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Side A Joshua Daley, Steve Kater, and George Moore – “Oral History Interview”

Side B Joshua Daley, Steve Kater, and George Moore – “Oral History Interview”

[Summary]

This interview with Mr. George Moore – one of the first seventeen students enrolled at Trinity in September of 1962 - was conducted to revisit the first years at Trinity Junior College, which is now Trinity Western University. The interview was conducted on Wednesday February 17th, 2004 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Moore at 7:00 pm and ran approximately 36 minutes in length. The interview was conducted by Joshua Daley and Steve Kater, both Seniors at Trinity Western University studying Teacher Education and History.

Mr. Moore begins with some thoughts regarding events prior to his attendance of the college. He speaks of how he came to hear about the college, his desire to attend Trinity Junior College as opposed to UBC, and the pros and cons of the institution during that period of time in 1962. George provides some background information regarding the presence of the school in Langley and how it was received, church affiliations, and life on campus. He talks about what the early years were like in terms of living conditions, the cafeteria or snack bar, social outings and clubs. George comments on the limitations and "kinks" of attending a new institution, on some of the professors and their roles in his early life, and his reasons for holding them in high regard. He makes mention of the high quality of the education and educators at the college, his reasons for enjoying the life on campus and the fact that he ended up leaving following his first year and half.

George was also asked about the ideological concerns of the school, whether in his opinion it had the same vision then as it does today, and if it is a different institution now, according to his recent experiences with Alumni and Chapel events. He speaks of his experiences following the college years and how his time at TJC equipped him for the marketplace and workforce. He also speaks about development of the school as he has seen it grow over the past four decades. George speaks briefly concerning spiritual matters as well.

The interview concludes with some personal recollections of the school and its campus, locations, sounds, friends and buildings.

George Moore was exceptionally gracious and a joy to interview; his comments illustrate a very different view of the school than we hold of it now.

[Side A]

[00:00] This is Steve Kater and Josh Daley, and we are students at Trinity Western University. Today we are introducing [sic] Mr. George Moore on the topic of the experience of the very first group of students enrolled at what was then Trinity Junior College. The interview is taking place today at George's house [in Surrey] on 17th of February as part of the History 310 Oral History project.

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S - Ah George, can you give us a little bit of your background before you enrolled at Trinity Junior College?

G- Ah I graduated from high school in 1959 in North Vancouver and ah I worked for two and a half years in the Vancouver post office before the school opened in September of 1962.

S- Were you a resident of B.C.?

G- Yes, yes I was born in Campbell River and ah lived practically my whole life in North Vancouver.

S- Interesting.

J – Um, How old were you then, when you enrolled at Trinity?

G- Ah I was twenty-one.

S- Where did you, or where or when did you first hear of Trinity Junior College?

G-In 1959 or 1960 when the planning committee was getting underway with some of their, their meetings in Whalley and other, ah, conference locations.

S- What made you choose to go to Trinity Junior College?

G- Ah, I think ah two things: the re- low, reasonable tuition rates and the fact that Pastor Johnson’s son Morris, and my brother David, had decided to enroll there.

S- Um, What did your family think of your attendance?

G- Ah, my mother she- was, she wasn’t against it, but she expressed some concern that perhaps I should have carried on my working career and just studied part time or at night.

S – It appears that your brother attended as well. Was it, what was that like for you, in terms of going to the same school, as I believe your older brother?

G- Um, it was um, fairly congenial, although he, he was more academically keen than I was. But we had different sets of friends there and shared some. And ah, we- there wasn’t, there wasn’t any sibling rivalry to speak of.

S- Finally, what did your friends think of your attendance? Was it a respected place? Did they think anything different of you because you were going there? Or anything of that sort?

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G- I don't recall much reaction from friends at the time, since I'd lost contact with most of my high school friends after working two and a half years on the night shift at the post office.

S- Um.

J- Something that I'm interested in that we failed to mention in here. You mentioned '59 and '60 there was a planning committee that went through Whalley. How much of a presence did Trinity make of itself, like, before it actually became an institution? Were they trying to gain support from the public? Or did they go to the churches? How was that? Do you have any information, at all, to shed on that at all?

G- Certainly a **[5:00 minutes]** major emphasis on getting support from the Free Church people and related Evangelical groups.

S- Did you belong to the Free Church? Or the- an Evangelical church?

G- Yes, I don't remember whether I had an actual membership card at the time but I had been attending faithfully in North Vancouver at a Free Church for a number of years.

S- Was that your parents' home church as well then?

G- My mother's church for quite a few years, my dad having passed away some years before, when I was, when I was eight and a half.

S- Hmm. How long did you attend at Trinity Junior College?

G- Ah, I attended for a year and a half, left in February of '64

J- Where did you go after that?

G- Oh I went back into the work force and became a meter reader for thirteen and a half years for BC Hydro.

S- Was there a field of study that you were focusing on in terms of getting a degree at Trinity Junior College?

G- Ah, in a way I had a general sort of a plan when I went out there to be able to get into some branch of science or engineering, but my interest in studies developed more in the areas of philosophy and sociology and theology.

S – What programs, now that we're talking education, what programs did Trinity Junior College offer? Was there a wide variety or can you recall, like, what some of your friends or your brother were interested in?

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G- Well at that time it was just a two year program and um I really can't say what four year degrees or certificates the other students had in view.

S- Did you live on campus during your time?

G- Ah yes, I had a dorm room there.

S- What was that like? Any stories come to mind? Or any memories?

G- Oh lots of comradeship and sharing stories and pushing the limits on how little studies could be done in a lot of the evenings. (laughs)

J- Now it obviously it was small in that first year, (Mr. Moore clears his throat) but how many students that attended that year actually lived in residence? The majority?

G- Um, I think it was slightly more than half, but I am pretty sure it wasn't more than ten.

S- What was life like in regards to the social scene on campus? Were there a lot of activities to partake in outside of school?

G- Um--

S- Or was it still limited because it was just in the first year of its--

G- Well others will probably remember activities that I don't, but there definitely was basketball and volleyball and ping pong. And of course jogging around campus and taking walks for, either for exercise or companionship. And I suppose skipping the odd rock across the lake

J- Now obviously, like, there wasn't going to be teams established that were playing with, like, other universities in leagues. Did you guys compete against churches or did you just play amongst yourselves at the university? Do you recall, for the basketball or volleyball that you mentioned?

G- Um, oh definitely [10:00 minutes] inter-squad practices and games in the barnasium and there may have been a church league that some of the students were affiliated with. I just can't remember for sure now.

S- Now, you said I believe 'barnasium', now was that a gym in a barn?

G- Yes, yes that's right Steve. Yeah.

S- Interesting.

G – With sloping walls. (laughter)

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S- Interesting.

S- In your recollection, was Trinity Junior College respected in the academic world or was it viewed still as a small Christian school?

G- Mostly the latter, although as the faculty became well, better known to some of the colleagues in the outside institutions, that began to change fairly quickly.

S- What were student-prof relations like? Were they very close? Did you feel a friendship with professors or were they regarded simply as smarter or more elegant than the average student?

G- Well there was a fairly friendly, respectful atmosphere in our classrooms. Some professors were more dignified or formal than others, but it was the administration that commanded more out- outwardly respect, shall we say, in the way we expressed ourselves and how we conducted ourselves.

J- Being such a small university, was there interaction with the faculty outside of classes? Did you go for teas, coffees, Bible studies and whatnot, or was it pretty much restricted to the classroom?

G- There were a number of times when faculty members would take us to games or events or to church on Sunday in Abbotsford, Langley, or Whalley, for example, or when the choir would go further afield, say to Port Coquitlam or North Van.

S- Um, if you can recall, what was one of your best experiences at the college during your time there?

G- Hmm, well possibly, the geology field trips that Professor Walters took us on. We could see different rock formations in the natural setting and not just examine the specimens in the lab.

S- Um, What did you value most about the university?

G- Um--

J- That can be both a short term question seeing as you made the reference you didn't take too much of an interest after your first six years, but now that you have a lot of reflections, did it help you to be involved in the world?

G- Well, I would say that the widely read and thorough education that the professors, especially professor Mattson and professor Asa, had in their disciplines, which I wish I could have had more time in their classrooms, or another year perhaps of taking courses from them to really benefit from more of their knowledge.

