

# Karl LaMar Moore

Interviewed by Judy Hansen  
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I was born January 21, 1927 at the family home in Spring Lake, Utah to Clarence Lee and Beatrice Young Moore. I had nine siblings; Iris, who married Lee Deuel, Vina who married Glen Wilcox, Anna who married George LeFevre, Stewart who died from spinal meningitis at age nine, Lawrence Wayne who also died young from whooping cough, the twins Bernice<sup>1</sup> and Bruce, who married Maxine Holm, and Lee who married Ruth Parcell.

My dad owned farmland and ran a service station in Spring Lake. I was the youngest so guess who got to run the service station. I

wasn't even old enough to drive but I made a racket out of that service station. It was during WWII and everything was rationed; gas, food, tires, everything. The smallest gas stamp was for five gallons. Well, the old farmers would come in and they wouldn't have enough room in their tanks so they could only put in four gallons. I would keep track of it until there were five extra gallons and then I would take a five gallon stamp and put it into my pocket. It wasn't too long before the kids in school found out I had gas stamps available. I didn't go without money; or friends. There were many times I had to get on my horse and take a gallon of gas to someone that had run out. We did oil changes, fixed flats, and stuff like that at the station.

One day I had gotten in trouble with a teacher at Payson High School. I came out of the schoolroom door and Lawrence Schramm was going up the stairs the same time as I was. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm thinking about going over to join the Navy." I told him I would go with him so we went to Provo to enlist. When we got there they took Lawrence because he was eighteen but I was only seventeen and so I had to go back home and get my mother to sign for me.

Right after Thanksgiving in 1944 I reported to Salt Lake City. That was the first time I had ever been there. They took me right straight up to Fort Douglas, give me a physical. They came down the line of men assigning each into a different branch of service; Army, Marines, Army. They took one look at me and said, "Oh he's Navy." I originally wanted to go to the Merchant Marines protecting the U.S. shorelines but my mother wouldn't sign for me if I had done that.



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<sup>1</sup> Bernice looked as healthy as could be so they sat her up on the warming oven and went back to deliver Bruce. When they went back afterwards she had died.

When we got finished at Fort Douglas they marched us down and put us on a train. There were thirty-three of us but they could only get thirty-one people in the cattle car. It was a car that had bunks in it. I and another guy got the Pullman suite on the next car back; all by ourselves. The seats were nice soft seats. I boarded the train November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944. The men in the group were told not to leave the train.

When we arrived in Las Vegas we never got the word that we couldn't leave the train. The kid I was with was from Las Vegas and his father worked with the railroad so he said, "Let's go up and get on the baggage car." We observed from the mail and baggage car when the train stopped in Las Vegas, we wandered around Vegas for a while, and then went back to our train. It wasn't until we got back we found out we shouldn't have been off the train at all (Karl laughs). That was how my career started. Thank goodness they never found out.

We rode quite a ways in that car and for whatever reason they left the door open. My friend explained the different communities that we passed through as we rode. I had never been down around that country before so it was interesting to me. We got into Los Angeles and boarded a train to San Diego.

As I remember, the first thing they did was take our picture<sup>2</sup> and move us to the barber shop. The guy in front of me had a beautiful head of hair. They asked him if he liked his hair and he said, "Yes." They buzzed it right off and said, "There it is" as they handed him his hair after they cut him bald.

Next we came to a guy that would look at each man and give him clothing in whatever size he thought was needed. The only thing I remember him asking me was how big my feet were; what size of shoes I wore. They had been handing out so much clothing they just knew by looking at you what size to give you.

The first part of boot camp we were in quarantine for about three weeks. They gave us all our shots and stuff. After that we went into Decatur<sup>3</sup> and they took us out on the rifle range to see how we'd do with a gun. The first three shots I fired were right in the bullseye. The more I shot the further from the bullseye I got. By the time I got through shooting my nose was bleeding, my ears were bleeding, and the next day both my eyes were black (Karl laughs). I know what happened. They gave me a gun that was really short-stocked. I was so scrunched up that when it would go off it would smack me in the head. I kept asking the guy what I was doing wrong. That is the only time I fired a gun in the military. I thought I was a pretty good shot. In fact, after I got home I bought a gun exactly what I'd had there and put a three inch extension on it. I was able to shoot it pretty good.

