

#NOBLE-CAUSE

World Wildlife Conservation Day

Dedicated efforts to protect our planet's incredible creatures and their habitats, ensuring future generations, get to share in, the wonder of nature



The sad truth is that the world's best loved, beautiful and fascinating species are being slaughtered by widespread and dangerous criminal networks that will stop at nothing to get what they want. And what they want are animal parts and products that, for reasons, no sane person really understands, are worth lots of money.

History of World Wildlife Conservation Day

A call to action was put out by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in 2012 to raise awareness and engage conservationists on Wildlife Conservation Day, December 4. During the "Wildlife Trafficking and Conservation: A Call to Action" event held at the State Department on November 8th 2012, Secretary Clinton outlined the White House's strategy to address the global problem of wildlife trafficking. These efforts are estimated to cost between \$7 and \$10 billion dollars, a year. "Wildlife cannot be manufactured. And once it's gone, it cannot be replenished. Those who profit from it illegally are not just undermining our borders and our economies, they are truly stealing from the next generation," she said.

How to Celebrate World Wildlife Conservation Day

Raise awareness and contribute to the conservation and protection of endangered species such as elephants, rhinos and tigers on World Wildlife Conservation Day's website. This global occasion provides everyone with the opportunity to learn more about wildlife conservation and to be part of the solution to wildlife crime. Go online and join thousands of other individuals who have taken wildlife pledge. Promise to learn more about wildlife conservation, spread the word about importance of protecting our planet's most endangered species and the impact of poaching on our environment. Learn how to become a responsible consumer in order to stop illicit wildlife trade.



The first problem was transportation. Since I had been inside enemy territory the longest and had good rapport going with Tiger Siddiqui, I was given the task to muster up as many vehicles as possible. I got going with my Bahini lads and by last light, had grabbed about 15 cars and 10 odd buses, given under duress, of course. The men were quite resourceful too. They got hold of cycles and rickshaws in large numbers! Advance was resumed on 14th morning but to our regret, we did not have cameras to capture the scene. Soldiers marching, soldiers on cycles and rickshaws and heavy stuff on brightly painted buses and trucks! On 15th's early morning, we picked up on radio, what appeared to be an order from General Niazi to all troops, to surrender. Advance was speeded up since we were nearing Mirpur Cantonment on the Southern edge of Dhaka and were keen to be the first to enter the capital. In the event, we succeeded.



On May 1971, the situation in East Pakistan was boiling over. Refugees had begun to pour into India and the constant refrain in the media was that war with Pakistan was imminent. At this time, I went to attend the Combined Course at the Joint Air Warfare School (JAWS) in Secunderabad. When I returned to 50 Parachute Brigade, in October, Brigadier Thomas summoned me and told me to meet the Chief of staff, Headquarter Eastern Command, Major General JFR Jacob.

I met General Jacob and he congratulated me for 'volunteering for the mission'. Seeing the look of utter bewilderment on my face, Gen Jacob smiled and proceeded to put me at ease in a most avuncular fashion.

"Look young man, you're a para-trooper, a signaller, a commando, a Bengali and your commander says that you topped the last course at JAWS, I cannot think of a better lad for this job".

The job was to get into enemy territory as soon as possible in the event of war breaking out, establish a good working relationship with Mukti Bahini and locate two to three good dropping zones (DZs) for 2 Para Battalion Group, as close to Pungli Bridge, General Jacob then waved me off with a big reassuring smile and said orders would follow in the due course.

I left Dum Dum for Guwahati by air on 28 November 1971, along with Lt Col KS Pannu, the Commanding Officer of 2 Para. It was a bright sunny morning and I was happy to be going to Shillong in this style. How lucky can a fellow get, I thought. I also felt thrilled to be going on this ultra-secret mission. Although I did not know much about it, but from the send-off talk that my commander gave me before I left, one thing was evident. I was in for plenty of excitement, once the balloon went up.



Lt Col KS Pannu.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES PART: I



Walt Disney Day

His name, Disney, is known all over the world and is the brand name of characters and stories that are cherished and beloved the world over. Behind all of this wonder, the voices of Mickey Mouse and the seemingly endless parade of characters that the company put out was the vision of one man, Walter Elias Disney. Known to his friends, which he would consider all of us, Walt. Walt Disney Day celebrates this incredible man and the joy and laughter he brought to the world.



