

## **E.V.STAYNOR (1897 – 1979) by Ken Staynor**

*(Edited & formatted for the VADHA website by Aubrey Ballantine)*



I saw Victoria School for the first time in 1932. It was not the first time I was at the Hill Top I had been there from 1928 to 1930 but was much too young to remember anything about it, and although I returned to the Hill Top in 1932 my memories of Victoria go back to 1933. We lived in the cottage at the end of "Pongo's Puck" and the start of the cobbled stone road that lead up to the road to Victoria and it was only when I was taken up the hill by my elder brother Derrick, who had already started his schooling at Victoria in Mrs. Clark's class, to watch cricket matches against the Planters and football matches against Goethals that I realised that there was a school at the top of the hill and my father was a teacher there.

My father E.V.Staynor, also known as "Cockles" joined Victoria as Mathematics Master in March 1919 .Details of his early life are nebulous; He was born in Bankipore but never knew his own father who died before his fourth birthday. When his mother remarried he was literally unpossessed by his step-father and abandoned in the care of the Irish Christian Brothers being educated at St. Patrick's School Asansol. It was there that the Brothers soon realised that he was no ordinary child but one with a very sharp brain which very quickly grasped a solution to a problem. At a very early age he had a penchant for solving mathematical problems and this lead to him being encouraged by the Brothers to continue his studies at St. Joseph's Bow Bazaar in Calcutta where he took the I.Sc. and then went on to get a First Class Bachelors Degree in Mathematics at Calcutta University at the age of twenty. In 1919 he was by open Selection appointed Mathematics Master at Victoria School and from that time he dedicated his life to the education of Anglo-Indian boys.

While studying for his Bachelor's Degree in order to support himself he became a lay-teacher at his old school St. Joseph's and also joined the Army Volunteer Force for the last two years of the First World War doing Guard Duty three nights a week at Calcutta Docks to supplement his income. Somehow he found time to play both football and hockey for First Division clubs in Calcutta. Besides these two sporting activities he was a proficient tennis player and while Headmaster often invited senior boys to play on the court at the Headmaster's house. In his early years at Victoria he played for the school in the Hockey Shield Tournaments. As a boy he was a superb athlete, his trophies taking a place of pride on the mantelpiece at the cottage in Kurseong and I particularly remember his cup for a record-breaking 440 yards.

During his early years at Victoria apart from teaching mathematics he continued his studies and gained a First Class Master's Degree in Mathematics and Psychology once again at the University of Calcutta. Meanwhile he got married on the 6th February 1924 and in November of that year his first child, a son named Derrick was born. My sister Joyce was born in May 1926 like Derrick in the joint Victoria-Dow Hill Hospital. He had three more children Kenneth (me) born in 1927, Iris born in December 1932 (Died of pneumonia in 1935) and Myrna born in New Delhi while he was posted at GHQ in Delhi on Military Service during World War II. Both girls followed him into teaching.

In 1930 he was granted Study Leave by the Government of Bengal and left for the UK where he studied at the Institute of Education at the University of London. While there he excelled. Details of a letter to the Education Department, Government of Bengal from H.R. Hamley, M.A, M.Sc., PhD, Professor of Education, University of London, is as follows:

*Mr. E.V. Staynor was a student of the Institute of Education in the years 1930-32. During the first year he took the course leading to the Teacher's Diploma. His performance in this examination was excellent; he obtained high marks in all his papers, and was awarded the mark, "Exceptionally Good" in Practical Teaching. This mark is given to not more than one percent of the candidates in any one year. During the next year Mr. Staynor worked for*

*the M.A. Degree in Education under my direct supervision. He attended my classes in Advanced Educational Psychology and Experimental Education and Sir Percy Nunn's classes in the Principles of Education. In his final examination he obtained the M.A. WITH DISTINCTION, an honour that had been secured only once before and has been obtained only once since. Mr. Staynor's papers were uniformly excellent, his thesis was a scholarly and original piece of work, and his practical teaching was again judged to be "EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD". So highly do we regard Mr. Staynor at the Institute of Education that we recently offered him the post of Senior Assistant to myself in the Department of Higher Degrees and Research. Mr Staynor, much to our regret, was unable to accept the appointment, for we had looked forward to receive from him his real contribution to education in this country.*

