The following oral history is from a recorded interview with Willson Moore (WM) conducted by Mānoa Heritage Center Executive Director Jessica Welch (JW) on January 6, 2023 at Mānoa Heritage Center. This interview is part of the Mānoa Heritage Center’s oral history project name.

Please keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

**Jessica Welch:** We are here with Willie can you tell us your name

**Willson Moore:** Willson Moore, my friends call me Willie

**Jessica Welch:** And what is your birthday, Willie?

**Willson Moore:** 11/24 1928, I’m 94 years old

**Jessica Welch:** My goodness. And, were you named after anybody?

**Willson Moore:** Yes, my father. The first name is my grandmother’s maiden name. My father’s, mother’s, maiden name. And so three generations got the first name of her maiden name, so there are three Willson’s. My dad and me and my son.

**Jessica Welch:** And then what was the address of your home in Mānoa?

**Willson Moore:** 2930 Loomis Street, just two blocks away.

**Jessica Welch:** My goodness. And um where were your parents from?

**Willson Moore:** My dad is from California, came out here and 1924 to open a law office and that didn't work out too well. My mother came here from, was a night supervisor of the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City, she’s a nurse. And she met my dad with a bunch of gay singles here. And they married, New Year’s Eve 1927. I was born 10 months later in 1928.

**Jessica Welch:** My goodness. What did they do for a living?

**Willson Moore:** My dad was a judge and then a Bishop Estate trustee, and then he died. Unfortunately, he died a young man. He was a heavy smoker which was a those days. Nobody knew about it and my mom lived to be 97 and she was married for 34 years and a widow for 37. Passed away about 15 years ago.

**Jessica Welch:** I don’t know if you said it, but where was your mom born? [WM: Idaho] Idaho. And your dad’s from California. [WM: Yep.] My goodness. And so where did you live as a child?

**Willson Moore:** 2930. We lived there and I think lived there until I was about six or seven years old and I was beginning to have incessant colds. So the doctor recommended a drier climate. So he moved out in front of Diamond Head. And I think we rented one, one year on Makalei Place, and then, Dad bought a place on Hibiscus Drive which was one of those arson homes, I told you...and I think it was 1939 or maybe 1940 we moved to Vancouver Drive. And so, we lived there all the years I went to Punahou and then college and then soon after college, I got married and then Sally and I move someplace else.

**JW:** Did they do you remember if there’s your parents built the house on Loomis Street?

**WM:** No, I think it was pre- no I think, was already there, have you, if you drive there You’ll see three identical houses, and I think there were tract houses. Maybe they’re small. Probably two-bedroom very small square footage. But I mean, I remember we had both neighbors, were named West, the one on the mauka side was Dr. Rodney West - was a local physician and known very well. And the West on the other side, I don't remember him so well, they tell me I sat in his lap often, but I don’t remember that. But his wife, his widow was named Clara West, everybody called her Tootsie. She was the head of the statehood commission, so that before we became a statehood in 1959 for, maybe 20 years before that, there was a statehood commission - was part of the local government that was [JW: advocating...] advocating for it and I got you would give out materials and so forth like that.

**JW:** And she was spearheading that

**WM:** And right and I have I mean I remember that...My dad during the Depression had an ice box and having an electric icebox was a big deal. The Clara West family had the ice wagon, and I can remember Honolulu Ice Company with a truck with the big chain that operated the back wheels. And the guy would go to the back of the ice truck and with a pair of tongs would get a maybe 50 pound about and then go to the back door and put it into, literally the icebox.

**JW:** And so what was the ice wagon?

**WM:** What was what? [The wagon?] It was a truck of some kind but it said Honolulu Ice Company on it. I remember that well.

**JW:** Wow, wow. What was your childhood like?

**WM:** Um, I can remember, I can remember making a raft and trying to float it in the local rice paddy and getting in trouble with the proprietor. I can remember, knocking on the front back door of the kitchen of Waioli Tea room, and the gals would give us cookies. And this property was a dairy in those days. All the way to the all the way the corner. [JW: Wow, and you remember that...] I remember the cows, very, very clearly. All right. Yeah, and next door to us, was the Woolsey farm and I read in some of my history writing that Woolsey was the last taro factory here in Mānoa Valley, it expired in 1922, I think... because there was too much competition, they couldn't make a go. But I knew the Woolsey family. The father was part Hawaiian, and the two sons Jimmy and Johnny, Jimmy and Tommy, were playmates and they grew up. And one was a member of the legislature years later. And, whatever. I can remember bicycle, my dad, got me a bicycle, he bought it at a police auction or something, and I would go at the head of Loomis Street and I can remember one day pedaling as fast as I could pedal. And the sunshine was shining on the front wheel and it was pouring rain on the back wheel. I was going as fast as I could, as fast as the cloud was passing above me...[That’s amazing] I remember the pueo, lots of owls in those days, in Mānoa Valley, lots of mongoose, I had a pet mongoose that nested in my mother’s fresh laundry on nice and muddy, which ended that! We had a yardman, I remember old Shimato, I remember the yardman and the house looks a bit much the same as it does it did then. [JW: Do you remember going swimming, going to a swimming hole?] We used to go swimming in the Mānoa stream. Yeah. When it wasn't when it wasn't running high and catch ʻōpae, I remember doing that too.

**JW:** Did you um, have a name for some? Some of the people we have interviewed had names for the different swimming holes. Do you remember?

**WM:** No, I don't remember that. I don’t remember that. [JW: But you do remember swimming in the stream] Yeah. Oh, sure. And the Mānoa Market was right there and as the only Market in the entire valley. So that’s where you went to get your, unless the ice uh, unless the truck came by with your groceries, but we used to walk to the store and get ice cream and so forth.

**JW:** So how old were you when you left Loomis Street.

**WM:** Probably seven or eight and but then I came back to Vancouver Drive when I was 12 or 13.

**JW:** Oh okay, so just a little break from Mānoa. [WM: Yep] What do you remember about the businesses in Mānoa? You mentioned the...

**WM:** I remember Mānoa Market. What other businesses do I remember? Waioli Tea Room was a bustling establishment, even in those days. I don't remember a lot. Where Safeway and the Mānoa Marketplace is now, I don't remember anything in there. I just don't remember.

**JW:** Yeah, that makes sense. Where did your maternal grandparents live? So that would be your mom's family they were in Idaho.

**WM:** Yeah, Idaho and I mother my mother’s dad died when she was two years old. They lived on a farm and he got appendicitis and there was no surgeon. No doctor that was able to operate, so they packed him in ice and put them on a train to Idaho Falls, which was the nearest big city. He was had expired by the time, so she was a widow. So, her mother was a widow, literally lived in a log cabin because I visited when I was a kid, literally lived in log cabin and couldn’t make it, and then her, my mother’s brother died at a much earlier age. My mother had a sister, and the sister and my mother were sent to Boise to live with her grandmother. She was raised by her grandmother. All during World War 1 because her mother was just too poor.

**JW:** Yeah, yeah. And your paternal, grandparents they were in California?

**WM:** My mater - maternal...my grandmother Willson, she lived on the Willson Ranch, which was near Holliste, California, that's where my Dad was born and my grandfather was another lawyer, and he was a district attorney there. And then at some point after the kids were gone grown up, he moved to Southern California, ran for public office and all during World War Two was a councilman on the Los Angeles city council, and when the mayor was gone, he would be acting mayor. I visited him a number of times when I was in college and what a life. I mean, he had, um, you know, front row seats at the Rose Bowl, and at the Rose Parade and...

**JW:** [Laughing] You have a family of lawyers!

**WM:** I’m a third-generation lawyer and none others. Then when I was raising the kids, they said nobody wants to work that hard for a living and they all worked just as hard as I did, just no, lawyers.

**JW:** What major world events happened in your lifetime? I know there's a lot...

**WM:** Well, Pearl Harbor, of course, was the major. I was 13. Helping my dad in the kitchen and we were relining drawers, I think. And I was an airplane buff, and I heard the sounds of airplanes. I went out in the back porch, and saw them, in flights of three, they were silver. In those days, there was no camouflage on the airplanes. And then there was explosions on Tantalus what happened I heard was that the anti-aircraft shells were set to explode not at a height but on contact and if it didn't contact anything it fell back to Earth and exploded on Earth. So a number of the people work others. A number of civilians that were killed dad had a, my father, had a partner by the name of Hoyt and they lived in lower Nuʻuanu and they were out the street watching, all this stuff going on. And she said I'm going to go inside and call my friend to come look too and a shell, came down, and ruined the house and killed her. [JW: Oh my gosh, that’s so sad] What other events? I remember statehood, you know the hoopla from the statehood. I remember the elections were big deals back in those days. The elections were all by paper ballot and every, every candidate had his own hula troop and so when he’d go to speak the hula troop would entertain. And there was one in that little park just as you pass Mid-Pac, there’s a little park at the foot of the hill. There was a precinct there. Remember my dad on election day would go around and then find out what the tally was and for his own information to find out what was going on. Oh yeah, I remember that the elections were very colorful. [JW: Wow] Very colorful. [JW: Now I see why they are the way they are now]

**JW:** Wow, wow. Did any of these world events have a big effect on you?

**WM:** Well, Pearl Harbor of course. Um, what happened was, I was going to Robert Louis Stevenson that - I went to six years at Lincoln School grammar school and then I went to Robert Louis Stevenson. It was a middle school in those days it was on Prospect Street. What’s on the mauka side of Punchbowl. And when the war started, we had to divide our school with somebody else. In other words, I went to school in the morning and another school came in and used our campus in the afternoon and my dad and mother said he’s not, that’s not good for the education. So for a year I went to California and my dad’s sister and her husband operated a farm in near Madeira between Madeira and Fresno. California. And it was that was very rural back in those days and so I lived on a farm... I drove a truck and pitched hay and hunt rabbits and fished up in the mountains and, uh, it didn't hurt me. And then after a year, we came back and said, well, I should say that was a major event in my life.

**JW:** I know that you are a lover of Hawaiian history...what um, how has your, is it something that you have always loved knowing a lot about or ...?

**WM:** Well, I guess I started with my dad, my dad became a Bishop Estate trustee and I went to a lot of Kamehameha events and I got a smattering of it. But what really got my love going is when I started with the ʻIolani Palace training Zita Cup Choy was my docent and she’s a total love. And she infected me, I just got so interested. I not only sopped up everything she taught me, but I did a lot of collateral reading and since I left there for in fact for the last six years I’ve been taking Hawaiian studies from Carol Silva at Kahala Nui. And I just I just have a just have fun teaching. Have fun learning. I know so little but I ...it’s fun.

**JW:** Is there anything else you’d like to share with us?

**WM:** No, I can’t think I just can't think of anything. I’ve had a wonderful time here and the people have been so great. I've learned so much. I miss you all.

**JW:** Oh Willie. Thank you so much, we’ll miss you - we already do. Thank you very much!

**WM:** Okay, thank you.