It was with great difficulty that I got my friend and of course, mate Brig PK Ghosh, to write this account of his wartime experiences. I had it published in a book 'Liberation 1971', which was launched by Sheikh Hasina, herself. This story was picked up by a friend of mine, Wing Commander Krishnamurti who was one of the pilots who flew us across the Meghna. 'Krauts', as Krishnamurti is called by his friends, dramatized the account which went around the armed forces groups like a wildfire. This fictionalized account is carried in Part 2, which will be published later.

Interesting problems with more interesting solutions



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This story would have turned out even better, had it not been for a slight miscalculation on my part. It was the evening of 16 December, the stage was set for the Surrender Ceremony at the Ramna Race Course. A contingent, each of Indian and Pakistan Army, had been constituted. The Indian Contingent was taken entirely from Para 2 of which I was a part. After General Niazi handed over his pistol to General Aurora and the latter reviewed the contingents, both Generals repaired to the table set up, for the actual signing. The contingents broke out, and surged forward to get inside view of the historic event. It was difficult to say who was the more excited, our boys for having trumped the enemy or the Pakistani, relieved that the whole sordid affair was over, and they could now go back home!

Seeing that the crowd was too dense to penetrate, I stepped aside and stood next to Niazi's staff car. I casually stole a glance to my left to admire the shiny black Mercedes with Niazi's flag still hoisted atop. This was my big chance! I saw a vision of this flag adorning the Headquarters Mess at Mhow (with my name in small caption below). As I was mustering courage and looking for a chance to swipe it, there was a sudden swelling of the crowd with much shoving and elbowing. I soon regained proximity to the staff car again. Just in time to see a Naval Officer disappearing with the flag. Whenever I reminisce over the Dhaka days this incident still rankles. Who says life is fair?

I reach Shillong



When I reached Guwahati airport, a shady looking character who took charge of our luggage and whisked us off to Shillong in an Ambassador car. He took us to the Officer's Mess and disappeared. Major Bhami, the GS02 (Operations) met us after dinner and asked us to be ready to meet the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 101 Communication Zone Area next morning at 0400 hours! When Pannu protested, Bhami told him that the 'Old Man' liked to get an early start.

Next morning, dot at four, we were ushered into General Gurbux Gill's bedroom. The General lay on his bed while we took up military postures. The bedroom looked more like a macho Command Post than a place for carefree slumber. Taking hold of a long pointer staff, he briefed us with the help of the 'ceiling to floor maps', at the foot of his bed. He also briefed me about Tiger Siddiqui whom he had met when the latter was undergoing some training in the FJ sector under Brigadier Sant Singh and told me it was important to contact Siddiqui at the earliest.

From the briefing, I surmised that the Mukti Bahini in Tiger Siddiqui's area was roughly 15,000 strong and that Siddiqui was one of the most effective Mukti Bahini commanders in Bangladesh. His force operated in the Tangail and Mymensingh area and he had become a thorn in the flesh of the Pakistan army. He was something of a snob but was completely honest, straightforward and highly motivated. Though lacking in formal mili-

Peace offering



tary training, he had a lot of common sense and natural leadership and was a good organizer. General Gill also stated that the Mukti Bahini was in virtual control over the Eastern banks of the Padma River from Jagannathganj Ghat to Tangail. The Mymensingh-Tangail Highway and the areas immediately to the east and west of it, were under Pakistani control. He then told us to proceed forth with to Garo Bhada in the Tura Hills District for further briefing at Headquarter, 95 Mountain Brigade. When Pannu asked him for further orders, General Gill told him to collect as much information as he could, then go back to Kolkata and wait for the 'balloon to go up'. As for me, I was to be launched into East Pakistan without further delay! Pannu looked at me with, 'a better you than me, boy' smirk on his face.

We reached Headquarter, 95 Mountain Brigade by ten, that night and realized that heavy and serious skirmishing was even then going on in border areas with East Pakistan. Brigadier Kler knew me before my days in 19 Mountain Division at Baramulla, he asked me how I planned to get on with my job.

'Well sir', I said, 'apart from the fact that there is not enough time for me to get circumsised, I do not have the foggiest notion of how to proceed in the matter.'

'Do not worry' said Brigadier Kler, cheerfully. 'I have had a chat with Brigadier Sant Singh, Commander of FJ Sector. His Brigade Major, Major Mookherjee, will brief you further.'

