

Frank Lorenzo Moorman (1902-1987)

By Jerry Long



Frank L. Moorman



Louisville Defender, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 16 February 1956, p.3:

**Louisville's Negro Business
Recorded In Success
Of Frank Moorman**

Thirty Years On Walnut Street



MOORMAN (left) received bronze plaque from the Standard Oil Company in 1949 for the strides that he has made in business. A. C. Bonnycastle (right), superintendent of the Standard Oil Company, presented the plaque.

"A lot can happen in thirty years especially on Walnut Street. You see a business start, and watch you watch a business fail. You watch junior partners grow into hard calculating business men."

Frank L. Moorman, Sr., owner of Frank's Service Station, 8th and Walnut, was voicing the memories that he had "collected" since he started doing business on Walnut Street thirty years ago.

Moorman, a native of Owensboro, Kentucky, came to Louisville in 1926 to work for Dr. R. F. White who operated a drug store at 6th and Walnut. As a youngster, Moorman had been employed by Dr. White in Owensboro.

"I got most of my business training under Dr. White," he said, "he taught me everything about the drug store. From him, I learned the art of compounding prescriptions."

Ventures Out

Having been employed in Louisville for ten years, Moorman, with J. E. McDonald, purchased the White Drug Company and opened the Central Drug Store, located in the building now housing the Domestic Insurance Company.

Then after six years at 6th and Walnut, Moorman leased the corner of 8th and Walnut and opened a Standard Oil Service Station with J. E. McDonald as junior partner. Two years later, Moorman purchased McDonald's interest in the 8th and Walnut business. Each ten years, Moorman enters into a special business project.

In 1934, he purchased the Cohn Building which adjoins the Mammoth Building. His 6th and Walnut property contains six apartments, and six store fronts.

During that year, Negroes for the first time were able to buy in the "up-town" area. Dr. Sweeney bought the Banner building across from Moorman's property, and the Louisville Defender purchased the Commonwealth Building on 5th. Moorman is the only one of the Negroes who still possesses his property in the vicinity.

Big Deal

Moorman's next business "deal" took place in 1953 when he purchased the 8th street corner property where his service station stands.

Until '53, the service station had one small frame building. The year that he purchased the property, he razed the frame structure and erected a two-floor brick building in its stead. The building is known as the "Moorman Building."

He also owns a beautiful stone, Gothic home at 3521 Grand Avenue where he and his wife, Mrs. Bessie Moorman, reside.

In The Blood

"Even though I have wanted to become connected with the Standard Company since I was a youngster in Owensboro," Moorman said, "the main reason why I struggled to succeed was because I wanted to perpetuate the 'Moorman' name."

"But I guess that I get what business sense that I have from my grandparents."

"My grandfather Dora Moorman, when he had been out of slavery a few years, purchased a 1000 acre track of land in Davis County, Kentucky. He built nine houses, nine stables, and nine barns on this land, and gave each of his nine children a house, stable, and barn."

"Then he constructed a school house," Moorman said, "and the land that he had developed became known as Buckhorn, Kentucky."

Moorman claims that nine houses still stand though none of his family live in Buckhorn. The oldest of his uncles is 102 years old, and living in Detroit, Michigan.

"It was through these houses that my grandfather built that I got my start," he continued. "My parents died when my brother and I were very young and we were reared by our Grandparents."

"When we come of age, my brother and I sold the property that had belonged to our parents. We split the money. I came to Louisville, and he went to Evansville, Indiana."

Moorman's brother, Cicero Moorman, yet resides in Evansville and is owner and operator of a barber shop. He has 12 children, all of which have finished high school. The two younger children are still in high school.

Business on Both Sides

"There are businesses on both sides of my family – on the fraternal and maternal side."

"My mother's parents, Frank L. and Louise Simmons, lived at Rumsey, Kentucky. My grandfather was first principal of the school there and operated a newspaper in Owensboro some years later. The paper was called the 'Owensboro Enterprise'."

Time For Laughs

"I've seen a lot on this street," he jested, "but I've had laughs."

He cited two comical cases: "One happened during the Derby season when a car bearing Mississippi licenses pulled into the filling station and demanded to see the boss. When I appeared he angrily remarked that he was not looking for a 'nig-', he wanted to see the white boss."

"Then years ago, I used to obtain small loans from Rev. Harris, then pastor of the Congregational Church." One time I asked him for a loan and he asked me what church I belonged to. I told him that I was a baptist in Owensboro but had not joined any of the churches here even though I liked Green Street Baptist Church. Rev. Harris looked at me, and then he said, 'well, ask Rev. Jones for the loan.'

"Of course Rev. Harris loaned me the money and laughed at his statement."

Responsible People

Humble, courteous and cheerful, Moorman says that there are many people who have helped him get ahead. Some of these were his grandfather Dora Moorman, Rev. E. H. Harris, the

Standard Oil Company, Mrs. Oma Hathaway – his Owensboro High School English teacher – and his charming wife, Mrs. Bessie Moorman.

