

We are placing the following e-mail dated Feb.22.2010, from Merrill Aluvihare with reference to Warden De Saram and the Communal Riots of 1958 as it would be of interest to most of the Old Boys of our vintage- LJ

My dear.....,

Thank you for the interesting CENTURION. Over the years various old boys have written articles about the role played by the warden during the communal riots of 1958 but everyone of these is not accurate. I thought I would put the record straight once and for all as I was residing with my late parents in our home 51 Hotel Road Mt.Lavinia where this incident actually took place. The previous day most of the tamil speaking people had moved out either to the Mt.Lavinia Police Station or to safer locations , except for the Kanagasabai family who bravely stood their ground at de Soysa Avenue Mt.Lavinia. One Mr. Kanapathipillai an employee of Ceylon Theatres Jaffna had come to Mt.Lavinia the previous night and stayed over at his relations house at Abeywickrema Avenue namely one Mr .Moorthy. On this tragic morning he was walking down Abeywickrema Avenue when just outside our gate he encountered a hostile mob led by one Diamond Perera a carpenter from Dhakshinarama Road then known as Wattumulla Road. On seeing the mob he ran into our portico. The mob chased him and hurled abuse at me saying I was sheltering tamils. I ran next door jumping over the parapet wall to the house of the Mt.Lavinia A.S.P. the late Mr Allen Flamer Caldera father of Maxim but the telephone wires had been cut. On my return the mob had poured petrol on this victim and set him on fire. Just then the warden was passing by and he got down from his car and he and I put out the flames as best as we could. Some senior school boys too arrived and the warden sent for a stretcher from the collehe sickroom. Just Inspector Dudley Ludekens from the Mt.Lavinia Police arrived and he stopped a Socoman truck as Socomans were laying the water pipes at that time. The warden was not touched by anyone and he was never bleeding nor was his cassock torn. I was the only prosecution witness who identified Diamond Perera and for this we too had to flee our home and live in a rented house at Torrington Avenue for some time. I gave evidence in Magistrates Court and then in Assize Court and the accused was sentenced to death purely on my evidence. His sentence was commuted to life inprisonment and after about eleven years I spotted him after release at Mt.Lavinia junction and went up to him and asked if he remembered me he said he didnt I said I am the man who sent you to the gallows which you cheated he replied he couldnt remember me, a few months later he suffered a heart attack and died and even the

house his family occupied caught fire. These are the absolute facts of this episode. Mr Month Abeywardena was O.I.C. Dehiwala at this time and for the identification parade he made all arrangements providing a Police car for the wWarden and my late father whilst Maxim and I had to go in the van. The Magistrate was Mr. Wimalaratna an old Thomian and the Commissioner of Assize was Mr Earl Wijeywardena and prosecution was by Mr Basil White crown counsel before a Jury. I withstood a gruelling cross examination which the judge commended me for to the Jury. At the identification parade the Warden my Father or Maxim could not identify anyone, although I had received several threats I identified the main accused Diamond Perera. I might have known some of the others too but I was so terrified that my mind may have gone blank to some extent. The late S.S.P Mr. Bennet Perera who was assasinated by the J.V.P was a young police officer who along with another Mr Jayasena handled the investigations.

Best Regards Merrill