

NOSTALGIA

Memoirs of a Kunjean

By:

Dharam Veer Tewathia(1517)

PREFACE

From school years itself I had developed the habit of reading. I always eagerly waited for the library period which was once in a week. Around the time in class 10th in 1979-80, I had started reading full-fledged novels written by authors of the Victorian period, like Charles Dickens, R L Stevenson, Jules Verne, Shakespeare etc. and poets of that era like Robert Frost, Robert Browning, John Keats, and William Wordsworth. I also got issued books by the then contemporary authors like Irving Wallace, Mario Puzo, Leon Uris etc. A book by Leon Uris, namely "Exodus" so appealed to me that I at once wanted to read it the moment I saw it in the library but there one problem in getting it issued, I was already having the maximum no. of books that could be issued to a student and unless I returned one I could not get any more books issued. So I hid the book under the book cabinet. It was extremely thin book. Next week in the library, I groped for it under the cabinet so that I could get it issued in my name as I had finished the earlier book and intended to return the same. Alas the book was neither under the cabinet nor in any of the shelves. God knows what happened to that book. Much later I actually bought the book from a Delhi book store and now it is in my personal library at home. Subsequently I also watched a movie based on that book.

With this kind of voracious greed for reading it is natural to have a desire to write so when in 2001 I booked the domain www.sainikschoolkunjapura.com I thought why not write a book about our school and put it in e-format and upload it on the site for all to read. This book comprises of two sections.

Section one contains chapters on the various aspects of life we spent at school. There are chapters on PT, Meals, Town Leave, IHC, Auditorium movies etc. There is one chapter on even 'Rajma' which, needless to say, played a major role in our healthy growth. Even now when there is a get-together of kunjeans at each other's place or Delhi OBMs, Rajma is an essential ingredient of the food menu. The second section is dedicated to the teachers. There is one chapter on each

teacher. To begin with, I have written chapters on teachers who've retired and they were the ones who mainly taught around our time. Another reason for including these chapters on priority was that since they are in the twilight of their lives I wanted to meet them to procure the biographical details before they passed away. I was not very wrong in my apprehension as between the time I met these teachers and the time by which I could bring out this book, at least four of them have moved to eternity. They are Sh. PN Narang, OP Malhotra, MM Singh and Chitravanshi. I could take their latest pictures, record their talking video and could have them write a couple of lines with signatures. This way their memories are still with us. Whichever teacher I went to meet received me with affection and supplied all the details of the questionnaire I had prepared. The biographic account I have given in any chapter on a particular teacher covers a period from the teacher's birth, early education to their grandkids. I went to various towns where the teachers are settled after retirement, I met Sh. BKG, SCA, NCU, PNN, PNM in Karnal and interviewed HKK, PVC, PPA at school, I went to Faridabad to interview RPS, HIS, SSG, AKG; to Ballabgarh for NPS, to Savita Vihar Delhi for VG, SSG. I met MMS at his son's Rohini flat which he periodically visited for his treatment at RR but was otherwise settled in Dehradun. I met KA and KKA at Dehradun etc. I hope the reader will like the chapters on teachers as well as on the school life, and his satisfaction would be the true rewards for whatever small efforts I've put into this book.

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LIFE AT SCHOOL

P.T.

Everything about school is either good or too good; however there were certain activities which were not very popular among students. Morning P.T. was one such activity, others being grass cutting and Roll call especially in winter nights. Grass cutting invariably gave us the blisters in the hands due to their contact with the wooden hilt of the sword. In winter nights, Roll calls, because of the chilly weather we stood in alfresco, in half sleep state and the house master trying to pass down the same routine stuff in his speech, daily. The worst part of P.T. wasn't the exertion it gave us, as it was having to get up early, as in those days, young as we were, the body didn't experience much tiredness and the recovery was quick.

The school authorities had devised their own system of waking the students up early. A reveille siren was sounded from a speaker placed atop the mess building, at full volume. Its shrill voice pierced through the early morning thin and calm air and was loud enough to make the boys squirm out of their deep slumber as far as in D-20 and D-10 which were a good 1km away. It was followed by three songs played one after the other. The songs were either religious or patriotic probably aimed at creating the right fervor at the start of the day. The list of all the songs is given at the end of this chapter. Any three songs out of those dozen songs or so were played turn wise and in my entire stay at school there was no addition to those dozen odd songs. Those three songs took about 10 to 12 minutes, or may be even less, the third and final siren was sounded which was an indication for everybody to come out of their dorms (we never called them dormitories) and to fall in threes for onward march to the P.T. ground.

The total time gap between the first and the third siren was no more than 20 minutes and during this period we were expected to get out of the bed, go to the toilet, brush the teeth, freshen up, change over to P.T. kit and fall out of the dorm. So there was always a lingering doubt in the students' mind about the sufficiency of this time. It was sufficient for students who got up immediately on hearing the first siren and rushed to toilets but as most of the boys did not get up till the last song or even the second siren despite the roommates' best efforts, there was a sudden rush in front of both the wash basins and both the toilets (the third one which was an English style toilet was unpopular with the boys, most of whom coming from rural background did not know how to use it or what to do

with it). Some of the boys slept clad in the P.T. dress instead of night suit so that they could get a little extra sleep in the morning.

Though during this time the Hostel Superintendent often visited the house and at times took rounds in the dorm corridors instructing the boys to get up and to get ready but then it was not possible for him to visit every cubicle and pull the sheet off every boy. He generally blew whistles in the corridors; little realizing that whistle will have little or no effect on the boys who could not be affected by a fully blown siren. Finally though owing to collective efforts of blaring music, hostel superintendent and room mates

, everybody was ready in time to fall in squads for reporting to the P.T. ground. All the house squads reported punctually there at 5:45 AM in summers and at 6:15 AM in the winters. Over the years different grounds were used for P.T. exercises. During the period I was at the school (1974-1980), the most commonly used grounds for this purpose were the ones sandwiched between the temple and the oval. Of the two grounds, the one closer to the temple was popularly referred to as 'under-14' (I could never get to know why it was called so). The second one was separated from under 14 by an 8 feet metallic road which had the oval on its other side. Besides these two grounds, a third ground was also used especially in my last one or two years of stay in school, namely the large ground opposite the main building. It was done at the behest of Sh. Bhakri, the then headmaster whose residence was nearby. He was somewhat of a fitness freak and the nearness of the P.T. ground to his residence suited him personally, little caring for the fact that it was greatly unsuitable for 600 students who had to cover an additional km either way, it being the distance between the temple side ground and the main building. Unfortunately in the ultimate analysis, this set up did not suit Sh. Bhakri either as the poor man died of a massive heart attack in 1981-82. May his soul rest in peace!

Once all the squads had assembled in the P.T. ground the Roll call (first of the half dozen odd ones spread over the day) was taken by the school Captain who stood in the centre facing the assembled formation. Individual House Captains reported their total head counts present to the captain, making a special mention of sick-reports who were exempted from P.T. as they were to report to the infirmary for treatment during this time. They generally went to the infirmary from straight to the house when the squad left to the P.T. ground, or sometimes went from the P.T. ground after the Roll call. After all the house captains had submitted their Roll call sheets, the school captain submitted a consolidated report to the duty teacher.

This over, the P.T. formally began with 3-4 rounds, running around the ground for warming up the boys, after which the houses reassembled in the ground in a spread out position. From here on, for next 30 minutes or so, it was over to Sardar Pyara Singh or Sh. Munshi Singh, the P.T. instructors who trained the boys through a series of exercises to strengthen and build muscles all over the body. In this endeavor they were assisted and supervised by the hotel superintendents from the sides. During the course of P.T., Sardar Pyara Singh frequently used a term which made no sense to the boys at all, especially at the beginning of each exercise. He often said "Pishdip" or at least this is how it sounded coming from his mouth though he, oblivious of this, was saying "Position Ready Up". A long whistle marked the end of P.T. and the boys, this time without having to file in squads ran to their dorms to have an early and a better share of the snacks and tea which had usually arrived in the houses by then. During my time and in green house, a tall, slim and heavily mustached Arjun Singh provided this invaluable service. A large aluminium kettle and a tray were placed outside each dorm on an elevated surface adjacent to the stairs. We all had our individual glass tumblers in which we enjoyed our tea. These tumblers were generally brought from school dry canteen costing Rs. 1.50 in those days and the tea in them tasted like nectar. The snacks were usually buns made of wheat flour and probably baked in the school mess. On Tuesdays, in place of buns, mathis were provided and they were generally preferred over the buns. However I personally liked bun more because it used to be big and satiated some appetite. Some of us even used to soak it in the tea glass and when eaten, it had a comparatively heavier effect in the stomach. Tea and snacks over, we removed our P.T. dress and rushed to bathrooms. The P.T. dress consisted of white shoes, white socks, white shorts and a T-Shirt made of soft towel stuff and was of the same colour as the house to which a boy belongs. In winters we were allowed to wear a khaki jersey over T-Shirt and sometimes we were allowed trousers in place of shorts. In bathrooms the baths were taken quickly because the presence of water was heavy and in those days our body mechanism and psyche was in such a way that we used to do everything in a hurried manner as there was always a shortage of time. Having bathed up, we returned to our rooms and dressed up the khaki uniform which we wore in classrooms and during NCC. The uniform was Khaki shirt (half –sleeves), khaki short, khaki stockings and oxford cut black shoes (brown shoes for NCC) and a black leather belt with metallic buckle besides we used to wear shoulder pips and stocking flashes which corresponded with the respective house colours. The stockings and flashes were held together with the aid of plastic garter. In winters

a khaki jersey was added over the shirt and the belt was secured externally. Around 7:25 AM the dorm in charge ordered the boys "out" for falling in squads. Another Roll call was taken by the house captain and the boys marched off to classrooms to get the best education from a set of fantastic teachers, which paved the way for us to become what we are today- well settled, happy and contented.

This chapter cannot be considered complete till I do not make a mention of certain 'No P.T. situation'. Basically there were three circumstances in which the boys were blessed with the opportunity of not having to go for P.T. The most common and frequent 'No P.T. situation' was the Sunday and other gazetted holidays as on these days we were not expected to make any appearance anywhere till breakfast at 9:00 AM. The second situation arose only in rainy season when due to heavy early morning rains it was automatically presumed that there will be no P.T. that day, though there was no formal instruction to this affect. The third situation likewise arose only in winters that to when spate of freezing and chilly winds ran through the country sides, as P.T. in such adverse climatic condition would have done more harm than good to the boys. However for this a formal announcement during dinner by the school captain, or by the house master during Roll call was mandatory. Finally there were mornings when there was no P.T. but instead there was NCC or grass cutting and this does not qualify for the three situations mentioned above.

CLASSES

The classes were held in the best of the traditions. There was a deep sense of discipline and willingness to learn among students and dedication and willingness to teach among teachers unlike other schools of those days and even present, where the students do not want to learn and the teacher does not want to waste his energy in school as he needs to preserve it for private tuitions. In Kunjpura probably even the thought of private tuitions did not cross the teachers' minds. The teachers were a class apart-they were class unto themselves. They were a set of devoted, sincere and enlightened human beings who would have excelled in whatever vocations they might have chosen and instead they chose to teach-the noblest of deeds-and shaped one destinies. They were available to us for guidance not only in classrooms but round the clock as they all lived in the school campus. They were truly dedicated teachers, always finding innovative ways to make studies simple and enjoyable. No wonder! They don't make teachers like them anymore.

The students tryst with their destiny shapes began at 7:40 AM (in winters it was a little later). There were 7 periods in all, each of 40 minutes. The first period accordingly ended at 8:20 AM and the second at 9:00 AM after which we all walked to the mess for breakfast. After breakfast, assembly was held in the school auditorium which was situated at 'stone's throw distance from the school mess. The assembly was a daily feature. It started at around 9:30 AM and usually took three quarters of an hour after which we all walked back to our classes. The 3rd and 4th periods were conducted between 10:00 AM to 11:20 AM after which there was a recess for 10 minutes.

The last three periods were conducted from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM after which it was lunch time to go to the mess. Regarding assembly there were two unique things. One, it was held daily without fail so much that during my entire stay in school I cannot think of a single day when it was not held except of course on Sundays and holidays. The other uniqueness was in respect of its time as it was held after the second period unlike any other school where it was and still is held

before commencement of first period. Every student had a fixed seat in the assembly hall (auditorium) and each house had a fixed area in the hall. The students waited in their seats until a formal instruction 'school stand up' was made by the school captain after all the teachers and the big three (Princy, Headdu and Rajji as they were called in short) had gathered in front of the assembly hall entrance. This done they all filed pass the students in two rows, one walking down each aisle connecting the entrances with stage. The row walking down the left aisle was lead by the Principal followed by some of the ladies teachers. About half a dozen gents teachers brought up the rear. It was the same procedure in the right aisle except that it was lead by the Head master who was followed by the Registrar, the ladies and the male teacher. All along a song was sung by the choir boys on band master's piano tune from the balcony. The song was non-filmy patriotic song and it ended only when everyone had reached on stage and stood in front of their respective chairs, after which everybody in the hall sat down. It was followed by four students coming on stage, one after the other, to deliver speech. It was aimed to improve the oratorial skills and to gain confidence to speak publically which was an indispensable quality to get through SSB. The first speaker spoke in English on any topic of his choice, and generally came from senior classes. The second speaker likewise came from a middle class and spoke in Hindi on any topic. The third one recited a poem in English and came from junior classes. All these three speakers spoke from memory though they had written topic sheets safely tucked away in shorts pockets, just in case their memories betrayed them. The fourth speaker was again from a senior class and read out important news items he had so carefully and hurriedly noted from the English Dailies especially Tribune from the school library during the first two periods or the breakfast hour. Some even dared to read news straight from the newspaper spread across lectern - a practice which was always frowned at by those present on stage. Finally it was the turn of the Principal who passed on general observations and instructions and ended with Birthday wishes to the students whose birthday fell on that day (Mr. Udiavar started this practice). The standard phrase was "Birthday Greetings for today go to roll no. so and so. Many happy returns of the day and May God bless them". With this he retreated from the lectern to his chair. Everybody stood up for the National Anthem after which

everyone on stage walked out of the hall in the same way as they came on yet another song being sung by the choir group. The students then walked back to the class for 3rd and 4th after which there was recess.

