

## Reflections from WT with Michael Moore

Randy Ray:

This is Episode number 36 of Reflections from WT, the heart and the soul of the Texas Panhandle. My name is Randy Ray. I'm your host. And I'm joined today by a couple of guys that, I really admire both of you. My boss', boss', boss, Dr. Walter Wendler, the 11th President of West Texas A&M, and my good friend, Michael Moore. Good morning.

Michael Moore:

Good morning.

President Walter Wendler:

Good morning, Randy. Good to be here. Thanks for the opportunity. I can't believe we've done this 36 times.

Randy Ray:

I can't either. It's been over two years.

President Walter Wendler:

It's three.

Randy Ray:

Is it three?

President Walter Wendler:

Well, 12 goes into 36 three times, guys.

Randy Ray:

You can see why I don't teach math.

President Walter Wendler:

I see exactly why you don't teach math. I get that part.

Randy Ray:

I tell my students, one thing I promise you in my classes, there'll be no math in here. No arithmetic. Yeah. I've enjoyed a lot of our conversations and I'm looking forward to our conversation today. Let me introduce our guest, Michael Moore. Michael Moore and I met at church and we've had some good conversations. One of the conversations that we continually have, is our love for WT. He loves working here. I love working here. And, when you and I started talking about getting some people on campus that just love being here, I thought about Michael. And you said, that'd be a good idea to bring him in. So, we brought Michael in and introduce yourself and tell us what you do on campus.

Michael Moore:

My name is Michael Moore and I'm a Custodian for the SSC physical plant. I really enjoy my work and enjoy the being a part of the campus, and I'm just really happy to be here. I enjoy the people, most are. And then, it seems like every semester there's a new bunch of people coming in. And then, it's just, be here.

Michael Moore:

Working here long enough to where you could see them come in as freshmen and leave as seniors, it feels, that I have a part in it. Because, I actually interact with a lot of people that come here, and stuff like that. And I get to know them. And then, after they're out of here, I still interact with them in public, sometimes. So it's really nice.

President Walter Wendler:

And what college? Where do you work? What building?

Michael Moore:

Well, I work... They changed that up. So, I used to work at the engineering building, over a long time. But, I've worked in every building here, because I strip and wax floors and I've... Sometimes when people are short, we work everywhere. So, I've worked in your suite, actually, the President Suite, classroom. There's probably not a building on here that I haven't stripped and waxed the floors in.

President Walter Wendler:

Well, I always think of you associated with engineering, for some reason.

Randy Ray:

Yeah, me, too.

President Walter Wendler:

Because that's how I first knew you, and everything.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

You know, I don't think we fully appreciate how the whole staff, from... Well, I'll say it this way, because Michael and I are sitting here. But, from the president to the custodial staff, how all of those people working together, serve students. And, when we recognize that, you called, talking about the love for the place.

Randy Ray:

Love for the place. Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

Look it, Michael just said he watches students come in as freshman and leave as seniors. That's a powerful thing. And, we stratify, sometimes, too much. Well, they're in the executive suite. They don't care. Or, somebody will say, he's a custodian, he's not worried about this. Uh-Uh.

Randy Ray:

It's a team effort.

President Walter Wendler:

Yeah.

Randy Ray:

I think. It's a team effort.

President Walter Wendler:

Yeah. Yeah, it is.

Randy Ray:

And Michael, you said something that... You talked about interaction with students. Tell us about that a little bit. How often do you do that and what do you guys talk about?

Michael Moore:

Well, it's just with anything, you want to be pleasant and so, whenever they come in... Because, I know how it was when I was in the military and you get to a place that you've never been, and you're without your family for the first time. So, I myself would want... I was nervous and already homesick when I got here. So, that's what I feel and that's how I think about every newcomer, in here.

Michael Moore:

You want to make them feel as welcome as possible and to let them enjoy the stay. And, let them know that you are away from your physical family, but, you are joining a new WT family. With that, make them feel as welcome and as natural as possible. That way, they enjoy the stay and get their education and then go on their way.

Michael Moore:

Because, whenever you get out of WT, it's going to be another step. Where, you're in another new world. Away from your physical family and the WT family. So, you're starting a new family with wherever you're at, working. Just want to get them used to that.

Michael Moore:

My interactions are, with anywhere, I've seen them in the store. Anywhere. Like I said, you see a person out in public, and then you see them at church. Then, you turn around and then you see them. 'Oh, I didn't know you worked here. I didn't know you went to school. I didn't know you

were a student here'. And, it's just interactions. I could not even count how many times I interact with students or faculty or...

Randy Ray:

Well, one thing you mentioned, Michael, and I want you both to talk about this, is the WT family. We say that a lot, and I've been other universities across the nation. They don't have the family-like atmosphere, that we do.

Michael Moore:

Oh, no.

Randy Ray:

And so, would you both speak to that a little bit? What?

President Walter Wendler:

Oh, look, Michael, you go ahead and go first and then I'll say a word, too.

Michael Moore:

You look at just how in the last 10 years... I'll just go 10 years. How much and how fast that the campus has grown and everything that comes with it. It's like I said, the whole town of Canyon, actually, WT include, because it's most of the population. Well, not most of it, but a lot of it is here. You can tell whenever there're holidays or there're summer breaks, or something like that, because everybody's gone and...

Randy Ray:

It changes the feel of city.

Michael Moore:

Yeah. You do get...I miss these people. I hope they do come back because sometimes they don't come back. But, when spring comes and then semester starts, and then you see these people again. It's like, Oh man. You almost want to hug them. I missed you. Where have you been? But, as far as familywise goes, you really get attached to people.

Michael Moore:

I don't know. I've been to a couple of places and a lot of places have no interest or care about you, as you come and go. But, it's not like that here at WT. You actually, generally, care about the person and want to get to know them. You can tell, by just going into JBK, or library, or activity center, and see how different people, from everywhere, coming together. And that's why I say, it's a family atmosphere.

Randy Ray:

Yeah. Dr. Wendler, is a different feel here, than other universities, that you have worked at and have led?

President Walter Wendler:

Yeah, yeah. I think there is. And I think part of it is the size. We're a little bit smaller. Part of it, is the nature of the Texas Panhandle. People, had to come together against the weather. Trying to scratch out a living out of this soil, up here, that's very unforgiving. And there's so much agriculture. Not enough water. The wind never stops blowing, and so on, and so forth. you know, and so on and so forth.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

And I think it draws people together. And I think it's powerful. And, I think it's one of the reasons I'm so committed to trying to, in a sense, preserve the best parts of that culture. It's not perfect. Don't get me wrong. It's not perfect, but, it does bring people together. As a matter of fact, I see it when I walk up and down on Sundays. I walk pretty much every day. I try to walk about three miles, and I'll walk past Michael's house and they're out there... He's laughing, because he knows. They're out there cooking.

Randy Ray:

He's out grilling.

President Walter Wendler:

He's grilling on Sunday afternoon.

Randy Ray:

Does he invite you over for something to eat?

President Walter Wendler:

Every time. And here's my problem...

Michael Moore:

You an open an invitation.

President Walter Wendler:

Yeah. Every time, he always asks me to come. Sometimes, I'll see what he's picking out at the grocery store. I stop, stop, on the way home from church, to get something myself. Mary and I, and I'll see him in there and he's getting the ribs, or whatever they're going to cook that afternoon. Anyway, bottom line is, I never stopped because I'm always trying to keep my heart rate up. I'm walking, not just to get out and walk, but I'm trying to exercise. So, I never stop. We wave and we shout each other. During the one... I forget which Super Bowl there was. It wasn't this last one, but, it was maybe, the one before. Whatever the teams were, I was on one side of the fence and those guys were all on the other.

President Walter Wendler:

But anyway, there's a certain sort of, unity about the place. And again, if anybody's listening and think, "Oh, well it must be perfect there". It's not perfect. But, it is a place that works hard at trying to be accommodating and open to each other, and be part of something that's larger than themselves. And, I'll tell you what, to the extent we do that this university gets better, and better, and better.

Randy Ray:

Michael, were you raised in Tulia?

Michael Moore:

No, Happy. Happy.

Randy Ray:

Happy.

Michael Moore:

Down, without a frown.

Randy Ray:

So, you grew up knowing about WT.

Michael Moore:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. For a long time, yeah. I've had brothers, sister... My sister didn't go here but our brothers went here. There were so many events. We'd come and actually watch basketball in the box. So I mean, it's been a while. First time, I went and saw that WT Stadium, out there. I thought that was the most amazing thing because it was the biggest football field I'd ever seen. Yeah, I grew up around here a long time.

Randy Ray:

Yeah. Is it different working here than it was? No one... I mean, is it what you thought it would be like?

President Walter Wendler:

No. No, actually, it's not. Because I'll tell you, work is work. And that's what you expect. To come here to see it work. But, it's more like, I don't know, like a school level. You go, and you see a lot of people you know, and friends, and everything, but, you work and get the job done. But, I mean, it's not like work. It's a job, but it's not like work. Because, when you think of work, you are constantly working. But, I mean we're constantly working. Don't get me wrong.

President Walter Wendler:

Oh, you're working. Cause your boss or somebody's listening. You guys work hard. You're always bent over doing the job. There's no question about it.

Michael Moore:

But it's less, it goes back to that family feel. It's like, you are... You see a lot of people that you know and you like, and it's just...

Randy Ray:

Yeah. If, you enjoy your job... What's that old saying?

Michael Moore:

If you enjoy your job, you never have to work a day in your life.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

That's it. That's exactly right.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

Hey, let me ask something. I've always wondered this. And, I should stop, and not worry about my heart rate being up. But, stop and talk, sometimes. Then, there's 12, 14, people sitting around that grill, out there, fiddling... Are they family members? Are they work partners? What are they?

Michael Moore:

No, they are all brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters, or, brothers and sisters. A gentleman passed by one time and asked, "How do you all hang out and always so happy and everything? You know, because if my family got together, we would be arguing and fighting". It's just like, it just goes back to my mom, which my mom. She worked at cafeteria for 28, 29 years?

Randy Ray:

There, in Happy?

Michael Moore:

No. Here at WT.

Randy Ray:

Oh, yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

Really? So, you're a second-generation WT employee.

Michael Moore:

Well, yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

Your mom was first and now you.

Michael Moore:

Well, my mom and my sister and my brother. Yes. Yeah, I'm second generation.

Randy Ray:

They have a long line of people that have worked at WT.

Michael Moore:

Oh yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

That's, and by the way, you probably know this. But, Pat Hickman, from around here, his parents both worked on campus.

Randy Ray:

I didn't know that.

President Walter Wendler:

Yeah. Yeah, both his parents. His father ran the steam plant and his mother took care of some kind of inventory stuff.

Randy Ray:

Huh.

President Walter Wendler:

So, they worked on campus and Pat went here for a while, but, he... Anyway, the bottom line is, they were rooted into the community through the campus, also.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

Michael Moore:

But, back to your, I don't mean to interrupt you. Sorry.

President Walter Wendler:

No, no, no, no, no.



Michael Moore:

But, back to the question. My mom didn't raise us to argue and fight like that. It was, enjoy the time that you have together, because you never know whenever that time is cut short. And, so it's, yeah, we have disagreements, but as far as arguing and fighting, I guess it's how my sister puts it. Because, she is the second mother, because she's our only sister. But, if you get upset and you can't deal with it, go home and come back tomorrow, because, it's not that big of a problem. But I mean, we enjoy our time together. So, I mean, that's why I say, anytime y'all feel like you want to stop by, stop by.

President Walter Wendler:

Next time I come when you're all out there, I am going to stop. I've been, I keep saying, I need to stop. I don't think to myself, I need to stop. But, I'm always thinking about my heart rate. All the time. You know? And I try to walk at a certain speed and so on, and so forth.

Michael Moore:

Well, you can walk around our house. I mean, you can stop by...

Randy Ray:

Around that grill.

President Walter Wendler:

You can walk around the grill. Walk around the grill. And it is... One thing they do have a family unity on, is the football team. I can't even remember which one it was.

Michael Moore:

Well, that's different. Because, I like... I am a diehard, Detroit Lion fan. But, my brothers are Cowboy fans and I have another brother, that's a Raider fan, and then...

President Walter Wendler:

Oh, that's sad.

Michael Moore:

Yeah. Yeah. I thought you were going to say, it's sad that... Man. Really, I'm not a cowboy fan, but you know. You love to hate the Cowboys or you love the Cowboys and, it's just like, I don't see what went with their season this year. And, it's just like, I thought they really had a chance, but...

President Walter Wendler:

So did, so did Mr. Johnson.

Randy Ray:

Yeah. So, Dr. Wendler, we talked a lot today about family. Let's talk about the half-off tuition and fee waiver program. That WT's recently started.

President Walter Wendler:

Okay. That is for WT employees. And this doesn't include SSC employees. Although, I want to caution saying this on the air, but, I want to talk to SSC about seeing if we can work a similar kind of deal. But, it allows employees of the University, at any level, to get half-off of the tuition and fees. Whatever they are. So, it's not a fixed amount.

President Walter Wendler:

Because, the tuition and fees, unfortunately, in every college are different. Because, we have lab fees, over here in Sybil B. Harrington. There's some of the areas of study have lab fees. Almost all of them do, in different ways. So, it's all different. But for us, it's real simple. Half-off. Whatever it is, you get half-off.

President Walter Wendler:

So, I told the faculty member, we were talking about this. If you're a faculty member here, and your child wants to attend here, and they live at home, it costs \$80,000 with no help or assistance. \$20,000 a year, four years, to get a bachelor's degree here. Well, if you live at home, the costs split out 50-50. Half of the costs are room and board and half of tuition and fees. So, the 80 goes to 40, if you live at home. Then, if you are an employee here, the 40 gets cut to 20. Which, is starting to be a very good deal. You can't buy a Mustang for \$20,000. It's a good deal. It's a very, very good deal. And, If you get any scholarships or anything on top of that, you can go to school for nothing here.

President Walter Wendler:

And, we want our employees, because as they are, this sounds sometimes hokey, if that's a word? But, it does sound a little that way. But, we would like our employees to feel that they're part of the family here and feel like WT offers at every level, offers a good, good experience.

President Walter Wendler:

So, that's a new program we're starting. It starts, technically after the may graduation. It'll be an in place. And then, we had to answer a lot of questions. It took a long time to do this. But, we wanted an employee educational benefit.

President Walter Wendler:

I told somebody this story and it's true. I was trying to recruit. When I was the Dean of The College Of Architecture, at Texas A&M, I was trying to recruit a faculty member from Notre Dame. And, I was pitching him and he said, "Walter, ain't going to work". He said, "Got three kids, getting ready to graduate high school". One after the other, essentially. And they're all going to go to college. And, he said, "They're all going to Notre Dame. And, at Notre Dame, as a faculty member, they all go for free".

Randy Ray:

Oh, wow.

President Walter Wendler:

He said, "How can you? You can't beat that".

Randy Ray:

No.

President Walter Wendler:

You can't beat it. I mean, it's a great university. The architecture program, may not been quite as good as A&M, but, it was pretty good. And they're going to be there. It was a good, good deal. So, that's what we're doing with the half-off for tuition and fees.

Randy Ray:

That's a good deal, still.

President Walter Wendler:

It is. And, I think it's a very nice way to say to the faculty and staff, we appreciate you. And quite frankly, I really wish it did extend SSC and to Aramark. And, I'd like to find a way to try to do that, so that everybody associated with WT has that opportunity.

Randy Ray:

One of the things we've talked a lot today about is, work and work ethic. Dr. Wendler, what is your biggest project you're working on right now?

President Walter Wendler:

Well, I would say there's a couple. The one, that I would say, that's in some ways, easiest to put my finger on, is our a fundraising campaign. Now...

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:

Todd Rasberry is the chief of that, to be sure. But, I help him as much as I can. And he doesn't need a lot of help. He's really energized by it, and so on. We've got a bunch of announcements coming up here in the next month or so. Big, big gifts. We will cross a \$100,000,000. We started with the 80 million, in contributions, about four months ago. Five months now, I guess. But, we will be at a 100 million, here, very soon. We have some things that have to be approved by the region's namings, and that sort of thing.

Randy Ray:

Yeah.

Michael Moore:

But, we're very, very, pleased. So, I think the fundraising is very important. And also, that's a big project that you can your finger on easily.

Michael Moore:

Another project, that is on the plate for me, every day, is to really work to try to keep the very best of the Panhandle values to the forefront. We're talking about family, we're talking about hard work. We're talking about loyalty, trust, all these kinds of things. And by and large, is in the nature of the people of the Panhandle and I want those to be in the nature of our University. Without apology. That these Panhandle values become very important. Of course, we want good scholars, and academic excellence, and everything else, but, I really want to see those Panhandled values shine through all of that.

Randy Ray:

Well, I think you're doing a fantastic job doing that. And I mean that.

Michael Moore:

Yes, you are.

President Walter Wendler:

That's, a far too kind.

Randy Ray:

We are all behind you. All right, Michael, here's the deal. Every podcast, I threw a curve ball. You ready?

Michael Moore:

Okay. I'm ready.

Randy Ray:

Here's our curve ball for this episode. I'd like you both to think about just, for a second, and tell me what is the worst fashion trend you've ever adopted? You know what I'm talking about?

