



Walter P. Moody

WALTER P. MOORE JR.

1937–1998

Elected in 1991

“For leadership in improving the quality of creative designs.”

BY JOSE ROESSET

WALTER P. MOORE JR., an internationally known structural engineer and chairman of the board of Walter P. Moore and Associates Inc., died on June 21, 1998, of injuries suffered in an automobile accident on April 4 of the same year.

Walter was born in Houston, Texas, on May 6, 1937. His father, Walter P. Sr., had founded in 1931 a one-person structural engineering consulting practice where Walter Jr. started to work in 1953, becoming deeply interested in structural design and in learning more about it. Motivated by his experience in the firm he attended Rice University, where he obtained a bachelor of arts degree in 1959 and a bachelor of science in 1960. This was followed by a master of science in civil engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1962 and a PhD from the same institution in 1964.

After serving as a captain in active duty in the US Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha Division, and technical director of the Protective Structures Branch from 1964 to 1966, he joined his father's firm. The company had gained national recognition due to its involvement in the structural design of the Astrodome, and was incorporated in 1967 with Walter Jr. as a principal. Since then the company has grown in size and reputation both nationally and internationally. In addition to its headquarters in Houston, it now has offices in Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Orlando, San Francisco, Tampa, Tulsa, and Washington, DC, and is recognized as a leader in the design of tall buildings,

sports arenas, and unusual innovative structures. It was ranked among the top three engineering firms to work for by Structural Engineer for six years in a row, and number 1 in 2008.

Walter P. Moore Jr. received a large number of awards during his life. He received the Distinguished Alumnus Award of the University of Illinois in 1990 and the corresponding award in 1991 from the Civil Engineering Department of Rice University. In 1991 he was also inducted into the National Academy of Engineering and in 1992 he was an honoree of the Houston chapter of the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists and received the Alfred E. Lindau Award of the American Concrete Institute. He was an honorary member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Consulting Engineers Council, and the American Institute of Architects. In 1995 he was named Master Builder by the Associated General Contractors.

Walter was extremely active in professional societies. A registered professional engineer in 28 states, he was a member of 12 different professional groups. He served in numerous technical as well as management committees of the American Society of Civil Engineers (including an executive committee), the American Concrete Institute (including its board of directors), and the Consulting Engineers Council of Texas (member of the board of directors, vice president, and president). He was equally active in civic and religious commissions and boards. He was an active member of St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, and was a member of the boards of directors of the Houston Engineering and Scientific Society, the Harris County Heritage Society, the Kiwanis Club of Houston, and the Forest Club. He chaired the finance committee for the sesquicentennial of the state of Texas and the United Way architects and engineers group.

He was also involved in the activities of various universities: the Rice University Engineering Alumni Association and Engineering Advisory Council, the University of Illinois Advisory Committee on the Effects of Earthquake Motions on Reinforced Concrete Buildings, the Civil Engineering Visiting Committee of the University of Texas at Austin, and

the Engineering Advisory Council of Texas A&M University. While serving the two rival Texas universities he maintained his allegiance to his alma mater. When asked once what team he favored when UT and TAMU played against each other his answer was straightforward: "I do not care which one wins; I am a Rice alumnus."

In addition to his advisory positions, he lectured at Rice University as an adjunct professor from 1975 to 1982, at Cornell University in 1986, and at the University of Illinois in 1988–1989.

In 1993 he retired from the day-to-day operations of the firm and took a full-time position at Texas A&M University, with a joint appointment in the College of Architecture and in the Civil Engineering Department of the Dwight Look College of Engineering as holder of the Thomas A. Bullock Endowed Chair. In this capacity he clearly illustrated the value to engineering education and to society in general of a prominent practicing engineer taking early retirement and joining the academic ranks as full-time faculty. Walter provided a link between the architecture and the civil engineering programs, two complementary but unfortunately all too often disjoint undertakings. He also founded the Center for Building Design and Construction, directed the Center for Construction Education, and revitalized the Structural Laboratory.

Whereas many young faculty members join universities directly after completion of their doctoral studies without any practical exposure to real-life engineering, and in particular to design and construction, Walter was able in his classes to provide unique insight into the creative and practical aspects of design, emphasizing the integration of the analysis, design, and construction processes and of the activities of architects and structural engineers. He also placed particular emphasis on the need to communicate effectively. Equally important was his contribution mentoring young faculty just as he had mentored his coworkers at the firm. His achievements at Texas A&M University endure but one can only imagine what the civil engineering program might have become were it not for his tragic and untimely death.

When the Moores moved to College Station in 1993 they were immediately a very popular couple. They were both extremely sociable and open. Walter was equally at ease talking to professional and academic architects and engineers and he knew through his experience at the firm how to successfully involve persons with different backgrounds in common activities. He frequented equally the favorite local restaurant of the civil engineering faculty and that of the architects (a better one). He was very popular on the golf course not only because of his classic and distinctive attire and his tendency to slice the ball but also because of his joyful disposition.

His achievements as an engineer are there for anybody to see: in Houston, there's the Miller Outdoor Theater, known for its striking exposed cantilever roof framing; the First City Towers, a 49-story building with a very specialized structural system; the 46- and 42-story office buildings of One and Two Houston Center; the Summit Arena; the Astrodome World park; the Southwestern Bell Houston area headquarters building, a 665-foot long building without expansion joints; the Exxon Chemical Americas headquarters; and the Hyatt Hotel; as well as the 60-story NCNB (now Bank of America) Tower in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the IBM Tower at Atlantic Center in Atlanta, Georgia, among others.

Walter P. Moore Jr. was survived by his wife, Mary Ann Dillingham Moore, his high school sweetheart whom he married in 1959 and who died in 2004; by his children Walter Parker Moore III, MD, and wife Sarah, Melissa Moore Magee and husband Michael Magee, and Matthew Dillingham Moore and wife Valerie; his brother Robert Laurence Moore and wife Lauris McKee; four grandchildren; and his coworkers at Walter P. Moore and Associates and colleagues at Texas A&M University who admired, respected, and loved him.

Walter was never pretentious, arrogant, or overbearing. He was always a humble man, open, caring, and ready to help anyone. He was an outstanding engineer with great creativity, initiative, and originality, and a successful entrepreneur, a born leader, who gave generously of himself.