Recess was a pleasant deviation for all of us. We wanted to have maximum fun in those 10 odd minutes. We stood chatting under the mulberry trees, which were in abundance around the classrooms area, and even eating their fruit. In winters we invariably stood against a wall basking in the sun. Sometimes the recess was used more positively in attending small errands like visiting the post office or the bank which were nearby (an extension counter of SBI was opened in the school in 1977-78 diagonally opposite the tennis court adjacent to the Headmaster's and Registrar's residence, to inculcate the habit of small savings amongst students and teachers). The recess was sometimes used to complete the homework needed to be shown in the following three periods. Thus it was a pleasant deviation as I just wrote, more so because after this there were three consecutive periods unlike only two each before breakfast and recess. The final respite would not come till those three periods were over and even that can't be said conclusive as there were Prep-Classes before dinner when we again attended classes though this time there was no strict regimen of subject wise periods. This time of 2 hours from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM was purely self study whence we completed our homework and mugged up the answers. Any unfinished portion was completed in the dorms after dinner. The composition of a typical class section was highly logical and well thought of. Each section had a strength of about 30-35 students and it was a mostly group of 7- 8 students drawn from each of the four houses. It was aimed to bring about a healthy interaction and rapport among boys of one particular house with boys of other houses (In fact classes were the only place where we got to mix up with boys of other houses; otherwise we ate, played and slept house-wise). Accordingly there were some 16 to 18 desks (we always called them 'deks') divided in 3 rows in junior classes and 4 rows in senior classes (The latter were held in the Main Building where the rooms were rather squarish unlike junior classes which were in study blocks between the Main Building and the infirmary and were more of a rectangle). Each desk seated two boys who could be from same or different houses. The desks were occupied on first-come

first-serve basis but tall boys were expected to be back benchers. Each desk had a flap which was secured to its side by a personal lock and when opened the flap fell on the boy's lap (The locks were mainly Klik, K-Like brands and it was not too difficult to open them with a compass). All our books were always in the desks and we normally didn't take them to dorms. The desk occupants thus remained unchanged till the end of the academic year and as a result the desk mates often became close friends. I remember having shared the desk with 1504 for at least 4 years in a row and we came very close and became sort of buddies and the bond has existed since then. Usually there were three sections in a class A, B and C but sometimes in the very junior classes there was a D section too. The administration of a particular section was the responsibility of the class teacher. For the better part of my initial years from 5th C to 8th C, Sh. Chitarvanshi was our class teacher. The start and end of a period was conveyed through a bell which was precariously perched atop the school water pump located between the Main Building and the Arts room. Another worth mentioning observation is that during our time the colour of blackboards changed from black to green yet they were never referred to as 'green boards'. Thus our teachers wrote on a blackboard that was actually 'green'.

At the end of this chapter I would like to recall the class room habits of some of the teachers. Every human being has some typical habits and styles of his own and they are often manifested in their day to day dealings in society, home or profession. There is nothing adverse about it and so the teachers or their favourite students need not feel bad about it as these are being written about in a very healthy spirit and would only help the readers imagine that they are setting in the class room and a particular teacher is teaching in the class. I will start with Sh. M.M. Singh Sir and while writing about him and teachers I shall be using past tense in my writing because my memories are more than 20 years and some of these teachers are not at school anymore for different reasons. Some have superannuated, some have left school for better jobs and some have been devoured by death.

M.M. Singh sir (in school it was a practice to suffix the teacher's name with sir or madam rather than prefixing with Mr. or Mrs., and I shall cling to that habit) was a

man of details, and elaborate explanations. He would explain a concept so thoroughly and in such an interesting way that a subject as boring as biology became enjoyable (I still remember every detail about Amoeba and Hydra). He wouldn't start a fresh topic till the previous one was completely understood by the whole class even if that sometimes meant incomplete syllabus at the end of the term. On the contrary his counterpart P.V. Leela Madam had a very objective approach, would always finish the syllabus in time and although her students scored a couple of marks more yet they remembered nothing about the subject after the exams and were always scared of her and her subject. Of her, because when angry she pierced the students' ear lobes with her nails so hard that sometimes even the blood came out and of her subject because biology we never liked as it came across a dull, boring and difficult for its terminology. M.M. Singh sir's standing posture was always typical. His left hand would always be twisted from the elbow and placed on the lower part of his back, fingers always closed. The other hand with a chalk in it and when not writing in blackboard would often come in front of his face in rapid action as if attempting to shoo away a fly which half the time was never there. His most outstanding characteristic was the fact that he always kept standing throughout the period. During the 4 years he taught our section, I never saw him sitting in the class, not even once. It was in sharp contrast to Narang sir who hardly left the chair despite his subject being English which involved a fair amount of writing on the blackboard. Narang sir's favourite punishment to the students was making 'cock' in the classroom (pronounced as 'Kaak'). All said he was a highly talented and scholarly person.

When I think of Satpal Sir I am immediately reminded of his impressive height and ambidextrous style of writing. I don't know whether he exhibited ambidexterity in every action in his day to day life but when it came to writing on class blackboard he sure did it. He would take out a chalk, break it into two, hold one piece in each hand and would stand in the centre facing the blackboard. He would start writing from the corner of the blackboard with his left hand and without moving from his place he would start writing with his right hand when the left hand stops. It is truly a unique quality.

K. Arora Madam had a habit of blowing her nose in the class room with the help of her handkerchief. S.C. Aggarwal sir would bang the table loudly with the duster instructing an already silent class to be silent. We failed to understand why he did so, at least initially. He made a perfect circle on the blackboard using a handkerchief and a chalk while teaching geometry. Kashmir Singh sir would often ask the boys to stand one by one and read from chemistry tool book and the strange thing was that each boy was to read just one sentence. Whenever there no light in the class and the boys so pointed out he would always smilingly say that though the light is there, the electricity is not there. A very decent and dedicated person Salaria sir, a fitness freak would hit the boys on their back with his heavy-weight fist after twisting the boy's arm. P.P. Anand sir had some cervical problem and he had to turn full 180 degrees if he wanted to look back and the boys knowing this would often call him on one pretext or the other(while he wrote on the black board) to see him turning. Then there was Upadhyaya sir who often spoke bilingually while in class or making any announcement to the boys whether in mess or during NCC. He would say a thing in Hindi and then would immediately say the same thing in English. An illustration will make my point clear. Let us say, if he were to announce to the gathered students about grass-cutting in the morning instead of P.T.; he'd say "Boys, tomorrow morning, there will be no PT...kal subha PT nahi hogi, instead there will be grass-cutting, uske badle grass cutting hogi. Be punctual, sab time se aana".

AFTER LUNCH

Classes over, lunch over – now was the free time of about 2 hours for us. It was the only free time at our disposal during the entire day when we could relax or which we could spend in any way we wanted (Post dinner hour we had to study and the bed hours cannot be technically termed as free time). If there was nothing personal work to be done then we simply slept off in these hours as in school we were forever short of sleep. This sleep was deeper and sweeter than the night sleep and when we were forced to get up for games it never felt as if we had actually slept for 1½ hour. At least on two or three days we did not get to sleep as there were some errand or the other to be attended to. Like one day in a week it was the 'wash' day. Different days were earmarked for different houses. For my green house it was Wednesday and on this day immediately after reaching the dorms and changing over, we shifted over dirty clothes in the kit – bags issued to us and put them in a row in the dorm corridors against our Roll no. written on floor with a chalk. At the same time the 'wash' of previous clothes given last week were handed over to us. The wash was transported to and from dhobi's place in a rickshaw cart. The dhobi's place was adjacent to the bandh and was surrounded by canteens on one side, T R Sharma's house on the other and the laboratories on yet another side. At dhobi's place there was a big open ground for drying the clothes which at an average were 1500 to 2000 per day. The dhobi used the services of his entire family folks numbering 15 to 20 for washing these many clothes a day. I remember he had built 5 to 6 clay chimneys of about 10 feet height in which he probably boiled water and the clothes were wrinkled and wrapped around these chimneys like structures and left for hours at a stretch. This probably quickened the washing process or cleaned better or probably both. The clothes thus washed, dried and ironed were then sorted house-wise first and then Roll No. wise (every item used by a student bore his Role No. written in black marking ink). So the wash system was highly quantitative and qualitative. Certain clothes were not accepted in wash, they were to be washed by the student himself. This included anything made up of terry coat, underwears, socks, hankeys etc. so on wash we normally could not

enjoy siesta. Then one day in a week was a 'dry canteen' day of a particular House.

The dry canteen in our time of seventies decade was not where it presently is. It was adjacent to the tailor's shop. We used to queue up and when turn we spoke out the articles we needed. The same were noted by the canteen attendant and items handed over to us. We never paid for them as the amount so spent paid through out one year was collected from the parents while raising the annual bill.

The common items so purchased were glasses, tooth brush, tooth paste (Binaca), pencils, rubber, soap (sunlight cost 85 paise), Rin (rather costlier)

The prices of these were cheaper then outside. For copies and notebooks etc. we sometimes brought from a State Co – op Store adjacent to temple. It closed after few years despite being of great service.

Sometimes after lunch we also visited Post Office to buy or post letters. Receiving letters from family was an absolute pleasure!

Post lunch time was also utilized for getting hair cut at Barber's shop which too was adjacent to the tailor's shop and had Cobbler's shop on the other side. Getting a haircut at regular intervals was mandatory. Being a military environment and NCC Unit, the size of the hair had to be very small. The barber Sh. Ramji Das used to cut the hair to the size he had been instructed by the school authorities. The students often requested him to let the hair longer but he normally never acceded to their requests. Since long hair were forbidden so when we went to our homes for summer vacations we all came back with long hairs and so in the initial days there was a mad rush at the barber's shop even at odd hours. Ramji Das' son was senior to us by few years and he was in yellow house. His name was Raghu and was a great player of football and perhaps he was also the captain of school football team. He was a gentle and decent person like his father. When Raghu became Major in the Army and later Lt. Col., Ramji Das was the same humble man.

Then there was cobbler's shop between the barber's and fruit shop. The cobbler in our time was Ram Bharose. He was a very frail man barely 40 kgs and was bespectacled. He was slightly disgruntled person. His shop door was facing the swimming pool. He died few years ago.

The fruit shop was often run by Sh. Khairati Lal whose son was our batch mate. The wet canteen was almost every year run by Durga Das who got the contract from school authorities often beating Khairati Lal in the auction bid. Wet canteen was a favourite place to hang out if we had the time and the money. Alas, in those days we hadn't enough of either. We had some money in the initial days of our return from our homes after vacation. Among our favourite sweets were Burfi and Kalakand. Sometimes we used to mix cold drink with cold milk and four/five of us used to share the whole thing. In the exam days it was practice with some of us to get a thermos flask filled up with tea from canteen after dinner so that we could drink it after midnight to keep us awake. One flask tea normally cost us Rs 1.50 and generally 4 or 5 of cubicle mates used to pool money together for this purpose. I remember once I felt sleepy around 10:30 PM and before sleeping I told my roommates to wake me up when the flask tea was distributed. I woke up after 12 'o' clock, drank my tea and slept again. Strange but true.

In the shop area there was also a tailor shop to sewed our uniform, coats, trousers, night suits etc. When occasionally we went for some repairing and mending of clothes we used to pay some amount for that.

Then once a month after lunch it was the day for disbursement of pocket money and postage. Each student was given one envelope, one inland letter, 2 postcards. A sum of Rs. 5 was also given. In the following couple of days, little wonder, that the rush at the canteen was more than any other day of the month.

GAMES

The after lunch couple of free hours being over, now was the time for games which were source for not only enjoyment but also to make us strong, agile and competitive. The games timings were from 4 to 6 PM and we played in various grounds and fields spread all over the school. We used to fall in at 4 PM in one sports dress which was similar to what we wore during morning P.T. A coloured T – Shirt of house colour, white shorts, white socks and white shoes. We were marched off to the fields and grounds allotted to our house. Which game we played largely depended on which inter house competition was round the corner. If inter house football was nearby, all the houses practiced their football skills.

The Hostel Superintendent of the particular house trained and coached us by giving valuable tips and practice. In our green house Sardar Gurbux Singh trained us. Before him it was Sh. M.S. Yadav who left SSK and joined Sports School Rai in 1975. During that time Sh. T.R. Sharma was Hostel Superintendent of Blue House, Sh. Mehta of Red House. These Hostel Superintendents were with a sports degree and background. They had to also specialize in some game or event from NIS Patiala etc. As for their degrees they were expected to be B.P.Ed.; which is Bachelor of Physical Education or D.P.Ed. which is a Diploma in Physical Education. Most B.P.Eds those days were cleared out from Amravati Nagar M.P. Neither the college nor the degree has much reputation as the training and theory regime there is not upto any standard in this institute or even at K.U. from where one can procure B.P.Eds or D.P.Eds. A decade ago at Delhi a similar institute was opened by the name of Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education but alas even this is producing sub standard sports coaches and trainers. The most renowned and best college in this area is LNCPE Gwalior which is much ahead of even NIS Patiala in its imparting of sports knowledge and practice. It fell under Jiwaji University. Some years ago it has been rechristened as LNIPE and it is now a deemed university in itself. Sh. M.S. Yadav was from this college as also few others in the ensuing years including Sh. Chhikara. One of the present Head Superintendents, Sh. Gandotra is an M.P.E. from LNIPE Gwalior. At LNIPE a 3 year degree is B.P.E. and 5 years is M.P.E. Selection is tough and on merit.

All the Hostel Superintendents worked very hard with the students to ensure that the team of his house is the victor in the inter house competition. Due to their able training the school teams of SSK often won laurels in the inter school meets,

The inter house competition (IHC) were held in a variety of games like Athletics, Football, Hockey, Volleyball, Basketball, Swimming, Boxing, Cross – Country, Cricket etc.

The competitions were held separately for Junior and Senior classes. In a way there was one IHC per month. The sequence of events generally remained the same over the years. IHC at the start of the year were mainly Swimming and Athletics. Then followed football and hockey. Other events too followed as winter approached. Cricket and Cross – Country were usually held in winters. From February end there were no IHC as it was time was academics.

We always particularly looked forward to athletics IHC as on its final day we proceeded for one weeks leave. The parents too were invited that day and sometimes musical chair event for ladies was also held that evening. Where as for other games different grounds were allotted to each house as there were plethora of fields and grounds strewn all over the school. The athletics posed some problem in this regard which required a solution. At school there was only one oval where one could practice so a schedule was prepared to allow smooth practice to all the houses. At oval the practice ground was divided in two parts i.e. Tracks and Pits. Former meant running part of the oval track and Pits meant the long jump, high jump, pole vault, throwing areas etc. if one house was allotted the tracks, some other house was on the pits and Vice Versa. This enabled proper rotation of practice areas for all the houses.

Boxing practice was done in Gymnasium near Swimming Pool. At this we practiced it in our dormitory changing rooms since enough boxing gloves were available with the house superintendents. For Cross – country we ran on the bandh and out of school till those brick kilns near Mughal Majra. It was a pleasant outing every day. For juniors the distance was much lesser.

Thus all the games and sporting events round the year kept us fit and in fighting spirit. We always looked forward to evening 4 to 6 PM slot because we enjoyed playing except on Thursdays when we had to go for evening NCC Parade. At 6 we all walked back to our dorms as after bathing and freshening up we had to report for Prep Classes at 6 PM.

This games chapter needs a special mention about cricket. When I joined in 1974 there were no IHC for cricket (It used to be there but for some strangely inexplicable reason it was discontinued). So we were not issued bats or balls from the sports store. The game being so popular, we devised our own way. We placed six bricks on top of each other and two sideways and they became our wickets. For bats we used hockey sticks as a result there were more broken hockeys. Later we arranged for primitive wooden bats got made from village carpenters when we went home during vacations. Such bats lasted more. For balls, in place of usual leather balls we used to play with Cork balls. We pooled money to arrange these articles. Sometimes within the house we had inter cubicle and even inter dormitory matches. And the winning team was awarded with burfi and milk by the losing team at Durga Das' canteen. This continued till 1979 when seeing the students' interest and zeal IHC in cricket was re-introduced.

PREP CLASSES

I do not know about others but till the fag end of my stay at SSK, I did not know that Prep was short form of Preparatory. After returning from game fields we bathed and got ready for evening preps. The dress code was grey trousers and grey shirt in summers and a tie. The tie had four thin strips each indicating the houses. To this in winters, the school coat was added which was green for the whole school with a school monogram on the left pocket. Later it became a blue coat. Black leather shining shoes completed the dress.

We used to sit on our desks in our respective classes. The prep time was to finish the homework and do some learning work too. It was self study and no teachers came to the class to teach. However there was always a teacher on duty who counted the students head and who also ensured complete silence and discipline. I recollect, once it was the duty of RPS and finding us making noise, he scolded all the classes in that block. He was very furious and with a folded newspaper he hit many students. It created more noise than impact. He was in an army green jacket. Sometimes one of the big three, viz. the Principal, Headmaster or Registrar used to pay a surprise visit to ensure that the students are studying seriously. Most of the students, anyway, were sincerely busy with their studies because this was the only time available to them for studies after leaving the classroom for lunch at 1:30 PM. Moreover we wanted to finish our homework in the prep classes so that we did not need to carry our books along to the mess for having to study after dinner. It was the case only in the initial part of any term and later as the days of the terminal exams approached, we had to carry books to dorms as we needed to learn and prepare for papers.

Presently the prep-classes trend is rather different I have been told that now there is an evening prep class before dinner and then there is another one after dinner till about 10 PM. occasionally there is also a morning Prep or zero period in the morning.

It means that on a typical working day the students get to spend very little time in their dorms. In addition to small changing times after P.T. in the morning and

games in the evening, they have about one hour more after lunch. Plus of course they sleep too in the dorms.

AFTER DINNER

The dinner was generally over by 8:30PM. We walked back to the dorms. After changing over to night suits the first thing was to polish the shoes for the next morning. We polished our shoes sitting on the steel trunk in which each of us had to place our belongings. In later classes of course we were allotted lockers from school even then we did use our steel trunk box. We took our own sweet time polishing our black leather shoes and while at it we chatted about day activities with our roommates. Generally there were five students in one particular cubicle. Their grouping was based on their individual likings. House master normally did not interfere in the structure of roommates. More over all the boys of a particular class/batch were in the same dorm of the house. Each cubicle had an in charge just as a dorm was headed by a house prefect or appointment.

The polishing over, we sat down to studies, reading an odd magazine or writing letters to home. At about 9:30PM, we all had to move out for night roll call by the house master. The house master counted all the heads and ensured that everyone was present and that no one was missing. Besides the house master passed on during this time instructions or observations he had. I recall once in 1978 in 9th class, our house master Sh. R.R. Sharma took a very long time lecturing during roll call and we all were rather impatient to go to our rooms as we were tired at the end of the day and it was a winter night. He concluded his lecture with "Okay Boys Sleep Peacefully". One boy 1475 quipped by saying "peacefully ne ke hade bum patte se..." (Asking us to sleep peacefully as if bombs were exploding all around us). We all laughed and Sh. R.R. Sharma was pathetic and helpless. Of course sometimes, the counting was faked to ensure the non – disclosure of someone absent whom often would be at Karnal watching a movie. But this aspect and the manner how it was faked is subject matter of some other chapter elsewhere in this book or maybe I should refrain from doing that because the current students may be emulating that practice.

After roll call we all returned to our cubicles. We studied a little more and then by 10:30PM, it was the time for lights out so we switched off our lights and slept off

within minutes so that we were fresh next morning for yet another strenuous day.

The only time the post dinner schedule was different was on the movie night when from 9 to 12PM we were in school auditorium watching a movie. In extreme winters and rainy nights the roll call were not held outside. Instead the HM visited dorms or the house captains and appointments reported the students' strength/counting to the head master at his house.

MEALS

Ideally this chapter on meals should include the following:

- 1) Morning Tea
- 2) Breakfast
- 3) Evening Tea
- 4) Dinner;

But it won't be in the fitness of things if I don't include the following:

- 1) Edible stuff brought by us after vacations (goond).
- 2) Items eaten at wet canteen.
- 3) Refreshment (about once a week after tea)

About morning tea I have described in detail in the chapter of "PT". I am reproducing the same nevertheless. A large aluminium kettle and a tray were placed outside each dorm on an elevated surface adjacent to the stairs. We all had our individual glass tumblers in which we enjoyed our tea. These tumblers were generally brought from school dry canteen costing Rs. 1.50 in those days and the tea in them tasted like nectar. The snacks were usually buns made of wheat flour and probably baked in the school mess. On Tuesdays, in place of buns, mathis were provided and they were generally preferred over the buns. However I personally liked bun more because it used to be big and satiated some appetite. Some of us even used to soak it in the tea glass and when eaten, it had a comparatively heavier effect in the stomach. Evening tea was brought to dorms at 4:00 PM prior to our proceedings for games. It was also brought in large aluminium kettles but unlike morning, nothing accompanied the tea.

I shall start with breakfast. It was provided at 9:00 AM. The objective of breakfast was to fill up our belly enough so as to last till lunch time. But with me it was strangely different. The breakfast which was pretty enough, both quality wise and quantity wise, did not perform this objective. While eating breakfast my appetite used to get agitated and as a result when the breakfast was over I was hungrier

than before. In my case it acted as an appetizer. Not that there was dearth in variety, even the quantity was enough for a good breakfast. But I always had a good diet since childhood, it never was sufficient. Five days a week the breakfast consisted of 4 slices of bread with jam or butter with one boiled egg or equivalent omelet and a glass of milk. For vegetarian boys in place of eggs, it was a small dish of porridge, saboodana, kheer or fruit. On Tuesdays and Sundays it was different. Either it was poori aloo or Parantha Sabzi (Rajma Dry) and curd and tea. Whenever one of the four bread slices was thinner and smaller we approached the table master who asked the waiter to replace it. Whenever one got a thick piece of bread, usually the one from the end of the bread loaf, he felt lucky. Such bread endings in city homes were considered unfit for eating but to us it meant more stuff. Sometime whenever due to an

Oversight, an extra plate was laid then the two boys on either side of the plate were the source of jealousy for others around them.

The lunch was at 1:30 PM and I always looked forward to it as my plight at that time was understandably unbearable. Lunch meant less variety but it was stomachful as there wasn't a limit on quantity. It contained rice, dal and raita. I generally had three helpings of rice dal every day and there many others like me in my house and also in other houses. Sometimes when the food got finished and we were still hungry, then especially more rice and dal had to be cooked for those who were still hungry. Such boys were more or less fixed in every house. There were the great "Paadoos". In my years; such paadoos were yours truly, 1475, 1484, 1561, 1473, 1472, 1575, 1470 from green house, 1500, 1551, 1622, 1542, 1567 from blue house, 1504, 1489, 1566 from red house and 1570, 1536, 1516 from yellow house.

The Dinner was at 8:00 PM, where as in lunch it was always rice and no chapattis, in dinner it was only chapattis and no rice. In dinner the variety was better. Thrice a week it was Rajma, mainly on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and thrice a week it was non –veg, it was mutton on Monday and Wednesday and chicken on Friday.

ROLL-CALL

Roll call means calling of the names from a roll to ensure the presence of all. Though we all know that roll call means counting of heads but I wonder how many of us know the precise meaning of the word.

It was an important part of the daily routine to be counted about half a dozen times during the day. Perhaps even the inmates of a prison are not counted so often during the day.

Our first roll call was taken early in the morning by the house captain and Hostel Superintendent, outside our dormitories where we fell in for marching to PT ground.

We were again actually counted on the PT ground by the duty teacher and the roll call slips were deposited with the school captain who handed them over to the duty teacher. A roll call slip was a brightly coloured slip of yellow or red colour and it contained columns like Sr. No., Total Strength, on leave, Sick report, actually present etc. Thick pads of roll call slips were provided to house captains and his appointments at the start of the year.

The next roll call was again by the house captain before we marched off to our classes.

After assembly it was the time for the class monitors to count heads and report to the class teacher before marching off from the assembly hall to respective classes.

Then there was no roll call for the next few hours. We were again counted by the house captains before we moved to playgrounds for games. Then we were again counted in the evening prep classes.

The last roll call was around 9:30 P.M after dinner by the house masters. It was primarily aimed at counting heads before the boys went to sleep and to pass on any instruction or planning some strategy in the wake of impending inter

house event. Another objective was to ensure that no Student could bunk the school for a night show of movie at Karnal because if attendance was taken at 9:30PM, it was not possible to attend the show at 9PM, that too in Karnal which was a good 8 kms away and we had no conveyance. This latter objective was sometimes not achieved as the boys sometimes managed to be at the hall before the start of the show despite the roll call where he was marked present. This trick shall be discussed in some other chapter.

HOUSES

Across the country in all the Sainik schools the practice of having four houses is uniformly existent. Every school has the same four colours allotted to each house. The house names differ from school to school but they have to be green house, red house, blue house and yellow house. At Kunjpura green house is chillianwala named after a battle field somewhere in Poonch Rajouri sector on Pakistan border. It bears a striking resemblance in sound with Jallianwala and in the initial years in SSK I thought the two words denote the same place. In reality Jallianwala is a place in Amritsar where General Dyer got thousands of Sikhs, who had gathered there for a peaceful demonstration, killed on 13th April 1919 whereas Chillianwala is a historical village situated on the banks of Jhelum (now in Pakistan), where the Sikh armies inflicted a crushing defeat on the English on 13th Jan 1849.

Red house is Kurukshetra house. The holy city of Kurukshetra affiliates itself to an immortal sage in the epics of our mythology. It is a well known battlefield of Haryana that inspires everyone with truth, morality and devotion for the cause of excellence.

The yellow house is Panipat. This city is situated barely 35Kms. from school on Karnal-Delhi highway. It is a historical battle field where three battles were fought which proved very decisive in the fate of our country. This place is internationally popular.

Blue house is Thaneshwar house. Thaneshwar was the capital of a great Hindu king by the name Harshvardhana. Almost throughout my stay at school I mixed it up with the town Thanesar near Kurukshetra.

In each house there are two wings, the senior wing and the junior wing. The senior wing, comprising of class 9th, 10th and 11th, had about 60 to 70 boys. The junior wing, comprising of class 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, had about 70 to 80 boys. Thus each house had 150 boys and the total school strength came to be 600. We joined the school in 1974 and from 1975 onwards the 10+2 system was introduced and the new batch though small one was directly sent to 6th class. As a result the 9th class was shifted to junior wing. From 1976/77 the concept of holding house was introduced in which the boys in first year were not allotted the

mainstream houses. They spent one year in the holding house to acclimatize and condition themselves. The Shakargarh holding house was in D-11 and D-12 and the boys in the next year were divided between green house and red house. Likewise Chhamb house was in D-1 and D-2 and the boys went to blue house and yellow house. In the maiden year their house captain was taken from some junior class and whereas 1510 was the captain of Shakargarh, 1548 was the house captain of Chhamb. Shakargarh had pink colour and Chhamb purple. The holding house concept was in practice in the 60's and then it got discontinued but it was re-introduced in 1977. The practice continues till date.

When arranged alphabetically the houses took the CKPT sequence and so the houses whenever assembled were in the same sequence.

Which boy would be allotted to which house also had a pattern. All the hundred odd boys selected for a particular year were allotted Roll numbers in a series which started from the last number given in the previous year. This way no number got repeated. A quarter of the lot had to go to particular house, so the first 25% went to the green house and likewise the next 25% went to red house, yellow house and blue house, but occasionally the pattern was changed. The 1st, 5th, 9th, 13th boy went to the green house, the 2nd, 6th, 10th Went to the yellow house and likewise the other boys went to the red house and blue house. The first pattern, I personally feel was better and little wonder that this pattern was used more often.

In the context of our school the roll number of a boy held a greater significance than the name itself. We always called each other by roll number than name. The practice was to call by the last two digits of the roll no. I was 1517 and I was, on more than 95% occasions, referred to as '17' (seventeen). At times we did not even know the name of many a boy. Few boys are called by names too but only when the name was different or catchy like Jagdish, Toshiba etc...

There was a period of about a couple of years during Cdr. Saran as principle that the names of junior houses were changed. Whereas a chillianwala Sr. retained the name, chillianwala Jr. was named as Ranjit Singh House. Similarly the names of all the other houses were changed.

Most of the students did not take the change very sportingly so as Mr. Saran left the school and Mr. Udiavar joined the school, the earlier names were restored. The tradition eventually prevailed over the whimsically evinced by the school authority which resulted in the changing of name.

TOWN LEAVE AND EXCURSIONS

All through my stay at school, I always thought the word to be 'Townly'. It never occurred to me that it was in fact 'Town Leave'. I realized it many years after leaving the school. I am sure that I am not alone in it as some more Kunjeans might have passed out the school without realizing that the often repeated word 'Townly' was in fact 'Town Leave'.

At school it appeared a very sweet sounding word because it meant a whole day of fun and enjoyment at Karnal. Normally there were no more than a couple of town leaves per student in one year as authorized by the school.

This used to be organized house-wise or class-wise so that all the houses and classes could go to the town in fair manner. Sometimes town leaves used to be granted to special groups like band boys or the group of NCC which gave guard of honour before the chief guest as an incentive of reward.

The Town Leave to junior houses was allowed under the escort of a teacher but for senior classes and houses no such escort was unnecessary. They were on their own in the manner of enjoyment at Karnal.

Usually the Town Leave started after lunch and we were to report back before dinner. After lunch we boarded the bus from naval village. We used to learn from the Tribune paper about which movie was being shown on all the various cinema halls of Karnal. If not paper we used to learn this from posters at by pass and accordingly we reached the hall of our choicest movie. The matinee show ended at 6 PM and then it was the time to pay a visit to NDRI dairy outlet where we drank the vanilla or strawberry milk or even ate ice-creams. The 300mL vanilla milk, in the late 70s cost us about 50 paise and perhaps strawberry cost us some paise more. The same quantity of vanilla cost us Rs, 6.50 when I visited NDRI in 2003 with my family. The dairy outlet is not so near the gate as it used to be in those days. It has shifted few hundred feet to the right side after entering the gate. The milk enjoyment over, we boarded the bus to Karnal and we were back at the school by 7:30 PM.

There were six cinema halls in Karnal. Ashoka between NDRI and bus stand was most favored due to its location and for the fact that it generally showed new movies. I remember having seen Seeta Aur Geeta, Khalifa, and Jaaneman etc. at Ashoka. There was also Indra Palace near Karnal Railway Station and I saw only movie there, i.e., Sholay. Then there was Randhir hall near Civil Hospital and I saw Sholay again at that cinema hall. At KR theatre, which was out of town near GT Road and which was most unsuitable, location-wise, I saw Phaansi and Kaala Paththar. In old Karnal there was Novelty theatre where I saw Himalaya Ki God Main and then Aatish too. The only hall I never saw a movie at was Prakash Talkies which was right opposite bus stand because it often showed old movies which did not appeal to us as teenagers. Prakash Talkies innately belonged to the family of Rakesh Gupta roll no. 306. The hall has been demolished and the posh Rama Hotel stands in that place. In 2009 Ashoka too was demolished. All the remaining 4 cinema halls are still intact and functioning.

Another situation when we were able to leave the school premises apart from town leave and periodic vacations was excursions.

To inculcate the habit of traveling and to educate us further through this very useful activity we were taken out on excursions also. Generally every house went out at least once in a year to a place of tourist or historic importance. We often went by our school bus and stayed there for a few days.

The earliest such trip I went to was in Aug' 74 when the 5th class of green house was taken to Shimla with Mr. R.R. Sharma as an escort teacher. I remember that the school authorities had booked Indira Holiday Home for few months as all the classes from 6th to 12th of all the houses were to visit Shimla. It was situated at Sanjauli 5 kms on Kufri road. The Holiday Home had a long hall with mattresses spread and we all slept there en masse. We had blankets and quilts as Shimla is fairly cold in the last week of August.

During our stay there we did most of the sight-seeing afoot whether it was Fruit Research Institute, Mashobra, Mall Road or any other place. Near the bridge we also saw a movie 'Five Rifles' at a theatre which perhaps does not exist now. Three memories from the trip that still are fresh in my mind are firstly the ragda given to me by R R Sharma sir. It so happened in the afternoon of one day we were to leave the Holiday House for a walk down up to the ridge. I was ready

early and when I realized that other students were yet to get ready and be out of the rooms to fall in squads, I decided to go to a nearby shop and buy some jalebis. It took some time and by the time I reached holiday house barely 100 mtrs away, all the boys were out and had fallen in squads. When R R Sharma saw me walking back with a packet of jalebis, he at once ordered me to do Frog Jump, little realizing that to punish a boy like that may kill his pleasure on the trip. But then, he was always a boisterous person. The second memory is that he always made us stand in groups for photos etc. from a camera which perhaps had no reel in it and later told us that the prints couldn't come out as he forgot to remove the lid from the lens of the camera while clicking. The third memory is terrible and it relates to an event that occurred on our return journey. Enroute the school bus had stopped at a point for a small refreshment break. The driver Preetam Singh had parked the bus on one corner of the road. Since it was a slope facing the valley, he had stopped the bus in gear. A jeep was right in front of the bus and then there was a deep valley below. Some students, about 15 or 20, were in the bus while an equal no. of them was outside, having tea etc. One of the boys, 1487, inside the bus told few of the students that he knew how to drive a bus as his father was a bus driver in D.T.C. No one believed, so as to prove his point he fiddled with the gear and brought it to neutral position. As the bus was on a slope and the gear was stopping it so far, it started moving. Seeing that a couple of stout Sikh gentleman who were standing in front of the bus started shouting in fear as the bus would have taken their jeep with it to the valley. They stood in front of the bus and tried to stop the bus which had just started moving very slowly only. Hearing this, our driver, who was enjoying tea, threw away his cup and rushed to the bus and jumped into the bus through the open window on the driver's side. He immediately applied sudden and strong brakes. A tragedy was averted otherwise all the 15 odd boys in the bus plus whatever was there in the jeep would have perished deep in the valley 100 of feet below. During the major part of this event I was asleep, only to awake at the climax when lots of voices around. This over, R R Sharma beat the boy black and blue and threatened him to rusticate from the school.

The above three activities remain attached with me till now regarding the Shimla trip.

Chandigarh is another town where almost all the houses paid visit. Once we went to Chandigarh with Sh. Satpal as the in charge. In the bus with us was also

Sh. Gurbux Singh's daughter who was very beautiful, as most Sikh girls are anyway. A couple of young college-type boys on a motorbike started following the bus with a desire to look at the girl. After few turns when it became too much, Satpal sir asked the driver to stop the bus. He got down the bus and warned the chasing boys politely but firmly in Haryanvi tongue as to what would happen to them if he ordered the boys in the bus to have a go at them. The duo soon disappeared. We saw "Shanka Shanbhoo" in that trip.

R R Sharma sir again took us to Hardwar in 1977-78 when we were in 8th class. We stayed at Aggarwal dharamshala and had a good sight seeing of the town as R R Sharma had been to the town few times earlier also. From there we went to Dehradun and again stayed at aggarwal dharamshala near Luxmi Talkies near the bus stand. At Dehradun we saw Amar Akbar Anthony at Parbhaat Talkies. For us no excursion was complete unless we saw a movie. The movie was good and they also showed the trailer of Dharmender Hema Malini starrer 'Dream Girl' which was to be released next.

I made another visit to Dehradun in December 1979 in class 10th but it was not with the house. Actually the school decided to send a bus full of boys to watch the passing out parade at IMA as a motivational trip. It was decided that all those who had scored first division in class 9th were to go. Thus we were about 45 odd students from all the four houses. We spent a night in RIMC School and after dinner walked all the way to the heart of the city, clock tower to see a movie ' Suhaag'. In a ground near the hall a big crowd had gathered to listen to the speech of Babu Jag Jiwan Ram. After midnight we all walked back to RIMC. Next day we attended passing out parade and I also remember having interacted with GC 968 who is also Dharamveer like me.

At school everybody as a hobby had to join one of the clubs. They were aero modeling, philately, wildlife, photography etc, etc. I opted for wildlife as it would have meant going out of school in nearby villages and jungles to catch sight of animals and birds. Sh. M M Singh sir was the club in charge and he took permission from the Principal to take the wildlife hobby club to Delhi Zoo. We all had a wonderful day at the Zoo which was my maiden visit to that place despite being a Delhite by birth. We had lunch in the parking. It was a school cooked one of rice, potato curry and curd. In the zoo, we noted the names of all the animals cage-wise, including biological names. We had a tough time in noting the names

in the birds' enclosure as there were hundreds of them. After the zoo, we also visited the Shankar's doll museum near I.T.O.

Besides the trips which were made in bus, we also had a couple of them on a different mode of travel, i.e. , cycle. The boys at the school were always so eager to be able to ride a cycle as most teenagers are. All of us from class 10th C requested our class teacher Mr. P N Malhotra to kindly take the Principal's permission for this adventurous trip which he did.

The trip was for Kurukshetra where we stayed in a dharamshala which was partly pen air. We went to Brahm sarovar and Thanesar. The high point of the trip was a chance meeting with actor wrestler Daara Singh at Uchana Lake complex. We clicked pictures with him and were very ecstatic.

Once the cycle trip craze picked up, the class tenth of our green house planned a trip to Bhadkal lake Faridabad. We started early morning on cycles rented from Karnal along with the NCC Instructor Sarदार Skylab Singh (his real name is not coming to my mind) and at night stayed at the house of 1568 Ashok Chhikara house at Azaad Pur. Next day we visited Badhkal and slept at Azaad pur only. We had dinner at Vijay dhaba and later watched the movie 'Noorie' at Ritz hall. Next day we returned to school late night after riding nearly 325 kms by cycle spread over three days in October 1979 with Dussehra falling on day one.

VACATIONS

Since education at school meant having to stay there in the boarding, the vacations held a special attraction for all of us. We were forever looking forward to the vacations as we were all young, aged ten years onwards and missed our families most nostalgically unlike those boarders who live in colleges for whom it would mean a break from family interference and a greater freedom for fun and merriment.

When in 1974 I joined the school there was a provision for three vacations in a year. The school started in July and the first vacations came after many months for Diwali. These vacations either came in October end or in the beginning of November, meaning that we had to go through a painfully long period of 3-4 months. The next were winter vacations which were for 15 days starting from the 22nd, 23rd December and continuing up to 6th or 7th January. These vacations were after the completion of the half-yearly exams and the Old Boys Meet held on third Sunday of December every year. The final and the longest vacations were the summer holidays which commenced after the annual exams in May. The vacations were of two months and while at home we were informed of the final results by post. This was the vacation scene as prevalent in 1974 but as my years passed there was a change in the pattern. Besides these three vacations, in 1978, the Dussehra vacations were also introduced. These fell in October and were of barely three-four days. As the gap between Dussehra and Diwali vacations was barely 15 or 20 days many of the students stayed back at school during Dussehra vacations as going too often on leaves was a waste of energy and money, mainly the latter as we all were from big sized families and money wasn't too easily available. I was all set to stay back in the maiden year of the Dussehra holidays but at the eleventh hour, seeing others leave, I couldn't resist the temptation and proceeded to Delhi. Later on, after I left the school the Holi holidays were also introduced. But during our times we had to celebrate Holi at school and I used to be so desperate that in

a particular year when I was in class IXth or Xth, I wrote in my letter to my family few days before Holi that I want to come home for Holi. I requested my family to send a bogus telegram to school about mother's ill health and mention there in that I should come home for a few days. My family, though reluctantly, sent the telegram and I was allowed, by my house master, Sh. Salaria and thus I spent few days at home and celebrated Holi. I realize that it was unethical but I was too keen to spend Holi with my family.

Present vacation scene is slightly different. Summer vacations, winter vacations and Diwali vacations hold but Holi and Dussehra vacations are not there. However a new vacation, viz., Session Break has been introduced. These commence around 20th March after completion of the annual exams. The boys return after the break on 31st March, a day before the commencement of the Fresh academic session. The mood and the spirit of the boys at the time of proceedings were in sharp contrast to the mood and spirit prevalent while leaving home for school. It was such with most of the boys but in my case it was there in large magnitude as me being very homesick and emotional by nature. I always dreaded at having to go back to school, leaving the family behind. There was always a set pattern to this feeling. After reaching home for few days I felt a sense of total happiness but as I reached halfway down the vacations the feeling of sadness gradually crept. With every passing day I felt that only few holidays remain. However the next day when one more day had elapsed I felt that the previous day's position was better as then I had an additional day. Similarly a day before I was to return, I was sad in the morning but in the evening I realized that the morning was better. At night I realized that evening was little better. The days had shrunk to hours. On the day of return I was tense in the morning and thus lost appetite for lunch. After lunch I returned and in the evening I reached school. Some boys might not have gone through this experience as perhaps they were not emotional and attached with their families as much as I was. Moreover as most of them hailed from villages, they perhaps got bored at home and longed for school, especially after two months of long summer vacations.

To each his own. Some boys left their homes early as to attend a movie show at Karnal and still reach school by 7PM. We were to return by dinner. The dinner that day went waste as all of us had brought some packed food from our homes.

RAJMA

When over a period of long time our school defeated RAI school in most of the games despite the latter being an exclusive Sports school, the principal of the RAI school enquired about this secret from one of the school authorities during an informal gathering, to this our reply was that we give special energy capsule to the boys in their diet. Thinking it to be some medicinal pills he further enquired about its details. Finally it was told to him that the energy capsules were not any medicinal capsules but they are Rajma, which quite resemble a capsule and are the source of immense energy. Needless to say that Rajma was subsequently introduced in their diets.

This energy capsule which is rather kidney shaped and of dark brown colour with few spots called Rajma is something which many kunjeans ate the first time in their lives at school only. It became the favourite of all the boys for it being wholesome, soft and tasty and the fact that its gravy too was tasty. We all knew on which days it was going to be served. Initially we used to read the weekly menu displayed in the notice board in the mess. Thereafter we often knew the whole menu, especially the items of our liking, by heart. Thrice a week in dinner we knew Rajma would be there, i.e., Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Sometimes we were also given Rajma in the breakfast along with Paranthas but then they were gravy less.

As I had never eaten Rajma before and having developed a liking for them, I yearned for Rajma during the vacations at home and in this way another item was added to our family kitchen. Once at school the type of Rajmas changed drastically. These new ones were whitish in nature and broken and probably of Kashmiri origin and may be they were cheaper or some other reasons the mess manager included them to be used in the school. After a few dinners we

made a complaint about this inferior quality to our respective house masters and mass manager but when our complaints went unattended, we all resolved to boycott this new Rajma.

A word went around all the houses and the boys not to eat Rajma the next time it was to be served for dinner. That night none of us even touched it so imagine the plight of the school authorities when quintals of Rajma went down the drain. As for us, since we knew we were to skip dinner, we ate extra during the lunch time thus creating another problem for the mess managers as they had to re-cook the food needed for this unseen contingency. Also in the evenings we went to the canteen for sweets and dinners and thus to some extent we were already full by dinner time. After a couple of days when the same Rajma was served we again didn't even touch it and the next morning the entire Rajma had to be thrown away. It was enough of a message to the school authorities and they immediately switched back to the earlier category of Rajma. The matter solved and the boys were very happy.

Over the decades after leaving the school, Rajma has no longer remained as a source of diet but it has attained the status of a tradition. No 'old boys meet' is complete unless it includes Rajma in its menu whether it is conducted by the Delhi chapter or the Karnal chapter. In the Dec.2002 meet when for once Rajma was not kept in the dinner menu and I asked Major Jasbeer Singh, the registrar as to why there was no Rajma, he said he didn't feel it necessary to include it in the menu. I promptly told him that Rajma is no longer an item on the menu, for us it is a tradition. He shrugged his shoulder. Poor Sardarji can't really blame him.

Most kunjeans wives know that if a kunjean is coming to their home for dinner, then Rajma is a must. Rajma thus is a uniting factor among kunjeans. Nowhere else a type of Daal would be held in such high esteem.

SCHOOL AUDITORIUM MOVIES

At school we were all super crazy about movies as they were not the years of TV, Cable, VCDs or DVDs as they are now. No wonder we were very much interested in movies and so the school auditorium was more pious than the temple to us because it was there they showed us the movies through the projector. In my initial years the movie was shown to the students and teachers on Saturdays and the same was shown to the school employees and their children on the next night. Saturday hence was a very dear day as it meant Rajma in the dinner, followed by the movie and the feeling that the next day was a holiday further added to the pleasure.

The movie was shown through 16mm projector on screen placed on the stage. The operator was Mahima Anand, though we always called him Menon only because that's how his name sounded when pronounced quickly. Only a couple of years ago, after his retirement, when his photo appeared in the Greykunj, could I know his real name. Every Wednesday or Thursday he used to go to Delhi in the office of the Films Division to procure the print of the movie. After returning next day, he generally checked the print on Friday evening. So when on Friday evening we found the lights of the auditorium on, we were certain that the movie had arrived and even got to know the name

The movie started between 8:30 and 9PM, when the students the teachers and the big three had arrived. The auditorium's balcony was reserved for the new boys and the choir boys and some teachers too sat there. All the others sat on the seat on which a student sat during assembly. Before the commencement of the movie some assorted songs were played to keep the audience entertained. The movie normally ended around 11:30PM. In between there was an interval for about 5 minutes in which we used to drink water from a tap in auditorium bathroom because we knew there would be no water in the dorm's taps afterwards which went dry after 10PM.

In 74-75 for about 3 months, we were shown movies in the open right outside the auditorium as some repair work related to echo/acoustics was going on inside. The plus point of seeing outside was that the movie could be seen from either side of the screen.

Mostly Hindi movies were shown but in our initial year of 1974 we had to see many English movies as Col. Gadhiok, the then principal, and a few anglicized teachers were of the view that English movies would improve our English. It didn't work in that way but our pleasure was surely reduced.

At times when a movie was very good, some of the boys did watch it the second time on the next day along with general employees, but that was chori-chhippe. The trick was to cover oneself with a sheet or khes and to enter the hall few minutes after the movie had started and to leave the hall moments before it ended. I personally don't remember having seen too many movies like this except perhaps Sanyasi and Roti.

Some movies need to be mentioned here for different reasons:

- *Pind di Kudi: It was the first movie I saw in July 74 after joining the school. As it was a Punjabi film, none of us could understand the dialogues.*
- *Seema: This Kabir Bedi, Simi Grewal movie had to be stopped halfway after the sad news of death of Ms. Sarojini Arora reached the school. She was the English teacher and was admitted to the civil hospital due o serious illness.*
- *Pakeezaah: This movie was specially shown to us in addition to the usual schedule. It was shown on a week day. They were the flood days and the water was running parallel to the school bandh. There was a chance of the same entering the school. To facilitate the sudden smooth movement it was necessary that all boys be kept at one place. Hence this movie was shown. Though some 3 tonners were parked near the building to evacuate the students but thank god the need did not arise. During most of the film time I along with 1551 (Ishwar Hooda, Blue House) was roaming near the bandh to check the water level.*
- *Phir Janam Lenge Hum: This movie too was shown out of schedule to keep all the students huddled at one place. It was screened after lunch to prevent the students from venturing out, as at that time a Solar Eclipse was taking place and that might have damaged the boys' eyes. Thick blankets were used to cover the windows.*

- *Haseena Maan Jayegi*: Our class 10th C had gone to Kurukshetra on cycling expedition. We returned around 10 PM on a Saturday and saw this movie from half- time onwards. Next day in the evening some of us went to Headmaster's house and sought his permission to watch the movie as we had returned after the movie had ended the previous day. Some lies indeed. So we watched rest of the movie the next day with the general employees.
- *Jewel Thief*: Menon put this wrong spool in the projector and as a result the second half movie started earlier and when the story started making sense(it was a suspenseful movie) and there was no sign of numbering even after 30 minutes the students created a commotion and then the proper spool was put in the projector. Ordinarily 4 spools made one movie After 1st and 3rd spool the movie stopped for a while but the hall remained dark.After the second spool there was an interval of 5 minutes.
- *Aandhi, Mausam, Dhund*: These were the first three movies shown in our 6th class in July/August 1975. All the three relate to weather and meteorology.
- *Roop Tera Mastana. Kathputli, Ek Naari Ek Brahmachari*: These were the first three movies of our class in July/August 1976. Here also there was a common element in the three movies. In all of them Jeetendra was the hero and Mumtaj was the heroine.

In the beginning of the year a list was procured from the films division people in Delhi and the school authorities and the senior master pondered over it and selected the 40 odd movies at the very beginning of the year and then the same were procured from Delhi and screened as per the schedule. Sometimes NDRI (National Dairy Research Institute) Karnal and our school showed the same movie in turn. One particular year Mr. RPS selected many movies of Amitabh Bachchan as the latter too is a Srivastava from Allahabad.

After the interval, as the movie neared the end I often turned sad as I wanted the movie to run on and on. Once over, there was not to be another one till next weekend, unless of course one counted the limited entertainment available on television. To begin with the TV did not arrive in school until 1976-77 by which time we were in 7th class. Then it was in black and white and I remember it had a long antenna of about 40feet and the TV was kept in the hall where currently the reference library is housed. There used to be a Hindi movie every Sunday, so everyone was there to watch it and hence a big crowd gathered. The

school captain or senior house captain then ordered all the junior boys up to 7th class to vacate the hall. We often unwillingly left cursing. The TV was then shifted to a similar hall on the other side of the main building near HM house. By that time chitrahaar had also started and so we had 2 days in a week to attend to the TV. Currently it is a 29" TV in the anti-room with cable facility etc. A definite upgradation just as there is with the auditorium projector which from 16mm to 35mm has finally become an LCD projector.

THE DESTINY SHAPERS

HEMLATA IRIS SRIVASTAVA nee RAWSON

If ever I run out of superlatives to describe the qualities of a teacher, it is madam Srivastava. Her virtues are plainly ineffable. Simple, serene, dedicated, caring and strikingly beautiful is the type of image that conjures up in my mind when I think of her. Even now whenever I have the opportunity to talk to her in person or on phone, I am so elated and excited that afterwards it takes me a lot of time to become normal. Even my wife can sense that state of mine as it is writ large on my face and is manifested through my behaviour. I am sure every ex-kunjean who has ever been taught by her feels the same way about her. Few years ago during a kunjean get together when I told to a couple of kunjeans of my batch that I was regularly interacting with madam Srivastava, they were instantly envious.

Born as Hemlata Iris Rawson on 15th Sept 1941 at Saharan Pur U.P. to Ernest Innocent Rawson an Army official and a teacher mother, she is the only sister of three brothers. Due to the transferable nature of her father's job she had to so often change the school that whenever she joined a new school she was always admitted to class 1st. And hence she was often the most over grown student of her class. Finally it was in Allahabad that she was admitted to class 6th as per her age. After few years she was admitted to the Mission School of United Church of North India, Dehra Dun and completed her schooling from there. Coincidentally her would-be mother in law and a sister in law also had had their schooling from that very school. Coincidence continued when she did her B.A. from St. John College Agra where her father himself had been a student few decades ago. The graduation was followed by Licentiate in Teaching (LT), a professional course which made her a qualified teacher.

She had briefly taught at St. Mary Convent School Allahabad before she chanced upon an advertisement in the news paper announcing a vacancy at Sainik School

Kunjapura. She finally joined SSK as English teacher in March 1965. RP Srivastava sir, her would be husband was already teaching there. Observant man that he was, he had the knack of sensing the best and within months they were a very friendly duo. They were often invited for Sunday lunch by her uncle Mr. David who also taught there and as sir recently remarked " arey yaar jab har itwaar khane pe dono ko bulaoge to kuchh to hoga hi na"- they soon were stricken by Cupid's arrows. The tall, dark and handsome boy and pristinely beautiful girl were in love. The elders from both the sides met and fixed the marriage. Both took leaves from school and proceeded to their respective towns. Madam went to Gorakh Pur where her family had settled by then and sir to Allahabad. The groom took the baraat to bride's town and they were united forever.

Sanchita was born in April 1968 and Puneet in Nov. 1969. Life took the same course for next twenty years or so. She kept imparting the Basic English language to countless students who came very raw and knew not even the alphabets and by the time she was through with them they had a wonderful command over the grammar as also vocabulary.

In 1987 sir joined the Navodaya Vidyalaya Faridabad on deputation as Principal. A year later, on 10th July 1988 to be precise, she too bade adieu to SSK leaving the latter a much poorer place which was never to have another teacher who could exude such warmth and be so nun like devoted.

She too joined the school where sir was the principal and stayed there upto 1992 when she sought transfer to JVM Vidyalaya, Titram, Kaithal where she continued till her superannuation in 2001. The school must still be reeling under the impact of having to manage without her.

Currently she is spending a peaceful retired life with sir at Faridabad where they own a big house .Due to cataract problem in her eyes she is not able to read as

much as she would otherwise have. Their daughter Sanchita is happily married and settled in Agra. Her husband is the Sales Manager in a multinational company there. They have a son and a daughter. Puneet is a Major in Army and presently posted in Poona. His wife is from Patna and they have a daughter and a son. Madam visits her family in Gorakh pur about once a year where her younger brother works in an insurance company. The other brother works for Eicher Tractors and the third one has his own business.

She lives at House # 356, Sec 8, Faridabad. Ph. # 95129-2249505.

I am not sure whether any one has ever told her or not and whether or not she is aware that she bore a striking resemblance with Jaya Bhaduri and later on with Swaroop Sampat who acted in a TV serial Yeh jo hai zindagi in mid eighties. This view I always kept to me till I heard few other kunjeans too discussing this aspect at a get together.

BK GUPTA

The thorough gentleman, simple and straight forward person who taught chemistry with same degree of ease and simplicity, was born as Bal Krishan on 30th September 1941. He was born at Karnal and perhaps is the only Karnal born person to teach at SSK. His father Sh. Bishambar Das Gupta was a farming businessman and died rather prematurely in 1965. His mother was a housewife.

Sir completed his schooling from the Arya High School, Mullana Ambala and then went on to do his B.Sc. from DAV College Dehradun. He later did his M.Sc. (Chemistry) from the same college. After M.Sc., he taught at Punjab Agricultural University for three years, i.e., from 1963 to 1966. He came across an advertisement in a newspaper for a chemistry teacher at SSK, a school which was founded barely five years ago and had become the top most school of Haryana. It also provided a better pay scale with free accommodation, food and was also in his home town of Karnal. He applied and was selected in interview and landed at SSK in August 1967. He was allotted residence A-7 opposite D-3. He spent almost all his time in that residence and for most of the time he was attached with Blue House.

As compared to a day school he found that the teacher - student rapport was much stronger in the Sainik School.

Sir's wife Kamlesh hails from Ambala and they were married on 5th March 1964. They have one son and two daughters. The son Sanjay was born in 1965. He studied at SSK as 1669, Panipat House. Later he did his B.Arch. from the prestigious I.I.T. Kharag Pur. He has his own private consultancy in Karnal. His wife Aroona is from Kaithal and they were married in 1991. They have two sons. Sanjay's younger sister Anju, born in 1967, studied at SSK as 1936. Having done her B.Sc. and M.A. (English), she is a teacher at Ambala. Her husband is a doctor and they have two sons. The youngest Deepti was born in 1971 and completed her education at SSK as 2153. Later on she did D.A.M.S. and her husband is also a doctor and the couple is settled in Kosi.

In all sir has served at SSK for 34 years. In this duration he did his job with great sincerity and dedication. He never thought of leaving the school, despite offers of better jobs outside. He also did not take any deputation assignments elsewhere which some of his colleagues did.

After retirement in 2001, he is currently working as Vice Principal in S.D. Vidyamandir School at Panipat. He still finds time for his passion of reading and watching TV. He visits school atleast once a month to draw his pension. He regularly interacts with the families of his siblings. His two brothers are settled in Dehradun and one is in Karnal. Sir is the youngest among his brothers. He has a younger sister too.

Sir resides in Sector 13, Karnal.

Phone No. # 0184 –

Sanjay Gupta's email : Sanjay – ann – gupta @ indiatimes. com.

H.K. Kochchar

Whenever I go down the memory lane and recollect the school years and think of Madam Kochchar, two memories which clearly stand out are her extraordinary attractive knowledge of Geography and her extraordinary attractive looks. She has not lost either of her qualities even now. Most ex – kunjeans hold these views.

This extraordinary talented and beautiful lady was born as Harjeet Kaur Uppal to a professor father Sh. A.S. Uppal and a devoted housewife mother. The birth place was Kanpur and the day was 8th November 1949, among brothers and sisters she has elders to her and one younger. Her elder brother is a Chartered Accountant in Ludhiana and the younger brother works for Punjab Sind Bank in Kanpur. One elder sister is in Chandigarh and the other one is in Lucknow. Madam is at Karnal. So in all the five siblings are spread over in five different cities. Madam's father retired A.S. Uppal expired in January 2004 only.

Madam's early years till her marriage were spent in Kanpur only. She did her schooling from RBRDSDMG Inter College Kanpur. Quite an abbreviation it is indeed so when I asked her to expand RBRDSDMG she fumbled few times before coming with what it stood for and even then she was not sure. It is expanded as Rai Bahadur Ram Dulari Sanatan Dharam Municipal Girls Inter College Kanpur. Perhaps this could hold some sort of record for the longest abbreviated school name. I would love to know if someone has heard of a longer one.

After completing her Inter education, she joined Vikram Jeet SD College Kanpur and did her B.A. from there. This was followed by B.Ed. as due to an academican factor at home, she was inclined towards a teaching job. She passed it from DAV College for Woman Kanpur. The education having been completed, she was now ready for a teaching job. She taught at Pandit Prithvi Nath (PPN) Degree College for about 4 months when she had to leave it because of her marriage.

On 5th December 1971, she was married to Sardar Gurcharan Singh Kochchar who worked for Haryana State Agricultural Department and was posted at Karnal. So madam too shifted from Kanpur to Karnal amidst the black – out days due to Indo – Pak war.

As she was interested in a teaching career, the moment she saw an advertisement in the newspaper about a vacancy at SSK, she applied and was selected. She joined the school on 18th September 1972 lived in house A-23 from 1972 to 1988 and when Srivastavas left the school, she moved in A-12 with her family where she has since been living. She was mainly associated with Red House. She is fully satisfied with her job at SSK and despite offers of better jobs outside and deputation she decided to continue at SSK only. Both her sons are grown up young man. The elder Jayneet born in 1973 completed his education as 2889, Red House. Later he did B.E from Karnataka University and is currently with Kodak group and is posted at Chandigarh. He is married and in his immediate family he has a cute son besides a strikingly beautiful wife.

The younger Avneet was born in 1976 and educated at SSK; he later did his MBBS from Dibrugarh and is presently doing MD from PGIMS, Rohtak.

Her husband served in Karnal most of the time.

However at the fag end of his career, consequent upon his promotion as Deputy Director, he did serve in Rewari and Kurukshetra.

Madam still has another five years from retirement. She continues to teach with the same degree of sincerity and commitment as she has always done. Without her wonderful way of teaching, it would not have been possible for us to still remember the Geographical terms like Pampas, Velds, Praries, Steppes, Andes mountain, Jharia, Murray Darling Basin, Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of capricorn, Taiga, Tundra, Torrid, Temperate zones etc etc. the list is endless. When she taught us the chapter on co-relation of longitudes with times, she told us “Go to the East – Time is the Least, Go to the West – Time is the Best”

N.C. UPADHYAYA

Whenever I think of Upadhaya sir, the image of a large and heavy man looms large in front of my eyes. He was indeed one of the two heavy weights in school, the other being Salaria sir. The latter was of course a heavy weight with a difference as he formally lifted weights and did special exercises to tone up his body figure.

Sir was born as Nigam Chand Upadhyaya on 21st September 1929 in a small village Mustafabad under Tehsil Chandpur, District Bijnaur, Uttar Pradesh. His father Pandit Ram Chand Upadhyaya was also a teacher. Mother though was a housewife but had a very good knowledge of medicine and she practiced it as a hobby. Sir had his early Primary Education from the village school only and when he was in Middle School his father took up the teaching job at DAV College Ajmer where he later became the Head of Department of Hindi and Sanskrit language. The remaining school was therefore finished in Ajmer. He also did his graduation from DAV College Ajmer and his Post Graduation from Government College Ajmer.

After college, it was the time for doing a job and he was soon selected as Sub - inspector U.P.Police and had almost joined when his father came to know of it and asked him not to join. In July 1955, he joined as a lecturer in St. Anslem's College Ajmer and taught there till January 1964, when he joined SSK. He almost would not have joined SSK but for the efforts of an NCC Sergeant. It is an interesting story. In mid-1963, an advertisement in the newspaper for a job at SS Bhubhaneshwar. The interviews were arranged to be conducted in various Sainik Schools so that the candidates from far flung areas didn't have to travel all the way to Bhubhaneshwar. Sir applied and he was called to SSK for interview where he was selected but he declined to join and put in a request with Headmaster Menon to consider him if and when there was a vacancy at SSK. In the early expansion years the vacancies were very frequently announced so soon sir applied for a vacancy at SSK. Out of excitement he forgot to write his

address and so the interview letter was sent to Gandhi Nagar Jaipur address where from he had earlier applied for SSB vacancy and where he was staying during an NCC Course. The NCC officer, realizing the importance of the letter sent a sergeant; who travelled from Jaipur to Ajmer to personally deliver the letter to Upadhyaya sir. So, but for the sergeant, the SSK would have been deprived of an extraordinary teacher and as luck would have it he got through the interview and he joined SSK on 11th January 1964, in the pay scale of Basic Pay of Rs.250 - 800. The maiden gross salary was Rs.272/-. Sh. R.S. Grewal too joined along with him albeit as Physics teacher. By that time the school was barely 2½ years so the few teachers who were already there were Mr. R.R. Sharma, Mr. K.K. Arora, Mrs. Kamla Arora, Mr. David, Mr. Dev Rajan, Mr. K.N. Budhwar, Mr. K.M.V. Rao. Sir taught overall for 28 years which is a huge period. During this period he saw the school starting from its infantile stage to its peak. His four daughters were educated here. Madam Upadhyaya too later became a teacher at school.

He had a very satisfying, respectable and meritorious sojourn at school. He completed his Ph.D while at school. He was often invited by All India Radio, Rohtak to participate and Sanskrit language programs. He was offered lectureship at a Jodhpur College but he declined the offer as that would have meant discontinual of wonderful education his daughters were getting at SSK. He also declined the Principalship of Kendriya Vidyalaya as they were posting him outside Haryana. He was also the Senior Master in the school for 15 years which is the longest by teacher ever. It appears as an unbreakable record.

With so much achievement behind him, with so many feathers in his cap, it was a just a matter of time before the Government of India recognized his meritorious service. Rightly then he was awarded the National Award for Best Teacher by the President of India. On the account of this achievement he got an extension of two years and therefore instead of 60 he retired at the age 62 years in September 1991.

I asked him if he was largely satisfied with his job he not only replied in affirmative but also said in an emotional tone that if reborn he would again

want to become a teacher at SSK. He still visits school very frequently, almost once in a fortnight. Post retirement he is settled in Karnal only.

He everyday remembers SSK where he spent the most satisfying and fruitful years of his life where he taught not only for 28 years but also officiated as Head Master and Registrar for years and on many occasions.

N. P. SINGH

Whenever we visited N.P. Singh Sir, Good Morning he always replied back softly and in the process shortened the letter 'd' in good and he always appeared to be replying back as 'Gut – morning'. Anyway he was not much off the mark as 'Gut' in German Language means Good.

He was born on 2nd September 1938 in Meerut to Sh. Amba Prasad Singal and Smt. Parmeshwari Devi. He was named Narendra Partap Singh and became more commonly known as N.P. Singh. His brother and younger brother too had very rhyming name with his. They are M.P. Singh and S.P. Singh respectively. He also has a sister who is eldest.

Sir's father was in Government Service. He worked as an Office Superintendent. His mother was a housewife.

Sir completed his early school education from N.A.S. College Meerut and later on did his graduation from the Meerut College, Meerut.

After completing his education, his motive was clear. He wanted to be a teacher. Before joining SSK, he taught as a senior teacher in various Government Schools of Delhi. He taught at Qutab Mehrauli, Netaji Nagar, Naroji Nagar, Bawana etc. This was from 1963 to 1968.

When he saw an advertisement in a newspaper about a post at SSK, he applied and was selected. He joined the SSK on 1st March 1968. Around that time Lt. Col. Munmidra Chandra was his Principal. Major Sahib Singh was the Registrar and Squadron leader PM Gupta was the Head Master. There were about 600 students from class 5th to 11th and about 30 odd teachers. At school NP Singh sir was allotted A – 24 and it remained his address till he left the school in 1996. He had a very satisfying stay at school teaching English. He was married when he joined SSK, but he was blessed with both his daughters while at school. His wife is a graduate from Ajmer University, Rajasthan. They were married on 10th February 1964. Sir was mainly attached with Yellow House. In between he took 4 years deputation as Principal, Navodyaya School at Bhilwara, Bauswara, Rajasthan.

After having worked as Principal for 4 years, perhaps it was not very comfortable for him to work as teacher back in SSK, so when he was offered Principalship in a Public School at his home town Meerut, he accepted it and took voluntary retirement. Besides his retirement from SSK was due anyways in 1998, after remaining at the helm of affairs of that school in Meerut for 4 years, he took up a similar job in a public school Rewari. About a couple of years ago in 2002, he joined as Administrator, Alpine Valley Boarding School, Ballabgarh, Faridabad. He lives with his wife on Campus. The school is situated amidst green fields and has about 400 boys and girls on its roll.

Sir's family besides his wife consists of two daughters. Both are M.A. (English) and B.Ed. The elder Kavita teaches at Holychild School Faridabad. Her husband Arun Batra is an ex – kunjean and he works for Burger Paints. He is MBA and is posted at Daryaganj. The couple resides at Sector 29 Faridabad and has a son and a daughter. The younger Juhi married a year later in 1997. Her husband major Puneet Goyal is posted in Delhi. The couple has two sons.

Sir is currently a satisfied and contented man. He takes his life easily and after his by – pass surgery at Escorts Hospital in August 2000.

P.N. MALHOTRA

Born on 8th November 1934, Malhotra sir was named Prem Nath by his parents. His father Sh. Jeevan Das was a station master in Railways. His mother was a housewife who died in 1957, when sir was only 22 years old. He was born in Montgomery near Lahore and therefore had his early schooling from a school in Montgomery. When Indo – Pak partition took place, the family shifted to Ludhiana. From 8th class onwards he finished his schooling from Government school Ludhiana. From his early years he had deep interest in drawing, painting and sketching so when it was the time to go to college, he did not opt for a conventional mode of graduation like B.A. B.Sc., instead he joined the renowned Sir J.J. College of Arts, Bombay and finished his Post Graduation from there with flying colours.

It was the time for job and he had plenty of choices but he settled for the Post of lecturer in College of Architecture, Roorkee. Here he taught the students who had joined Roorkee to do four years engineering course of B.Arch. Sir taught here from 1960 to 1964. During this time he also had a brief interaction with his name sake Prem Nath Narang with whom he would later co – teach at SSK.

In 1964 sir joined S.S. Balchadi. At SSB he gave his best years of life and served with utmost sincerity and earned a high dignity and esteem from school students, colleagues and people from the town. There he did lot of horse riding, often going out on a horse on weekends to take the round of the town and stopping at a particular place to purchase a biscuit packet costing 1½ Annas those days. Since he basically belongs to North India, he often had his mind to getting transfer to some SS in the north. In 1977 when Chitravanshi sir had to be shifted from SSK on some ground, Malhotra Sir saw an opportunity here and with the help of his congress man father, he managed a transfer to SSK. Later on, however in 1981, Chitravanshi sir rejoined the school and the two art teachers worked together till 1989 when Chitravanshi sir retired. At SSK he became class teacher of 8th C in place of Chitravanshi sir. At that time I was in class 8th C only. At SSK too he was very popular not only due to his artistic expertise but for his extracurricular activities. For example in late 1979 when he was still our class teacher of 10th C he

took our section on a Cycling Expedition to Kurukshetra and Thaneshwar. Later on many such trips were conducted from school but he was the one to have started it. He remained in school for 16 long years till 1993. During this period he lived in A – 21 a house vacated by Sh. K.S. Grewal. He was mainly associated with blue house. His wife whom he married on 15th October 1959 was a true soulmate taking interest in his hobbies. Before marriage she worked for the GOI Department of Printing and Stationery. Their son is an ex – Balachadian. He is Dr. Gyan Malhotra, Ph.D. and is working as Production Manager with Milk Time and is posted at Dera Bassi who has a son in 3rd class and a daughter in 7th class. Sir's daughter is married and lives in Delhi. She has a son in 7th class and a daughter in 12th class.

In 1993 sir took an early retirement 1 ½ years before time. He joined as the Administrator of Guru Ram Das Academy Ludhiana of Texla TV Group. Mr. Bhalla an ex – HeadMaster of SSK was already the Principal there. Sir worked there for 2 years till 1995. From 1995 till to date he is with Guru Harkishan Public School Karnal as Manager – cum – Administrator.

Sir resides at Sector 6 Karnal and is leading a lonely and peaceful life. His wife is no more. His grandchildren often give him company. He has one elder sister surviving. Both his brothers are no more. Elder worked with Birla Group as a Plant Erector and younger one followed in his father's profession and was a Railway Inspector. He visits the school atleast once a month to collect pension and meet old buddies.

P.N. NARANG

In the initial years of my stay at school after joining in 1974, I was fairly weak in English language because I learnt my alphabets at SSK only. The plight was same of all the students. Sometimes English movies were shown in the school but we could not follow any part of it. However we had heard from our seniors that Narang sir understands the whole movie and it placed him very high in our esteem. Another aspect of his nature that comes to my mind is his easy going and laid back approach towards life. He never appeared in a hurry. I remember the farewell day of Col. B.R. Gadhiok, the then Principal, when we formed a human chair from his residence to the main gate on either side of the road to bid him farewell when he went past that road for one last time. After he had left the school gate and all the students and teachers were returning, we saw Narang sir walking at a leisurely pace towards the main gate portico with an intent to see Mr. Gadhiok off. When some teacher jokingly asked him for his being late he replied that post lunch he had been resting !

He was born on 22nd August 1927 in District Gujrawalan (Pakistan). His parents named him Prem Nath. His father Sh. Jagan Nath Narang was an engineer at P.W.D. He studied in Denny's High School Rawal Pindi. He did his college education from Gordan College Rawal Pindi and Khalsa College Gujrawalan. Later after partition he did his M.A. (English) from camp college, near Birla Mandir, Delhi. This college was affiliated to Punjab University. Sir did his M.A. in 1951. In Delhi he lived in Roshan Ara Road, Subzimandi.

After completing his education he taught as a lecturer in various colleges before settling for Roorkee College where he was an English Lecturer for 6 years during which time he also did one year diploma from Teaching of English Institute Hyderabad. At Roorkee Sh. P.N. Malhotra was also there. They met occasionally, little realizing that fate would bring them together once again at SSK many years later. While at Roorkee, sir came across an advertisement in newspaper about a vacancy at SSK which not only offered a better scale but also facility of food and residence. He applied and was selected and landed at SSK in January 1969 with his wife, one daughter and two sons.

In 28 years of his career at SKK, he was very satisfied with his job. It never occurred him to change school or even go for any deputation. He was a sincere teacher and was very reserved and modest. He lived mostly in A-22 and remained affiliated mainly with Red House. Post retirement he lives with his wife in Karnal. His wife basically hailed from Jammu but later settled in Delhi when her parents shifted there. They were married in 1953. Narangs have three children. The eldest daughter Reeta lives in Model Town, Panipat. Unfortunately she lost her husband in a road accident about 8 years ago. Her elder daughter is doing her Post Graduation in USA after doing B.E. from India. The younger son is on the verge of doing her B.Engg.

Younger to Reeta is Atul Narang, who after doing his engineering from Kurukshetra University is working as S.D.O. in Haryana Irrigation department. His wife is a teacher and the couple has 2 sons. The elder one is doing his B.B.A. from Panipat and the younger one is in senior college. Atul got himself posted in Panipat so as to be able to look after his widowed sister.

The youngest of Narangs is commander Ajay working for the Indian Navy. He is married to and lives in Delhi. He has a daughter of 9 years.

During his stay at school sir did a lot of paper and correspondence work with the government for the cause of teachers' pension. The pension when allowed to retiring teachers was a big source of happiness and relief to all the serving teachers. However by the time this rule became affective sir had already retired a few months ago. So he does not receive any pension and so the school is deprived of the monthly visit he would have made to collect his pension.

Sir lives at Flat No. 2089, Sector 6, Karnal.

Phone No. # 0184 – 2282099

P.S. : Post retirement sir joined Har Kishan Public School Rohtak as Principal but left after 2 years primarily as he had no ambition left and also he did not feel

comfortable as having taught at SSK, all other public schools to him more teaching shops.

P.P. ANAND

The teachers at SSK can be broadly classified in four categories with respect of their joining years. First category includes teachers who had joined and left the school before 1974 when I joined the school, I never got to see them but often heard their names from the seniors.. The second category is of teachers who were still at school when I joined. Third category of teachers relates to those teachers who joined the school during my tenure 1974 – 80. The fourth category includes those relatively young teachers who joined the school after I left the school in 1980.

One of the more prominent teachers falling in the third category is indeed Mr. P.P. Anand. He joined the school in August 1978 when I had just started my ninth class. He taught me Physics all through class 9th and 10th. Another teacher in this category is Mr. Sk. Kaushik who joined SSK a couple of weeks after Mr. P.P.Anand did and taught us English in class 9th and 10th.

Mr. P.P. Anand was born as Prem Prakash on the New Year day of 1951. His birth on 1st January 1951 marked the beginning of the second half of the 20th century. His father late Sh. Lakhi Ram was a businessman, and mother a housewife. Of the two brothers he had the elder one lives in Panchkula and younger one is no more. He also had a sister who also is no more.

Sir was born in Hissar. He studied in Government School, Hissar upto class 8th and then finished his remaining schooling from H.R. Hindu School, Hissar.

He did his B.Sc. from Government College Hissar and later did his M.Sc. (Physics) from Meerut.

After his Post Graduation he taught as a Physics lecturer in Government College Mahendargarh first and then later at Jhajhar both towns in Haryana. From 1975 to 1977, he was attached with State Council of Education and Research Training Institute, Karnal (SCERT). It was here that he came across an advertisement in the paper about a vacancy of Physics Teacher at SSK which had, in fact arisen because Mr. Gouri had left the school.

Anand sir applied and was selected. He landed at school on 7th August 1978 with his bride of barely ten months. He started his newly wedded wife as also newly started career at SSK at A – 26 where he lived till 1991 (He has since been living in A – 11, opposite D – 15). His initial salary of Rs. 622 appeared a huge sum in those years.

In his 25 years of job at SSK, he has mainly been affiliated with green house. Even currently he is the House Master of Chillianwala House. He has imparted his knowledge to the best of his ability and countless students have stood benefitted. He has always been satisfied with his present job and thought of living the school for greener pastures never occurred to him. He even turned the offer of Principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya, INA Colony New Delhi. He took about 1½ years deputation in a Navodya Vidyalaya. The SSK has been everything to him. His wife Aroona too got employed as teacher in the school and the couple started their family here only.

The Anands have been blessed with two daughters. The elder one unfortunately untimely left the world in March 2003.

The younger one was married in July 2003. Her husband is an Engineer in NDMC, Delhi. She too being B.Sc. and M.B.A. works for a private firm. The couple lives in Gurgaon.

Sir is keeping a good health and is always ever smiling at Old Boys Meet which arrangement is his responsibility along with HKK as they are most Senior Teachers around and always willing to take up the responsibility.

P.V. LEELA

I am certain that no student can tell what dothe initials P.V. stand for. Perhaps even her husband and their two children can't tell that without making spelling mistakes. Well here it is for all of you. She is Pollath Vakayail Leela. She was born on 3rd March 1948 at Trichur Kerala to Saraswati and M.S. Menon (Muthedath Sakaram Kutty Menon for those who have penchant for details). She comes from a big family comprising of five sisters and a solitary brother who studied at school as Roll number 480 and now is more popularly known as Brigadier Krishna Menon. Brigadier Menon is presently posted in Delhi.

She had her primary education in Mysore at her grandmother's place. After completing class 5th from Mysore she went back to Trichur for further education and completed school from a local school there. She also did her B.Sc from Trichur College. Between 1970 and 1972 she was at Saagar (M.P.) doing her M.Sc in Botany. Thereafter came to SSK to reside with her family as her father M.S. Menon worked there as Office Superintendent.

She also joined DAV College Karnal for her B.Ed. After B.Ed she joined school as a biology teacher on 21st July 1973. Before that while doing her B.Ed, she often used to assist Miss Gail Macmillan who taught at Bal Niketan and had come to school for one year under the India-UK Teacher Exchange Programme. This experience came handy when she taught in the main school. Her salary scale was Rs. 250-800 and the initial gross salary was Rs. 410. As a spinster she was allotted the single's room in D-15. In December 1974 she got the house A-8 and has since lived in that house. In her 30 years of service so far, she has been affiliated with green house for almost 15 of them. On 13th February 1975 she was married to R.S. Chhikara, the extraordinary person about whom I will write in greater in detail at the end of this chapter.

They were blessed with a son on 15th November 1975. They named him Sandeep. Their daughter was born on 4th October 1980 and was named Sandhya.

Sandeep did his schooling from SSK and then did a comprehensive Diploma in Hotel Management from Gwalior. He currently works as a captain with an Italian Restaurant in Delhi. His wife hails from Nangloi, Delhi and is a teacher at Salwan Public School, Rajinder Nagar New Delhi. The couple has been residing near Dhoola Kuan since their marriage in early 2003. Sandhya is doing her M.B.A. from Amity School of Management, Noida near Delhi. During their recent visit to Delhi madam and her husband R.S. Chhikara visited my house along with Sandhya, Sandeep and his wife. They spent the evening with us and we have fond memories of it.

A small paragraph about madam's special way of punishment requires to be written. She always had long nails and whenever she was angry and needed to punish a student she would pierce her nails in the earlobe of the poor student by forcefully pricking with the nails of her thumb and her small finger. I myself have been on the receiving end a couple of times.

No sketch of madam's life can be considered complete unless a special mention is made of her husband. Her husband Rajinder Singh Chhikara is indeed an extraordinary and unique person. Unique not merely because in the orthodox seventy's

decade he chose to marry a girl who not only was culturally different from his Jat back ground but who also was more than a feet shorter than him and a good twenty months elder in age. I am rather more impressed and envious about his other uniqueness.

It is regarding the total time he has spent at the school.

Most readers will be surprised to read that he has thus far spent 42 years at SSK.

No other person in the world has spent so many years at SSK. Let me explain how this could become possible. He joined the school in 1962 as roll no. 324. After passing out from the school he continued to live there with his family as his father was the quarter master there from 1961 to 1980. After marriage he and madam PV Leela have been residing till to date in the house allotted to latter. He has always commuted to his office from there only as most of the time he has been posted in one branch or the other of the Insurance Company in or around Karnal. He will live there for another five years till madam retires in end of 2008. That would make his tally to 46, four short of a well deserved HALF CENTURY AT SSK. The only solution to his completing golden jubilee lies in his daughter in law joining the school as a teacher (she is a teacher anyway) and then he and madam can spent many more years with Sandeep and his wife who would sure be allotted a house in the school. Mr. Chhikara is a person of pleasant, helpful and charming nature. As office bearer and initial founder of the old boys' association 'The Kunjeyans' he has kept the association and the feeling of kunjeanness alive with his dedication, zeal and devotion. I wish there were more of his kind.

ROBERT PREM SRIVASTAVA

If he were not teaching history, he would have been in histrionics. He is a very voluble and articulate person who is full of drama, acting and a tendency for similar creative instincts. When one Srivastava (Amitabh Bachchan) has rocked the Bombay filmdom in the way he has, imagine what two of them could have done.

Robert Prem Srivastava (RPS) sir was born on 23rd February 1942 in Allahabad. His mother was a Home Science teacher and his father Rajinder Prasad Srivastava (RPS) was an electrical and mechanical engineer. He had his early education from St. Mary School and St. Joseph School, Allahabad. For some strange reason he did not pass classes 6th to 8th. He studied from 9th to 11th from Government Intermediate College Allahabad. He did his B.A. from Allahabad University in 1960. He enrolled himself for further higher education and had very high ambitions but it was not to be. His destiny had something else in store for him. He had barely crossed his teens that his father expired in May 1961. His life engulfed in darkness with one stroke of fate. He left further education in between and took up a job for a teacher at Bishop Westcott Boys School, Ranchi so as to be able to support his family which now comprised of a widow mother, one younger brother and two sisters. While teaching there he came across an advertisement in the newspaper about a teacher's vacancy at SSK. He applied and was selected and joined the school on 24th July 1964. In the initial years he taught Geography and later on only he became a permanent History teacher.

When Hemlata Rawson joined the school in 1965, he fell in love with her and on 24th June 1966 tied the knot. Their daughter Sanchita was born in April 1968 and their son Puneet was born in November 1969. Sir had a very eventful tenure at SSK from 1964 to 1987. During this time he was zealously working towards

imparting all around education to students. He was often the most successful housemaster whether he was with Green house (in my time) or later on with blue. He ensured that no student ever suffered because of the harshness of some school rules which immediately provided for a student being suspended and sent out of the school on an act of indiscipline.

His ambitious inclination saw him go on a deputation as Principal of Navodya Vidyalya Samiti and he formally resigned from SSK. However he was not to remain with N V Samiti for long. In 1992 he resigned and since then he has worked in various educational institutes. The list is long. In 1993 he found C S K M Boarding School Chattar Pur, New Delhi as Director. He had brief stint first with Ryan School Faridabad and then Uday Bharti School Faridabad. He was also Principal of BPS Public School, Palwal for few years. Tired of working for others he opened a school of his own on the terrace of his house. It was named St. Paul School and both sir and madam (who had retired by then) ran the school successfully and satisfactorily for 2 years till the government rules banning running a school at home created hurdles. They decided to close the school.

Currently sir is working as administrator in Vidya Niketan School NIT Faridabad, But for a chronic cervical problem and diabetic imbalance he is very active physically. He is leading a very satisfactory life with madam. He also shares a sweet rapport with all his siblings. His younger brother, a retired Lt. Col., is holding the post of Coordinator, Distance education, Allahabad agricultural Institute – a deemed university. One of his sisters has retired as Principal, P.G. College, Agra and the other too retired Principal from a school in Daryaganj, New Delhi.

RPS resides at House No. 356. Sector 8, Faridabad.

Ph# 95129-2249505.

SUBHASH CHANDRA AGGARWAL

During my entire stay in school from class V to class XI, I was taught Maths by S C Aggarwal sir only. I do not think there are many examples like this where a student has been taught a particular subject by one particular teacher all through the school years. Whenever I think of S C Aggarwal I am at once reminded of the circle he drew on the blackboard with the help of a white handkerchief he carried with him. He would put one end of the hanky on the blackboard and would hold up a chalk with the other end and he would draw a perfect circle. In the later years he was able to do it with free hand only not using a hanky.

He was born on 1st October 1940 at Lahore. His father Prabodh Chander Aggarwal was also in teaching profession.

The family settled in Ambala after partition. The family comprised of three brothers and two sisters besides the parents. He did his schooling from Cantonment Board High School Ambala. He did his B Sc also from S.D. College Ambala. Post Graduation in Arts was done from Agra University and as he too aimed a teaching career like his father, he eventually did B Ed from Ambala.

Before any good teaching offer could come, he was selected as an auditor in Accountant General's office Shimla and worked there for about 6 months. He returned to Ambala to teach at Arya School. After a year he joined DAV School Sector 8 Chandigarh and taught there for few years but was always on the lookout for better prospects. In early 1969, he had job offers from three prestigious schools namely by PPS Nabha, YPS Patiala and SSK Karnal. The salary offer at PPS was Rs. 300 and at YPS was Rs. 400 and since SSK offered him Rs. 446, he joined the last on 10 July 1969. At DAV School Chandigarh he was already

earning a fortune through tuition which started at 5 A.M. and continued till 10 P.M. at night. The SSK job in fact reduced his financial position as most students came from modest background and besides the SSK teacher as per rules could not take up private tuitions. Of course there were other compensations in the form of free accommodation, mess facility and free children education so he continued forever at SSK till his retirement 31 years later. During this time he was largely satisfied with his job; though his wife sometimes urged him to go for better offers elsewhere. Sir did not act because he was averse to taking risks and the tensions connected with it. He, however, went on a deputation as Principal to Navodya Vidyalya, Pratoor, Jalna near Aurangabaad for 4 years.

His wife Vijay Aggarwal too was a qualified teacher BA BEd and after her marriage to sir in November 1967 taught briefly in Chandigarh when he was also there. At SSK she did not take up regular job in main school. However for some years she was a teacher and headmistress in the Bal Niketan School. Their son and daughter were born while in SSK only. The son Vineet, Role number 2077 is a squadron leader in Air Force. His wife is a teacher and they have a daughter and a son. Vineet's sister Mona, having done her BE from Poona, lives in USA with her Engineer husband and a son.

After retirement in October 2000, sir chose to remain in India despite the suggestions from his family whose numerous members reside in USA. His elder brother is the Head of Department of Zoology, Michigan USA. Yet another is a successful eye-surgeon in Florida. Both his sisters and his mother too reside in USA. His father too expired there in 1998.

She shifted to his house in Sector 13 Karnal which he had built during his job. He took up the job of Bursar at DAV School Karnal but the stress and responsibility took a heavy toll on his health and he had to undergo a by-pass at Apollo Hospital in Delhi.

Currently he is leading a peaceful retired life with his wife often indulging his hobbies of Homeopathy, Television and cricket. His address: 2268, Sector 13 Karnal.

S.S. GOURI

I don't think Mr. Gouri must have ever felt the need to announce his profession. The serious and suave man by his very appearance looked like a teacher. He was born on 8th March 1941. His parents named him Shyam Sunder. He came from a big family which comprised of his parents, four brothers and three sisters. Only one brother is younger to him. After partition they left their home in District Mujaffargarh, West Punjab, Pakistan and shifted to Dehradun.

He did his school education from DAV School in Dehradun. He later did B.Sc. from DAV College Dehradun. For his B.Ed. he joined a college in Patiala falling under Punjab University and was a Gold Medallist there. He did his M.A. from Kurukshetra University. He also did M.Ed. from Himachal Pradesh where he topped the university. Still all of 22 years of years of age he set his eyes for doing M.Sc. from Chandigarh. It was end of 1963 and the M.Sc. course was not due to start before July next year. So when a vacancy of a Physics teacher at SSK was advertised in the newspaper. He applied so that he could temporarily work there and gain some teaching experience as till July 1964 he had nothing to do. He wouldn't have dreamt in his wildest dreams that by July 1964 he would not only have decided to teach at SSK permanently but that he would also be married to an SSK teacher Vimal. Fate has its own plans. The marriage was solemnized on 11th June 1964.

The SSK was not destined to have his services forever as in 1978 he left the school. In these 14 years, he taught with utmost passion and dedication. Beside teaching Physics he also started a Photography club in school in which the students were explained the basics of camera, rolls, negative, developing, printing etc.

In between due to his meritorious records he was also sent to USA in 1969 – 70 under Full Bright Exchange programme.

An interesting incident took place in 1961 when Mr. S.B. Saxena who was HOD Chemistry DAV College Dehradun while sir was doing B.Sc there, joined SSK. Sir

touched his feet though at SSK, Gauri sir was senior. Mr. Saxena left the school after 2 years.

In 1978 he joined as Principal, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Bombay where he remained till 1981 and when a vacancy arose at Panipat KV he joined there in 1981 as its founder principal. He remained there till 1987. During these 6 years he used to operate from SSK as Madam was still there. In 1987 he joined Navodya Vidyalaya Samiti as Assistant Director and moved to Delhi. N.V.S. was in infantile stage then with only two schools and when he retired in 2001 as Joint Director the tally had risen to 465. A great credit for this goes to sir. During his stay with NVS, he helped many teachers at SSK to get depositions as Principals in various NVS with option to get absorbed eventually in NVS.

Post retirement sir is leading a contented life in Delhi with Madam. He also provides Educational Consultancy to various Educational Organisations, to keep himself busy!

He can be visited at C – 633, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi – 45.

Phone No. # 26946950

SHYAMA UPADHYAYA

In her I always saw a motherly figure. She always evoked that kind of feelings among all the students. It was not a one – sided situation because she too considered all her students as her own. In every student she looked for her Abhishek who was snatched by the cruel hands of destiny when he was barely nine.

She was born as Shyama on 15th November 1933 at Bijnaur, U.P. Her father Pandit Shobha Ram Sharma was a teacher and her mother a devoted house wife. In the growing years was very close to her brother and sister who were both younger to her. She did her schooling from Government Girls High School, Bijnaur. She completed her B.A. in 1952 from DAV College Dehradun. From Dehradun only she did her M.A. in 1956 during which she got married in July 1955. After marriage she completed her B.T. Degree (Bachelor of Trg.) from Dehradun in 1958. After completing her education, she taught at Saraswati Balika Vidyalaya, Ajmer. Sir was also a teacher at St. Anselm's College, Ajmer and so when he joined SSK as a teacher in January 1964, she left her job and settled at SSK with sir and their two daughters and one son. They made A-19 at SSK as their home for the next three decades.

Madam joined the main school as a teacher for Hindi and Sanskrit in 1971. This was the beginning of her regular job at SSK though prior to this she had taught Hindi against leave vacancy when Madam Kamla Arora proceeded on maternity leaves. From 1971 to 1983, she had a very satisfying career. She gave wonderful results. She loved the boys and the boys simply adored her.

She and sir, over a period of time were blessed with five children.

- ✚ Eldest child was Sunita, born in 1959. After completing her 11th from school, she did her B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Botany) from Kurukshetra University. She also did her B.Ed. from DAV College, Kurukshetra. Later she too joined SSK as a General Science teacher and taught Biology. Barely after six months she left the job and was married to an Army Officer. She is presently in Bhatinda where her husband is currently posted as a colonel. She has two sons. One is in Class 11th and the other goes to college.

- ✚ Mudita was born in 1961. She also completed her schooling from SSK. After school she joined B.Sc. in Kurukshetra University. She later did her M.Sc. (Physics) and B.Ed. from DAV College, Kurukshetra only. She also did Post Graduation Diploma in Computer Appliance (PGDCA). She joined SSK as a teacher and taught Physics and Matter for 9 years till her marriage. Her husband is a Chartered Accountant. The couple has a daughter and a son.

- ✚ Next was Suchita 1573, Green House, joining in Class 5th in 1974 with my batch. She was born in 1965. After completing Class 12th in 1982, she joined DAV College Kurukshetra and did her B.Sc. After B.Sc., she did her Diploma in Computer Science and went on to her Masters in Computer Application (MCA). For about a year she taught as a Lecturer in Vanaspati Vidyapeeth. Her husband is a Computer Engineer from IIT Delhi. They are settled in Karnal and have a son Pranay.

- ✚ The youngest of the Quartet, Shobita was born in 1973. After schooling from SSK, she did her M.A. (English) and then B.Ed. She also did PGDCA. She is married to an MBA and she lives with her husband in California, USA where her husband works for a bank.

- ✚ The details of Upadyaya Madam and sir's family will remain incomplete if I do not make a mention of their son Abhishek born in 1963 and who died of snake bite on 18th June 1972 when he was only nine. That night madam and sir had gone to some teacher's house for dinner party. They came back late night. All the kids were asleep on Charpais (Cots) outside the house in the lawn. They too went to asleep. At night the boy got up to drink water as it was mid June and so very hot. Before that he had removed his Kurta and placed it on the bed corner which fell

down on the grass below. A cobra snake had placed himself on the Kurta and little Abhishek unmindful of it picked up the Kurta and the Cobra bit him. He felt pain in his hand and asked for water. Having drunk water he told his parents about some bite. Realizing that it appeared a snake bite as three distinct bite marks were on the child's hand. They rushed with the child to Doctor Harnal Singh who lived in the adjacent house. He got up but despite being sure about the snake bite refused to administer anti – venom injection and suggested them to take the child to some hospital. The doctor was perhaps not gutsy or competent enough and did not heed to even his own wife's insistence that it was clearly snake bite. The Upadhyayas rushed to the Registrar and asked for car. The car was provided and they all rushed to the Civil Hospital, Karnal at 3:00 AM. At the hospital the kid was declared dead.

Sir and madam recollected this event when I met them recently. Even after more than three decades they remember the events of that night with moisture in their eyes. They clearly remember the last sentence their son uttered while being taken to the Karnal Hospital in the car. He said "Mummy neend aa rahi hai ". Madam begged him to stay awake. The child could not obey his mother and slept forever.

VIMAL GOURI

As I was never directly taught by Madam Gouri, I had a very different opinion of her. Prima facie she appeared very inaccessible because of her refined and sophisticated looks and dresses. Besides, in my years of stay she was not affiliated with the green house and moreover her residence also did not fall in the route to our dormitories which were between D – 13 to D – 18. Hers was A – 14 which was adjacent to bandh and later when sir left the school and she continued there, she was given home no. A – 2 opposite D – 1. Their home was vacant as Ms. R.S. Sehgal had resigned and left the school.

Having met her recently, I realized that how wrong I was in my opinion of her about her. I mean she is still very refined, graceful and sophisticated but she is not a bit inaccessible. She came across as a woman who is very warm, caring and gregarious.

She was born as Vimal on 28th April 1941 in West Punjab (Pakistan). She was the first born of her parents and remained the only child as her father died when she was barely 1½ years. He was a doctor. After partition she and her mother settled in Ludhiana. Her mother accepted a job with State Government. Madam did her schooling at Kundan Vidya Mandir School, Ludhiana and later graduated from Government College Ludhiana.

Consequent to her graduation she took up a job of Research in Agriculture at Amritsar. She enjoyed her job and would have continued there, only but for the fact that her mother in those years was posted in Karnal with State Prison Department whom she frequently visited. So when a vacancy of Maths Teacher was announced in a newspaper for SSK she replied as it would have kept her near her mother.

She finally joined SSK in January 1964, the initial gross salary being Rs. 280/- which was quite an amount in those days. The same year she married Gauri sir,

who too had joined the school along with madam in January 1964 as a Physics teacher.

Madam spent 25 years at school. A quarter century of eventful life. She was fully satisfied with her job. Both her children were born and educated there. Even when sir left school in 1978 to join as Principal in Kendriya Vidyalaya Bombay, she stayed back to look after the home and their children. In 1987 when sir left the KVS and joined the NVS and it appeared that he will remain in Delhi by and large then only she resigned from SSK and shifted to Delhi in 1989. Besides, both their children had finished their education from SSK by then.

With her kind of job experience, she got many good offers from Delhi schools. She joined Salwan Public School, Rajinder Nagar as Principal. She worked there till 1993 when she joined Kensington International School as Principal because this school was in Sarita Vihar only where a year ago they had bought a DDA flat. In 2000 she left that school and is now spending her retired life with sir in relaxed and calm atmosphere.

Both their children are doing well in their life. The elder child Ritu, born in March 1968 is married to 1628, Inderpal Singh who is working as a Pilot with a Commercial Airlines in middle-east. Earlier he was with Indian Air Force. They were married in 1991 and have a daughter and a son. Ritu's younger brother Vishal born in 1972 is currently working for Novellas an MNC specializing in semiconductors. Earlier he was with Gauval Electric USA. He is an IITian from Delhi and did a fellowship in USA in Chemical Engg. He was married in 2000.

Madam spends her time listening to music and in gardening. She has a huge collection of plants at her place including some very rare species. She feels her life in Delhi is comfortable because of ex – Kunjeans who are in galore and make it a point to keep in touch with madam and sir. She can be visited at C – 633, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi.

Phone No. #26046950