

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Peace Corps/Foreign Missions Project

Upper Volta Mission

O. H. 621

PAUL MOORE

Interviewed

by

Joseph Rochette

on

December 10, 1984

PAUL HERMAN MOORE

Paul Herman Moore was born on October 17, 1901 in Eldred, Florida, the son of Charles S. and Ella M. Moore. Going to school in Florida, he graduated from St. Lucie County High School, Ft. Pierce, Florida. In 1925 Pastor Moore entered Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri where he received his diploma in 1928. Marrying the late Lillian Ellen Moore on September 26, 1928, he began his ministry as a pastor with the Assembly of God Church.

While establishing and pastoring churches in Girard and Weathersfield Township, Pastor Moore worked at Automatic Sprinkler (1929) and Youngstown Steel Door (1930-1937). Throughout these early years the Moores felt called to serve in the foreign missions, especially in Africa. For that reason they served as missionaries in the West African country, Upper Volta, for 31 years (1938-1969). There Pastor Moore was involved in establishing churches and training local people to be ministers in their own churches. The Moores worked primarily with the Mossi, the largest ethnic group in the country, and learned to speak their language, More.

Pastor Moore presently lives in Canfield, Ohio and serves as Minister of Visitation at the Highway Tabernacle where he has been since 1970. He has been honored with a plaque indicating 34 years of missionary service and a certificate recognizing 50 years in the ministry.

Joseph G. Rochette

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INTERVIEWEE: PAUL MOORE

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Rochette

SUBJECT: Upper Volta, Foreign Missions(Assembly of God),
Islam, Animism

DATE: December 10, 1984

R: This is an interview with Paul H. Moore for the Youngstown State University Peace Corps/Foreign Missions Project, by Joseph Rochette, at 6542 Kirk Road, Canfield, Ohio, on December 10, 1984 at 2:56 p.m.

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your family?

M: I was born in Florida and went to bible school in Missouri. I met my wife there; we both graduated in 1928. We started preaching the gospel right here at home. Three months after we got married we took over a church in Weathersfield. We were there for six years. We pioneered the Girard First Assembly of God and we were there three years until it was strong enough to have a pastor of their own. Then we went to Africa. We went in 1938. First we went to France in March of 1938. We were in a town just outside of Paris, Argenteuil. We studied French there under Madame Mabillon and lived with Mr. and Mrs. Mabillon there. About that time there was a war scare when Chamberlain went to Munich and appeased Hitler. We had already made arrangements to go on a boat from Marseilles so we left even though we weren't through studying French. We went to Africa then. We arrived in Abidjan; that's the capital of the Ivory Coast. We had bought a small automobile in Paris which we drove North through Ivory coast to Ouagadougou, which is the capital of Upper Volta. The country of Upper Volta is now called Burikina Faso. Missionaries had already been there for a number of years so we weren't the start of work up there. We arrived there and had a great, big plate of fried chicken. They were waiting for us when we got there. We were missionaries at Ouagadougou our whole first term. The term at that time was supposed to be four years, but because of the war we had to

stay there seven years. During that time my father died and I didn't get any news about it until two and a half years later. No mail came during the war.

R: Were there a lot of French at that time in Upper Volta as far as soldiers and military?

M: The French enlisted soldiers from all of their colonies. There were a lot of Africans there that the French had trained. The president of France gave in to Hitler at that time. Sometimes German Army officers would come to Ouagadougou during the war. When the American soldiers came in to North Africa later on, they put soldiers at our gates. We were confined in our own place and we were supposed to not leave.

R: So you noticed there were some differences during the war as far as you being able to leave when you wanted?

M: Just when American Soldiers went into North Africa. That was only for about three or four months. Before, we had liberty to go anywhere we wanted. We could go somewhere in our car if we had the gasoline. Before we went anyplace we had to report to the police to where we were going, and when we got there we had to report to the police there.

R: You said you left for foreign missions in 1938. What got you interested?

M: I felt called to go to Africa. I heard a Baptist missionary in Florida speak about it. I felt definite in going to Africa as a missionary. The girl I married went to bible school because she felt she had a call to Africa. We started to work here, but we always felt that at some time we were going to go to Africa.

The Lord worked wonderful miracles here before we went. For instance, the little church that we took over had just had a split. An evangelist had come there, took a part of them, and went down to Girard. The former pastor had Sunday school in her house with a few. The first service we had on Sunday morning there were eight people counting ourselves there. But the Lord helped us.

We had cottage prayer meetings in homes of people in the neighborhood. One example is the Richards Home. We believe in divine healing. Grandma Richards' hand had been hurt eighteen years previously. She had gone into the barn and a goat bucked her hand and it wouldn't heal. For eighteen years it would never heal. We prayed for grandma's hand and within a week it was completely healed. That word got around in the community in Weathersfield and people started coming back to our church.