A member of Centennial Olivet Baptist Church and member of the church's Trustee Board, Moorman has one son, Frank L. Moorman, Jr.: and two grandchildren, Frank L. Moorman. III, and Marcia K. Moorman. Frank Moorman, Jr., is associated in business with his father.



Louisville Defender, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 16 February 1956, p.12:

Frank's Service Station
**GREAT ASSET TO
OUR COMMUNITY**



The new "Frank's Service Station" shown above was erected in 1948. Frank Moorman, coming to Louisville from Owensboro as the protege of Dr. R. F. White, worked in the Doctor's drug store for some ten years, finally buying the business. After five years, he launched himself into gasoline business. Mrs. Frank Moorman contributes her share to the success of the business by serving as bookkeeper.



A Businessman & Civic Leader

Frank Moorman operates a humming service station at Eighth and Walnut Streets. One of Standard Oil's best dealers, he employs five trained attendants.

In addition, he is very active civically and is Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Centennial Baptist Church and a Director of Red Cross Hospital.



Louisville Defender, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 1 March 1956, p.7:

Frank L. Moorman Sr. – The Business Man



Some time ago it was my pleasure to witness the awarding of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Plaque to Mr. Frank L. Moorman, Sr., owner of the Moorman Service Station at 8th and Walnut Streets, Louisville, Kentucky. I was particularly interested from the standpoint of economics and the circumstances under which this young man had become one of Louisville's leading business men.

As I think of the hundreds of business men I have known over the United States and especially in Kentucky, I cannot recall a single one whose achievements stand out in my mind as does Mr. Moorman's. Perhaps no other professional man (as you may know he was a druggist) has ever given up his profession to go into a business that calls for hard work and continuous contact with grease and dirt.

Mr. Moorman, in my opinion, represents the highest type of manhood that I know anything about. He believes in service. The moment you stop your car either he or one of his men will be standing at the door waiting to fulfill the order. He owns some valuable property in the city of Louisville aside from the service station, and yet this apparent success and accumulation of money has never changed him. He is still the same good-natured friendly young man he was years ago when he was a druggist at the old White's Drug Store near 6th and Walnut.

If ever the Negro race is to achieve real and lasting progress in any community it will be because we have more such people – people who believe in and know how to give service to the general public.

I have often contrasted the service which you get at the Moorman Service Station and some other places of business. I have been to some restaurants where you had to wait for five or ten minutes until the waitresses completed their conversation; in some instances they seem to be throwing the food at you. I have never fully understood just why a Negro could give the finest service in the world in a White hotel and never seem to be able to run a first class restaurant of his own. Is it that we are unwilling to respect our own people, or that we lack a sense of values when it comes to public service? Is it that we must always have somebody else telling up what to do and when to do it?

One of the greatest functions of education in the future will be to train young people to give the most efficient service, not to any particular group, but to anyone who desires our service. As

we move to the era of desegregation we are also moving into an era of the keenest competition. The race will not be to the white or the black, but to the individual who has mastered his art and knows how to sell it to the world.

I am happy to salute Mr. Frank L. Moorman, Sr., one of the nation's outstanding business men. If you have any doubt about what I have said all you need to do is visit his home and see the plaques that he has won.



Louisville Defender, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 17 August 1967, p.5:



FRANK L. MOORMAN, local businessman, presented his final payment on NAACP Life Membership to Dr. Maurice F. Rabb last week, Dr. Rabb is a member of the National Executive Board and Life Membership Committee of the NAACP.



Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, Wednesday, 16 May 1973, p.1B:



First and last – Frank L. Moorman Sr., left, closed his service station yesterday at Eighth and Walnut to make way for urban renewal. His last customer was George Lang, right, who also was his first customer when he opened in 1937. Lang, now retired, was a chauffeur then and "was in a big Packard car, waiting for me to open," Moorman recalled. Moorman is retiring from business.



Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, Saturday, 10 January 1987, p.4B:

Frank L. Moorman Sr., 84, died Friday at his home.

He was a native of Owensboro and owner and operator of the old Frank's Standard Oil Station at Eighth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard [note – formerly Walnut Street], for 35 years. He also was former co-owner of the old Central Drug Store at Sixth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard. He was a member of First Virginia Avenue Baptist Church, NAACP and Bluegrass Garden Club.

Survivors include his wife the former Bessie T. Washington; a son, Frank L. Moorman Jr.; a daughter, Bernice Long of Owensboro; and three grandchildren.

The funeral will be at 1 p.m. Tuesday at A.D. Porter & Sons Funeral Home, 1300 W. Chestnut St., with burial in Eastern Cemetery.

Visitation will be at the funeral home after noon Monday.



Grave of Frank L. Moorman, Sr. (1902-1987), wife, Bessie Washington Moorman, and his mother-in-law, Louise Gordon Washington, in Eastern Cemetery, Louisville, KY



Ancestry of Frank L. Moorman

Frank Lorenzo Moorman was born near Utica in Daviess County, KY on 2 March 1902. He was the son of Vitalis (Tal) Moorman (1878-c1902) and Laura Jane Simmons (1879-1906). Frank is enumerated in the 1910, 1920 and 1930 federal censuses of Daviess County, KY. In 1910 he and his brother, Cicero, were living with their maternal grandparents in the Red Hill – Utica neighborhood of Daviess County. Frank's grandparents, Frank L. Simmons (1855-1919) & Louisa Washington (1857-1944) were married in Daviess County, KY on 18 October 1876 and are buried in the Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery near Utica in Daviess County. At the time of the 1920 census Frank Moorman and Cicero and Alfred Moorman, were living with their grandmother, Louise Simmons, in Owensboro, KY.

In the 1930 census of Owensboro, KY Frank L. Moorman was reported to be a clerk in a drug store. In the 1940 and 1950 censuses of Louisville, Jefferson County, KY he is listed as being an attendant – operator of a gas station. He died on 9 January 1987 at his home in Louisville, where he was buried in the Eastern Cemetery.

Frank L. Moorman's parents, Vitalis (Tal) Moorman and Laura Jane M. Simmons, were married on 9 January 1899 at the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Daviess County, KY (Daviess County, KY Negro marriage book H, p.249). Tal was born in March 1878 and died during 1902-1905. Frank's mother, Laura Jane Moorman wrote a final will on 30 September 1905 and it was probated on 18 June 1906 (Daviess County, KY Will Book E, pp.522-523). The following notice was published in the newspaper, Owensboro Inquirer, on 18 June 1906 (p.1):

Will of Laura Moorman

The will of Laura Jane Moorman was probated, It leaves to her father and mother, Frank L. and Louisa Simmons, a gray mare and a bay horse and a top buggy. To her father and mother, also she leaves the custody of her two boys, Cicero and Frank L., aged respectively three and five years. Between her two boys she divides her farm, thirteen miles south of Owensboro and containing sixty-three acres, equaling, when they arrive at the age of twenty-one. In case one dies the other is to get his share. In case both dies before they reach the age of twenty-one, then all the farm is to go to her father and mother. Her father, Frank L. Simmons, is named executor without bond.

The will was written by the testator, a colored woman, and it is well expressed and perfectly clear in its terms. It is attested by Arthur Higgs and Alex Marshall.

Frank L. Moorman's grandparents, Dora Moorman (c1829-1894) & Della Higgs (c 1833-1906), were former slaves and are buried at the Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery near Utica in Daviess County. Dora was born in Kentucky about 1829. In several family trees on Ancestry.com Dora is reported to have been enslaved by Silas Mercer Moorman (1812-1864), who is listed in the 1850 and 1860 census slave schedules for Daviess County, KY.

Dora & Della Moorman after being freed registered their marriage on 26 June 1866 (Freedmen Bureau's marriages at the National Archives). They are listed in the 1870 and 1880 censuses of Daviess County, KY. The 1876 Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY (p.34) shows Dora Moorman owned a farm of 874 acres in the Murray Precinct just north of the McLean County line.

Dora Moorman died in Daviess County in 1894. The Owensboro Messenger of 4 August 1894 (p.1) reported that Henry Moorman was appointed administrator of the estate of Dora Moorman, deceased. Dora's widow, Della, in the 1900 Daviess County, KY census is reported to

have been born in July 1833 and was the mother of 9 children, one of whom was deceased. Della died on 11 July 1906. The Livia community column in the Owensboro Inquirer of Tuesday, 17 July 1906 (p.3) noted "Aunt Della Moorman died at her home Wednesday evening at 3 o'clock. She was buried in the Buckhorn cemetery."

This following reminiscence of Dora and Della Moorman was written by their granddaughter, Henrietta Pope Davis Jackson (1900-1978), and was taken from a booklet, "The History of the Moorman & Pope Family" by Myrtle Ann Pope.

"My grandfather, Dora Moorman, died before I was born. I heard a lot of good things about him, but I never knew him personally. I was about six years old when Grandmother Della died. I remember all of us rushing over to the house the evening she became ill. We stayed with her until her death. From what I heard about Grandmother Della, she was a very staunch Christian, a wonderful neighbor and a compassionate friend to all who knew her. Grandfather and Grandmother were both slaves. During his life time he acquire a large amount of land which enabled him to give each of his children a farm and other necessities need to operate the farm. He owned most of Buckhorn, extending from the Calhoun Road, West to Livermore Road, East*. They all owned farms connecting to each other. They also shared in the bringing up of their children. There were all prosperous farmers and gardeners. They were all devoted Christian people. I remember when I was a very small child, how they would be at church on Sunday's, shouting and rejoicing. They would meet at the little school on Wednesday nights for prayer meetings because the schoolhouse was closer than the Church. There always seemed to be a tie that kept the family together. My father was a teacher and he would have the literary society at the school house once a week. Everyone would go and have debates and spelling bees. That was out greatest entertainment in those days. My father would pass out peppermint candy after the meetings. That was fun for the old as well as the young."



Dora Moorman (c1829-1894) is the third from the left in the front row; his wife, Della, is second from the left.

