s my secretary out there that she
works for me. So I’m constantly out there through some, not physically but through emails et
cetera, our preferred way of communicating anymore.

Q. Well it appears that your education played a significant part based on your comments in
forming, in supporting you in your career. But what would you say the benefit or the result of
getting your education out there has been for you and your wife?

A. It has put me in a position that I would have never been in if I had not gotten the education.
I’ve been fortunate enough as I said to become a writer, to become a curator, to become an
executive that’s been recruited south twice to manage police departments, managed the
Department of Children and Family Service as a Cook County… I’m being, I’m traveling the
nation now with my exhibit. I have a traveling exhibit that I put together like United States
Marshalls that I’m traveling the nation and educating.

I have my homes, my family. In terms of how my personality is shaped, it’s always shaped
through that educational process. And it has made my life and my career both very successful.
And my community life, I couldn’t ask for better than where I sit within my community in my
life. And I owe that to those universities in which I’ve been in.
Q. Well I think we’re toward the end of this interview with one exception. I would just like to ask, Bob, if there is anything other than what we’ve already talked about that you might want to include.

A. Well there’s always something that is there. I guess that the importance of the university itself to this community is something that we really have to look at. And I look at it even a little bit more deeply from an African American standpoint of view because we’ve had so many African Americans that has benefited from Sangamon State and now the University of Illinois we can see them all around the city here.

The Urban League Director, the Park District, they serve on everything that’s there and I think that we don’t emphasize that enough in terms of how that university has impacted the African American community here in Springfield. It really has. And I know and I’ve been in the south and I know how Jackson State, the African American university has impacted the nation because there’s graduate students.

But Illinois, but Springfield to have had the impact on the leadership of African Americans here in the city is just phenomenal. And I’m just saying that my own, just for my own experiences, it’s just shaped out of that experience. So I think that’s the importance for all of us for the entire community is it is just there.

And I think that as we move forward and we bring in a new chancellor and with the diversity that’s going on out there at the university first this time, I hope that that cornfield space can be kind of removed so that we can all communicate a little bit better, interact a little bit better with the student and faculty out there because we really… you know I don’t know if the professors, new professors ever come out into the community. And those are some of the things… that is why we don’t get to know… if you don’t go to a classroom, you will never get to know them.

Q. Well thank you, Bob, very much for taking the time to do this interview and we’ve certainly I think learned a lot from your perspective about what it was like in those early days. Thank you.

A. Thank you.

38 minutes 0 seconds

End of Interview