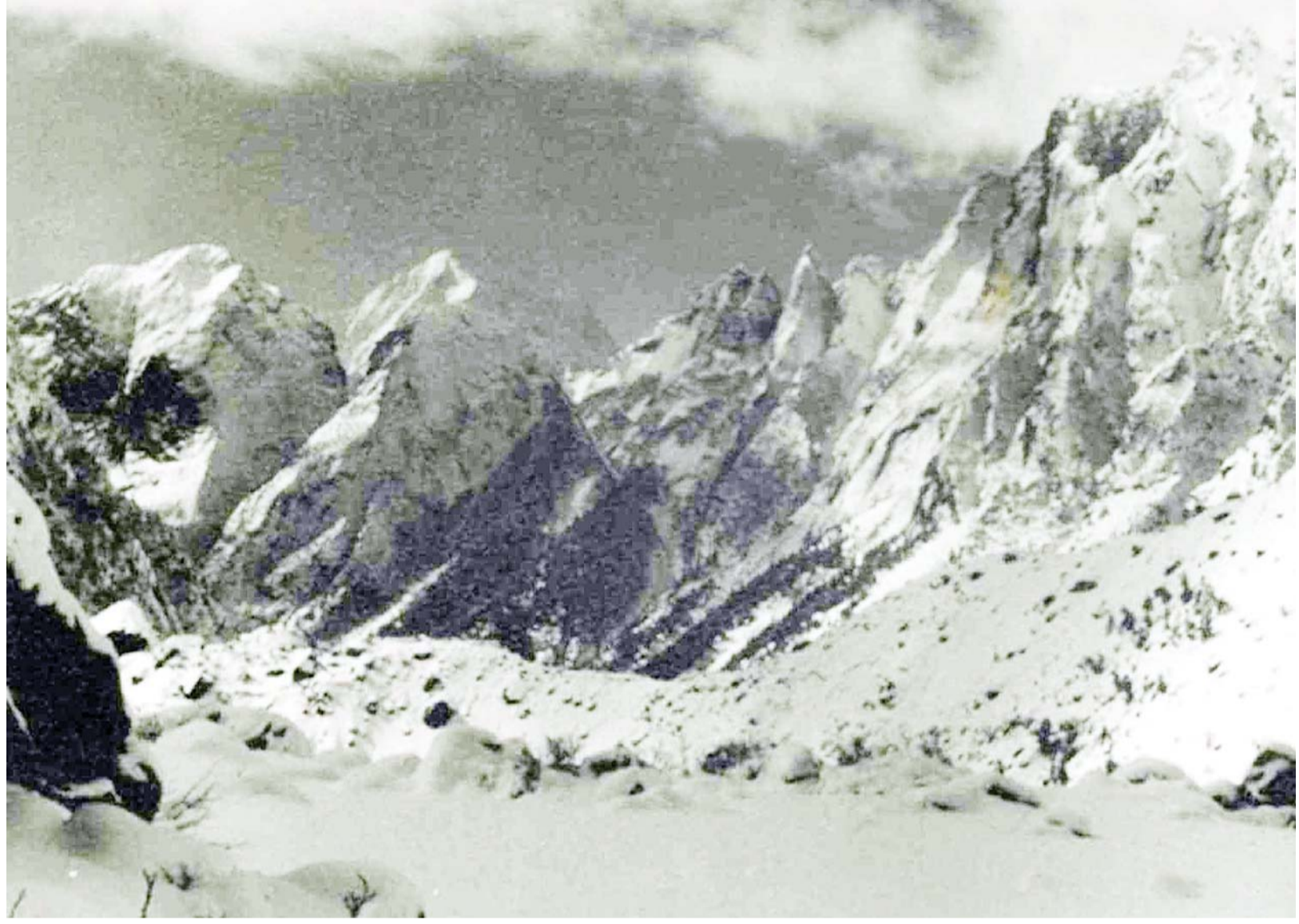


On 12 May 1962, our observation Post reported men and ponies descending Tun Jan La, about two hours' walking time from us. At last, here was the PLA detachment of twenty soldiers with thirty laden ponies on course to Rimkin. We had time to deploy our six LMG's, two MMG's and assemble the remaining 65 soldiers with bolt action rifles, fixed bayonets and charged magazines near the RCP in a show of strength. No one had given us any orders in the event of a showdown and far-flung as we were, our strength lay in instinctive actions.

The face-off moment with the PLA



Lt Gen Baljit Singh, AVSM, VSM (Rtd.)
Military Historian, Sportsman & Environmentalist

#WAR GAMES

(A burly six-foot-something with walrus mustachios) showed me a signal from the Army Headquarters marked "Top Secret and Personal for the Commander" directing him in a nutshell (!) to occupy a Company Defended Locality at Rimkin the Soonest but not later than 15 May 1962 (!) and the Special Task Force (STF) till the Rimkin perimeter defence effectively established.

