

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John "Deacon" Moore

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Deacon John (Musician)
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore,
Dates:	June 8, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:37:09).
Abstract:	Musician and singer John "Deacon" Moore (1941 -) , commonly known as Deacon John, lead the musical group Deacon John & the Ivories and in 2008 was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. Moore was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 8, 2010, in New Orleans, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_040
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Rhythm and blues musician John Moore, commonly known as Deacon John, was born on June 23, 1941 to Frank P. Moore, a bricklayer, and Augustine Boudreaux, a homemaker and musician, in the 8th Ward of New Orleans, La. One of thirteen children, Moore was raised in a musical family. He received vocal training in his church choir; he sang in his first R&B band in middle school. Moore bought his first guitar at a pawnshop on Canal Street, and learned how to play it from the instruction books and records he purchased. Moore played in high school with various pickup bands as a singer and guitarist.

After playing for several years, Moore joined a musical group called the Ivories with Roger Lewis of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. It was there that he picked up the nickname "Deacon," a term that drummer Al Miller tagged him with from a line in the song "Good Rockin' Tonight" by Roy Brown: "Deacon John and Elder Brown, two of the slickest cats in town ..." In 1960, Moore re-established the musical group the Ivories under the name Deacon John & the Ivories. Eventually they became the house band at the legendary Dew Drop Inn, backing up famous musicians like Bobby Blue Bland, Little Junior Parker, Arthur Prysock and Big Joe Turner. At the Dew Drop, Allen Toussaint discovered Moore and led him to the recording studio, where Moore began playing the guitar on R&B hits like Irma Thomas' "Ruler of My Heart," Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is," Robert Parker's "Barefootin'," Ernie K-Doe's "Mother-in-Law," Chris Kenner's "Land of 1,000 Dances," and Lee Dorsey's "Working in the Coal Mine." In 1970, Moore performed at the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and has performed at each annual festival since.

In 2000, Moore was inducted into the Louisiana Blues Hall of Fame, and in 2003 he starred in Deacon John's Jump Blues, a CD and DVD tribute to New Orleans R&B, for which he earned the 2003 Offbeat music magazine award for Album of the Year. Gambit magazine awarded him three awards that year as well. In 2005, Moore performed at the Congressional Ball at the White House and in 2006, he starred in the critically acclaimed documentary, Going Back to New Orleans: The Deacon John Film. On July 25, 2006, Moore became the first African American

president of New Orleans Musicians Union Local 174-496 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). Just one year later, Moore closed the inauguration of Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, performing “God Bless America” accompanied by the 156th Army Band and a Navy fly-over of jets. Later that year, Moore was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame.

John Moore was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 11, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John "Deacon" Moore was conducted by Denise Gines on June 8, 2010, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Musician and singer John "Deacon" Moore (1941 -) , commonly known as Deacon John, lead the musical group Deacon John & the Ivories and in 2008 was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Deacon John (Musician)

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Deacon John (Musician)--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Musician and Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, June 8, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_001, TRT:

0:27:26 ?

John "Deacon" Moore was born on June 23, 1941 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Rilda Augustine Boudreaux Moore and Frank Moore. His paternal family had roots in New Orleans' Creole community, where they raised livestock and sent their children to Catholic schools. His maternal family came from Pointe Coupee Parish, where his great-grandfather was a French jailer and his great-grandmother was an African American cook. Moore's maternal grandparents, Viola Borsky Boudreaux and John Boudreaux, married during their teenage years, and then moved to New Orleans, where his grandfather worked as a shoeshine at the Victory Barber Shop, and played the banjo with the city's jazz musicians on the weekend. They had one child, Moore's mother, whom they enrolled at New Orleans' Xavier University of Louisiana. Moore's mother worked as a teacher until marrying his father, who owned an ice and charcoal delivery business. She then raised thirteen children, of whom Moore was the fifth born.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_002, TRT: 0:29:19 ?

John "Deacon" Moore grew up in a Creole family in New Orleans, Louisiana. He had both African American and white ancestors, including his maternal great-grandfather, Jean Boudreaux. Moore's parents, Rilda Augustine Boudreaux Moore and Frank Moore, both belonged to congregation of the Holy Ghost Church in New Orleans' Uptown section, and met at a wedding. They were devout Catholics; and, after marrying, raised thirteen children, of whom Moore was the fifth born. His family initially lived in New Orleans' Eighth Ward, before moving to Uptown, where they raised livestock and vegetables in their yard. Moore began his education at Corpus Christi Elementary School, where he sang as a soprano in the Corpus Christi Boys Choir under the direction of Sister Angela Merici. His mother encouraged his singing talent, and often invited her friends to attend his recitals. She also cast Moore and his siblings in an annual Nativity play, which she directed for the community.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_003, TRT: 0:28:48 ?

