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SNIPPETS – X
(BITS & BYTES OF SHARED MEMORIES)
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Our Snippets compilations so far represent a retrospective commentary on the 60 years of our professional lives together. It would certainly be appropriate and fitting that this issue of Snippets should appear as our Diamond Jubilee Number in celebration of the 15th September, 1948 when it all started.

These 60 years have passed like 60 seconds; we seem indeed to be able to condense and encapsulate the recollections of those years in our memory in just as many seconds. Which, perhaps, makes for those intriguing qualities of Relativity of Time which can be fast or slow, and sometimes even hang, while we are in the Present; can be instantaneous in recall and review in relation to the Past; and of course, totally unpredictable in respect of the Future.

In retrospect, all of us in our batch, have had our share of professional successes and failures, and personal joys and sorrows in these years that have passed. Many of our batchmates, and even many of later batches have passed on, reminding us that the Maker maintains his own seniority lists while recalling us, that makes nonsense of things like the Year of Allotment, Seniority Lists, Badges of Rank, Promotions and Postings that sometimes had seemed so important.

But let us not dwell on these philosophical comments, but move on to a celebration of today with a vivid recall of the joys that we shared and which provided the more lasting values of our lives. On the 13th of September, 1948, we (CVN and NK) boarded the Bombay Express at Madras to proceed to Mount Abu, with new uniforms in our baggage and hearts in our mouth, in trepidation of what a police career would hold for us. We had our first encounter with the redoubtable G.V.Narayanan at Bombay Central while waiting to board the connecting train to Ahmedabad. There he was on the platform, oblivious of his surroundings, posing with his cricket bat and lofting an imaginary ball to the long-on, reminiscent of the hero of Cervantes. But a preview indeed of later times, when playing for the CPTC, he punished that great Test bowler, Ghulam Ahmed, with repeated sweeps to the boundary. And of course, the memory of that first morning in our barracks when Commandant Mehta came by on his first inspection round and looked at this motley collection rounded up from all over India, and remitted into his charge, wondering how on earth he could make men of these boys or officers of these men.

So, here we are then, 60 eventful years later, to recall and celebrate those years, specially that first year when the 39 of us from all over the country were badgered and hammered into shape, invested with a proud national identity, and sent out into the country to give its first taste of truly swadeshi policing !

First a word on how this jubilee issue of Snippets originated :

On 15-09-2008 Padam sent the following email :

Dear Batchmates,

As I was signing a letter this morning it struck me that today is the sixtieth anniversary of our joining the police. So heartiest congrats and many more years full of happy and healthy activities.

In 1958, on this day Shiv and I were together in the Delhi Police when we suddenly realised that we had completed ten years in the IPS and needed to celebrate. So we borrowed ten rupees from the office accountant and went off to Connaught Place to a restaurant called the Standard. Our budget got us tea and 4 delicious pastries
..... Padam

And CVN responded on 17-09-08 with :

Dear Padam,,

Very nice and thoughtful of you to have sent this mail. It is a happy remembrancer of our joining at Abu on the 15th September, 1948 to commence our pioneering professional debut on the stage of public service for policing a new born democracy. A momentous Diamond Jubilee indeed for the first crop of Mehta's boys !

I earnestly pray that we all be blessed with health to enjoy fully the years left for us, with pleasant memories of the past and happy interaction with the present, with a sense of fulfillment. With affectionate thoughts and best wishes fromNarasimhan

And NK responded on 17-09-08 with :

Dear Padam,

Thanks for the email describing what to my mind was a simple but sufficient celebration of the 10th year Jubilee of our professional lives together.

Three points struck me about your and Shiv's celebration of the 15th September, 1958 :

(a) That the day brought back vivid memories that merited celebration;

(b) that by the 15th of that month you were already so broke that you had to borrow 10 bucks for the celebration; and

((c) that 10 bucks of those days could still get you so much in Connaught Place..

Surely an eloquent commentary on the simplicity and joys of those days !! And also a

celebration today of the Diamond Jubilee, even if reduced to an email-based sharing of old memories !!!!! I think we should work on a Diamond Jubilee issue of Snippets...NK

HERE THEN IS THE DIAMOND JUBILEE ISSUE OF SNIPPETS !!!!!

Rosha writes

You all know Gautam Kaul, a handsome, versatile officer, who retired a few years ago as DG, Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Among his passions are Western classical music and Indian films. Once I had an occasion to go to his office in Chandigarh, and was pleasantly surprised to find a projector running next to his table while he attended to his official work.

In 1970-71, I was posted as DIG at Delhi, incharge of law & order. Gautam was the SP incharge North District, which includes Chandni Chowk, Civil Lines, etc. He was also our next door neighbour – we were living in the police lines complex..

Once while I was routinely checking the arrangements for the Prime Minister's programme for the next day, I saw that she was to visit the St Stephen's hospital in Tis Hazari. Since this hospital was hardly a few hundred yards from my residence I was curious to know more about this visit. I learnt that Rita – Gautam's wife -- had delivered a baby boy the previous day and Mrs Gandhi was going to the hospital to felicitate her..

Now I know it will strain your credulity, but till then I did not know that Gautam was the Prime Minister's first cousin. By that time we had been working together in the Delhi police for almost four years! Must have been pretty dumb, you will say. Years later, in Kashmir, I met Gautam's father, who was re-employed as advisor in the horticultural deptt. and was affectionately known as mama Kaul. For now, I want to tell you how my ignorance worked to Gautam's advantage.

In 1977, immediately after Mrs Gandhi was defeated and the Janata govt took over, I was posted as chief of Police in Haryana, where Gautam was the SSP Chandigarh. As you know, while Chandigarh is the capital of both Punjab and Haryana, it is a centrally administered Union territory.

One fine morning a few hundred university students were holding a demonstration near the Secretariat. Chaudhry Devi Lal, the Haryana Chief Minister passed that way and his car and escort were held up in the melee for a couple of minutes, while the police cleared a passage for him. The students raised rude slogans about the CM and some even thumped on the roof of his car. The police were certainly at fault as they should have diverted the CM's cavalcade.

The CM was furious and took it as a deliberate attempt to denigrate him. Immediately on reaching office he sent for the Chief Secretary, myself and a few of his cabinet colleagues. In our presence he rang up Chaudhry Charan Singh the Home Minister and asked that Gautam Kaul be immediately transferred and sent as far as possible to the North-east or Andamans as he could not be trusted because of his close relationship

with Mrs Gandhi. Some of us tried to put the incident in perspective but to no avail.

Later in the day Gautam came to see me. Naturally he was somewhat dejected, as the CM had refused to give him a hearing. In the evening we both went to see the CM at his residence. I told him that Gautam was a unique person who had never flaunted or taken the least advantage of his relationship with Mrs Gandhi. The CM relented only when I told him how I remained ignorant about this relationship even after working with him for four years.

CVN writes :

The early batches of IAS officers who joined immediately after Independence used to narrate interesting, and sometimes wayward, notes recorded in old files by the ICS officers during the British regime.

There was a case in the old Madras Presidency in which a young ICS officer in charge of a subdivision had passed an erroneous order assigning an unreasonably large area of government land to an applicant private party. The senior Collector promptly modified the order on review, and advised the young Sub-Collector that

‘ Next time you assign any land to an applicant, please ensure that there is still some land left for His Majesty to administer ’ !

CVN continues :

In another case the Revenue Board had to deal with a request from an aggrieved party for some sensitive information from old revenue records. Taking the stand that the information should not be made public, the dealing clerk had put up the papers with a draft reply to the applicant stating that the information asked for by him ‘ will not ’ be furnished. The Office Superintendent corrected the draft substituting ‘ cannot ’ for ‘ will not ’. The Under-Secretary struck off ‘ cannot ’ and restored ‘ will not ’. Again at the next level, ‘ will not ’ was changed to ‘ cannot ’. Finally the Board member wrote : “ The Board ‘ can but will not ’ furnish the information “ ! A lesson in King’s English for the Board staff.

K.R.Shenai writes :

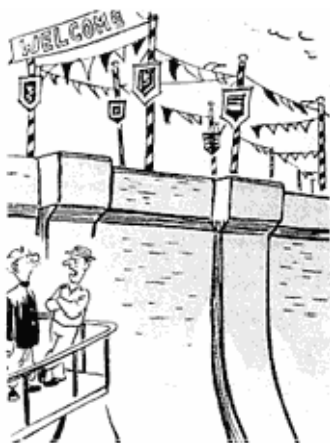
KRS joined the IPS in 1947 after release from the Royal Indian Navy. On one occasion in his early days in a Sub-Division he had to organise a raid in a cluster of villages to apprehend a long wanted communist of an extreme group. One of the search parties reported to KRS their find of an Instruction book, a shaving kit, tooth brush and an alarm clock with an old mother and her daughter-in-law in a hut. KRS interrogated the mother about her son, the absconding communist. The mother admitted her son’s visit to the hut but affirmed that he had left a week earlier. On noticing that the alarm clock was still ticking KRS wanted to pin her down with that evidence to prove her son’s presence there earlier that day itself. When he proceeded to question her pointedly on this aspect, he was nudged on the side by a Jamedar of the search party who whispered to him that he had wound the clock during search to see if it was working ! An apparently

hot clue instantly turned cold !

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Tamil Nadu has been having Prohibition Law off and on, depending on the Ministries in position at any given time. Once around 1973 it was set to become law with effect from 1st October or so. KRS was then Commissioner of Police, Chennai. A couple of days prior to that date, the City police were involved in tight bandobust work for some local elections. Eight new Patrol vehicles were on duty in different constituencies. After a taxing round of the City, KRS took a short break in his uncle's bungalow for a peg of Scotch with a couple of relatives, taking advantage of the pre-Prohibition period. The mike in his vehicle in the compound was 'on', receiving messages from the Patrol vehicles in different constituencies. All the vehicles reported 'Nothing special' over the wireless. After hearing these messages in succession, KRS and his relatives sitting in the verandah happened to turn round to lift their glasses when they noticed that the brand of Scotch was 'Something Special' - a striking contrast to the official messages !

Here are a few select cartoons



No it is not ready for official opening; some ministers are coming to see the crack in the dam.

R. K. Laxman
'The Times of India'



I just asked the candidate to draw a chair and sit down!

R.K.Laxman in the
'Times of India'.

And a selection of jokes about absent-minded Professors.

Professor Jones was visiting a ranch out in Texas. He looked at a rope in his hand and mumbled to himself,

"One of the two things - either I've found a rope or lost a horse."

Professor (sitting beside his bed with a shoe in his hand): Now let's see, am I going to sleep or waking up ?

The university professor and his wife were leaving church
.Professor : Ha, ha! Who's absent-minded now ? You forgot your umbrella and left it in church, but I remembered mine and I picked up yours ,too.

Wife : Fine-but the trouble is, neither you nor I brought an umbrella to church today!