

# Robin Moore: colorful, controversial

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WASHINGTON — Robin Moore, the man who would like to be Connecticut's next U.S. senator, is not your typical politician.

Consider that:

— He was kicked out of the "Soldier of Fortune" national convention last summer for a speech that convention officials said "demonstrated his blatant racism." The speech included a reference to former U.N. ambassador Andrew Young as "Jimmy Carter's pet coon" — a comment Moore says "was totally taken out of context."

— He spent two years in Rhodesia with American mercenaries who were fighting for the white-ruled government there. He even declared himself the "unofficial American ambassador" to Rhodesia after former President Carter cut off diplomatic relations to protest the country's racial policies.

— He claims to have shot and killed a South Vietnamese, whom he suspected of treason, while researching his best-selling book "The Green Berets."

— He is running as a conservative, yet co-authored a sexually explicit book about prostitution and police corruption that was later serialized into several "soft-core" adult films.

— He has ghost-written, co-authored or produced some two dozen books, of which "The Green Berets," "The French Connection" and "The Happy Hooker" are the best-known and most successful. A new book about American policy in Africa, "The Crippled Eagles," is due out this summer.

Typical he is not.

Colorful, conservative and controversial he is.

In his first attempt at elected office, the 55-year-old Moore is trying to knock off a two-term liberal GOP incumbent, Sen. Lowell Weicker Jr., in the Republican primary. His presence has added some strong spice to politics in the Nutmeg State this year.

"At least the election will be colorful," Moore says. "Most of the voters like it (his background) — it's so far out, it's different than anything they've ever heard of."

The state GOP chairman, Ralph E. Capecelatro, considers Moore a personal friend. But he is staying neutral.

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so far, and expresses open skepticism about Moore's chances.

"As a candidate, I really don't know much about his qualifications. I'm not sure where his support will be coming from," Capecelatro said. "I just don't know whether he has the political background for it."

In earlier times, a candidate like Moore — with skeletons enough to fill a closet — could never have dreamed of running for office.

But the political pendulum in America has swung far to the right, and Moore hopes to ride the pendulum into the U.S. Senate. He is proud of his past — it reads like one of his own novels — and he displays it as proof of his patriotism and conservative credentials.

Robert Lowell Moore Jr. was born into fortune and fame. His father co-founded the Sheraton Hotel chain, and he is directly related to the famous Lowell family of Boston. He attended posh private schools and graduated from Harvard in 1949.

Before entering Harvard, Moore fought in World War II as a nose gunner in B-17 "Flying Fortresses" on bombing runs over Germany. Later, while working for his father's hotel in Jamaica, Moore started a small air charter service.

As commander of his own private air force, Moore literally flew into political intrigue — "in gun running and smuggling guerrilla fighters into troubled Latin countries," as Moore describes it in his own Harvard biography.

Ironically, one of the revolutionaries Moore supported was a guerrilla leader in Cuba named Fidel Castro, who had not yet declared his allegiance to the Soviet Union.

"We all thought that Fidel was a saviour in those days," Moore explains with some embarrassment now.

When British authorities caught on to Moore, he sold his airplanes, opened a bar and wrote a book about gunrunning in Latin America ("The Devil To Pay"). There followed several "disastrous" independent business ventures in the U.S., after which Moore returned to the shelter of his father's hotel in Jamaica.



Robin Moore

Moore's big break as a writer came in 1962, when then Vice President Lyndon Johnson attended Jamaica's independence celebrations. He stayed at the newly opened Sheraton hotel.

"I arranged with the manager of the hotel to place a copy of 'The Devil To Pay' in all the rooms assigned to the vice president's party. To ensure attention to my book, I removed all other printed matter, including the Bible," Moore says in his biography.

"Overnight I was a known factor among the vice president's staff. I persuaded them to give me a crack at writing 'The Green Berets.'"

To write the book, Moore spent two years with the Army Special Forces (informally known as the Green Berets), one year training with them in the U.S., and another following them on patrols in Vietnam.

Even though he was a civilian in Vietnam, he was always armed — which is how, by his own account, he killed a South Vietnamese civilian.

Moore said the man he killed was one of about 100 mercenaries hired by the Green Berets. Moore said the man deliberately led him and an Army sergeant into a Vietcong ambush, so he shot the man right on the spot.



"Sure I shot a guy," Moore told The New York Times in 1969. "I've got a picture of the body. But that was 750,000 dead Vietcong and five years ago. It was a minor thing."

Moore made the disclosure in response to President Nixon's decision to drop murder charges against several Green Berets accused of the political assassination of a South Vietnamese. In news interviews at the time, Moore said political killings were routine business

for the Green Berets, and that "they were very good at it."

"The Green Berets," published in 1965, was a tremendous commercial success for Moore, and spawned a popular song and a motion picture starring John Wayne.

