

## Roger Moore Oral History Interview

### Clarence Bryk:

This is Clarence C. Bryk and today is June 26, 2010, and I have the honor of interviewing Mr. Roger Moore. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Pacific War Museum. It is about 11 o'clock, and the next voice you hear is Mr. Moore, and thank you.

### Roger Moore:

Good morning, I'm Roger Moore from World War II. I have lived in Florida for the last 20 years, but my birth place -- I was born actually in Buffalo, New York. I lived in Kenmore, New York, which is a suburb of Buffalo on the north side.

In 1943, I graduated from high school and went immediately into the US navy, one of the proudest days of my life. Within the US Navy training, I was offered the possibility of going to the US Navy photographer school at Pensacola, Florida. I attended there for three months and got an excellent education as a photographer that has served me well all of my life.

Finishing that photography school class in Pensacola, I was sent to Washington, DC to a photolithography class. And while in

Washington at the US Navy Department building, I saw a notice asking for volunteers for prolonged and hazardous duty at a destination unknown to the volunteer. My Friend, Bob Grace, and I volunteered for that duty and found out that we were going to be sent to China in the interior to be members of a group called SACO, S-A-C-O. SACO is well-represented here at the Pacific War Museum with an original banner being used in the displays.

My mission to get to China was by way of a troop transport out of San Pedro, California, by way of Melbourne, Australia. We were changing hemisphere into the Southern Hemisphere in order to avoid Japanese submarines.

From Melbourne, we went to Calcutta, India and waited in Calcutta, India until we could be flown over the hump, which the hump meaning the Himalayan Mountains of India and China. That flight took us into Kunming, China, which was just a stopover then for another flight a few weeks later into Chongqing, China, and it was in Chongqing where I first got my opportunity to practice my craft for the Navy, that of a photographer, where we set up a photo lab in the area of Chongqing known as Happy Valley. I did some training there of Chinese guerilla troops, equipping them and educating them to use photography to photograph the coast of China in the vicinity of Amoy, which I

was led to believe would be an invasion point for the allies in trying to attack Japan. We would make a landing in China and launch the attack on Japan from the mainland of China.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, and I had been in Chongqing at that time for a little less than a year, the Japanese surrendered, and immediately, all SACO troops and other Allied troops were rushed to the coast of China to take over from the Japanese, who had controlled all the coast of China and had controlled the major cities of Shanghai, and Anqing, and others.

When I got to Shanghai, the Japanese were still in evidence, and I photographed them. One in particular that stays in my mind was a crew on a small ship, a small tender, and the discouraged and upset captain was in his cabin as I photographed him there, along with others.

It was not too long after that that, in fact, the Japanese were probably finally given orders to come home or whatever they were to do. At the time we arrived there, they didn't know what was expected of them.

In Shanghai, we set up a photo lab in the Glen Line building. The Glen Line became Navy headquarters on the Bund. The Bund is

the very famous harbor front for shipping in Shanghai, and my tour of duty was to make photographs of the various events of interest to the Navy. That, of course, would be my assignments, to take those photographs.

Within the photo lab, some of the photographers' mates were instructed to develop film and to print pictures. Others were given the assignment to take the pictures, and I was one of those given the assignment to take pictures for the Navy.

When I was on assignment in Shanghai with my 4x5 Speed Graphic camera, that was the government issue camera, I always carried my smaller Rolleiflex, and with that camera, I was able to take pictures of Chinese workers. These workers astounded me. They had been oppressed by the Japanese. The Japanese had bombed Shanghai in 1937. We're now in 1945, and these people had --

**CB**:

[We?] pause again. Yep, I'm just going to go record. OK, we're OK. Go ahead, keep working. I may have been impressed in 1945.

**RM**:

I was very impressed by the working people, the people I would meet on the streets of Shanghai when I was doing my Navy

assignments, and in particular, around the shipping docks of the Huangpu River, that is the harbor of Shanghai. So, I took the pictures and, at that time, I was focusing on their eyes because their eyes interested me so.

Now, 65 years later, I look at those pictures -- and I'll tell you more about that -- the resolve and courage which I felt I could see in their eyes. That photo study, if you will, has just opened at the National Museum of the Pacific War, and it opened on June 25th, 2010, and I'm very proud of the fact that the Nimitz Foundation has asked me to show my work here in the museum. And I ask people who are viewing this showing to take a look at these courageous Chinese and see if they don't see just a special quality of makeup, and these are not educated rich people; these are every-day working people, and I became very, very impressed with their disposition.

