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SNIPPETS – XI
(BITS & BYTES OF SHARED MEMORIES)
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The New Year heralds a new life for all, and for Snippets too. The Snippets family has now been blessed with the arrival of triplets ! We announce with delight that we are now joined by S.S.Vaidyanathan (Gujarat-1959),P.R.Parthasarathy(Maharashtra– 1958) and G.Ramachandran (Gujarat -1955). They bring with them a wealth of sense, commonsense, eye for the comical and gift for comment with which, in their time, they had illumined the police cadres of their States, and also the corridors of the higher police institutions of the Government of India.

SSV had this to say in his “Inaugural Address” : I joined the IPS 11 years after CVN and NK and I have been whining for years how disorganized we retired folks are. But these two “ First Regulars” in the form of SNIPPETS have done more than what all their successors together could have done, in cooking up something spicy, delicious, and nostalgic for all of us to relive and savour those days. CVN and NK have been trailblazers in the Service and once again they have shown the way. RK Raghavan catalyzed this happy connection after years. (Thank you, RKR) It is fun recalling those days. It seems not so long ago; yet about half a century (or more) has passed. An American, William F. Buckley said to a graduating Yale class, “ Some of us who wondered if we would ever be this old now wonder whether we were ever young”. May be we should demand a recount of the years. Those photos reproduced in SNIPPETS may be black and white but our memories are in colour.

GR added that nothing could be more alluring than sharing the memories of the good old days, and appropriately opened his innings with the following snippet :

" I think I am getting old" a man tells his friend.
" Why? Are you having rheumatism?"
"No, I am having reminiscences"



S.S.Vaidyanathan starts from his Mount Abu days:

No time to waste at seventy ! So let me share with you the anecdote that came to my mind as soon as I typed the words First Regulars. We were called the 12th Regulars. The Mess in Mount Abu (and what a mess!) was erstwhile Rajputana Hotel for the princes and we all fantasized that we were the post Independence princes. The rooms were numbered 1 to 34 or so. But there was no Room 13 for reasons of superstition. It was numbered 12A. The person (Anonymous) who was allotted this room had the gumption to question the unquestionable Commandant G K Handoo why his room alone had an unusual number. He was a maverick probationer in many ways. "Because, you do not belong to the 12th Regulars, you are a class of your own", replied Mr. Handoo. The inmate of Room 12A did not join the laughter that followed. Neither did he forgive Mr. Handoo ever after.

SSV continues on E.L. Stracey, the memorable Deputy Commandant of the CPTC at Mount Abu :

In the course of his talks to us on Police Procedures, once ELS lectured on Police Stations and the Police Lock Up. He told us that the police stations should be maintained neat and clean – like you would maintain your own house – and lock-ups should be airy and open to public view, to avoid allegations of ill-treatment of prisoners. He gave us the usual assignment on the subject he had taught. A few days later, when we were assembled at the mess before dinner, ELS told us that he had a probationer's assignment on Police Stations, which had "made his day, his week and his month". A probationer had written something like this: "Maintain your house neat and clean as you would maintain a Police Station. Lock ups should be kept completely open, free for public access and kept unlocked, to avoid allegations of police torture".

(NK adds : On his first visit to my sub-division – Hospet in Bellary District, ELS who was my SP – started his inspection of my headquarters Police Station with an inspection of the latrines of the police lines, which stank to high heaven. This, he said, is where your supervision must begin).

SSV continues on E.L. Stracey : During another lecture, ELS told us that third degree in police work was totally ruled out and added, "There are no ifs and buts about this absolute rule". A probationer (from Punjab, where else?) put his hand up and started saying, "But, sir..." when ELS cut him short and said, "There is no But about it, I told you". The probationer was not pleased with this and persisted with his But Sir. He was firmly and somewhat rudely asked by ELS to sit down. He obeyed, but this time the probationer had the last word: "This is nothing but subtle third degree", he muttered, "I am not being allowed to speak and being gagged"

P.R.Parthasarathy writes this one on how honour invariably comes posthumously to policemen

When dog bites man it does not make news. But when it is the other way about, it does. When you talk of a good policeman, the reaction is one of disbelief, like hearing about a Scottish philanthropist !

In 1974, as a Deputy Commissioner of Police, Headquarters, I had occasion to look into the record of service of one Havaldar Surve of the Dadar Police Station.

Dada Surve, as he was fondly called, had been inducted years ago into the Social Security Branch of the Crime Branch, C.I.D., referred to as the Anti-Goonda Squad. Various teams were formed and each allotted a particular area. Surve and his team were allotted the Dadar Area. The brief of the Anti-Goonda Squad was to go to the help of the weaker sex, or the under-privileged or the vulnerable sections of community like the petty traders, shopkeepers etc. from being intimidated or exploited or harassed by local muscle men. Dada Surve's headquarters for a number of years was a platform built around a big banyan tree in the compound of the Dadar Police Station. Hundreds of people got redressal through Dada, even those who, at the Police Station level, might have been normally told to seek redressal in the Court of Law as their complaints were non-cognizable in nature. No one would dare to question the summons from Dada Surve, not even the muscle men of the area if they were sent for. When Dada Surve pronounced a verdict, it was implemented without a murmur.

As he had served longer than normal at Dadar, Surve was moved out to another assignment. Shortly after he died as a result of cerebral haemorrhage. Several morning papers of Jan 1, 1975, carried the news of his death with tributes to his services. His funeral became a big event. A large number of people joined the funeral procession and it was stopped at every street corner, where hawkers, shopkeepers and people from Dadar-Parel area paid homage and many walked in silence in large numbers to the crematorium. The funeral procession took four hours to go from Parel to Shivaji Park crematorium. The funeral procession turned into a public meeting at the crematorium. Leaders from all political parties and social workers eulogised his services and many appealed to the Government to erect a memorial in Surve's name.

Editorial note : It is a sordid commentary on our politician breed that they have a good word for a good policeman only when he is dead. If it was so with Surve in 1974, it is no better with Karkare today in 2008.

P.R.Parthasarathy writes this one on M.S.Heble of the "First Regulars" : a story of an unintended fast that had ironically started with a breakfast ! PRP emphasizes that the story is fact, not fable :

M.S.Heble who was the S.P.Sholapur from 1957 to 1960 invited the then Chief Minister,

Mr.Y.B.Chavan, for breakfast at his house. The CM accepted the invitation but asked Heble to not to have many invitees. It suited Heble

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and he decided to have only Mr.and Mrs Chavan, besides Mr.and Mrs.Zubairy (the Collector) .With his wife Sita and himself, that would mak it six, just right for their dining table which had only six chairs.

On the appointed day I presented a Guard of Honour for Chavan on his arrival at the Police Headquarters. After the programe there, Chavan, Heble and Zubairy went to the circuit house to pick up Mrs Chavan and Mrs Zubairy and found they had already left for the S.P's bungalow. At the Circuit House, Mr.Jagtap. the District Congress Committee Chief could not be stopped from jumping into their car despite all their efforts just short of manhandling to prevent his joining them. . Naturally the Hebles were highly embarrassed to find Jagtap joining them while their table had been set for only six. Jagtap occupied the chair meant for Sita Heble who reconciled herself to serving the guests. When Mrs.Chavan asked her "What about you", Sita muttered that she was observing a fast for the day. Breakfast was a grand affair as Sita was a great cook.After breakfast, Chavan and Co left while Mrs.Chavan who was ro be escorted by Mrs Zubairy asked Sita to join them in their programme. Poor Sita could not say "no", and hopped into their car. Later in the day, Mrs Chavan and party went through the lunch and afternoon tea with poor Sita having to maintain her pre-announced 'fast' for the day. At 7-30 P.M. when they boarded the train, Mrs.Chavan asked Sita not to wait till the departure of the train but to go home and break her fast Wasn't she happy to go home?

G.Ramachandran writes on "My first gaffe"

In my estimation, my performance in the written papers in the Competitive Examination for the All India Services held in 1954 was not satisfactory. The call for the interview was therefore a pleasant surprise. Logic informed me that that the odds of getting into the service were no better than hitting the jackpot on buying a lottery ticket. My family and well wishers were equally illogical in their belief that my capacity for loquacious banter will see me through the interview. My sartorial inelegance or inexpediency or both, as I presented myself before the personality testers was the cause of some concern. Being modestly circumstanced, investment in a new suit for this risky undertaking was ruled out and I got fitted into my father's coat and trousers).

V.S.Hejmadi, the Chairman of the selection board of the U.P.S.C, put the butterflies in my tummy to rest, and my confidence grew as I realized that I was making a good impression on the board members.

Nearing the end of the interaction, Hejmadi almost announced the result of

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the examination when he said “Mr. Ramachandran, I am sure you will be in one of these civil services. You are a Gold Medalist from the University Of Madras. You are working for your Doctorate in Science. I am sure you will have many opportunities and scholarships would be coming your way. would like to know why you are fascinated by the prospect of a career in the Police Force”

A little nonplussed for an answer, my flippant nature, encouraged by the euphoria over my good show during the exchanges, took over and I said “the ending letters of all scholarshIPS are also IPS”. To my good luck the Chairman did not think I had made a gaffe. He laughed and said “That’s a good one. Good luck to you”. There was jauntiness in my gait at the exit.

G.Ramachandran continues with “My second gaffe”

On October 4, 1955, taking the mail to Bombay were three Tamil speaking candidates from Madras (both places as they were then called) *en route* to Mt. Abu to report at the C.P.T.C. We had got acquainted with one another after our appointments were announced and had, much in the style of NK and CVN, got our uniforms made and other accouterments procured from the same suppliers.

We got our reservations for the journey done in the same compartment but only two of us could get the lower berths. The 1955 vintage rail cars had divan like couches in the First Class compartments, three of them at the lower levels and two at the upper. We desired adjacent seats, all three at the lower level which would have facilitated our *tete-a-tete* and munchings over the long haul. The T.T.E said he would reallocate the third passenger, an Agarwal if he did not show up within 15 minutes of the scheduled departure time, and give us the third lower berth. When the TTE was about to do the readjustment a rolly-polly and burly up-country Agarwal appeared, and in frustration I exclaimed in colloquial Tamil “*dadian vanthutanda*” (Meaning : the fatty has come at the last minute). We settled down, two below and one up, with Agarwal as the unwanted third, snoring away at our own level.

Next morning the unwelcome Agarwal while getting down at Poona turned to us, patted each one of us lovingly, wished us a great career in the Police and with a broad smile said in chaste Tamil “*sar, dadian poitu varen*”(*Meaning* :Sirs, the fatty is getting off here. Bye Bye to you.) It had hardly occurred to us, all green horns, that there could be Tamil knowing Agarwals in the Madras of the nineteen fifties !

NK writes : Remembering M.V.Narayana Rao.

In 1967 when I was DIG at Coimbatore, I had a surprise visit from M.V. Narayana Rao. He was then one of the oldest and strongest pillars of the IB at N.Delhi but was wanting to return to his home State, Andhra, on pressing personal grounds. But, given his awesome reputation, the IB top brass would have none of it. Finally on his long and passionate pleading they said he could go if he would undertake to find a successor who would fill the bill. So, here was MVN at my door to plead with me to come to his aid. As I was myself then on a weak wicket with a none-too-friendly DMK dispensation that had just swept into power in Tamilnadu, I agreed and joined the IB soon after.

There was then a farewell dinner for MVN arranged by M.K.Narayanan at a restaurant at Connaught Place, attended by all members of our Branch, headed by the redoubtable R.N.Kao. With my usual impish streak I composed a limerick on the spot to serve as a farewell speech, but on second thoughts, suppressed the urge to recite it, as I was not sure whether Kao might consider me too irreverent to succeed MVN.

My poetic effort had finally to wait long years to find expression at another farewell to MVN – this was in the Memorial Volume that S.Subramanian got up to bid a final farewell to MVN. The limerick which I reproduced there, to the best of my memory, ran roughly like this :

On your face Mr Kao
Do I see worry on your brow
Over the departure of Mr Rao,
But take heart Mr Kao,
I will manage his absence somehow

A Memorial Volume might have appeared an odd place for such flippancy. But I was sure that I would bring a hearty laugh from the departed spirit, if indeed spirits were given to laughing. How much I missed the joy and laughter we had shared in our lives together !

Here are a few select cartoons
(courtesy R.K.Laxman)



Strict security code prohibits
30 items...Scissors included!



The same cops arrested and
thrashed me before we came
to power. Who's the turncoat? =

And a joke for added spice

AB was complaining about his health problems and that no treatment was effective.

"Have you tried Allopathy ?, his friend asked.

"I have tried that but it has failed", replied AB

"What about Homoeopathy ?"

"No, that also has given no relief"

"What about Naturopathy ? "

"No, not that also"

"Then your last resort will have to be Venkatachalapathy"