During his time in Vietnam, Moore began looking into opium trade, from the poppy fields of Asia to the heroin factories in Europe. This led to his second major book, "The French Connection," which was made into a critically acclaimed and financially successful movie.

His contacts with New York police lead to his third famous book, "The Happy Hooker," a saga of high-society prostitution he co-authored with notable callgirl and madame Xaviera Hollander. Three soft-core adult movies were spun off from this work: "The Happy Hooker," "The Happy Hooker Goes to Washington," and "The Happy Hooker Goes to Hollywood."

Moore said he had nothing to do with the films, but maintains they "are not pornographic." He said his royalties from the films have been blocked by legal problems.

As Moore says himself, "one book leads to another," and in 1976 he followed some former Green Berets to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to write about American mercenaries fighting for the white-led government there. The result was two more books, "Rhodesia" and "Crippled Eagles."

To Moore, the issue in Rhodesia was not one of a black native majority struggling against domination by a white colonial minority; it was communism against democracy, terrorism versus freedom. Moore believes the American mercenaries who fought for the white regime of former Prime Minister Ian Smith were fighting for an honorable ideology — not for money, and not for white supremacy.

In a recent interview, Moore added: "There were no racial overtones in the war. I was backing a multi-racial, moderate, pro-western African government against a communist government."

In his book "Rhodesia," Moore accused Carter and Young of "encouraging world terrorism." Andrew Young was "an unwitting tool of the communists," Moore has said.

Because Carter had cut off diplomatic relations with the Rhodesian government, Moore appointed himself in 1977 as the "unofficial American ambassador" to that country. He also founded "The Crippled Eagles," an organization of "Americans fighting communist terrorism in Rhodesia for an ordinary soldier's pay, despite U.S. State Department threats to strip them of their citizenship rights."

In 1978, on returning to the U.S. from Rhodesia, Moore was investigated by the Treasury's Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control for possibly violating U.S. sanctions against Rhodesia. Moore says the probe amounted to a personal vendetta by Young, which is why, during a meeting with federal investigators, he first referred to Young as "Jimmy Carter's pet coon." The probe was eventually dropped.

"I said it (the slur on Young) during the course of a three-and-a-half-hour interrogation," Moore explained in a recent telephone interview. "I did say it three or four years ago. I said it, I regret it...but the truth of the matter is that Andy Young wanted to prosecute me."

Last summer, as a guest speaker at the "Soldier of Fortune" national convention of American mercenaries in Columbia, Mo., Moore admits he repeated the reference to Andrew Young as Carter's "pet coon" and another controversial comment he made years ago, "What's the big deal about killing a gook? (slang for an Asian)." The guest of honor at the convention happened to be a former general in the Royal Laotian Army, Vang Pao, who sat at the head table near the lectern as Moore spoke.

There is some dispute over exactly how and why he said these things at the convention. Some people at the event say he was drunk. Moore says he was sober at the time. But when it was over, "Soldier of Fortune" magazine publisher Robert Brown, who sponsored the event, kicked Moore out of the convention.

"He pretty well seemed to cover the ballpark" with ethnic insults, Brown said in an interview. "It was in very bad taste, to say the least."

"Soldier of Fortune," which is written for mercenaries and includes regular features on various ways to kill people, later published a statement that Moore "demonstrated his blatant racism" with the speech, which was "clearly inappropriate and insulting (to) the majority of the SOFers — black, brown and white."

Moore, however, says, "I never used racial epithets" and maintains "I never think that way." His comments were taken "totally out of context" by Brown to improve the magazine's image and advertising, Moore said.

According to Moore, he repeated both the Andrew Young and "gook" statements as examples of what not to say — of how offhand comments made long ago under pressure can come back to haunt a person.

"All I said was, this is an easy way to get in trouble...I said it was a mistake," Moore said. "It was totally taken out of context. Maybe I shouldn't have confessed the sin."

But at least one reporter who heard the speech remembers it differently.

"There was nothing apologetic about his tenor," says Tom Zito, a reporter for The Washington Post who attended the event where Moore spoke. "They had to practically strap down some blacks in the audience who were ready to go up and slit his throat."

So now, at age 55, Robin Moore is starting another chapter of his life with a bid for the U.S. Senate. What are the motivating forces behind this decision?

One, certainly, is his intense dislike of the liberal incumbent, Lowell Weicker Jr.

"Weicker's opposition to (Secretary of State Alexander) Haig so crystallized feeling in Connecticut that all over the state there was a sense of outrage," Moore said. "That made me decide I ought to oppose him."

Another is his belief that the nation's political views, at last, have come to agree with his own.

"My ideas are pretty much in line with Connecticut voters and with what got Reagan elected," Moore said. "I felt I had as good a chance as anyone else, maybe even better."

But as Moore begins this next chapter of his interesting and swashbuckling life, he is venturing into a strange new world, into the land of elected politics. It is a place he has never been before.

The book of politics on this level is written by voters. — and Robin Moore may find the script a hard one to read.