Terrain Briefing

Next, the Brigadier led me to an adjoining room and on a wall covered with maps; he placed his index finger on one spot and said, "This is the Bara Grazing Ground (BGG) which the Chinese threaten to usurp from India. I have personally handpicked one Company of the fittest and most highly motivated soldiers of 14 Rajput Battalion to constitute the STF. Your task lies in inducting them from Joshimath onwards either en-bloc or in dribbles across the Chor Hoti Pass, approximately 17,000 feet ASL. You have a Carte Blanche sanction from the Army Headquarters to hire/purchase specialized equipment, mountain guides, etc., and travel anywhere in the country to do so" (words to that effect). Noticing my stricken looks and

becoming empathetic, the Brigadier mentioned: "young man, I have been informed that you are a fresh graduate from the Basic and Advanced Mountaineering Courses under Mr Tenzing's tutelage and have the requisite knowledge and skills to tackle this assignment. So cheer up and get terrain briefing from Lieutenant Colonel KM Pandalai (KMP) of the 14 Rajput who has just returned from Joshimath."

What I learnt next was anything but reassuring. Firstly, there was just one single-lane, 560 k road from Lucknow to Joshimath (the last 300 km stone-paved), which under favourable weather, was a three-day journey for cargo-laden, light trucks. And beyond, a well-beaten 80 km pony track to Ghamsali (10,000 ft ASL) and thence pristine, mostly untrodden 40 to 200 km terra firma to Rimkin! Wisely, the Colonel had already commenced shipment of 30 days' commodities for the STF to Joshimath.

What KMP informed me next was the most worrisome aspect of the STF's capabilities that they had had no previous experience of living and soldiering at High Altitudes. If it was a matter of a few soldiers being attuned to operate in high altitude environment, I could have handled it by myself. But given a large body of 120 and limited time, this vital task was best entrusted to the Ski Warfare School, Gulmarg. The Brigadier agreed readily, organised an airlift to Srinagar and exposed STF to a compressed ten days' training capsule. He also agreed to establish a forward logistics dump at Ghamsali as an urgent priority.

I departed for Darjeeling by the next train and, with Tenzing Sahib's help, hired four B-grade Sherpas, purchased such accessories as charting a route over the



Chor Hoti Pass may require, and together with the Sherpas set out for Joshimath.

We preceded the STF by four days for a fast foray to Rimkin and back. The approach to Chor Hoti Pass lay through a narrow horse-shoe, with ten to fifteen feet deep snow pile. Once the sun touched they are, the ascent was very exhausting. Even for seasoned climbers. The descent on the far side was down a near vertical rock face and we set to fix a Manila hemp rope for two hundred and forty feet on the steepest stretch. The going beyond for about three km was over an almost level, snowed-up plateau, ending at a wet and dangerously slippery rock ledge. Here again, two rope handralls were fixed for two hundred and fifty feet, ending close to the spine of the Rimkin ridge, our ultimate goal spot! We bivouacked for the night, unarmed and taking comfort that the Brigadier did not expect the PLA to show up before mid-may!

Meanwhile, as planned, Captain RS Taragi (Rajinder) had moved to Ghamsali with STF and commenced stocking ten days' worth of

rations at Kala Zabar (12,600 ft ASL), about 10 km enroute Chor Hoti. We decided to make the first push with 30 soldiers, leaving Kala Zabar at 2600 hrs, on April 21, each soldier carrying a personal kit and two days survival rations. The snow on the approaches to Chor was firm and compacted by night but laden with 30 kg, the going was slow and laboured. At 0400 hrs on 22 April. All of us were atop the Chor Hoti saddle.

The Airdrop

The descent using fixed ropes was a new experience for the soldiers and almost all of them had to be led by us in relays, one by one. In the event, the last man reached Rimkin at 1845 hrs on 22 April 1962 and, in so doing, consolidated India's claim on BGG. I must admit that the soldiers were so exhausted after the 12 to 16-hour long very demanding day (a few even hallucinating "kiya hum Tibet pahuch gaye Saab") that they could have taken hostages without a murmur at the mere asking.

We were given a radio set of American origin with an independent power source which had to be

cranked manually by two men for the duration of the transmission. But it worked! We communicated the code of having touched base at Rimkin and airdrop of tentage, fuel and basic food.