John "Deacon" Moore began his musical career as a soprano in the Corpus Christi Boys Choir in New Orleans, Louisiana. During this time, he encountered secular music at dances, and listened to blues music on the radio. Moore formed a rhythm and blues group with his friends at Corpus Christi Elementary School, and went on to attend New Orleans' St. Augustine High School, where he taught himself to play guitar using instructional books and records. He was encouraged to join the school's glee club, but pretended his voice was changing to avoid it. Instead, he began playing guitar at fraternity parties and other events in the city. Moore sometimes struggled to maintain his academic scholarship at St. Augustine High School, and often clashed with the principal, Father Matthew O'Rourke, who was a strict disciplinarian. Moore also remembers learning the French language, and his teachers' discouragement of Louisiana Creole words, which were considered provincial.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_004, TRT: 0:28:29 ?

John "Deacon" Moore matriculated in 1959 at the nominally integrated Louisiana State University in New Orleans. There, the cafeteria and dormitories were segregated, although Moore and his African American peers attended classes with white students. The City of New Orleans enforced anti-mingling statutes at the time, and Moore was once defended by civil rights lawyer A.P.

Tureaud after being arrested for attending a classmate's party. Moore studied chemistry for two and a half years, and then left school to marry his first wife. During this time, he continued playing guitar in New Orleans' nightclubs, and joined the all-black American Federation of Musicians Local 174. At this point in the interview, Moore describes the history of the union chapter, which formed because New Orleans' black musicians were unable to obtain work on riverboats and other venues controlled by the all-white Local 496 union. The two chapters began to collaborate during the 1960s, and officially merged in the 1970s.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_005, TRT: 0:18:58 ?

John "Deacon" Moore joined The Ivories band in 1959, and became the bandleader after his predecessor's departure in the early 1960s. Upon the suggestion of drummer Al Miller, Moore assumed the stage name Deacon John, and changed the band's name to Deacon John and The Ivories. The group initially focused on rhythm and blues music, but soon began playing waltzes and standards to attract more business. Moore was responsible for selecting the band's outfits, and usually chose brightly colored suits. To supplement his income, Moore taught music lessons, rented equipment, played as a studio musician and wrote commercial jingles. He belonged to the American Federation of Musicians Local 174-496 union, which maintained separate pay scales for African Americans and whites after its integration in the 1970s. Moore became more active with the union during the 1980s, when an office worker was appointed as treasurer despite being neither a union member nor a musician. Moore later became the Local 174-496 president.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_006, TRT: 0:28:41 ?

John "Deacon" Moore played backup and served as an opening act for numerous notable musicians, including Wilson Pickett, Marvin Gaye and Dionne Warwick. In 1959, he met guitarist Curtis Mayfield, who was a member of The Impressions at the time. Moore also played with guitarist Bo Diddley, who taught him the open G guitar tuning. In addition to his career as a musician, Moore occasionally worked as an actor. He studied acting at the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans, Louisiana, and appeared in several television commercials. He also had a small role in the movie 'Angel Heart,' and was a principal character in 'Treme,' a television series set in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Moore demonstrates the guitar tunings for country blues and Delta blues, and plays a medley of each genre. He also talks about his family, including his children, Lisa Moore and Keith Moore, the latter of whom was murdered several years prior to the interview.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_007, TRT: 0:31:46 ?

John "Deacon" Moore was a longtime member of the music community in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he experienced discrimination because of his race as well as his light complexion. He lived in New Orleans' Uptown neighborhood, which was one of the few sections of the city that was located above sea level. As a result, his home was not destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, which caused severe flooding in New Orleans in 2005. However, many of Moore's fellow musicians were displaced, and the disaster influenced him to join Sweet Home New Orleans, an organization that supported the preservation of New Orleans' cultural heritage. With musicians like Dr. John, Allen Toussaint and Wardell Quezergue, Moore also created 'Deacon John's Jump Blues,' a musical documentary show about the history of the jump blues genre, which aired on

PBS in 2004. He talks about his presidency of the American Federation of Musicians Local 174 - 496, and reflects upon his career and legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_008, TRT: 0:18:52 ?

John “Deacon” Moore often struggled with audience expectations of his band, Deacon John and The Ivories, which included both black and white musicians. He also served on the advisory board of Tipitina's nightclub in New Orleans, Louisiana, and once confronted the club owner about the club’s mascot, a bust of African American pianist Professor Longhair that patrons were encouraged to treat in a discriminatory manner. Moore reflects upon the challenges faced by black musicians, and shares his advice to aspiring music industry professionals.

Video Oral History Interview with John "Deacon" Moore, Section A2010_040_001_009, TRT: 0:04:50 ?

John “Deacon” Moore narrates his photographs.