

Face to Face-Interview of Lt General SPS Dhillon(Ex Ravindra 1965) with Sahil Choudhary

S.C – Sahil Choudhary

S.P.S – Lt General Samer Pal Singh Dhillon

S.C : Sir, how many years did you study in the Scindia School?

S.P.S – I joined the Scindia School in 1961 and passed out in 1965.

S.C : You spent five years in the school. Share with us some of the beautiful moments you spent here.

S.P.S : Actually instead of moments I'll take school life as a capsule. It's a bundle of memorable moments. It's colourful and bright like Diwali. Just as Diwali is not simply one cracker but many *phuljaris*, *anaars*, rockets together combine to give it the sparkle. Similarly my life in school was also a beautiful package. It moulded my personality in such a way, that the way I respond to situations, the decisions I take, my reactions in life, have all been shaped to a great extent by the time I had spent here in the school.

S.C : As a student you must have played pranks and done lots of naughty things. Tell us some of those.

S.P.S : (Laughs) Let's start with the good things first. My favourite pastime was spending time at the woodwork department. Stone carving and clay modeling also fascinated me a lot. I was fairly good at sketching too. You could probably write a thesis on the pranks I played, but I'll mention just a couple of them.

Maybe because of my artistic and good hand, I could forge the signature of my house master, doctor or that of anybody else including that of the Principal. Even today I can copy the signature of Mr. K.C Shukla. So anybody who wanted to issue extra notebooks or pencils would take a chit from me. If a person did not want to attend classes, he would get a chit signed by me on behalf of the doctor and enjoy bed rest. I enjoyed helping people in this way. Luckily I was never caught.

Once I got some itching powder and put it on the table of the English teacher. He was an Englishman with a pinkish complexion. He scratched himself till he went red and kept wondering what nasty thing had bitten him.

S.C : Sir do you think residential schools like ours equip the students with certain special skills?

S.P.S : Definitely. There are some schools which lay undue stress on academics which at times encourages rote memorization. However residential schools like the Scindia School, focus on overall personality development. By virtue of spending time together one learns camaraderie, dedication, truthfulness, time management, better communication

skills etc. In this age one requires total versatility and it is residential schools which impart it to the students.

S.C : What inspired you to join the army?

S.P.S : Firstly, I have an army background. Secondly, those days we were imbued by the spirit of patriotism. The memory of the 1962 war was fresh and the feeling of nationhood was very strong. Another very important motivating factor was my housemaster Mr. Mukherjee. When I asked him if I should join the army he said that I was perfect for it. I was physically fit and had the spirit of adventure. So I opted for it.

S.C : These days there are so many jobs which are far more lucrative than a career in the Armed Forces. How do you think that the youth can be motivated to join the army?

S.P.S : It's a misconception that money is everything in the world. In these so called lucrative jobs people are so engrossed in creating wealth that they don't even have the time to enjoy their wealth or their families. The Defence Forces provide perks which can't really be weighed in monetary terms. If people view the entire package which includes housing, food, medical care, canteen facilities etc. they will understand and appreciate the attractiveness of joining the Army. No other career provides you with a large, extended family or the quality of life that the Forces do. My wife and sister-in-law were adamant on marrying into the Forces or not at all.

S.C : Please Share with us some interesting and thrilling moments of your army life.

S.P.S : The first few years were spent in playing games, going for National level sports, athletics and football. It was an amazing time. The thrill of winning gives one a high unlike any other.

A very interesting incident happened soon after I had joined. There was a Lt. Sameer Chandavarkar who had laid down his life in the 1971 operations. Since my name 'Samer' sounded so much like his, people thought that I had passed away. So when they saw me they actually wondered if they had seen a ghost. It was really eerie to hear people say, ' "Oh, you're alive. We thought you were dead." "

My experience in Jammu and Kashmir during the counter insurgency operations was also challenging and thrilling. There have been times when I have been in the thick of action and have been fired at from very close range. It does shake you up.

S.C : How does it feel to come to the school as a Madhav Awardee?

S.P.S : It feels good, since so many of my friends have come down for this. I think getting recognition from your Alma Mater is something unparalleled. I have been awarded many times in my Army career but this is the most satisfying. Getting a Madhav award is one of the greatest achievements for me.

S.C: Thank you Sir.