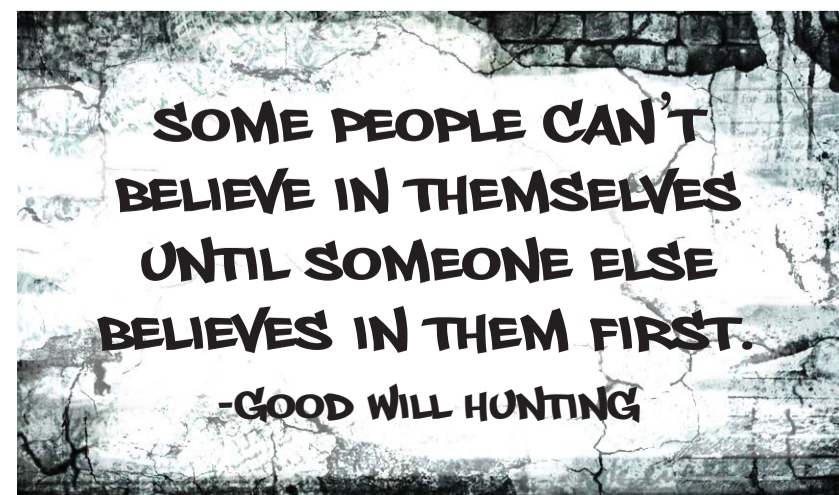
At this stage, I got into a huddle with Rajinder, the Sherpas and two Radio operators to organise our soldiers into three groups of ten each, prod them to erect the ten two-men tents we had carried and generally keep them moving about. The Sherpas also lit three stoves and set about brewing three Langar-degchis of extra sweet tea! Half a mug of warm brew and shakar-paras helped lift spirits all around and avert looming disaster from dehydration etc.

There was no acknowledgement of our Radio message but on 24 April, we were awoken by the drone of aircraft over Rimkin. In the next twenty minutes, two Dakotas dropped cargo, creating a cloud of floating white parachutes over Rimin. The "drop" had spread several hundred metres all around, which, combined with the fatigue

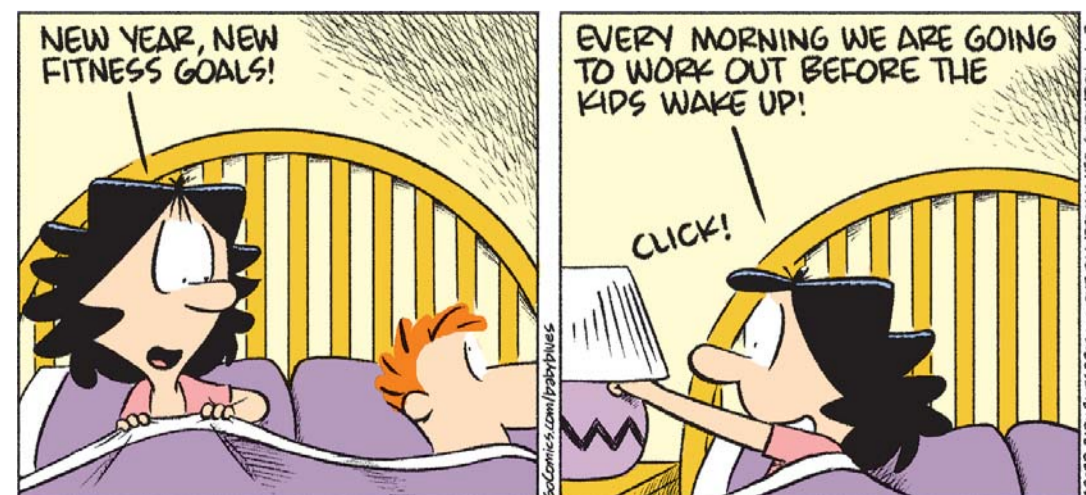


By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

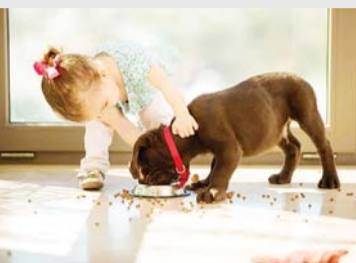


Telecommuter Appreciation Week

Most who work for companies have to commute to work, dragging themselves along long stretches of road, stuck in traffic and stressed as a result. However, have you ever considered commuting as a better way to work for your boss? Telecommuter Appreciation day is all about learning what telecommuters do, appreciating their work, and seeing how you can change the way you view your work life as it sits.

#RESEARCH

Toddlers Helping Dogs



Toddlers will go out of their way to help dogs, especially pups struggling to access out-of-reach treats and toys, according to new research.

The finding shows that young children notice and understand dogs' goals, using that knowledge to help them. "It's been known for a long time that toddlers will go out of their way to help struggling humans, even strangers," says Henry Wellman, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Michigan.

"But perhaps such altruism is specially evolved for and targeted toward other humans (who after all might help them back). But no, it applies to other animals too, like dogs they will never see again."

Wellman and colleagues conducted experiments with three dogs-Fiona, Henry, and Seymour-at the University of Michigan's child laboratory between 2015 and 2020 to determine if young children spontaneously helped a pet.