Peace offering

On 1 December, General Gill arrived at the helipad and the General then briefed me. He told me that I was to pose as a Mukti Bahini, but if caught by the enemy, my cover was that I was a Bengali from Kolkata who was fighting with Mukti Bahini as a freelance. He also gave me an Odomos tube and asked me to give it to Siddiqui, as a present from the GOC. This, he assured me, would put me in good standing with Siddiqui. He also told me to crossover the same evening.

From the helipad, I went along with Brig Sant Singh to Dalu. He briefed me in his office where I was told that Siddiqui's forces had adequate quantities of mortars and ammunition, some of which we had supplied and some had been captured from two steamers in August, on the Padma River, off a village called Matigaha. I was to contact Siddiqui as soon as possible, find out the location of his forces and pass back this information at once, as well as information about the enemy. I was also to operate in conjunction with military operations, launched by the Indian Army and where possible, block enemy positions to prevent withdrawal of forces or movement of reinforcements. My main task, of course, remained to select main and alternate DZs, not too far from Tangail and pass back coordinates to FJ Sector.

At Dalu, I met SG Mookherji of Signals, whom I knew from my days, at Mhow while attending a course there. He also filled me up on other details of the operation and my mission. I was given the codename 'Peter', dressed up in a 'Lungi', a half-torn shirt with a 'jhola' and a sheet to cover myself. The codename for Headquarters, FJ sector was Babu. That incidentally was how Siddiqui's forces referred to Brigadier Sant Singh. I was also given Rs10,000/- in Pakistan currency and an unmarked Sten Machine Carbine with two magazines of unmarked ammunition. Captain TI Donald, the Signals Officer of FJ Sector, then handed over two small radio trans-receivers, called Radio Set HX. Four such sets had also been sent across in September to the Mukti Bahini, but their fate was not known. Working on battery cells, the crystal tuned set could be used to send and receive messages using Morse code. I was told that I could expect a range of about 10 to 15 kms with the former and about 30 kms with the latter. In actual practice, on good days, I was able to get as much as 65 to 70 kms! Ofcourse, I took the precautions of discreetly passing it on to Donald's boys as it had tilted and was at

Peace offering



Brig Ghosh, Maj Chandrakant, Mrs. Bandana Ghosh.

To be happy or not to be

Setting across the border, I do recall being a bit uneasy. I was young but not so young to not realise that my wife was in the family way with our second child. She was due in December and it would be hard on her if something were to happen to me. I had taken precautions of writing out about seven odd letters and sent them back to my Company with Colonel Pannu, with instructions to 'Bags' (late General Andy Bhagat) to post them at regular intervals to my wife. (As it turned out, this play failed miserably since my letters were impossibly out of sync with her letters, not to mention the well-known 'women's intuition factor'. At a professional level, I realized that my mission was important and that I ought to feel

excited. I also realized that what I was doing was 'clandestine'. General Gurbux had made it quite clear that once I crossed over, the Indian Army would disclaim all knowledge of my existence. Nonetheless, once I had spent 24 hours inside enemy territory, the urgency of 'here and now' completely took over my consciousness and thereafter, it was more a question of thinking on my feet and getting on with the job. From Dalu, I came to Garo Bada and then moved to Manka Char on the border, where we had a post, each of the BSF and the Mukti Bahini. I had with me 'Badshah', a 14-year old boy, whom I had picked out from the batch of Mukti Bahini trainees in FJ Sector. He came in handy as

a local guide and as an interpreter when required. I was after all a 'Bong', born and brought up in Kanpur and as far as local dialects of rural East Pakistan were concerned, I may, as well, have been of Greek Parentage. At ten that night, Badshah and I left by foot. We walked due south for about 10 miles and then were able to arrange a small boat which we hired. This I decided would be the safest and fastest way to contact Siddiqui, who, as I was told, was at a place called Bhuapur, about 65 miles further south. There were two places en route, which would be dangerous; Bahadurabad Ghat and another Ghat about ten miles further south, which were guarded by Pakistani soldiers.

