

R L (RAY) CLARKE OBE

I am grateful to BBB of C General Secretary, Robert Smith, for informing me of the death of my old boss and friend, Ray Clarke at the age of 98.

Ray started work for the Board in 1946 after serving in the Royal Navy during World War 2 (rum was always his favourite tippie). He worked under the Board's first General Secretary, Charles Donmal, and was Assistant General Secretary to the second, Teddy Waltham.

He succeeded Waltham in 1972 and also became Hon Secretary of what was then called the Commonwealth Championships Committee, a position he handed on to me in 1980. Despite his authoritative manner and stern-sounding voice, he was actually a very benevolent boss who gave me great encouragement during those early years when I was finding my way

As both General Secretary of the Board and a member of the Board of Governors of the World Boxing Council he was a widely respected world figure in the sport and was praised by a number of USA promoters for the way he battled fiercely on behalf of British boxers at WBC Conventions.

He was never over-awed by the major American promoters and I recall the Rules meeting for the Alan Minter v Vito Antuofermo undisputed World Middleweight Championship return at Wembley when Bob Arum, one of the sport's two most powerful figures at that time, became disgruntled at one point, banging the table and sounding off. As a new boy only a few months into the job I, like others around the table, said nothing.

Ray listened to the outburst without comment until it was finished, then just calmly said, 'Right, we've had the cabaret – now let's get on with the meeting.'

After retiring as General Secretary in 1986, having been awarded an OBE by H M Queen Elizabeth II and following the death of Alexander Elliot, Ray took over the position as Chairman of the CCC and it was his idea during the incorporation in 1997 of the old Committee into a 'not for profit', limited liability company, a separate legal entity from the BBB of C which had founded it in 1954, to re-name it the more modern sounding 'Commonwealth Boxing Council'.

As old age belatedly took hold (he always seemed much more youthful than his years) he stepped down as CBC Chairman and was succeeded by Eric Armit.

He still attended meetings into his '80s, but once these started to take place in Cardiff, following the Board's move there in 2002, he retired as a CBC Director.

We kept in touch and I would call him every so often. Even though he became physically frail that stern voice still resonated and I recall one of our last conversations when I told him that whenever I heard his voice for the first time after a while, I always expected him to tell me off !

He became difficult to contact in recent years, particularly after his move to a care home in East Anglia and with wife Jean having pre-deceased him, and given our last few conversations, I believe his passing, although sad, to be a release.

Nevertheless, to daughter Jill and son Gordon I extend to them on behalf of all the Directors of the CBC our most sincere sympathies and convey to them our gratitude for all their father did for us.

With much sorrow,
SIMON BLOCK
Hon Secretary