*Mr. Staynor has a fine mind, and is an excellent teacher and lecturer. He has a wide knowledge of schools and other educational institutions in this country, and in contact with some of our leading educationists. I may add that Mr. Staynor was highly respected by the members of the staff and by his fellow-students. The proposal to appoint him to the staff was accepted unanimously, an indication that his personal and social qualities were highly regarded. His fellow-students looked upon him as their intellectual leader, and speak of his contributions to their seminars discussions to this day.*

*Signed: H.R. Hamley, M.A., M.Sc., PhD  
Professor of Education in  
the University of London  
24 July 1936*

There is another letter from Sir Percy Nunn dated in 1931 to the Department of Education, Government of Bengal on very similar lines but the one above says it all and was actually written after he was approached by the University of London to return to the UK and take up the post offered in the letter. I remember my father mentioning this letter to the family not long after the Pliva Shield Final between Victoria and St. Paul's in 1935 Played on North Point's ground in Darjeeling. Victoria won 1-0 and I remember going to the match. "Tootie" Smart was captain while Mervyn Jacob was in goal. Other names I recall from the team are Renwick and Weleski and Mr. "Putoo" Price. I know I have a photograph of this team somewhere in my archives which I will post as soon as I can locate it. Later when I was more aware of life I asked my father why he had not accepted the offer from the University of London. He replied that his first priority was the education of Anglo - Indians and in his wisdom he had already foreseen a war in Europe and did not want to expose his family to the dangers of it.

In 1940 while officiating as Headmaster he was called up to military service which was expected as he was like other members of the staff at Victoria in the Army in India of Reserve Officers (A.I.R.O). He was sent to Dalhousie for training, and then posted to GHQ in Delhi in Cyphers. While there he wrote a Cypher Manual and once again because of his mathematical, teaching and natural leadership skills was selected to set up and command the Communication Security Training School, Royal Corps. of Signals in India and later South-east Asia Command. But he never lost touch with Victoria always ready to help and counsel old Victorians he came in contact with and I especially remember Errol Marchant (one of my childhood heroes!) and Dick Swanton (one time Head Prefect) staying with us. While we were in Mhow, Central India where the Training School was based I remember several old Victorians at the Officers' Training School walking up to dad during the interval at the pictures saluting and saying "Good evening sir". He was always very glad to see them and made a point of enquiring about their welfare and asking if there was anything he could do for them.

When the war came to an end he was demanded back by the Government of Bengal while the army still wanted him. Bengal won and he was appointed as Headmaster of Victoria, a post that did not last long for no sooner had he set foot in the Headmaster's house again when he was

summoned to Calcutta to be told he had been selected to be Inspector of European Schools Bengal and was to take up the post with immediate effect. This meant that the outbreak of WW II virtually ended his direct contact with Victoria.

I remember that he had a very active and creative mind. In the days when there was no mains electricity at Victoria he built a battery operated radio which was the first radio at the Hill Top. The supetrhetrodyne set had not been invented and he built the set during the school holidays in 1933/34 when we spent the winter in Kurseong. Later while officiating as Headmaster once again we stayed at Victoria in the winter when mains electricity was being brought to both Dow Hill and Victoria; I remember seeing the workmen cold chiseling the holes through the walls to carry the wires to the various classrooms and dormitories (No electric drills in those days and in any case no electricity to operate them). A Mr. Merchant of the CESE was the Engineer in charge. He stayed with us in the Headmaster's House very often and became a friend of the family. While this was going on dad was already building a mains operated radio/radiogram. This was used for the Victoria/Dow Hill dances in both schools until my father persuaded Mr Elton to present the School with one of their own. The set was built and supplied by Mr. Ezekiel of Calcutta, brother of a boy at Victoria. Mr Elton also became a great friend of the family. Mr Elton also used to donate the presents on the Christmas tree on the last night at school. This used to take place in the Assembly Hall followed by a big bonfire on the top flat in front of the school building and around it the boys used to sing "We'll hang old Boss on the sour apple tree". The presents were invariably torches made in Hong Kong and shone here there and everywhere the next night as the Toy Train neared Siliguri. It was during the time while my father was headmaster he managed to get funds for the Tennis courts to be built at the Dhow Hill end of the ' Big Flat ' the Commercial playground at the back of the building for the juniors in the Commercial and the building of the Catholic Chapel between the dining room and the Gymnasium.