After I went from there I attended refrigeration school, firefighter school, and another school I can't even remember. Our job was to put gasoline fires out with water. I learned to do it. We would do it with fog. We'd get the water into as much mist as we could and that would put the gasoline fires out. I trained aboard ship designed for firefighting. They would light gasoline floating on top of water under the walkways for us to put out with fog.

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<sup>2</sup> The picture that was taken is in the front page of this interview. Notice this seventeen year old kid with long hair.

<sup>3</sup> Decatur was a camp or section of the Naval base in San Diego

It was the first part of May and I had all my credits earned that year for the first quarter of my senior year in high school before I had left for the Navy. I mentioned to someone that I was feeling kind of sad and one of the guys asked me why. I told them that my High School class was graduating and I wouldn't be there to graduate with them. I didn't think anything more about it. Later I got summoned to the Camp Commander over the whole base. I wondered what I had done wrong. I went in and told him who I was and he said, "I understand you're a little sad because your High School class will be graduating and you won't be there to graduate with them." I said, "Yes Sir, I am." He asked me if I had all my credits before I had left school and I told him I did. He asked where I went to school and I told him Payson, Utah. He asked me who the Principal was and I told him, "Lewis Bates." He turned to the girl beside him and told her to call the Payson High School and get Principal Bates on the phone. We stood there a minute or two and she handed him the phone. He identified himself and asked if he'd had a student there by the name of Karl Moore. He said, "I understand he had all his credits up until the time he left" and then asked what more he needed to graduate. The Commander then told Bates that I should get so many credits for going through boot camp and then credits for fireman school, refrigeration school, and this other school so I should have enough credits to graduate. I didn't think anything more about it and I didn't even mention it to my mother. Well, the school called her out of the graduation audience and gave her my high school diploma.

They had put me on KP or "kitchen patrol." I had gone to the doctor because my throat was just as sore as could be. He gave me APC<sup>4</sup> tablets and sent me back. I had been taking the coffee cups out of the dishwasher and putting them in the racks. Three days later I went back to the doctor and he started to laugh at me. He said, "You've got the mumps." I didn't think it was funny. They shipped me up to the hospital at Balboa Park. In all the rooms and even in the corridors they had bunks three and four high filled with people that had mumps. I've never seen so many people with the mumps in one place before. I remember climbing up the ladder and got as high as the third bed. When I came to I was on the top bunk. I asked the nurse what happened and she told me I'd passed out. She said, "I just threw you up there and took your clothes off so you'd be comfortable." After two weeks I got out and went back to base.

The first company I was assigned to had all these men from Utah but the second company had men from Oklahoma and Arkansas. I went in and threw my junk up on my assigned bunk. This little guy got off his bunk and asked me my name. He told me he was Gabby Hayes. I'll never forget him 'cause he lived up to his name. I went through the rest of boot camp with them. The thing that struck me more than anything else was the number of these men that would cry themselves to sleep at night.

Boot camp was about three months and after I finished they moved me into what they called Camp John Paul Jones<sup>5</sup> where they held me until I was assigned. I was able to go home on leave then. When I came back they moved me to Camp Shoemaker. I was there three or four months. There was nothing to do but sit around. They did have some pretty good shows and entertainment.

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<sup>4</sup> Acepromazine or acetylpromazine

<sup>5</sup> Another camp or section of the Navel Training base

They assigned me to the USS Hamilton, a destroyer minesweeper. It was a WWI vintage craft. It was originally a four stacker.<sup>6</sup> They took one of the boiler departments out and reclassified it AG-111 miscellaneous auxiliary. It had just returned from overseas and I never had the chance to meet most of the guys that came off the USS Hamilton because they had left. I was told that one of the guys that came off the ship had a beautiful bright red beard. When his wife took one look at him she said, "Let's go." They went right into the photography shop, had a picture taken of him, then straight to the barber and had the beard cut off.