In addition to the pictures, the portraits of the working people that I just mentioned, I'd like to call attention to some other pictures that I have in this exhibit, particularly a picture of a Chinese junk, a good-sized Chinese junk. I would estimate that the junk is somewhere around 150 feet in length, and a classic junk; it was not a modernized junk. It was brought by

some of my SACO friends to Shanghai, coming down the Yangtze, downstream the Yangtze, as a war trophy in Shanghai.

On the way, it encountered another junk that happened to be manned by the Japanese, who must not have known that the Japanese had surrendered only a few days before. They opened fire on the SACO US junk and a battle ensued of machine guns and bazookas. And the SACO junk prevailed and took the surrender then from the Japanese. We are proud, then, to declare as SACO people, that we, the SACO team, won the last battle of World War II, which actually occurred after the surrender by the Japanese.

After being in Shanghai another several months, I was qualified for a discharge from the US Navy. I had volunteered as a reservist, and so I did not stay. I chose not to stay in the Navy, but I went home from China by way of another ship transport, taking me back to Los Angeles, and then by train getting back to my home town of Kenmore, New York.

Very fortunately for the veterans of World War II, the government made available to us the GI Bill of Rights, and so I was entitled, then, to have a college education. You will recall I said I graduated from high school, went right into the Navy, we're now three years later, and I'm about to go to

college. So I enrolled at the University of Rochester, from which I graduated four years later with a degree, a bachelor of science for mechanical engineering.

If I had known what my career would be, I really should have taken civil engineering, but I found that mattered very little. I say that I should have taken civil engineering because I became a road builder and a bridge builder, but I really didn't find that was a real disadvantage. It would have been just a little more specific.

I worked for contractors. The first contractor I worked for was W. W. Kimman's, and I made, in a few years there, their executive vice president. After about 18 years with Kimman's, I joined another contracting company and became their general manager and had a couple of other executive positions. In 1980, I formed my own construction company called Nichols, Long, & Moore Construction Corporation, and our emphasis was on building bridges, repairing bridges, and all phases that would go with a bridge-building, which did include road building, also. That company, I am proud to say, is still going strong. I've been retired for 20 years. That company is still going strong in the Buffalo, New York area, doing bridges as we had originally intended.

I am also proud of the fact that I have three children by a first marriage. Those three children are Greg, Robin, and Judy. I'm also sorry to say that I have lost Judy; Judy died two years ago at the age of 54 with colon cancer. The children are college-educated and have done nicely on their own, with families of their own. I have three children, as I mentioned, and seven grandchildren. I am now married to Edith [Dorr?] Moore and we have lived happily for 20 years in Florida, on Amelia Island.

In this change of scene, from the north coming into Florida, that has re-inspired my interest in photography. In Florida, I was attracted to the bird life and just some of the other scenic ventures. Therefore, from the result of being so inspired, I have published a book called *Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach*. My friend, Ron Kurtz wrote a history of Amelia Island, which is very interesting, having had eight flags to fly over it, including one being a pirate flag. But it has also had British, and French, and US, of course.

That book that I speak of, in the first chapter done by Ron Kurtz, is the history, and then I have five chapters of contemporary pictures of the very attractive Amelia Island and



Fernandina Beach. The book is now in the sixth printing, and we've sold over 15,000 copies of the book. Ron and I have then published -- I published, Ron did the story, I did the illustrations -- three children's books featuring a local dog named Arfie, and those books have been popular with the mothers and the children of Amelia Island because the stories of Arfie all take place on Amelia Island.

I was very pleased, recently, to be asked to display my 1945 pictures that I took in Shanghai here at the National Museum of the Pacific War and had an opening there yesterday, which really was a wonderful feeling for me to find that people would be interested in my work.

I'm in relatively good health for my age; I'm 85 years old, and I hope to be around to do more books and do more photography. I find that photography really gives me a wonderful way to manage my life in retirement. My retirement has, at no time, been a bore. My retirement has been a continued vocation of things that I like to do. Thank you for having me.

**CB:**

Thank you.

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