

The Life & Times of
Charles W. (Dinty) Moore

Prepared by the subject under
duress by Paul B. Zimmerman

-----May 1981-----

Charles Wesley Moore was born in Villisca, Iowa on February 15, 1903 at 12:02 A.M. according to his mother, Jessie Arnold Moore, who had hoped her first-born would arrive on Valentine Day. That he did not was a regrettable oversight of Mother Nature because of his subsequent sweetness of character and saintly demeanor.

Figuratively born in his father's drug store, probably behind the soda fountain where he was to devote most of his early youth to satisfying the desires of the town's citizenry, in addition to those of farm folk, for the cooling concoctions of ice cream and assorted syrups. At this period Ross and Jessie Moore's first son was known as Wes--for Wesley Arnold, his maternal grandfather, then a passenger train engineer for the Burlington Railroad. The town's most accomplished soda jerk also was known for his excellence at pool--a minor course of study that cost him half a year in high school; driving the family Model T around corners on two wheels, and devastating accuracy in dropping bags of water on the Villisca nightwatchman when making his nocturnal rounds.

As an apprentice pharmacist Wes was permitted to assist in the production of certain prescriptions, and in this role he produced the first and only chocolate-flavored suppositories, a formula not included in the annals of the Iowa Pharmaceutical Association. The suppositories were the inadvertent by-product of chocolate syrup preparation for the soda fountain, and were prescribed for and used effectively by an elderly farmer, who came back for a refill, but didn't get chocolate.

A year after he was graduated from high school Wes left Villisca for Des Moines to enter Drake University to begin a pre-medical course. He intended to go on, Drake's faculty permitting, to the University of Iowa's medical school; but, an after-classes job as copy boy in the newsroom of the Des Moines

2. The L&T of Charles W. (Dinty) Moore

Capital began the erosion of interest in medicine as a profession and the beginning of a long, gratifying career as a newspaperman and railway public relations/advertising officer. The transition also ended the appellation, Wes, and the "rechristening" of the Capital copy boy as Dinty. That was apropos one of the copy boy's responsibilities, the delivery of comic strip maps to the composing room; and, Dinty Moore was a principal character in the famed Maggie & Jiggs comic feature. The nickname, Dinty, has endured almost 60 years.

The copy boy graduated to cub reporter for the Capital, and in 1924 he moved to the Des Moines Register & Tribune as a news writer and rewrite man. In 1928 the city editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press visited a Register & Tribune news department friend who introduced the Minnesotan to Dinty Moore. A reporting job on the St. Paul morning paper, was offered and later accepted, and that was the beginning of a 48-year residence in Minnesota's capital city.

Fortuitous as was this change, a much more important one had occurred in August 1927--his marriage to Gertrude Gamble, a strawberry blond and recent graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. Miss Gamble was an assistant librarian in the Des Moines Public Library, an activity to which she was destined to resume in 1976 as a volunteer in the Leisure World Library.

The Moores went to St. Paul in September 1928, and in the following July became the parents of Eleanor Gamble Moore, their only child. Eleanor now is Mrs. George B. Merrick, wife of the vice president and assistant to the president of Rockwell International's Space Division. Merrick was in charge of the engineering and production of the Space Shuttle. The Merricks live in Manhattan Beach, and the Moores have three grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Dinty was a reporter and rewrite man on the Pioneer Press, and later on the afternoon paper, the Dispatch. He was assistant city editor of the Dispatch for several months, but was moved to special assignment writing in 1935.

L&T of Charles W. (Dinty) Moore

On a May day in 1937 two exciting opportunities came to Moore. In the morning the president of Great Northern Railway, the James J. Hill line based in St. Paul, suggested Dinty's interest in becoming assistant to the company's public relations director. That afternoon a Western Union telegram from Byron Price, then general manager of the Associated Press, invited Dinty to become a member of the great news-gathering agency's New York staff. Neither position had been sought, and Dinty was to learn later that both proposals had resulted from recommendations volunteered to the two executives of the railway and Associated Press.

After substantial consideration that entailed all of the emotions involved in choosing between two attractive opportunities, Dinty accepted the Great Northern invitation. He went to the railway in September, and was the president's guest at lunch that day. He remembers what his host said that day; "Well, Dinty, you'll no longer be accepted as a newspaperman because you left the field; and, you'll never be accepted as a full-fledged railroader because you didn't begin as a water boy."

The ensuing 31 years worked out differently. Dinty feels that his identity with newspapermen and the electronic press as a public relations officer of one of the nation's largest railways was effective because he worked hard at making the job meaningful and a productive, two-way association. He feels that he was accepted as a railroader by his peers, not because he became assistant to the president, but because he made an effort to know men and women in the many, many responsibilities involved in the operation and management of a railway, and how they did their jobs. But, he never drove an engine to emulate Grandpa Arnold.

In 1944 Dinty became assistant to the president, and the responsibility for Great Northern's advertising was added to the public relations assignment. The railway's advertising expenditure was substantial through the 1940s and 1950s, and averaged about \$3 million annually, for a ten-year period through the mid 40s and mid 50s, the largest of any railway at that time.

Great Northern's public relations/advertising department was an Executive Department function, and the staff totaled 15 persons, including a 2-person office in Seattle.

In the seven years preceding Dinty's retirement in 1968 the public relations responsibility was largely merger-oriented. Great Northern, Northern Pacific and Burlington railways were seeking consolidation. The project involved many public hearings in several cities along the routes of the three lines in addition to Interstate Commerce Commission hearings in Washington, D.C. Press coverage and related communications requirements kept the public relations staffs of the companies extremely busy.

The three companies were consolidated in 1970 as the Burlington Northern, now the longest railway in the United States.

During his Great Northern career Dinty was active in St. Paul civic affairs, including directorships in the Chamber of Commerce, Red Cross, Junior Achievement, and president of the St. Paul Winter Carnival Association. He continued some of those associations after his retirement. He also had been identified with public relations activities of the Association of American Railroad and the Western Railway Association, and at his retirement was a "dean" of the railway industry's public relations officers.

Dinty's community activities in Leisure World began in 1976, the year the Moores came here. He began Meals-on-Wheels deliveries that year---a community service he had done in St. Paul---and in 1977 became communications chairman for Saddleback Kiwanis club, continuing that until the Fall of 1980. Dinty was appointed to the United Laguna Hills Mutual board of directors in 1978, and in 1979 was elected to a three-year term on the directorate. He is chairman of the United Community Relations/Communications committee. He is also an active member in Laguna Hills and Saddleback Lawn Bowling Clubs and a charter member of the Chess and Chamber Music Societies..

A former director of the Laguna Hills Historical Society, Dinty authored the story on the Leisure World Library in the Fall 1980 issue of the society's Leisure World History.

Dinty also is weary of writing about himself, and urges Paul Zimmerman to exercise charity in considering what appears on the preceding four pages.