They docked the USS Hamilton at the Richman Dock in the San Francisco Bay and brought in a flat bottom house barge so we could live on it. They had to vacate the USS Hamilton and retrofit it to handle a new type of mine sweep gear. They were working on that for six months and during that time we had nothing to do. Richmond California was really close so the guys would go there for entertainment. I didn't go much because I didn't have that much money. When I had joined they had a deal where you could give your family so much of your pay so I gave my divorced mother \$35.00 a month and I kept \$15.00 I got a \$5.00 bill one payday and a \$10.00 bill the next payday. My mother went on mission to Riverside, California during the last part of my service and I financially supported that.

We went down the coast of Santa Barbara to test the new mine sweep gear. This gear was new and every time they put it in the water we'd have to go below deck so we couldn't see it. They didn't want the enemy to know anything about it. Once it was out functioning we could go back up on deck but as soon as they brought it in out of the water to put it away we'd have to go back down below deck again. We were there six months with not much to do except our duties. I was a mechanic; or fireman so most of my work was below deck.

When they finally decided the mine sweeping gear was working they sent us up to the San Francisco Bay and filled us up with food and fuel. We headed out and as we were going under the Golden Gate Bridge the Skipper announced our first port of call was Pearl Harbor and our second would be Tokyo Bay. I noticed a lot of the guys were writing letters. I found out afterwards that most of them thought they had been given their death sentence because the first ship that goes in is the mine sweeper. The USS Hamilton already had scars from being hit before.

Two days after we set out the Skipper announced that we had been reassigned to Panama so we changed course. Shortly after that we were told the war was over, they had dropped the bomb. You know they actually only dropped one atomic bomb on Japan; the other one was not an atomic bomb under the same classifications. Do you know the reason they didn't bomb Tokyo? They had to have a government to deal with. Who would they have dealt with if they had killed off all of the government? The Emperor said, "No, we're not giving up" when they dropped the first bomb but when they dropped the second one the military took over and said, "We're done!" So they surrendered. We again had been reassigned; this time to San Diego.

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<sup>6</sup> Clemson class destroyer

Here again, I was downstairs in the low deck because I was running the engines. They were diesel engines. Aboard ship there were boilers so we had fires to boil the water that made the steam to turn the turbos that turned the props. That was my job on the destroyer. I also had to do repairs. One day some of the tubes in one of the boilers sprung a leak so they had to shut it down. The guy that went in laid down on a board, put his hands over his head, and they slipped him through this hole until he found the boiler tube that was leaking. He put a plug in it so it wouldn't leak anymore. I told him, "I couldn't have done that." I was too big. We had repairs and stuff like that we had to do.

After the war was over we were towing targets off San Diego. We led a target out 1500 yards; they were just a big flat canvas wall. The USS Missouri was sitting across and we couldn't even see her but she was sitting there shooting at it with her big guns. We could see the shells coming through the air. They used radar to lock onto the target and then they shot what they called a star shell.<sup>7</sup> This lite up the target so you could see it and then they had a camera on the aft or stern of the ship that was taking pictures. One day they got our ship and the target mixed up on the radar. They dropped a star shell over the top of us that lite us up like daylight. I could hear the Commander on that radio just a screaming. I don't know if you ever seen the lights that flash for Morse code but in order to communicate with other ships they would flash this light of Morse code. Our communication man started flashing those lights. That was the closest to war I got (Karl laughs). I always say I fought the battle of San Diego.

Lawrence Schramm, my friend who went in the military the day before I did was one of the first people to step foot on Japan after the surrender. He had been all down through the islands and into the invasions of the Pacific Theater. He had some pretty tough times. He never talked about it. He ended up moving to Lehi and raising his family here too.

