



## AN ORDINARY BLOKE

Peter Moore

Ronald Allen Moore began his working life at the age of 18. As the son of a Mail Driver on the East Indian Railway, he followed his father, in time-honoured fashion, into railway service as an A-grade Fireman. Working on the footplate of steam engines was strenuous, especially in India's summers. As a junior fireman he worked mainly on yard shunters graduating to goods trains. He was young fit and strong and well hardened by railway work – he also had developed a reputation as a boxer of early promise. His mother was determined that he could do better than railway service and urged him to seek another career. In Bengal, all roads lead to Calcutta so in due course he found himself at the gates of Lalbazar, the headquarters of the Calcutta Police Force. The large, impassive Bihari police constable guarding the gate directed him to a passing British Police Inspector who led him to the office of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Headquarters, who adjusted his monocle and interrogated the would-be applicant. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941 he reported to the Police Training School at 247 Lower Circular Road, Alipore and began a way of life that was to last for the next 36 years. Ronnie Moore was considered a “useful” member of the force's boxing fraternity which already contained many good and some outstanding fighters. In summary it unfolded like this:-

**1941** – Posted to Headquarter Force, Lalbazar after initial training. Sergeants of Headquarter Force maintained foot patrols - walking beats like London's policemen – in the centre of 'European' Calcutta, i.e. Chowringhee Road from Dharamtollah to Park Street and the vicinities of the Spence's, Great Eastern and Grand Hotels. All of Calcutta's western film theatreland were in this precinct. During the World War years, combined patrols of British and American military policemen and Sergeants of the Calcutta Police patrolled Calcutta's main “night life” area in a struggle to maintain order in a virtual cauldron of high tension and violence. Here Ron met and began boxing training at the U.S. Army's Camp Howrah with a military policeman, Master-

Sergeant Lester Carter who had been a lead sparring-partner for the then world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis. He learned much from Lester. After six months, he applied for and was posted to the force's mounted branch.

**1942** – Early in the year, while on late-night mounted patrol he was struck by a tram as his police horse shied into its path in the wartime blackout. His horse was killed and he was hospitalised for six weeks and incapacitated with back injuries for a further three months. Later he resumed boxing training and fought the following bouts:-

- At the Grand Hotel, Winter Garden in a Civilians vs. Military match, he knocked Sachin Bose (Bengal) out;
- At the Garrison Theatre (St Xavier's College) in a Civilians vs. Services event he beat Mr Kenneth (St. Xavier's College) by a knockout;
- At the Globe Theatre he beat R. Robertson (US Navy) on points;
- At the "Greenshutters" (British Army Service Club, Outram Road) he beat Lance-Bombardier Tipper (Royal Artillery) by a knockout; and
- In Fort William, he beat George Prim of Bombay by a knockout.

**1943** - The wartime demands upon police officers meant little time off or time for training. He fought one fight only, in an "HM's Forces vs. The Rest" tournament in aid of the Mayor's Cyclone Relief Fund in which he lost to Private Coles of the British Army on points.

**1944** - While still a Sergeant in the Mounted Police he fought the following bouts:-

- At the BESA Theatre, Park Street he beat Leading Aircraftman Salmon, Royal Air Force, (Light-Heavyweight); and
- Three weeks he later beat Leading Aircraftman Edwardson, Royal Air Force;

On July 4<sup>th</sup> he lost to Sergeant John Nuttall, Calcutta Police (Middleweight Champion of India) on points.

The excerpt from "THE STATESMAN" on 5.7.44 read:

The Ronnie Moore-Johnny Nuttall encounter exceeded expectations and proved the best fight on the programme. Nuttall sent Moore down

with a smashing right for a short count in the very first round. Moore not only rose full of confidence but carried the fight to Nuttall and a toe-to-toe exchange thrilled the crowd. Nuttall won but Moore was applauded for his grand performance.

On August 25<sup>th</sup> he fought and lost, on a TKO, to his mentor, Master Sergeant Lester Carter, US Army Military Police, in a match in aid of the Indian Red Cross, in the presence of Sir Rex .C. Casey the Australian Governor of West Bengal.