The people of the church told us about a person in Hubbard who was dying with tuberculosis. The doctor said that one lung was completely gone and the other one would only function a month or so. We went over there and explained divine healing to him; he was a perfect stranger to us. We explained about divine healing from the Bible and we prayed for him. We went back home and in a week or two we thought we should go over and see how he was coming along. We went back over there and he was out in the barn milking a cow. He was completely healed and he lived for years after that.

When we started the church in Girard our pianist, Lucy Mitchell, got very sick and went to St. Elizabeth's Hospital. The doctors tried different things. What she had was an acid pregnancy; everything she ate turned to acid. She couldn't eat. They tried different kinds of IV's and nothing worked. The doctor told her husband that she would die because they couldn't feed her. Lucy said if she was going to die, she was going to die at home. Ed, her husband, came by our apartment in Girard and told us what the doctor said. He told us that tomorrow he was going to get her and bring her home. That night the Lord woke me up in the middle of the night with a burden of prayer for her. I got out of bed, went into the sitting room, and I prayed earnestly for her. The Lord gave me a promise from the Old Testament that I had never learned; I had to look it up in the concordance in the Bible, "Concerning the works of my hands, command ye me." (Isaiah 45:11) I claimed that verse and I had the assurance God heard me and I went back to bed and went to sleep. Ed came by our house early in the morning on his way to pick up Lucy. I told him, "Ed, Lucy is not going to die. God gave me assurance last night that she is going to live." He went and got her and brought her home. Lucy got a consuming desire for three things: buttermilk, spinach, and Limberger cheese. She ate them and felt no ill effects. She ate some more without any distress. Within a week's time she was down eating with the rest of the people at the table. She went through with the pregnancy and when it was time to be delivered she went back again to St. Elizabeth's Hospital. She saw a nurse go by in the hall and she called to her to come in. The nurse asked who she was and she said, "Lucy Mitchell." The nurse said, "No, you're not Lucy Mitchell, she died." She gave birth and this was the first child she was able to nurse naturally; all the rest had been bottle babies. She gave birth to several children after that. Lucy Mitchell and her husband Edwin are still living in Fort Myers, Florida today.

- R: When you were in Africa, as far as healing and the same kinds of experiences, do you remember any with people there?
- M: Not as much as here. Numbers of people were healed but I can't remember details of place. When we were home on furlough, I

had an empty steel drum that I wanted to put in the trailer that I had brought home. I put my back out of place lifting the steel drum into the trailer. Ever since that, every so often it goes out of place. I remember I was out in Africa and we were loading a truck. I wanted to get up there to see that the ropes were tied right. I got up on top of the load to see about something and when I got up there I knew my back went out of place. I didn't know what to do. There were no chiropractors out there to help me. We had some African preachers and I told them about it. They prayed for me and it went right back in place. I have had different things like that happen out there, but nothing like I had been explaining to you.

R: While you were there were you involved in establishing any churches?

M: Yes, we established churches; not as many as I would have liked. We had African preachers that we taught who opened up new churches. From Ouagadougou we went to Nagabagere, which is about seventeen miles south of Ouagadougou on the road to Po. We were in charge of the bible school there. We trained many young men for the ministry.

I remember the first church we started. We weren't there very long. We hardly knew the language, but we went out with one of the African preachers. Usually we went to a chief's yard and preached through an interpreter. The African preacher that was with us told us, "If the chief likes you he will give you a chicken. If he really likes you he'll give you a rooster. If he really likes you and wants you to come back he'll give you a white rooster." We were looking for what we were going to get then. After the service was over he whispered to one of his slaves. When the slave came back he had two white roosters in his hand, so we knew he wanted us to come back. The church that was started at that place has sent quite a number of men to the bible school. (About seventeen or eighteen from that particular church). It was usually the African preachers that started the new churches. Before we went to the bible school we would have our preachers come in for further teaching.

In the Ouagadougou circle we had seventeen African preachers. I don't know if we had that many to start with or not. We would have these preachers come and then we would teach them lessons from the Bible. Then we would teach them to go out and preach and teach and make churches.

R: You worked mostly with the Mossi while you were there?

M: Yes, mostly. I never learned any other African language. We started to learn another language at Po, but we never did get very far with it. We were only at Po about a year

and a half. More was used as a trade language. The Mossi are everywhere.