Anyway, in San Diego they decommissioned the ship. I got assigned to a yard freighter. We would go out of the mouth of San Diego Bay. We had little boats that went out with us and we were the targets for the torpedo bombers and dive bombers. Because we only pulled about 10 feet of water, the torpedoes would go underneath us so it wasn't too much of a problem. When the dive bombers started working with 500 pounds of water bombs, sometimes when they would drop those and it would really shake that that old ship pretty good. I did that for four or five months.

I was reassigned to a tug boat. It was the YTB 254; yard tug and fire boat. I was sure glad for this assignment because there was something for us to do. At least on the tug boat I had a job. From then on out I served there for the rest of my tour of duty. It had two Enterprise straight-six diesel engines that produced 400 plus units of power with only 400 RPM's. The pistons on that thing were a foot in diameter. It was a propulsion motor that put the energy to the generators that drove the electrical motor that drove the props. I had to keep that running. The first thing that had to be done in the morning was to put the crank in the notch and then turn it 365 times to turn it over and make sure there was no water in the pistons. Then I'd turn the power on to start it. If it wasn't just right and the piston was half full, you'd hit the power and it would blow the top right off the heads.

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<sup>7</sup> A thin walled shell with a mechanical time fuze. Packed inside is a flare attached to a parachute.

We would go out and bring the ships into dock. They were all coming back from overseas. They couldn't come in without a Harbor Master. Once the Harbor Master got on ship we would hook onto it and they were ours. They shut their power down and became helpless. We moved them through the water, turned them, and everything else. We would bring them in and tie them up to a buoy or once in a while put them up against the dock somewhere.

We knew which ships were going to be decommissioned so we'd go over on board and they would give us anything we wanted off of them. We would get steaks or fruit cocktail; anything that was good to eat was great. We had a first class cook who was excellent. He was constantly cooking steak. We ate better than most of the Officers; I think, because they had to eat in the mess halls. I was happy to get clothes because \$15.00 a month wasn't much for me to live on.

Once in a while we would have to take a diving barge out and anchor them up because they would need to find something in the bay. One time we had to take them out because someone had dropped the 'cash sack' or money coming off a ship. We spent about a day a half out there. They never did find it. I'll be right flat honest with ya; I think one of the divers found it and fastened it to the bottom of the barge and when they got back took it and split the money. Now that is just my opinion (Karl laughs).

Once we brought in the USS Saratoga, which was an aircraft carrier. There were also smaller tug boats that would help us by getting on the bough if we needed them and we would push back and forth. When we brought the USS Saratoga in, the wind was blowing so hard we had every tug boat helping and still couldn't push in into shore. They kept playing with it and finally they got all of them on the very front of it and pushed it over enough to where they could get a line on the dock and then used their winches to pull it in while we pushed the back end in.

I did my share of cooking too. During Thanksgiving, I was downstairs working and the Skipper opened the door and said, "Karl, are you down there?" I said, "Yea," and he said, "Get up here!" I said, "Yes Sir" and up I went. He said, "Look in that oven." So I opened the oven and there sat a roasting pan with a turkey sitting in it. No top on it, no liquid around it, and just as black as coal. He said, "I got guests coming for dinner at noon today." I told him OK but reminded him I couldn't cook a turkey in that length of time. I told him to call up the mess hall on the base and see what he could get. He called them and I went to pick up the turkey with the trimmings. I had time to bake the potatoes and stuff like that. I was able to get it all put together. I heard his guest come on board and about five minutes after they were settled I stepped in and said, "Sir, your dinner is ready to be served." I sat outside the door and if the Skipper needed anything he would speak to me and I would go in fill their waters or anything else that they wanted. I was his favorite person on that ship from there on out. They had a third class cook that was assigned to us and he was told he had a Thanksgiving dinner to prepare. I don't know what happened to him but we never seen him aboard that tugboat again. He just stuck the turkey in the oven and left.