**1945** – In the final stages of the World War, the “Quit India” movement was increasing in crescendo against a background of Hindu-Muslim communal violence. Ronnie Moore boxed on three occasions in this year:-

- At Fort William, he beat T. L. Carapiet by a knockout;
- He later knocked Piam (US Air Force) out in the second round;
- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the CBI Boxing Championships he lost, on a TKO, to George Evans (US Army).

**1946** – He was promoted to Sergeant-Major, ‘B’ (Gurkha & Hill tribes) Company, Calcutta Armed Police. This year of unprecedented civil violence began with the February Riots (11-14 February, 1946) and later on the horrendous Great Calcutta Killing. In his memoir, “While Memory Serves” (London: Cassell, 1950), Lt. General Sir Francis Taker, the last British General-Officer-Commanding Eastern Command, Fort William, wrote in his account of the February Riots (pgs. 99-110):-

Calcutta had a considerable force of Gurkha armed police who usually came in and used their weapons whenever things were getting beyond the power of the ordinary constabulary....The Gurkha armed police were in action all over the town, to be ostracised later on by the Indian communities for quietening their areas of the rioting city with their rifles....We in the Army were always admirers of the Indian Police and believed that no other police force of its kind could have stood up for so many years with unimpaired efficiency to the storm of calumny and abuse that that force had had to endure.

Command of this unit, at various ranks, was to feature several times during his police career.

An incident occurred where the Muslim League-dominated Bengal Government under Chief Minister H. S. Suhrawardy sought to prosecute Gurkhas of the Calcutta Armed Police for firing on a Muslim mob. While Sergeant-Major Moore was away

inspecting the Cossipore Gun & Shell Factory guard (where Sergeant Max Joachim, an Old Martinian and outstanding boxer himself was in charge) the bulk of 'B' Company rose in their lines, seized arms and ammunition from the armoury and ran amok in the Muslim locality, shot many civilians and terrorised the district. They surrendered their arms to their officer-in-charge and other officers who attended the scene. Following two days of negotiations no further action was taken in view of the imminence of Indian independence. British sympathies lay with the much put-upon Gurkhas as Suhrawardy was suspected of fomenting communal unrest for political ends. Worse was to follow as the horrendous four days of brutal Hindu-Muslim slaughter known as the Great Calcutta Killing (August 16-19, 1946) unfolded in which up to 10,000 persons are believed to have died and a further 15,000 injured. Like all British and Anglo-Indian police officers of that period, he was actively involved in the near continuous police operations to retain order and control. In the midst of this, found time to train for and fight two bouts in Fort William that year:

- He beat Captain Divecha (Indian Army); and
- In a return bout, he beat George Evans (US Army) on points.

British officers of the Calcutta Police were repatriating their families to England and force morale was low, reflecting the indecisiveness and instability of the times. The bulk of Anglo-Indian officers of every rank stood fast and together with their Indian colleagues maintained discipline by continuing to police the city, in often nightmarish conditions, while insecure about their own legal status, unsure of their future and undecided about their intentions.

**1947** – With the approach of Independence, Sgt.-Major Moore had decided to serve on in an independent India and immigration to another country or opting to serve in Pakistan (despite much blatant canvassing) was not considered. He liked India and the unknown offered no attraction for him. Consistent with his generation of police officers who were brought up in the tradition of "Duty"; "Honour" & "Empire" the only transition he had to make was to "Duty"; "Honour" & "Country". He saw no conflict of interest in doing so. He held the pragmatic view that if one attended to their "Duty" properly and took care of their "Honour", the "Country" would be well-served as a consequence. A fortnight after Independence Day, Calcutta experienced it's first, post-independence, communal riot. The experienced Calcutta Police maintained the

stability of the city throughout while the fragile transition of power unfolded at national level.

**1948** –In a March 22<sup>nd</sup> match, he lost to Sergeant John Nuttall on points. He recalls that Johnny Nuttall was the most scientific boxer he had ever fought, with a “classy” style about him;

- Later he knocked out Malayan, Mohammed Kidwai (Middleweight Champion, CBI). At the end of the bout, Kidwai’s friend “Wildcat” Hasan jumped into the ring and challenged him to fight;
- Three weeks later he fought Hasan, knocking him out in the second round;
- On October 31<sup>st</sup> he fought another outstanding Anglo-Indian boxer, Lieutenant Oscar Ward, Indian Army, losing to him on points at the YWCA, Wellington Branch. He reflects that, “It was no disgrace to be beaten by someone of Oscar’s calibre.”

