

30 YEARS AND THEN SOME as told by Skip Moore



It seems that the family's shop in Richmond, Nelson Neon, named after my grandfather and founder, Art Nelson, had been my playground from the beginning; soaring on the ropes of the monorail pulleys through the Quonset hut building, peering over the shoulders of the artists, marveling at the ideas they transcribed to empty paper with a few swipes of the magical hand, amazed as the simple tubes of glass leapt to life, blazing brilliant on the bombarding table in the darkness of the neon shop, watching the long shadows of the welder

flicker across the wall as he struck an arc, the flash of hot light bonding steel, discovering pollywogs in the creek that ran behind the shop, balancing on the Sante Fe tracks on a summer afternoon, following the familiar steel path as it gently curved toward my favorite destination, the place I simply knew as "the shop". Besides El Monte Elementary School, and the streets, grassy hillsides and playfields of El Cerrito, this is where I grew up.

Eventually, the shop became a place to work. I swept floors and yards, restocked hardware bins, rode with the servicemen, emptied scraps of colorful plastics into the trash bin, ran blueprints, and got in the way. I even crossed the union picket lines to help keep the family business alive, wiring four-lamp ballasts, gluing Safeway "S" mosaics and the like. All for what was, as a 12 year old, a meaningful wage of \$1.65 an hour.

I think it was 1967 or 1968 when we moved the shop to Benicia to get away from the unions that threatened to destroy our way of life. 14 years old and my Saturdays were spent driving the service and crane trucks to check the tires and gas them up, still sweeping the floors and clearing the scraps from the weekly cycle of an industry that fed me. Through high school, summers meant 40 hour weeks as stock boy, gopher, janitor, painter, \$50 checks and the camaraderie of my coworkers. As I became more interested in drafting and architecture, I longed to be free of what had become the drudgery and simple labor within the compound of Nelson Neon.

That freedom lasted about 6 years, which took me to the University of Oregon for a degree in Architecture and Land Use Planning, 3 summers spent in Kodiak, Alaska, over a year as a carpenter building pole barns in southern Oregon and northern California and, a year after graduation, as a cartographer and citizen coordinator for the Hood River County Planning Department. It was a strange feeling walking in through that door at BMA 30 years ago today for what I thought was to temporarily help my Dad launch his new business.

So as I stop at this anniversary to acknowledge my prolonged engagement at Bill Moore & Associates, I realize that the memories last much farther back than that, and just like the tendency of the aged mind, I find myself remembering the days of my youth with greater clarity than the events of last year, and how my lifetime in this enterprise the influence of my father and my mother, my grandfather, the artists, sheet metal men, salesmen, installers, apprentices and journeymen have shaped and molded me into who I am today.

After all of that, I find myself looking forward to what tomorrow brings with a renewed sense of pride and purpose.

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