In 1952 my father was approached to head the Teacher Training School at St. Mary's in Poona. He retired from the now West Bengal Education Service in that year and accepted the post at St. Mary's. But his links with Victoria did not end there the first thing he did on accepting the post was to seek out suitable staff to work with him so he turned to an old Victorian for whom he always had a great respect and admiration, Tom Gasper. There was always a mutual admiration between them and although they were once Teacher and pupil they were on first name terms. I knew Tom also and later when both dad and Tom came to the UK they remained on visiting terms.

But this was not the end of E.V. Staynor's teaching days; he arrived in the United Kingdom in the winter of 1956 and by the autumn term starting in September of that year he became mathematics master at Glyn Grammar School, in Epsom where he continued to teach well into his seventies till the school with difficulty found a replacement for him. His teaching days had finally come to an end. He had achieved a lot in his time. The boy who from a very young age had realised he had to succeed using his own ability had contributed a lot to Anglo-Indian Education.

He had authored the Modern School Arithmetic in seven volumes which was used in all Anglo-Indian Schools, he had taught hundreds and remembered nearly all his pupils by name and face and while at Victoria gave his all for the education of his pupils. He once said to me "My job is not to make myself popular but to teach and give a good education to the boys who wanted to learn." He sort out no favours but was glad to give them because he was given none as a boy and did not want others to suffer the hardships of his own young days.

On the 4th of August 1979 following a massive heart attack Eryx Vere Staynor passed away at Borehamwood in Hertfordshire where he lived just a few doors away from his eldest son. He had lived long enough to see that son honoured with the British Empire Medal for his services to Radar. So a man whose own achievements should have been honoured lived to see an honour bestowed on his eldest son by the the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

## **Summary on the life of E.V. Staynor:-**

*Born 15<sup>th</sup> July 1897*

*B.A 1st. Class Honours in Mathematics Calcutta University*

*M.A.1st. Class Honours in Mathematics Calcutta University*

*M.A. Distinction Education London University (Internal)*

*Teachers Diploma London University (Internal)*

*SENIOR MATHEMATICS MASTER Victoria School, Kurseong Bengal for 20 years*

*Principal of Victoria School for 2 years*

*War Service: 6 years Royal Corp. of Signals. Commanded the G.H.Q India Communications Security School; later for Southeast Asia Command. (Based at MHOW Central India)*

*INSPECTOR OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS, BENGAL (Later West Bengal)*

*Selection Post in Bengal Senior Educational Service 1946 - 1952 (Inclusive)*

*Also during these years Secretary, State Board for Anglo-Indian Education, West Bengal.*

*Served on the Inter-State Board for Anglo-Indian Education.*

*Member of the Senate, Calcutta University.*

*Retired from Government service in India at the end of 1952 at the age of 55.*

*1953-54-55 Principal of St. Mary's Teachers Training College (Co-ed) Poona.*

### **Publications:**

*Contributor to articles in Educational Journals (hand written and typed drafts still in possession of the family)*

*Author of "Modern School Arithmetic" published by Orient Longmans and used in English speaking schools in India, Pakistan and Burma.*

*Mathematics Master Glynn Grammar School, Epsom, Surrey. 1956 - 69*

*Deceased 4 August 1979*