Michael Moore:

Oh, fashion trend. I'm going to let Michael go first, but...

Randy Ray:

Well, I'll let you guys... I'll give you a minute to think about it, and I'll tell you mine. Back in the eighties, there was a thing called parachute pants. Does anyone remember parachute pants? Yeah. They were in style for about 10 minutes. I think. So. I had, I had a pair of them and I...

President Walter Wendler:

Thank God, that only lasted 10 minutes.

Randy Ray:

I still have them somewhere up in the attic, I think. I can't fit into them anymore. So, what's the worst fashion trend you guys have ever had to deal with?

Michael Moore:

Okay. So, on the worst fashion trend... It was a good generation, but back in school we had where you could dress up. I think it was, the seventies, or what. However, and my brothers are quite a deal older than I am. So, they had the platforms shoes, they had the checkered pants, they had... Believe it or not, I'm bald now, but I mean, I used to have a lot of hair. So, I poofed it out to an Afro. With the platform shoes, and the checkered pants, and stuff like that. And, I had two friends at my house as well, and we all dressed up like that. Went to school like that. And it was... I couldn't do that every day. It was too much, because, I couldn't. Walking in platforms shoes is like walking in high heels. And, I don't, can't do neither one of those.

Randy Ray:

Do you have, do you have a picture?

Randy Ray:

There are, but y'all probably will never see it. But, it was, that was good. Like I said, it's probably a good era, but it was just not for me. That was, I think the worst trend that I ever...

Randy Ray:

Dr. Wendler, what about you? What's your worst fashion trend?

President Walter Wendler:

Similar. In 1973, Mary and I got married. And, we were very, I don't want to say cheap. But, we didn't want people that spent a lot of money and we didn't want to spend a lot of money on the wedding. And came from working class families. I mean, we were... Everybody worked for a living and, so on, and so forth. So, for our wedding, I said to all of the best... The groomsmen.

President Walter Wendler:

I said, "Look, we're not going to go rent tuxedos and all that. You buy a sports coat, and a pair of pants, and a shirt, and a tie. And just come with that and then you can use it". See? I thought this was very smart and I do have a picture of this.

President Walter Wendler:

And, I am telling you, this was at the time when, first of all, the lapels. You could almost take it. They would go to your shoulders. Right? They were that wide. And checkered pants. I had to laugh, when you started talking about it. Checkered pants, and patterns, on these double-knit jackets, and big wide ties... I am telling you, this was a cacophony of fashion. I mean, it was just like loud noise. And they're in our wedding pictures and I look at them and I just laugh, because, we had all. Everybody did.

President Walter Wendler:

I even bought a suit to get married in that I wore for five years after that. I mean, it was my suit. It was nearly white. It was a very light beige suit and everything. And, I had a brown shirt and a white tie. But, but my brother and my friends were in these, oh man, they were wild outfits. All different colors, no two, anything. Anything looking like it.

Randy Ray:  
Was 72, Did you say?

President Walter Wendler:  
73.

Randy Ray:  
73. Yeah.

President Walter Wendler:  
If I said 73... I meant, 72. I meant 73. June 16th, '73. So, we're coming up our 50th anniversary.

Michael Moore:  
Oh wow. Good job.

Randy Ray:  
Congratulations.

President Walter Wendler:  
I'm proud of.

Michael Moore:  
And that's 50th anniversary for you, is 50th anniversary for the radio station too, right?

Randy Ray:  
Yes. I'm glad you brought that up this year, at homecoming, we were going to have a big celebration for KWTS, the campus radio station. So, more news about that coming. We're in the planning stages, right now. So...

President Walter Wendler:  
Well, you bet. He let the cat out of the bag.

Randy Ray:  
He knows...

President Walter Wendler:  
I didn't even know it.

Michael Moore:  
I am sorry.

President Walter Wendler:

No, no.

Randy Ray:

He knows all about campus. Yeah.

Michael Moore:

Yeah.

Randy Ray:

Well, listen, Michael as always. I enjoy talking to you when we are in church.

Michael Moore:

Thank you, very much.

Randy Ray:

Yeah. Always have a good conversation. Dr. Wendler, We always have a good conversation.

President Walter Wendler:

I appreciate you.

Michael Moore:

Yes, Sir.

Randy Ray:

Appreciate you guys. Both of you, joining us today for, Episode number 36, Reflections from WT. And thank you for listening. Join us again next time.