- R: What do you remember about things that really impressed you as far as the country itself, just the geography of culture?
- M: Rain is from the last of April up until October. It rains five months of the year and for seven months it doesn't even sprinkle. If it is a good season it is five months of rain and seven months of dry weather. It is dry. In March, April, and May it gets so hot and dusty. You could clean your house, have a dust storm, and write your name anywhere in the house. The Africans would love to have it rain all year round.
- R: Is there anything you remember about what you would do in a regular day?
- M: In Nagabagere we had classes from eight o'clock until twelve o'clock. I don't think we had classes in the afternoon. I've been home fifteen years and I've forgotten an awful lot. I think we had the principle of half day classes and half day working in the fields. That way they provided for their own upkeep. They didn't have to bring any money; all they had to do was work in the fields during the afternoon. We had an electric plant and we would have lights up until nine-thirty and they could study up until that time.
- R: At the school the students lived there?
- M: Yes. We would build four-room houses, which would house four families. A man, his wife, and a child or two would live in one room and each family would have a little veranda out front. We could build a building like that for \$1,000; you couldn't do that here in America. The French established that country on a slave basis economy. When we first went to Africa the franc was worth three cents. You could go to the market and buy any kind of meat you wanted, four francs a kilo (a kilo is two and one-fifth pounds).
- R: What things were hard for you, when you first went over, to get used to, being used to living here in the United States?
- M: We had to get used to having servants. Over here you do it all yourself.
- R: Do you ever remember times when you felt frustrated or angry and you wondered why you ever went?
- M: No, never.
- R: Were there times when local customs or beliefs of the people came in conflict with the beliefs of your church?

- M: They're ancestor worshipers. Most of our converts would be from the ancestral worshiper sections rather than Mohammedans. We did get a few of the Mohammedan people to change, but very few. The ancestor worshipers believed their ancestors hung around after they died, and although they would be very kind and good before they died, after they were dead they were just ready to get something on you. Our cook had been a witch doctor before he became a Christian. He said that sometimes when he was under the power of the devil he would be walking through the woods and never knowing where he was going and a little devil about two feet tall would be walking alongside him. He was awfully glad Jesus saved him from all that.
- R: While you were there did you do a lot of traveling?
- M: We had cars and we could go. We had missionaries in Kaya, in Ouahigouya, in Koudougou, in Po; we would go to see these missionaries sometimes under certain conditions.
- R: You went in 1938, right?
- M: Yes.
- R: How long did you stay?
- M: We came home in November of 1969. Our first term we were there seven years; our second term we were there five years. Then, because of the trying climate, they changed the rules for Upper Volta missionaries to be three years in a term.
- R: The first term you started in Ouagadougou. Then when you came back for the second one would it be in a different location?
- M: It all depended on how the missionaries' terms that were there would be.
- R: In Ouagadougou did you have a central office?
- M: At the mission. The mission was about two kilometers from town. In the old days all of our mission station houses were built out of mud bricks and they were made on the arch construction. The supporting arches were all a meter thick.
- R: Did you ever go to Niger, Mali, or Ghana?
- M: We went to Ghana often. We would go through Ghana rather than Ivory Coast because we had more of our mission stations there. We went to Tamale (in Ghana) especially for supplies that we couldn't get at Ouagadougou.
- R: How would you get supplies for your mission?

- M: We would buy them there at Ouagadougou. In later years the trains came to Ouagadougou and we could get corrugated iron roofing, cement, nails, and lumber.
- R: In the times you would come back while you were on leave, did you ever travel around to churches or speak at different places to raise money?
- M: Yes. We would be home a year, but the first month we were supposed to rest and stay at home. Then we would visit our assemblies (churches). At first we were under the General District--Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. At that time we would visit all the churches in these different states. Later, Ohio Assemblies of God Churches became a district on its own.
- R: While you were in Upper Volta what other mission do you remember, Christian missions that were there?
- M: The French, who colonized most of West Africa, only allowed one denomination of missionaries to work in a colony. So in Upper Volta the Assemblies of God was the only mission there. To the east of us was the colony of Niger and the Sudan Interior Mission was there. To the west of us was the colony of Uppery Ivory Coast and the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) was there. To the south of us was the colony of Gold Coast, which later became Ghana, which was controlled by the British. They had several different churches working: Methodists, Adventists, Assemblies of God, Baptists.
- R: Were the Catholics there at that time?
- M: Yes. In Ouagadougou they had a cathedral. There was a bishop there and he was quite well-known.
- R: You must have been there when Upper Volta got its independence?
- M: Oh yes.
- R: It must have been hard to leave after all those years?
- M: The reason why we came home was because my wife developed a very serious case of allergy to the millet grain. That is their main food. She would get an attack and it would close the passages to her lungs. She couldn't get air in or out. It would kill you if you didn't get anything started through. Sometimes she would get an attack three or four times a day. We had medicine that would help her get her air started.

END OF INTERVIEW