BABAJI TO PETER: I had established contact. I now found myself in a tricky position as the Mukti Bahini company at Bhuapur had to be moved near Madhupur but in the absence of Siddiqui, the local company commander was rather reluctant to take orders directly from me. Ultimately, however, he was persuaded to do so. This company, along with two more companies to the north then occupied defensive positions southwest of Madhupur and west of Gopalpur. The enemy was not to be allowed access to the Padma and escape down south. From Bhuapur, I collected nine young and enthusiastic boys and headed south towards Tangail, in search of Siddiqui. By the evening, we reached a village called Doghalkandi, just

north of Tangail. From the Mukti Bahini company there, I came to know that Siddiqui was in village, Nagarpur, ten miles south of Tangail. To save time, I decided to move through Tangail town but as the town was held by the Pakistani forces, it was important to find out their deployment. To facilitate our move, the Mukti Bahini men were attacking a Razakar outpost of five mud bunkers. There were about 20 Razakars there with weapons, holding on stubbornly to their positions. I came to know that Siddiqui had earlier left for Basail, a Thana headquarter, about eight miles south east of Tangail. We, finally, contacted Siddiqui there, at eight in the morning and handed over Brigadier Sant Singh's letter to him.

Celebrations

After the surrender Ceremony was over, most of us repaired to the Dhaka Intercontinental Hotel to celebrate. The member of the International press and journalists from all major international magazines were lying in wait to get all the scoops. While they plied us with some good whisky, we, on our part, held forth on how 'we had won the war', not neglecting to mention the stellar role played by our own selves!

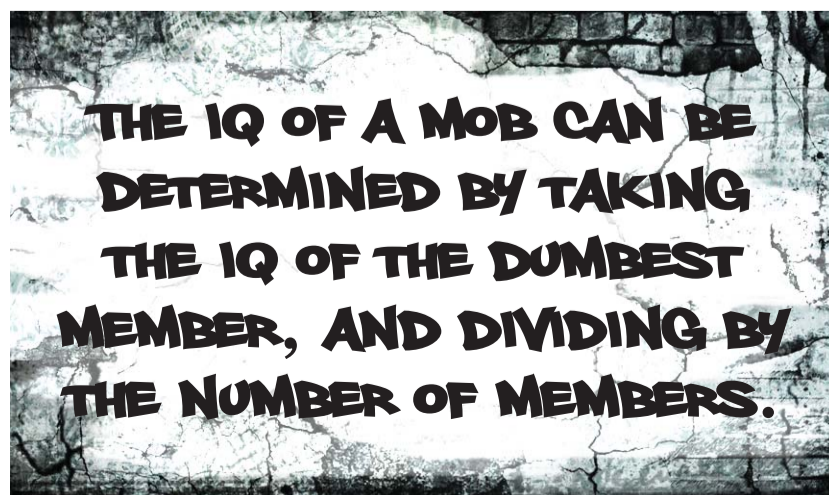
We were happy but at a personal level, there was a tinge of sadness. Right from the morning of 16 December, there was much sniping going on by the Mukti Bahini, who were armed and wanted to extract revenge on the Pakistan Army personnel and their families as they rushed back to Dhaka to seek shelter with the Indian Army in makeshift prisoner of war camps. Captain Ajit Singh, the education

office of 95 Mountain Brigade, was hit by a stray bullet while outside the Intercontinental Hotel and died on the spot. Truly, conflicts bring about their own share of tragedies. This was my most unfortunate as it occurred just before the surrender ceremony. We left Dhaka soon after. My stay behind enemy lines was over.

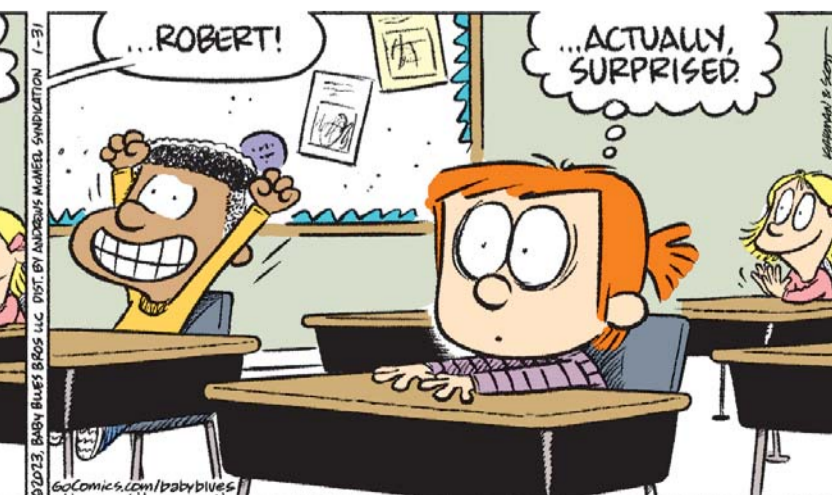
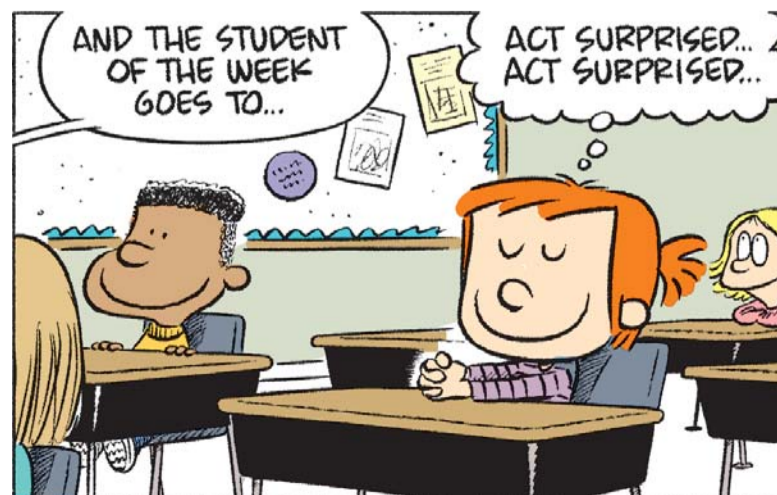
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THE WALL

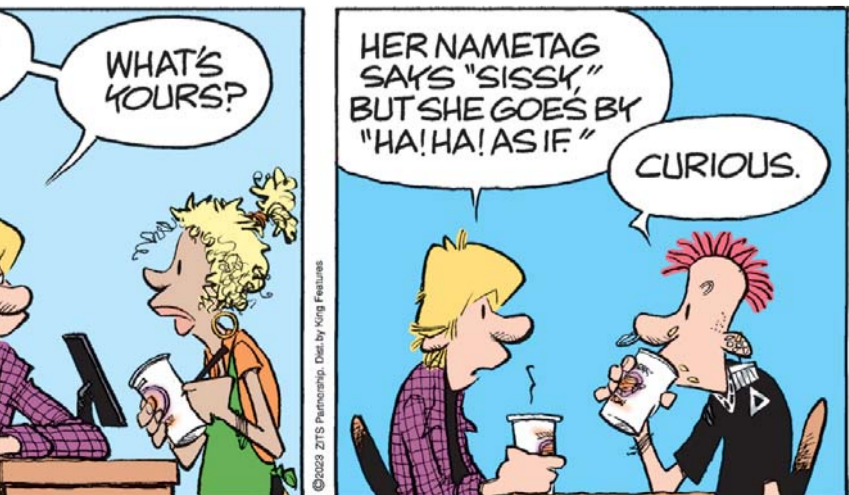
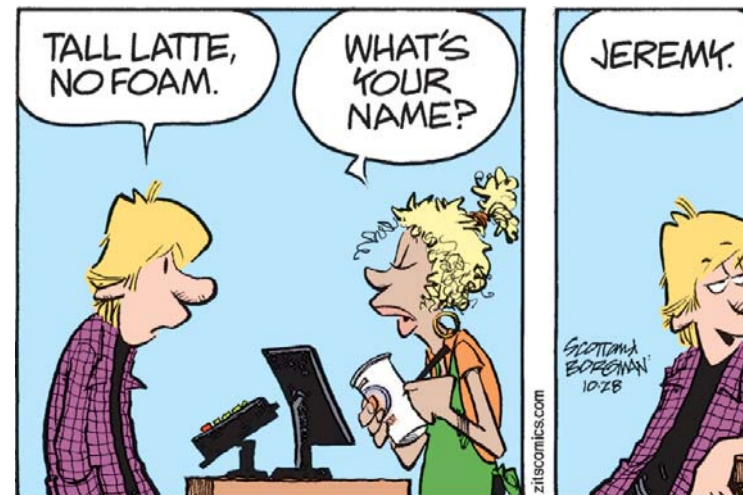


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman