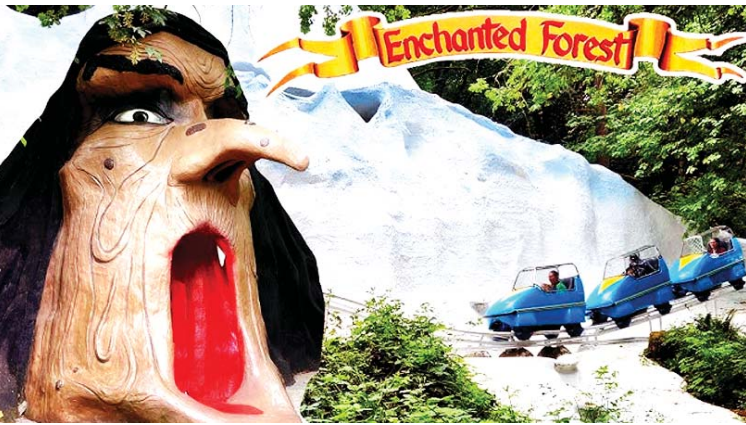


#MALAKWA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

An Enchanted Forest

By 1970, a million people had stopped to visit the castle and marvel at the statues and tree houses and all the other surprises nestled in the Needhams'



Artist Doris Needham and her husband Ernest needed a place to put her hand-sculpted cement creations, so, they bought a forest and filled it with enchanted figures from fairytales and nursery rhymes.

During the 1950s, they cleared trails and constructed rock walls over 8 acres with nothing but hand tools. Ernest built them a little home that looked a bit like a gingerbread house, and installed a gravity water system using the waterfall across the highway, which is still in use today.

When Rogers Pass opened, traffic began being diverted through the Needhams' unusual haven, and in 1960, they decided to officially open up their Enchanted Forest to the public. What was once just a project they enjoyed together to invent their own happy place for their retirement was now a highly popular tourist spot for sightseers. One could not drive by and resist dragons and pirates lurking on boulders and behind trees, dwarves and fairies sharing the pools at the foot of waterfalls, or the adorable Candy Cane house belonging to the couple that created it all.

By 1970, a million people had stopped to visit the castle and marvel at the statues and tree houses and all the other surprises nestled in the Needhams' forest. The couple realized that it had become unmanageable, and their retirement idea had turned into a challenging full time



job. Wanting to enjoy the fruits of their labor before it was too late, Doris and Ernest sold their forest to Rocky and Juliet Ehlers and their children, Aza, Silas and Naomi. Fortunately, the Ehlers loved the Enchanted Forest for what it was, and have continued to care for it and keep it available to visitors. The forest is full of twists and turns, each corner revealing a new small cottage with ferns growing on the roof, or a favorite nursery character sitting on a wall, full of whimsy. They boast over 350 figurines, a pirate ship, and the tallest treehouse in British Columbia. The forest itself is a beautiful site, with beaver ponds for boating, 800 year-old cedars, salmon spawning and moose and caribou sightings during migration months.



"Bol Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai"

During this war, all battalions had upheld the proud Maratha tradition of loyalty, efficiency, discipline, toughness and fearless courage that have always been the hallmarks of the regiment. What stands out in these operations was the frontline leadership of the officers, who fought gallantly with the troops. Three commanding officers killed and one taken as prisoner and over a dozen company commanders killed and wounded testify to their motivation, courage and leadership. Other junior commanders also set fine examples, not only for their jawans but also for the entire army. This ethos of leaders always leading their troops gallantly and with élan is the hallmark of the Maratha Light Infantry. The sacrifices of the Marathas will long be remembered and hopefully emulated. Even when the Maratha troops were launched at short notice and at times with limited reconnaissance, they rose to the occasion and gave a tough fight to the Pakistanis.



Trees Around, Green Around

ational Tree Day is a vibrant celebration dedicated to the importance of trees in our lives. It's a day when people come together to appreciate the beauty and benefits of trees. This event encourages everyone to plant trees and enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're in a city park or your own backyard, planting a tree connects us to nature and each other. To celebrate the day, plant a tree in your backyard or local park. Grab a sapling, some friends, and enjoy the fresh air while contributing to a greener planet. It's a fantastic way to bond with nature and each other.



#MARATHAS IN THE 1965 WAR

The Kashmir Sector

The curtain raiser of the regiment was the short-notice move of 1 Maratha LI (Jangal Paltan) to counter the Pakistani infiltrators. The battalion was on its field tenure in Ladakh since mid 1964, as part of 163 Infantry Brigade. The entire brigade was moved to the Srinagar Valley in J&K on 08 August 1965 to deal with the Pakistani infiltration. The battalion, under the command of Col SA (Mini) Mohite, first took up a defensive position at Badgam and then moved to the Srinagar airfield for its defence. Company level operations were launched in area Yumarg on 15 August; in area Khunmuh on 20 August; in Dachigan forest on 22 August; and in area Watrad-Dalbal on 28 August. During the sweep in the Dachigan forest, the column was ambushed. In the ensuing fire-fight, two officers, Maj. Vijay Oberoi (the author of this essay) and 2/Lt AG Raut were severely wounded. While brave Raut succumbed to his wounds, Oberoi survived, though his right leg was amputated. He eventually retired as the Vice Chief of the Army after over 40 years of service. During the operations, the battalion lost one officer, one JCO and 11 Other Ranks (ORs) killed and one officer and four OR wounded.

When Operation Gibraltar commenced, 7 and 20 Maratha LI were deployed in the crucial Uri sector of the CFL with 7 Maratha LI on the south of river Jhelum and 20 Maratha LI on the north. The entire defence of this important sector was thus in the capable hands of these two Maratha battalions. Once the Pakistani infiltration commenced in the Srinagar Valley, Uri became the hub of counter-infiltration operations by the Indian Army.

7 Maratha LI, then under the command of Lt Col HW Kulkarni, defended its area with dogged

determination and thwarted all attempts by the Pakistani troops to gain important ground in their area. In addition, it launched a number of offensive operations which included the capture of Point 9108 and a major operation across the CFL by a company-plus strong patrol. During the entire operation, the battalion lost four OR, and nine wounded and earned one 'Mentioned-in-Despatches.' 20 Maratha LI was guarding the northern shoulder of the Uri bowl in rugged terrain and was then under the command of Lt Col KC Aiayanna. It was also responsible for protecting the vital Mahura Power House. The battalion distinguished itself in the capture of the enemy piquet Jhandimali after hand-to-hand fighting, as well as two subsidiary posts, Babar and Burji. Three were killed and 23 wounded, which included Maj. RCS Mann, Sub. Waryam Singh and Hav. Niwriti Saste. For his bravery and leadership, Maj. Mann was awarded the Sena Medal and Lt/Nk Shrirang Pol was 'Mentioned-in-Despatches' for gallantry.

The Jammu Sector 22 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col OR (George) Shinde, was deployed over an extended sector in area Gambhir, with all four rifle companies fully committed on the CFL. It was also responsible for protecting the line of communications between Rajauri and Bhimber Gali. It was this section under the command of Nk Keshav Rao Salunke that first made contact with the enemy, while forming part of a large fighting patrol under Capt. CN Singh from the brigade HQ and Capt. VI Chaudhan from the battalion. In the fierce encounter that followed, Nk. Salunke and Capt. CN Singh were killed. Capt. CN Singh was later awarded the Mahavir Chakra posthumously and Capt Chaudhan was awarded the Sena Medal.

For keeping the road axis open, patrols operated successfully against great odds. Two important bridges on the axis, Dubey and Vishnu, were defended. On 19th September, a rifle company successfully inflicted heavy casualties on an enemy infiltrating force and on 26 Sep, three enemy attacks were thrown back. During these operations, the unit suffered four OR killed and seven wounded. The battalion earned three Sena Medals, including one posthumously, while the Commanding Officer was awarded a Commendation Card.



The Punjab Sector

Three battalions, 2 Maratha LI (Kali Panchwin), 6 and 19 Maratha LI, took part in operations in the Punjab Sector. The ferocity of operations in this sector can be gauged by the number of casualties collectively suffered by these battalions, which numbered 39 killed, 163 wounded and 110 missing. Two battalion commanders, out of a total of seven officers were killed.

2 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col TTA Nolan, moved to Ferozepur on 4 September to defend the important Hussainiwala headworks on the Sutlej River. A high enemy observation tower and the Kujanwall post were captured and extensive patrolling kept the enemy on the defensive. On 19 September, a major enemy attack was repulsed, although the company commander was wounded. Throughout the operations, the commanding platoons successfully harassed the enemy. On 21 September, Col Nolan was killed by a shell splinter and command of the battalion devolved on Lt Col Ranjit Singh. During the entire operations, the casualties of the battalion were two officers (including the CO) and 11 other ranks killed. One officer, four JCOs and 22 OR were wounded.

6 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col AM (Mathew) Manohar, moved to its operational area on 7 September and went into action the same night. The battalion was a part of the offensive in the Sialkot Sector and was tasked to take part in the important attack on Chawinda. The brigade attack commenced on the night of 18 September and met with strong resistance. The battalion fought its way against heavy odds and captured its

assigned objective, but it was isolated as it was the only battalion to reach the objective. Enemy armour and infantry launched a number of counter-attacks, in which the battalion suffered heavy casualties. Two officers, including the CO, two JCOs and 36 OR were killed; two officers and 30 OR were wounded; and two officers, four JCOs and 110 OR were taken prisoners of war. In the overall context, the Chawinda attack was a failure.

19 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col SD Parab, operated on road Hudiaara-Barkhi in Pakistani territory. In preliminary operations, the battalion secured areas Manihala, Jainman and Chatawala. In the last attack, a company commander was seriously wounded and a JCO and two OR were killed and 29 were wounded. On 20 September, the battalion contacted the strong enemy position at Thatti Jaimal Singh and secured it after heavy fighting. The enemy launched a number of counter attacks in succession over the next two days but all were repulsed. Although the ceasefire had become effective, the enemy launched one more counter attack, which was also driven back. Despite the heavy attacks, the Marathas stood their ground doggedly, beating back each attack, with the officers leading their men courageously, but the battalion casualties were heavy. In this fierce battle, all rifle company commanders were either killed or wounded. Three officers, one JCO and 20 OR were killed and 106 all ranks, including three officers and six JCOs were wounded. For this epic battle, the battalion earned four Vir Chakras, five Sena Medals and five 'Mentioned-in-Despatches.'

The Rajasthan Sector

4 and 5 Maratha LI were in action from September 1965 to January 1966 in the desert, as the Pakistani troops did not adhere to the ceasefire in this sector. They endured tremendous hardships in the desert, where logistics, especially water supplies, were often poorly organised and there was lack of specialist equipment for desert warfare. 4 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col VVK Nambiar, moved to its operational area on 7 September, but remained in reserve initially. It then saw action for the next four months, as Pakistani troops had commenced their old game of infiltration to recover lost territory. The battalion secured Sundra Village after a gruelling march in the desert on 28 September. The enemy mounted a major attack the next day and surrounded our troops.

A withdrawal was ordered. However, as the enemy had blocked all routes, our troops were cut off and the commanding officer, four other officers, two JCOs and 20 OR were taken prisoners. Despite reverses and losing a large number of officers, the battalion captured Kelnor. The next day the battalion attacked the important area of Kelnor Ka Tal, at short notice and with grim determination against a superior force, the enemy was driven included the officiating commanding officer. On 10 Nov, Lt Col VC Jang took over command of the battalion, while the plans for attacking the important position of

Miajlar were being finalised. The attack was launched on night 17/18 November by a mixed force. It was a highly successful operation in which the entire enemy force was either killed or captured. The battalion suffered a total of one JCO and 20 OR killed and one officer and 113 OR wounded. The battalion was awarded two Vir Chakras, one Sena Medal and three 'Mentioned-in-Despatches.'

5 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col Rattan Singh, was moved to Barmer on 02 September and later to Gadra Road. It secured Gadra City on 08 September and then advanced towards Khokrapara and firmed in at Sakarbu. On 21 September, a mixed force attacked Naupatia and captured it against heavy opposition. However, the position was later lost, along with the nearby position at Dali, just prior to the ceasefire coming in to force. Despite the ceasefire, the enemy tried to grab as much territory as possible. Skirmishes and jockeying for positions continued till January 1966. During these operations, the battalion had also provided a firm base to 4 Maratha LI for its attacks on Kelnor and Subhala. It also provided a commando platoon for the attack on Miajlar, which successfully cut off enemy reinforcements. During the operations, the battalion suffered one officer and six OR killed and two officers and 27 OR wounded.

The Sikkim Sector

17 Maratha LI, under the command of Lt Col MA Shaikh, was deployed on the Sikkim-Tibet border during the War. Its brigade commander, Brig E D'Souza, had earlier raised and commanded the battalion. The Chinese troops had massed a major force opposite the Natu La Pass. Although heavily outnumbered, the Marathas held the position with determination, while the Chinese troops brought down heavy machine gun fire. After a face-off of two days, the

Chinese troops withdrew, realising that the Marathas were neither subdued nor backing out from a fight. Another similar incident occurred at the remote Yak La, where the position was again held with tenacity. The battalion suffered two casualties; one OR was killed and one wounded. The battalion was awarded one Sena Medal and two Commendation Cards.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



#CONNECT

Aizawl Unlocked

A Historic Milestone: Mizoram's Capital Aizawl now connected by Indian Railways

After decades of anticipation, a landmark moment has arrived for Mizoram and its people. For the very first time since India's independence, Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, is officially connected to the Indian Railways network. This historic achievement comes through the completion of the 51.38-kilometre Bairabi-Sairang railway line, a critical infrastructure project under the Indian government's ambitious plan to boost connectivity and development in the Northeast region. The eagerly awaited inauguration of this rail link is set to be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underscoring its national importance.

The journey on this newly operational route begins at Bairabi railway station, until now marked the furthest reach of rail travel into Mizoram. However, that has



now changed dramatically. The train route has been extended all the way to Sairang, a mere short drive from Aizawl, finally opening the gates of Mizoram's heartland to seamless rail travel. "This is no ordinary railway," said Vinod Kumar, the Chief Engineer overseeing the project. "We had to carve this

line through one of the most challenging terrains in India - constructing 50 tunnels and over 150 bridges. At this very moment, we stand on a bridge 81 metres above a river, surrounded by dense forests, far away from any major road. Transporting construction materials here was an enormous challenge."

Mountains, Landslides, and Endless Rains

The geography of Northeast India is notoriously difficult. Mizoram's rugged hills and dense forests, combined with a relentless monsoon season lasting eight months each year, posed significant hurdles for engineers and workers alike. "In the initial years, landslides blocked access roads for nearly two years, bringing construction to a standstill," Kumar recounted. "But we adapted our strategy and managed to

complete the construction within four years."

Limited space for construction compounded the difficulties. "We didn't have large flat lands or open areas to work on. The terrain was cramped, and we only had about four to five months of favourable weather annually. Winters were spent working continuously but frequent rains forced us to halt progress for weeks," he explained.

Affordable, Faster, and Safer Travel for Mizoram's Residents

The new railway connection is set to transform travel for Mizoram's residents by cutting down both journey times and costs significantly. Currently, the road trip from Guwahati to Aizawl takes over 18 hours. With the train service now operational, the same journey will take less than 12 hours, a remarkable improvement in accessibility.

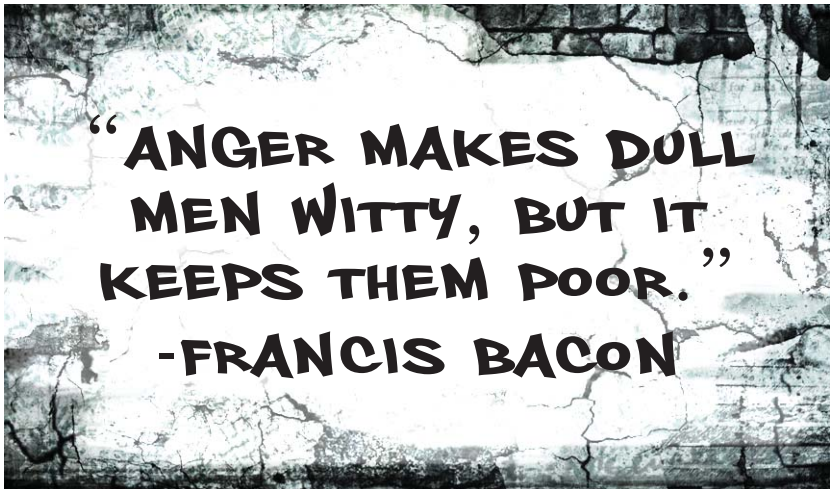
Moreover, the fare is set at just Rs. 450, making it an economical choice compared to

air travel or long road journeys. This affordability is expected to benefit a wide range of passengers, including students, patients seeking medical care, traders transporting goods, and tourists eager to explore Mizoram's natural beauty.

Importantly, the railway infrastructure has been designed with safety as a priority, built to withstand seismic activity, a critical feature given Mizoram's location in an earthquake-prone zone.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman