

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to another installment of Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into how they see themselves and most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs host of Leadership Landscape where previous interviews have included former mayors, state politicians, nationally renowned sports writers, sports legends, and heads of major business concerns, community activists and developers. Today our guest is none other than Mr Owsley Brown Frazier. He's the founder and chairman of Frazier International History Museum and the former vice chairman of Brown-Forman. He was born in 1935 and is a native Louisvillian. Frazier attended Center College and graduated from the University of Louisville in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science in law and juris doctor degree in 1960. Get this. I love this. A childhood struggle with dyslexia is behind Frazier's dedication to education. His personal quote, "When I was six or seven I was told that I'd never be able to graduate from high school," he says. "Well that just irritated the hell out of me and I was determined to get an education." I love that. Another quote, "education is very important. Regardless of what you do it cannot be taken away from you," he says. Quote "And like most things the quality of that education is a direct result of the effort you put into it." I'd say so. Listen to this Mr Fraser has contributed or raised about 500 million dollars for educational, historical, or medical pursuits during his active business career mainly for the University of Louisville, Bellarmine University, Kentucky Country Day School, the Kentucky Historical Society, and the Frazier Rehabilitation Center. And in 2005 Mr Fraser was named the University of Louisville's Alumni of the Year. Now Mr Fraser is a fourth generation descendant of George Garvin Brown and he joined Brown-Forman in 1955. And listen to this he nearly even got a Masters Degree

in Business Administration as well but the growing demands of Brown-Forman prevented him from completing it. Now retiring after a 45 year career as vice chairman of the board in 2000 and then retiring from the board completely in 2006 he recently paved the way for the fifth generation of descendants to ascend to the board of Brown-Forman. I think this quote really embodies Mr Frazier comes from his good friend Bill Stone was quoted once a saying quote "If the good lord had to endow fortune to anyone he picked the right person in the Owsley." How did how does a quote like that Mr Frazier make you feel when somebody says something like that to you?

**Owsley Frazier:** Makes me feel great and rather humble

**Kirt Jacobs:** Yeah

**Owsley Frazier:** Bill is a good friend but to have him say something like that is really quite meaningful to me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I love that quote. That's what why I wanted to mention it in our interview today. And for the audience I'm going to give a little background on the genesis of the Frazier International History Museum.

**Owsley Frazier:** Good

**Kirt Jacobs:** I'm going to do that for a moment. After Mr Frazier's family's Kentucky longrifle was lost in the infamous 1974 tornado that raked Louisville one can say it was serendipity as Frazier began to think about acquiring another and another and well another. Well serendipity struck again when on the board of the Kentucky Historical Foundation the board knew he had a collection and asked if he would be willing to show it at the Kentucky History Museum in Frankfurt. Well it turned out to be the best received, best attended exhibit the museum ever had in terms of attendance. Frazier then realized he might start a small museum in Louisville. Well guess what serendipity then strikes again as the Royal British Armories which is Britain's oldest National Museum was in the United States looking to collaborate with a partner. Thus the genesis of

the museum was born and on May 29, 2004 one of Frazier's greatest gifts to Louisville the Frazier International History Museum held its grand opening and a museum slightly in excess of 1000 square feet covering 1000 years of history was born right here in Louisville. So again I want to ask you Mr Frazier how does it make you feel they have completed a project like this?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well you know it took quite a period of time to get it done. I was told it would only take about seven to nine years to get the museum built and up and running and I was able to do it in three and a half years.

**Kirt Jacobs:** There you go.

**Owsley Frazier:** And I felt very good about that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Well I think it's a testament also to your leadership that during the museum's development you were and still are confined to a wheelchair. And what I like about your leadership is no matter what the challenge is you carry on. A lot of people don't think would have done that. One last quote I want to make about his leadership and then we'll get into the interview was quote "my leadership style is to be a convincer. To demonstrate my own belief in a project which makes me a more powerful salesperson," he says. Think that really embodies Mr Frazier. And finally I noted you had only two daughters, excuse me, I noted you had only daughters and no sons and you once were quoted as saying "I feel very strongly about women not only getting everything they're entitled to but even getting a little bit more to help them catch up." I like that. He has two surviving daughters Catherine and Laura and eight grandchildren. With that and I had to cut some stuff you have a heck of a bio rich bio Mr Frazier I want to welcome you to Leadership Landscaping. We'll go ahead with the questions.

**Owsley Frazier:** Thank you.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you sir for being here. For the first question we ask all of our guests is what drives you to do what you do?

**Owsley Frazier:** I guess I am I am motivated to do what I do because of my love for the community and for the University and other items in the city. And so this is the driving force behind me is the love of the community and wanting to try to make it better as time goes by.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Whom do you credit most influential in your life? It can be more than one person.

**Owsley Frazier:** Well there are really two people a fellow by the name of Inus Dobbins who was chairman of the board of the old Liberty National Bank and my grandfather. Inus and I served on the University of Louisville Athletic Committee together. He was chairman and I was a student. appointee to the to the board. And he took me under his wing and taught me a lot of things that helped me grow up. And I will always remember the gentleman and be very grateful for his help and training. The other gentleman is my grandfather who I knew until his passing when I was 17. He also was the type of person who had quiet leadership abilities.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** And helped me adjust to life.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Our next question is what was the most defining moment of your life Mr Frazier? Could be more than one if you choose.

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I guess the most defining was an illness that I had and my ability to recover from that illness. I was in intensive care and in the hospital and quite ill. And it was just I made up my mind that this was not going to get me down or take me out

**Kirt Jacobs:** I like that.

**Owsley Frazier:** And so I fought and struggled and won against that particular problem.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And that led to things afterwards did you look at life

differently?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I guess I did. The.. The.. Oh I'm struggling for words but...

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's OK, Take your time.

**Owsley Frazier:** It helped me a great deal.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK And your perspective on life

**Owsley Frazier:** Yes

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK. Now this next question is some of our guests that kind of gets them a little unnerved if there is one Mr Fraser what is your biggest professional regret? In other words is there something you would have done differently and it can be personal as well

**Owsley Frazier:** I in all honesty cannot think of anything that I would have done differently or changed as a result of my life to date. And so in all respect to the question I would give that answer.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Was there ever a moment maybe where you've thought about maybe not a regret where you could have gone left but you went right or you went left and he should've gone right you ever have any of those thoughts or are you pretty content?

**Owsley Frazier:** No I was pretty content with what I was doing and how I was doing it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It's a life well lived. How I look at it anyway. On the flip-side of that Mr Fraser what is your biggest professional triumph?

**Owsley Frazier:** I guess pulling the museum together and getting it up and running in three and a half years.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Compared with what was it eight or nine I think...

**Owsley Frazier:** Yeah. Typically takes to to put a museum together

and to get it up and running

**Kirt Jacobs:** Did you did you.. I want to go off for a second. Did you think at the time that you get it done that quickly? Was it just your fierce determination or do you think everybody who came together?

**Owsley Frazier:** I think it was my determination and everyone came together and pitched in and worked very hard and we got the job done.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Yes you did.

**Owsley Frazier:** In record time.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It is a beautiful museum. I've been in it. What do you find exciting about all this Mr Frazier? I mean you've done the rehab center you've done that museum contributed to education quite a bit. Why does that excite you? What you do.

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I like the city and anything I can do to help the city grow and develop and become a better place to live I'm all for. And each of the various events that you mentioned. From the Frazier Rehab Center to the Frazier Museum has been a wonderful experience and a.. It's something that I meant to do and worked hard at getting it done.

**Kirt Jacobs:** You did get it done. What was the best advice ever given to you Mr Frazier? Can be more than one go.

**Owsley Frazier:** I guess probably from my grandfather who said to me that life is a series of struggles and a series of learning and compromises and you must live with those with dignity and practice what you preach and do what is the best for all.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That is beautiful. That's good. Can you define leadership in one word because that's the basis of our show Leadership Landscape and it could be more in one word if you choose in the great English lexicon.

**Owsley Frazier:** I would offer the word skill as one defining statement. The skill and ability to...

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** ...make things happen and make things occur.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK. If you can change one thing Mr Frazier be it in life or in general what would that be?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I think it would be to stop all wars.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** And to have people live in peace and harmony.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Now this next question is as it were going to kind of delve into the inside of your leadership. Could you describe in detail a particular incident or scenario in your professional or your personal life where you ual, excuse me, utilize your style and philosophy on leadership?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I would say to you in building the Frazier Museum which brought together all kinds of conflicting forces that all wanted of the same thing but wanted to get there in different ways. The curator Walter Carchesky had one idea. A fellow by the name of Dan Schlegel who was on our board to had another idea as to how to accomplish...

