

Interview

with

JAMES MOORE

October 16, 2003

by Malinda Maynor

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The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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MALINDA MAYNOR: Okay this is tape 101603-JM and this is Malinda Maynor interviewing Mr. James Moore. Mr. Moore just start out, tell us your full name, your birthday, what your address is.

JAMES MOORE: I am James Moore. I'm from Prospect, born and reared at Prospect. I was born August 18th, 1922, and I've lived here. At the present time I'm living on Highway 711 at Pembroke, but I still consider myself from Prospect. I've been around now for eighty-one years, and I've been a part of and witnessed a lot of the changes that have come about in the county and well, yes, the whole county.

MM: Start with Mr. Early Bullard and the formation of the Prospect—

JM: Early Bullard married my father's sister Emma, and he was our first Indian judge. This came about in 1954. In 1954 a group of us here at Prospect, we built a clubhouse on land adjacent to the school property, and we like to give ourselves a lot of credit, not all the credit because he became our first judge. It was four districts, Maxton, Pembroke and Prospect, and there's another one in there. But anyway, we at this club here at Prospect like to give themselves a lot of credit for his election. He was the first Indian judge, had never been one before. I think it came as a surprise to the white people and caught them by surprise. When this happened, there was a group in Maxton, Gus Spero[s], Buddy Dunn and others, it took them by such surprise until they thought that they could go to headquarters, to the Democratic headquarters in Raleigh and do something about it, which they were told they could not. After he became judge, he appointed Mr. Lacy Maynor as his assistant. Mr. Lacy was my seventh grade teacher in 1935. Naturally I supported him. I don't remember just, I believe it was two terms Uncle Early served, and then he gave it up and Mr. Lacy became judge and he ran unopposed as

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long as he served. However, I believe, I'm not certain about this, but I believe that there was a law fixed to the effect that to be a recorder's court judge that you had to have a law degree, and of course that was made to eliminate anymore recorder's court judges. Then that's about it I reckon for the judge seat.

MM: Well, go back and tell us a little bit about how you all organized to get Mr. Early elected.

JM: Well, going back to judge, the recorder's judge, we organized by roads. Each road in the Prospect community was assigned to a certain person, and of course we gave ourselves a lot of credit, and we did this by visiting house to house, being assured people were registered to vote and being assured if they registered that they voted on election day. It was carried out well. I don't think we, after this the elections since then, we've never gone to that extent. [coughs] Excuse me. But it was carried out well, and it brought about then after this, this was in 1954 and by 1960 we had integration to come. The school here at Prospect, its boundaries extended to the Hoke County line up kind of northeast of Maxton, and that was where it was expected that we might have a problem with integration picking up the different students. They had a bus, an extra large bus at Prospect that they gave this route to, and it would pick up the students that were expected to be integrated. It went up in that direction, and it dropped off the primary students at Oxendine School. But anyway, the principal Mr. Danford Dial he came to me, and he said I want to know that I have a man on that bus. He says, will you drive for me if you don't drive but for two or three months which I agreed to. I agreed to drive and I drove for three months and told him I'd had enough of it. We did have incidents that could have turned into violence. However it didn't. I'm not giving myself credit for that. It

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was handled somewhere it wasn't. But it almost became violent at the school, the people in the community. So it was pretty rough time however we came through it without anybody getting hurt of which I'm glad.

MM: Now what about the club activities in the 1960s after Mr. Lacy was kept running unopposed. What did y'all focus on at that point?

JM: Not going back to, after Mr. Lacy was eliminated. The law was passed to eliminate him running for judge—

MM: Do you remember about what time that was?

JM: No. I guess, Mr. () I think it was four terms. I think Uncle Early served two and Mr. Lacy two. We still stayed together as a club, but we were never as close knit as a group as we were to begin with. However, this club was founded. It doesn't exist now, and it was determined at the time when we were building it--Mr. Mack Locklear let us have the land to put it on. His land adjoined the schools. His land adjoined the schools, and he let us have the land to put it on with the provision that if we ever ceased as a club, that it would go back to his family. It never has, I really don't know just how it stands at this time except that it has been used, it was used for years by-- I don't know what to say about this--as a kind of nursery thing for the young people and I believe right now there's, I believe the sheriff's department has it as what would you call that.

MM: A substation.

JM: As a substation, yeah. I don't know just how what the status, its status right at this time. I don't know.

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MM: Talk then, you had started to talk about some of the breakdown that happened around when the county wanted to integrate the schools.

JM: When the integration came, like I said I took the job of driving the bus for Mr. Danford, and there were some incidents where it could have become violent on the bus. But however, it didn't. I'm not giving myself credit for it. It just worked out that it didn't become violent. However, I think maybe why I decided I didn't want to continue driving the bus was one morning I drove in and unloaded, and there was a group of parents. They were all Indian parents at the school. The parents and Mr. Danford got into a confusion. It almost turned violent it looked like, but it didn't. Mr. Danford resigned. He took this, he used this as an excuse to resign, and he had done such a wonderful job as principal. But anyway, he resigned, and Mr. James Arthur Jones who was assistant principal at that time, he became our principal, and he stayed for years. I don't remember just how many. But anyway, I want to say right here that the progress that has come about at Prospect is due largely to those two men, Mr. Danford and Mr. James Arthur.

MM: What were those Indian parents so upset about?

JM: Well, I don't know. It was just, they didn't want the colored in the school. I don't believe I brought a single white student to Prospect. I believe it was, they might have been some that came here, but they didn't come on the bus that I was. But I didn't bring any white students. It was Indian and colored, and I think that was the problem. I'd have to say that the Indians were just upset about integration.

MM: So they wanted to stop black students from coming to the school.

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JM: They didn't want the black students to come here. There's always been, there was a fear for a long time that the Prospect and Maxton was going to be consolidated. I don't know. I haven't heard it talked recently, but for a long time it was talked that Maxton and Prospect would be consolidated. I'm proud that they haven't because prior to integration Maxton was one of the towns that had its own school, its city schools like Lumberton, Red Springs and so forth. I was sorry to see Prospect, Maxton and Pembroke consolidated together, the high school. I think it took something from each community, especially Prospect.

MM: Describe what you think it, what do you think it took away?

JM: Well, what did it take away? I just feel like that anybody performs better at home than they will away from home. As a result there's a list of students that have gone on beyond the college level and become doctors, lawyers and what not from Prospect. Since that time, since consolidation of Prospect, Pembroke and Maxton came about, we've had one to go beyond the college level, and he became a dentist from Prospect. Prior to that there was just, they're listed, but I don't have it right before me right at this time.

MM: But you think there were more Indians from Prospect who achieved more things.

JM: During this period of time I do. However, we've had people outside of Prospect that have become famous. Some of them, Dr. Brooks and his brothers and others. But I think it took something about I really just can't say what, but I think it weakened each school when they consolidated.

MM: (tape cuts off) Prospect.

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JM: There may be, but right now I just, I can't think of just what we are. It may be that I think of something later that I could talk about, but right as of now I just can't think of it.

MM: Yeah. Well, we can—

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by L. Altizer, November 14, 2003