I finished my tour of duty. I got home November 21, 1947 so I was probably on that tug boat a year and a half. I served two years, eleven months, and twenty-one days. When I joined I had gone in before I was eighteen and agreed to stay until the day before I turned twenty-one. A lot of people joined for the

duration of the war plus six months. I didn't do this. I went in on a minority cruise because I was a minor.

I returned home to Spring Lake and went to work for Cream-of-Nebo Dairy. I processed, pasteurized, bottled, and delivered milk. The milk had to come within government regulations; 4% cream. I met Virginia Parker from West Mountain when I was delivering milk at the Payson Hospital at 5:00 in the morning after she had just walked into town for her shift. She looked like she had already had a bad day. I had been engaged to Lois Rogers from San Diego whom I had met during my time in the military but after my discharge I'd went back to get her it and it just didn't work out. The wedding invitations and everything had already been sent out.

Later, I had been assigned as the M-Men leader for the Stake and Virginia Parker was assigned as my secretary. I ended up giving her rides to and from the meetings. You can see how that turned out; I found out I could go to college on a G.I. Bill in Kansas City so I applied and got accepted into mechanic school. I hurried and asked Virginia Parker to marry me and she said yes. We got married really fast on June 22<sup>nd</sup> in Manti, Utah and then reported to school in Kansas City, Missouri on July 5<sup>th</sup>. We lived there for eight months.

I went to school from 6:00 AM, got out at noon, then drove a delivery truck for a grocery store in Kansas City after school. We were right on the Missouri-Kansas State Line. One day someone asked me if I was delivering alcoholic beverages with the groceries. I told him, "Yea, once in a while." He informed me I was bootlegging in Kansas because it was a dry State so I quit that job and got one at Jones department store in downtown Kansas City. They could have thrown me in jail if I hadn't.

My wife had gone to work for Macy's out of New York so she and I were working for the two major stores in Kansas City. I graduated second in the class. I cheated myself out of first because I missed a question that I knew the answer to. We came back home to Utah in February.

The Korean War had started and I found out that Deseret Chemical in Tooele County was hiring. I failed the driving test. I had never been in a 6X6 before. There were no trucks in the Navy. The man told someone to take me out and give me a driving lesson. Then they brought me back in and retested me. I got a job there as a truck driver. At one point I was supposed to have been laid off at Deseret Chemical but then my military preference went through so I was exempt and another guy ended up being the one that got laid off. After I transferred to maintenance, I later got a Supervisor Position in Tooele with a twenty-one person crew; fourteen of them were female.

I moved to Lehi when I got the job at Deseret Chemical; that was 1950. Virginia and I have seven children: Randy, Colleen, Nolan, Ronald, Russell, Cheryl, and Virginia (Jenny). Ronald and Russell are twins.

I have been a member of the American Legion in Lehi for forty-nine years. I am currently the Service Officer. All of my children know how to do flags on Main Street. I was putting flags on Lehi Main Street when we first started doing it. We went to the businesses and asked them if they would buy the flags and then we would post them. The flags cost \$45.00 each. We posted the first two blocks on Main

Street. I drilled the holes for the flags in the curb-and-gutter; because it was State Property it was against the law but I didn't know that at the time. We expanded a little putting more flags up as time went by. Heather Miller was over the Lehi Chamber of Commerce and she asked me to join. I presented the idea to the American Legion and they decided we would do it. Then Heather went to the City of Lehi and told them they needed to get involved posting the flags on Main Street. At one time we put up 192 flags on both Main and State Streets. Now we're back down to posting them from the Freeway to the Railroad track and the City is doing it because the Legion doesn't have the man power anymore. I was involved putting up those flags for about forty-eight years. Blackie Harris used to call my wife Betsy Ross because she took care of all those flags washing and mending them.

I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President for a while and the Finance Officer and now I am the Service Officer. Our Legion Hall hosted 235 events last year and I would drive down and opened the door for each event. We host Alcoholics Anonymous Tuesdays and Thursdays and T.O.P.S. every Tuesday. I have always enjoyed the time spent with the veterans, museum staff, city workers, and elected city officials here in Lehi.