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S- Now if we can backtrack for a little, you mentioned that you were there for a year and a half.

What were some changes that occurred between the first year and the second year? Were there much of a raise in students that attended the school? Was there growth? Any new developments on campus that you can recall?

G- Ah yes, the number of students went up from seventeen to forty-nine I think it was. And I believe the um one building was begun, if not completed, in that second year. Certainly by the, yeah, I believe the chapel was there the first year, ah, but they started to make rearrangements of where the administrative and teaching functions [15:00 minutes] took place, and making plans for larger buildings in the future.

S- Um, now you mentioned that you were there for a year and a half, and even though your time was somewhat short, did Trinity Junior College prepare you for life in the working world? You mentioned you went into reading meters and such. Did that come from experiences at Trinity or was that just something you wanted to get into, apart from the educational setting at Trinity Junior College?

G- I thought at the time that BC Hydro might be the vehicle to get into some, some technical or scientific field, but I guess the only link to Trinity would be the outdoor setting for my work, uh, which, which um we had with the dormitory setting there at the college and--

S- Have you kept up at all with the progression of Trinity Western University throughout the years? Um.

G- Yeah, several visits over the years, to lectures or to alumni events there in the centre there at the north end of the campus with the underground parking, um, and also one chapel I recall at the new building there, the Dr. Enarson—

S- Gymnasium—

G- Yeah gymnasium. And for a very inspiring guest speaker from back in Ontario, I recall. So I- quite pleased with the expansion and the provision for the dormitory and in-residence facilities--

S- For sure— (both speaking at once)

G- For students, married and otherwise.

S- Is there one thing that sticks out about Trinity Western today in your, maybe from your past or most recent visit, or maybe a visit prior to that, that just, yeah, makes you respect Trinity or makes you admire its growth and development?

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G- Well it reminds me to pay tribute to the down-to-earth, practical vision of Dr. Asa and Dr. Mattson, and the hard work Dr. Asa and Professor Friesen and others put into laying out the cement in front of the old chapel and ended up not keeping some of the walkways in other buildings.

S-Do you affirm the direction which the school is presently taking? In regards to its expansion, its development, offering more and more programs, but also its direction theologically and where it's heading?

G- Um, I have to confess I'm not too acquainted with the issues that the question pertains to particularly, but I recognize there's always a debate in Christian schools about whether the focus of the studies should be strictly theological or should they include broader aspects of missions or even the liberal arts, and I don't come down on any one choice myself. It depends on the constituency of the school, in my view.

J – Having participated back in '62, then, with the changes they did in '79 making it into a four-year-program, is that something you saw as beneficial to the community at large?

G- That I can give my assent, and Amen to. Yes.

S- Has there been any news or information about the school in the past few decades that has caused you trouble or that, you know, you disagreed with in terms of their direction or development?

G- No, no, no there hasn't.

S- Is there any new development you think, that, I don't know, you would like Trinity Western University to take, or anything maybe that sticks out in that sense?

G-Um, I would, I would think that, that wherever the greatest needs are, in- either in church planting or in missions work or in working with, with [20:00 minutes] poor people or AIDS sufferers in Africa, that there should be some effort to have courses or workshops to try and address them.

S- Um, Trinity Western University presently is very strong-willed in the sense of building community. If you can, do you have any recollections as to if that was the case in its formation in 1962? Was there a strong sense of community already when it started? Or was it still in its growing stages?

G- Yes, I think there was a fair degree of group identity and concern for each others' welfare and how each local church was doing

S- Were there, if you can recall, were there any standards that you had to sign to as to abstinence from drinking or from drugs? In that sense were they strong community standards?

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G- Yes, yes there were. Definitely it was expected of the students.

J- Do you recall, do you recall any of the ones you had to affirm? Like, was there something- see today we at present have something involving sexual relations, involving tobacco use, drug use and alcohol. Those are the four don'ts. Did you have the same four when you attended?

G- Yes, yes I did, I forget whether, what, if anything, they had us actually sign, but they expected us to, to abide by proper Christian lifestyle and abstain from those things. Yeah.

J- And also, you touched on- It seems like you want the university to carry on a strong mandate into the world, like to impact the world. Now I understand the geographics of the Lower Mainland were very different back then, but at present we have a lot of programs and clubs where the students will get together and they'll go downtown Vancouver and do inner city ministries. They'll go into Langley and they'll just perform art shows and drama, and the choir obviously goes out, but there's a very strong desire for the school to send its students out to be ambassadors of Christ within Vancouver, Langley and the surrounding area. Outside of the question we asked you about sporting activities and whatnot, did the community come together to direct any sort of student-led activities in any part of the Lower Mainland?

G- Hmm. The emphasis I remember was- especially among the girls, but everybody was invited to participate, if they wanted, in Sunday School, teaching in different churches in the Lower Mainland.

J- Okay.

S- Do you still support TWU as an institution?

G- Ah, financially I haven't been able to be that generous lately, but I'm (clears throat) certainly sympathetic to them.

S- Ah, would you consider sending your loved ones there and recommending it to others?

G- Oh yes, yes I would do that.

J- Something I'm interested in. You spoke about chapel when you visited there quite recently, you said it was, I don't remember the word, an enriching experience. How did your chapel experience then, besides from the size, differ from what you guys would have had as chapel back then? Was it, did it follow the same kind of format with worship and a message? Was it student led or was it led by the leadership of the school?

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G- This time it was more student led in the praise and the worship and not the hymn-singing that we definitely had back there in the early '60s, and the chapel service I attended was certainly challenging for Christians to be leaders in society and business.

J- How does that compare with back then? Was it student-led when you attended or was it led by the administration?

G- Usually, well, uh, occasionally students took part, ah, but usually just to, to lead in one hymn or song, and mostly faculty organized and led

J- Was chapel attendance mandatory?

G- I thought it was supposed to be that first year. But my memory is a little hazy on when that may have changed. (laughs)

J- Alright.

S- Can you recall some of the, maybe, experiences of fellow classmates or recollections about fellow classmates or any stories along those lines?

G- Ah yes, without, without naming names, I can remind everybody that there was a series of students dunked in the swimming pool, and others threatened to be dunked (laughter) and various pillow-fights that took place and uh-- (laughs)

S- Now, was there a swimming pool on campus?

G- A small pool that later was filled in.

S- Interesting.

J- Overall, being a part of the first year of the university, was that a rewarding experience, something to be proud of, like “I was a part of the first year of the college,” or was there a lot of kinks to get out of the system while it was trying to establish itself? Did it have a lot of flow and a lot of good spirits, or was it definitely a first year experience and everybody kind of suffered together as they went through the first year of establishing the university?

G- Ah yes, I think [25:00 minutes] others, perhaps my brother might have had regrets about not being able to take certain courses, but I felt it was a good orientation to, to study in general, especially in humanities and theology, and to get acquainted with the overall aims of the Free Church to educate its youth. And my only regrets centre on the second year I was there, and not excelling more in my studies.

J- You mentioned the Free Church, was there a broad spread of denominations that were represented there at Trinity when it started, or was it mainly from certain denominations?

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G- Well I do recall that my friend George Ney, who I think was living for some years in Lethbridge, Alberta- I believe he was a Baptist from Victoria, and I think there was one or two others from other church groups that I can't just identify at the moment.

J- It was a pretty broad spread for the most part? Not particularly E-V-Free?

G- You could say that, yeah.

S- Um, can you recall any of the growing pains mentioned/talked about in your first year of experience? Do you recall any growing pains or experiences that were directly related to the fact that Trinity Junior College was in its first year?

G- Ah yes, there certainly was the mud and, uh, gravel and cedar tree twigs and branches that would be blowing and sifting around campus from time to time, and tracked into the chapel and the dorms, that made it necessary to sweep up more often than otherwise might have been the case. Other growing pains, certainly there was financial problems administration were constantly challenged with.

S- On that note, was Trinity a cheaper place than UBC [University of British Columbia] for example, or SFU [Simon Fraser University]? I'm not sure if they were in existence?

J- Yes, they definitely were then, yup. (both speaking)

S- Um, did you experience, or can you recall, any other organizational, like, what were the classroom sizes like, or you know, were things run always on time or you know, were there any problems in that area?

G- Um, they were run practically always on time or within a minute or two of the scheduled times, yeah.

J- Was it mainly a local representation of students that came to the college or, I mean, you mentioned Lethbridge and Victoria. Were people coming from all over or was it mainly local?

G- Oh it was mainly local. I think the few students like George Ney and one other student from up in the Cariboo- they lived locally while the school year was in operation.

J- Did that change at all during the second year?

G- Oh yes, um, at least to the extent that the students as far away as Abbotsford and perhaps, perhaps further commuted in.

J- What kind of impact did Trinity Junior College have- Langley must have been a very small community at that point in time; did it get a warm reception from the community,

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or, when you went out and about as students from the college, or was there a bit of disdain that was sensed? What was your general perception of it all with the college now being in Langley and having a pretty strong presence?

G- I don't have too accurate a feel for that, not having gone out on the business part of the town of Langley too much, but the Langley Free Church certainly was friendly and hospitable and supportive of the college in every way. And I suppose, I suppose, I believe it was an Anglican Church that sent a student in the second year, as I recall, and I trust that they had the same attitude too (chuckles).

S- Now back to your experience on living on campus. Was there food provided for you?

G- Yes.

S- Was that enjoyable? Presently, I think a lot of people on campus who live off cafeteria food are not so keen (laughs) like, going there day after day.

G- Yeah.

S- What was it like back in 1962?

G- Well I guess everything, every kind of fare can become monotonous or boring, just like the Israelites traveling through the wilderness experienced (laughs). But I was quite satisfied with the cooking of the Jenstads, [the chefs] at that time those first two years.

J- Bit of a personal question, you can opt not to answer if you prefer. At what point of your Christian journey were you at when you arrived at the school? Was it a catalyst for your pursuit of God or were you already pretty firm in your faith when you arrived there? Just wondering where it fits on your timeline?

G- Um, it provided some new perspectives and challenges to learn more about the Christian faith, and I was able to pursue that in the churches I attended afterwards, to a certain extent, yeah.

S- When you look back at your time at Trinity Junior College, are you glad that you went there for the year and a half that you were there?

G- Ah, in all- in balance yes. Yeah.

S- Is there anything that sticks out that you would, maybe- or make you reconsider or--

[End Side A]

[Side B]

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S- [30:00 minutes] Ah, sorry George, I'll just ask that question again. When you look back at your time at Trinity Junior College, are you glad you decided to go there? Are there any, is there anything you would like to change or any regrets that you might have?

G- Oh, just the regret of not completing the second year and the possibility, looking back, of either enrolling at UBC in the second year like my brother did, or possibly going to some technical school that would be directly related to a future job.

S- I heard from other people who have just done the same interview- was there a typhoon that hit campus? Or something close to that?

G- Yeah, very, very high winds at one point there. But I forget just what date it was. I think it was probably in 1964. I recall that a lot of trees were down in Stanley Park

S- Yup, interesting.

S- Is there anything you would like to share with us as we conclude this interview?

G- Oh I could say that very pleasant, idyllic surroundings there and the cabins, dormitory cabins were quite rustic and quaint, you might say. Sort of evoked the feeling of a construction site where some of them came from, and also the feeling of a wilderness camp I guess. And the trains going by at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and 10 o'clock at night was quite, quite a symbol of the campus after a while.

S- Yeah.

G- And also it was quite- rural feeling to the campus as a whole, and especially underneath the big cedar trees there near the dorms.

S- Yep, Trinity still had those trains running by morning and night.

G- Hmm.

S- And they still get to wake up or hear the trains running in the afternoon.

G- Yeah, and also there were a few, at least, a few ducks in the smaller lake at the time, not, not the numbers of geese that have been, in more recent years.

J- Just to comment on those cabins. So the dorms were set up in cabin form were they? Was there like a guys' cabin and a gals' cabin?

G- Yeah. Hmm.

J- Hmm. That sounds rustic. (laughter)

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S- Very interesting. George, thank you very much for your time. We very much appreciated it, and going back through the years and learning a lot more about your experiences in 1962, as one of the first students at Trinity Junior College, and we thank you for all that you shared, for your insights and your recollections.

G- Well, thank you Steve and Josh.

J- You're welcome!

S- Thank you.

[End Side B]

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