He was selected to represent India in Boxing at the Wembley Olympic Games but could not be released from police service.

**1949** – He attended the Indian Army School of Physical Training, Instructor’s Course, in Poona (now Pune). The School’s Commandant was the famous “Father of Indian Army Boxing”, then Major Charles Campagnac, 3<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha Rifles. Upon gaining his PT Instructor’s qualification, he returned to the Calcutta Police and was appointed Chief Drill Instructor at the Police Training School.

**1950** – He was promoted to the gazetted rank of Inspector of Police, remaining at the Police Training School (I’PTS) as both Chief Drill Instructor and deputy to the Commandant, an Assistant Commissioner (AC’PTS). In this year he saved a Cadet Sub-Inspector from drowning in the Training School tank for which he was awarded the Kendall Humanitarian Life-Saving Medal. He was also awarded the Indian Independence Medal. He was appointed Drill Instructor to the prestigious Calcutta Special Constabulary and as the resident Physical Training Instructor to St. Xavier’s College.

**1952** - As Amateur Heavyweight Boxing Champion of India he fought Sidney Schmidt at Gresham & Craven winning on a knockout. Again he was selected to

represent India in Boxing at the Helsinki Olympic Games but could not be released from police service.

**1955** – He directly managed the closure of the Calcutta Police Force's own Training School and the transfer of those services to the Combined Police Training Centre at Barrackpore.

**1956** – He was selected for promotion to Assistant Commissioner (Junior Grade) by the West Bengal Public Service Commission and transferred to the Calcutta Traffic Police branch. While on duty as officer-in-charge of policing a trade exhibition on the Calcutta Maidan, a telephone linesman became trapped and electrocuted in overhead power-lines. Regardless of personal safety, Asst. Commr. Moore freed the unconscious man from the live wires and resuscitated him. The man was discharged from hospital three days later, fully recovered. A. C. Moore received a High Commendation from the state government for his actions which was published in the Government Gazette.

**1957** – On April 6<sup>th</sup> he fought against Glen (Dusty) Miller (late Royal Indian Navy) then All-India Heavyweight Boxing Champion for the title, winning by a TKO.

**1958** – Upon passing both parts of the Public Accountancy Examination at first attempt, he was confirmed as an Assistant Commissioner (Senior Grade) and posted as Assistant Commissioner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Calcutta Armed Police, at Talla Park Camp. It was a homecoming as this Gurkha and hill tribes battalion was the direct descendant of the old 'B' Company he had once commanded as a Sergeant-Major.

**1962** – Following attendance at an extended National Civil Defence training course in Nagpur, he was specially appointed as Assistant-Commissioner, Civil Defence Training in Calcutta.

**1963** – On August 21<sup>st</sup> an adult female elephant, "Phulmala", in Calcutta's Zoological Gardens, inexplicably killed her *mahout* and ran amok. She evaded every attempt at recapture and it was decided, in the greater interest of public safety, to have her shot. Assistant Commissioner Ronnie Moore of the Calcutta Armed Police who was known to be experienced in culling rogue-elephants for the state governments of Assam and Tripura was approached. With great regret he despatched the enraged

animal swiftly and efficiently, thereby preventing any further tragedy.

**1964** – On May 22<sup>nd</sup> he was commissioned to raise an auxiliary body along the lines of the old Calcutta Civil Guard to be entitled the “Home Guard”. He was promoted to the rank of Deputy Commissioner as the inaugural Commandant of the Home Guard.

**1965** – He helped to develop the unique light-metal riot shields which markedly reduced the level of injuries Calcutta’s policemen sustained from brickbats in the city’s cyclic disturbances.

**1966** - He was commissioned to raise an additional battalion of Calcutta Armed Police. A lack of accommodation in Calcutta was countered by locating the battalion in former military lines in Kalyani some 40 miles north of Calcutta. He was appointed as the inaugural Deputy Commissioner, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Calcutta Armed Police. He was at the forefront of many police actions against the depredations of the newly-emerged Naxalite terrorist movement.