The researchers studied 97 children (51 girls and 46 boys) ages 2 and 3 years, 44 of whom had dogs as pets. In the lab, the children met one of the friendly dogs in an enclosed baby gate fence while a treat or toy was placed outside it. Dogs reacted naturally, either showing interest (either pawing or begging) in accessing the item or ignoring it.



Children provided dogs with out-of-reach items 50% of the time when dogs showed interest rather than ignored items, indicating sensitivity to the dog's goals, the study shows.

In addition, children who lived with pet dogs were more likely to provide items to the pups in the experiment if two scenarios were present: the dogs were lively and engaged rather than subdued, and if the item was a treat rather than a toy.

"These findings lend support to our hypothesis that children's early-developing proclivities for goal-reading and pro-sociality extend beyond humans to other animals," says lead author and alumna Rachna Reddy, who is now a postdoctoral fellow in evolutionary anthropology at Duke University.

The researchers believe children's willingness to help goes beyond dogs.

#FOOD-REVIEW

Soulful Dining at Hyatt Regency



Shubham Agarwal
Bhukhadaniya, Food Blogger and Freelance writer

Innovation of modern cooking technology has and always will be celebrated. It is clean, efficient and promotes better hygiene alongside better and better techniques to take out more flavours. One thing that is not though, is that it lacks a certain sense of poetry.

Sure, a blender does a far better job of mincing out the silkiest chutney you can imagine but the romance that involves a dainty lady crushing herbs underneath decades old silbatta (a set of traditional crushing stone) is the stuff straight out of legends.

It involves the same level of romanticism where the Maharajas and Sheikhs of old would hunker down by the fire in the pitch-black forest and cook the day's hunt while sharing stories of bravado.

SHROT, inspired by the strong roots of our culture, the name literally means "Source" and treats us with regional delicacies that are sourced locally. Another such local delicacy that we enjoy is Thikri ki daal which is a simple vegetarian dal with another flame touched elemental twist.

As tradition goes in the rural Rajasthan, earthenware employed in kitchens impart their own flavours to the food cooked and/or stored in them over time. As these brittle utensils break, some of those pieces are charred in fire and then daal is tempered with them, thus the broken pot/pan imparts its final flavour before being completely discarded.

This rather sentimental dish, while checking all the taste boxes is something that makes me personally feel proud of the heritage

Well, a forest was tamed inside the lush gardens of Hyatt Regency, Mansarovar and a faint hint of the fires remained and with them remained the taste of charr and grill in the evening's menu. See, tandoori food, real tandoori food, the kind licked by red tongues of smouldering-sparking coals is something we feel we are familiar with but it has sadly been lost to a myriad of dishes revolving around chicken and paneer. When was the last time you had any other protein touched by smoke and charred to perfection?

One of the restaurants at this beautiful hotel offers just that. We have lamb shanks grilled to perfection carrying a smoke heavy taste accentuated by the spice rich marinade. Although we could see and taste the flames on our plates, sadly the fires remained hidden behind rows of electric hothouses that flanked both our sides. And yes, I know it was for health and safety, but still. That said, I do give thanks to the industrial-scale hot plates and convection burners as I want to have dinner, not become it.

SHROT, is one of the two restaurants of Hyatt Regency, Mansarovar and while the hotel caters primarily to big fat Indian weddings and doubles as an ultra-luxury hotel, SHROT prides itself in being a revival restaurant.

By that I mean it has dishes that were prepared by the khansaamas of the old royals and commoners that have remained



out of limelight for decades, perhaps centuries now. "We all know and love Laal Maans but over time, recipes such as Degchi Maans have been forgotten and we at SHROT are endeavouring to revive them," quoted Mr Prashant, the F&B Manager at Hyatt Regency, Mansarovar.

I call a win when the staff wants you to feel all their efforts reach deep within you.

Stark opposite to this quintessential local cuisine is the other restaurant at Hyatt Regency, Mansarovar named "The North Club" which has been dubbed as "Jaipur's very own". This club carries forward the timeless club cul-



ture which has engaged the elite since legendary establishments of such nature were conceived in our city. The cuisine, however, is inspired from something entirely different.

We have Salmon grilled to perfection alongside Roast Pork with a sweet sour glaze. These hail from the different colonies that existed all over India and have permanently left their mark on people, culture and cuisine.

The beautiful coastline of old French Pondicherry inspires the salmon while the Portuguese influenced Goa shows up in the Butter-basted double roti and channa. While SHROT takes an extremely nuanced approach in serving ultra-local and traditional food, The North Club takes you all around old India in plates.

The people behind Hyatt Regency, Mansarovar could definitely be the run-of-the-mill corporate hospitality trained brilliant staff but they become so much more.

Their creativity and warmth both are proven when signature cocktails come flowing alongside traditional food which has not forgotten its roots but has donned on a more refined, meticulously created identity.