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** ...opening the museum. And and it was getting eventually all of these folks working together and pulling together that enabled us to move as quickly as we did.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Now a lot of people will see this show when it airs Mr Frazier. Is the museum everything you embodied today when you go in it?

**Owsley Frazier:** I think it is. It's still got a lot to do before I would say it's complete.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** But to date it's well well done and managed well. We've got an excellent new curator a lady by the name of Madeleine Burnside.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK.

**Owsley Frazier:** Who is bringing all of her skill and ability into running of the museum and is doing a wonderful job.

**Kirt Jacobs:** For you in our next question I was going to ask you we've got a medallion here I wanted you... I'm going to hold this up for the camera. Could you explain to the audience what that is in regards to?

**Owsley Frazier:** It is the Minerva Medal of that I received from the University of Louisville for outstanding service and commitment to that university over an extended period of time. And they do not award this medal lightly or easily.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK.

**Owsley Frazier:** But do award it for deeds well done and well accomplished. And I feel very honored that I won and receive the medal.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I don't want to speak on behalf of the University but I think it's well deserved Mr Frazier.

**Owsley Frazier:** Thank you

**Kirt Jacobs:** Want to show that to the audience. I think is very well deserved. The question I want to ask you next is and I think you are one of the few people in the community that's got this view-

point is there a difference today in our leaders than there wasn't past generations? I mean for example you've seen the Bingham's rise and fall. You've been there through decades of leadership in this community. Watched it grow. Louisville itself. I just want to get your insight and viewpoint.

**Owsley Frazier:** Yes. Twenty five years ago there were a number of families who provided leadership into the city and county and subsequently those folks have all died off. And it's been a great loss to the community that we've suffered as a result of their demise. But as all great cities we've been fortunate in electing a great mayor and great county judge when they were still county judge and mayor. And in the consolidation. And those fellows and now the current mayor have brought the city together in a admirable way and they have done a fine job in doing it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Anything you'd like to see Louisville be that it's not? At this timeframe?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I'd like to see it larger and have more and better sports and museums and cultural sorts of events.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Would you agree we're heading in the right direction as a community?

**Owsley Frazier:** I think we are. It just takes a long time to get there. And if we were larger we could do it in a faster faster way.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK.

**Owsley Frazier:** But we're not and so we have to do the best we can with what we have.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure. Done quite a bit in the last ten years with merger and other things

**Owsley Frazier:** That is right.

**Kirt Jacobs:** This next question we love to ask our guest because I

think it was great insight into that through the person. Mr Fraser if you were granted two weeks right today and I know pretty much you've been driving your own ship most your life. No obligations. No commitments. How would you spend that two week mini vacation from life? If you just didn't have to answer to anybody.

**Owsley Frazier:** I'd go fishing.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Would you?

**Owsley Frazier:** Yeah.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Any particular area of the world you go?

**Owsley Frazier:** Yes on the Lake of the Woods in Ontario, Canada.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Owsley Frazier:** I love to fish and you've got good game fish up there with northern pike and muskellunge and bass and walleye and so forth and it's a place that I dearly love to go. That's where I would spend it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's great. I like that an honest answer like that. Now this is a question that we ask all of our guest Mr Frazier. And again I think it gives great insight into the person that you are. When the great day comes and you are an exceptional human being and I mean that quite honestly with what you've done you've left an indelible mark on this community that's going to get live long after you passed on. How do you want to be remembered?

**Owsley Frazier:** Well I think for my philanthropy and through my assisting the community in its growth and development. That would be the thing I would like the best I believe.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Well in terms of your dedication to education, the rehab center, the museum, those are true monuments to your legacy so. There anything else you'd like to add Mr Fraser.

**Owsley Frazier:** Not that I can think of.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I tell you what it's a heck of a story. It's quite an honor to have you on Leadership Landscape Thank you sir.

**Owsley Frazier:** You're most welcome.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)