**1967** – On August 9<sup>th</sup> he was appointed to the Bengal *cadre* of the national Indian Police Service (IPS).

**1968** — On August 9<sup>th</sup> his earlier appointment to the Bengal *cadre* of the national Indian Police Service (IPS) was substantively confirmed. He formally retired, undefeated, from boxing.

**1970** – On December 23<sup>rd</sup> he returned, once again, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Calcutta Armed Police, and this time as the Deputy Commissioner commanding.

**1972** – On September 9<sup>th</sup> he was appointed Senior Deputy Commissioner of the Calcutta Armed Police Brigade (IPS Selection Grade) a post that, by tradition, carried with it the simultaneous command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion as well.

For three decades (1950-70’s) he was probably the most widely-known Anglo-Indian in Calcutta if not northern India. He was especially sensitive about the plight of Anglo-Indian people and went out of his way on countless occasions, not only to attest immigration and passport documents of those joining the exodus, but to personally support their various immigration applications with foreign and Commonwealth High Commissions and embassies. Many found employment

through his intercession and he often mediated with local police on behalf of Anglo-Indians in trouble.

**1977** – On September 1<sup>st</sup> he formally retired having been awarded, during his service, six Monetary Awards, four Commendations; one High Commendation and the President's Police Medal for Meritorious Service in recognition of his actions in quelling the notorious Bagmari Riot in Chitpur, north Calcutta, in 1966. The Calcutta Police Force officially farewelled him with a large parade. As the outgoing commander and Guest of Honour, the Commissioner of Police invited him to inspect the parade during which the Calcutta Police Band played "Auld Lang Syne" in slow-time. His final official act was to take the salute as representative units of the Force marched past in review and, as the serried ranks swung past, band playing, drums beating and bayonets fixed, he permitted himself the momentary reflection, "Not bad for an ordinary bloke from a railway colony."

He emigrated to Western Australia to be reunited with his family. In the manner of new migrants, a decade of low-profile occupations followed before he retired from the workforce. Now, at age 90, he potters about tending the roses in his garden and keeping up a light exercise program to maintain mobility. His long-term memory is still good as is his skill as a raconteur. He remembers his life in India vividly and with great affection and, like former policemen the world over, he reflects that one may leave police service, but it remains in your head to the end. He is always keen to indulge in a bit of '*gup-shup*' and '*yadgari*' about "the old days": game shooting in the jungles of Orissa; culling rogue-elephants in the hilly wilds of Assam and Tripura; sporadic recollections of Calcutta's near-seasonal riots; cruelties seen and kindnesses shared:-

Old policemen, in the sun,  
Dream of long ago;  
Of hard times shared,  
And hard things done,  
And men they used to know.

Ronnie Moore is my father and I am very proud of him.



**Peter Ronald Moore** was born in Calcutta in June 1945. He was educated in St. Xavier's College and St. Thomas' School and later served in the Calcutta Armed Police in the mid-1960s, resigning after two years to join the British Police Service. In 1980 he left the London Metropolitan Police and immigrated to Western Australia where his family had settled. There he joined the Department of Corrections, Western Australia and served in every rank of the prison service, over half of it at senior management levels, including appointments as Superintendent (various), Assistant Director, Prison Operations; Director of Prisons; Director, Operational Standards and, with the advent of private prisons, Monitor, Custodial Contracts. In addition to fifteen years previous police experience (India & UK), he holds qualifications in Corporate Investigations; Government- Statutory Investigation & Enforcement; Practitioner's Certificate: Mediation & Conciliation; Monitoring, Assessment & Review of Compliance Management Systems; and Assessment & Workplace Training. He retired from service in 2004. Peter and his wife of 43 years, Ardyne, have three sons, two of whom are serving officers in the West Australian Police Service and the youngest is a state Public Servant. In retirement Peter is kept busy with house renovations and serves the community as a Justice of Peace and Volunteer with the Citizens Advice Bureau. He enjoys reading, music and writing and spending time with his family. His academic interests include researching British and Indian military history as well as Indian Police history. Peter has acquired a considerable collection of books and articles on India and badges to complement his interests. He can be contacted at [peterm235@hotmail.com](mailto:peterm235@hotmail.com)