



by Col Ramesh Davesar (Retd)



Time endears but cannot fade away the memories particularly those which were nurtured through rigors of military training and the camaraderie developed during baptism into the Armed Forces (AFs). Reversing the time clock by over half a century that on 12 Jan 1969, we, the 515 Gentlemen Cadets (GCs) passed out as commissioned officers in the Indian Army from the Officers Training School (OTS) our Alma Mater; subsequently rechristened as The Officers Training Academy (OTA). The epoch which has indelibly etched in our memory neurons. Since the time flies faster than any Mach number, the first dawn of this year marked 50 years of our induction in the Army; the day we had been longing to see and celebrate during our life time.

The deliberations in actual had commenced in 2017. I recall when the proposal of Golden Jubilee (GJ) Celebrations was circulated, initially it received a mixed response, but our one line motto "come what may" to go ahead was undeterred. Also more than money, the motivational funding was required. Incidentally, Majrooh Sultanpuri's couplet "Mein akela hi chala tha janeb e Manzil; log aate gaye caravan banata gaya", aptly suited the subsequent events or shall I say it became a silent motivation factor because as the message started trickling across more officers came out with the consent and willingness to

participate both monetarily and with other assistance.

At the outset, in order to plan and conduct it at massive scale, required a dedicated Nodal team, thus a Steering Committee comprising our Mighty 12 colleagues took upon this most challenging task. As a first step, maintaining the sanctity of the 12 January, we organised celebrations at our respective places but our unflinching desire to commemorate the historical event at our Alma Mater at last got materialised when 128 of us along with our spouses reached OTA on 13 September for three days of celebrations. It is beyond perceivable expression the emotional moment when we entered this great institute that converted raw youth into young military leaders.

Meeting our colleagues particularly those after half a century hiatus was nostalgically touching. The specially designed identity cards with photos each on Commissioning and the current one, simplified mutual identification. As we commenced reconnecting, like a Hindi movie, we got into the flashback when in March 1968, when we had entered the premises as raw kids with the huge steel trunk and Holdall on our head, running into seniors who were eagerly awaiting to accord the 'reception' (in modest parlance-ragging). The first night was spent undergoing spates of their hospitality.

Come next day, it was the barber who with one

"razor sweep" chopped our hippy hair styles not only turning the skull into a barren wasteland, but also took away perhaps the last heirloom of our civil life. The landscape of OTA is changed beyond imagination from our time and now equipped with state of the art training and the administrative facilities at par if not better from other sister establishments. The only landmark which remains unchanged is the 'P Hill' approx 350 ft of relative height; the 'Pleasant Hill' for the instructors, but the 'Punishment Hill' for the GCs whose days started and ended with countless "to and fro" punishment sojourns to this monument. Even now, while going atop, one could see the indelible hoof marks of GCs all over, and reminisces PT Ustads' haunting shouts of *'double se P Hill ka chakkar lagao, Pehle j GC rakhoonga.'*

The next unforgettable landmark in the GCs' training is the 'Drill Square', now re-laid and named after my fellow Regimental Hero Maj Parweshram, PVC. In fact, this training monument permanently gets into the DNA of the GCs which keeps reminding them of the rugged drill sessions they had gone through. Not to forget those privileged ones including self who had to do "extra drills" as a punishment awarded by the Instructors. To relive those moments,

we had a mock drill practice sans punishments with rifle up our arms. As we started flocking after exchanging the initial introductory rounds followed the longish strumming sessions of our 50 years of "olive green" journey.

The affection, love and the care we enjoyed and shared amongst us was peerless. But it was the ladies who stole the show, without losing time they huddled together followed by a "photo op", enjoying the anecdotes of their spouses, but above all, braving the scorching heat of Chennai, they participated in all the functions; be it, paying tribute to Martyrs, the "round robin" tour of Campus, trip to Mahabalipuram and series of social gatherings. In congruence with the traditions set by the seniors to keep the memories alive, we too left foot prints on the sands of time by presenting a horse mounted statue of the great son of India - Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the OTA.

One does not know how these three days went, and by the time we realised, the nostalgic whirlwind was over leaving behind lasting memories to cherish till we fade away. A big take away! It has rejuvenated us both physically and emotionally and synergised our resolve to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee 10 years hence. And God willing we shall!

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Untold Battlefield Tales Gifted to CO 15 Kumaon during Reunion



The coffee table book 'Untold Battlefield Tales', published by Fauji India Foundation of India, that carries the article 'Malharis Battle of Gedra City in 1971 Indo-Pak War' written by Col NN Bhatia (Retd), was gifted by the author (right) to CO 15 Kumaon (middle), during the 15 Kumaon get together in late October.