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GENERAL RAINA RETIRES

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General Tapeswar Narain Raina, MVC, Chief of the Army Staff, is retiring from Army on May 31, 1978, after putting in more than 36 years of distinguished service.

General Raina was born in a distinguished Kashmiri family on January 21, 1921 and his father, Rai Bahadur A.N. Raina, gave him the best possible education in Lahore. From the very beginning, young Tapeswar had great fascination for the Army and while he was in college at Lahore, he had joined the 4th Punjab UTC in October 1938. He continued with it up to March 1941.

When World War II broke out, he volunteered for service and was attached to 10/8 Punjab Regiment from May 1 to June 20, 1941. He tried his hand at flying too and was a cadet with the IAF for a short while during July-August 1941. But he joined the Officers' Training School at Mhow soon after, and was commissioned into the Kumaon Regiment, then called the 19th Hyderabad Regiment, on April 12, 1942.

The 10th Battalion of the Regiment was at the time stationed at Agra and the young subaltern who was destined to be the Indian Army's Chief joined it there. In December 1942, he was posted to the 2nd Battalion, but he did not remain with that unit for long and joined the 1st Battalion in Iraq during March of the following year.

There was not much of fighting in Paiforce, as the Iran (Persia) and Iraq Command was called. But there was the danger of a German breakthrough in the Caucasus, and Paiforce was responsible to guard against it. It was a difficult assignment with almost complete lack of allied armour in the area. Manned mostly by Indian troops, Paiforce carried out its task admirably. It was while serving at Dibis (Kirkuk) in Iraq that Lieutenant Raina was seriously wounded in a grenade - throwing accident. He suffered multiple injuries in both thighs and lost an eye.

The 1st Battalion returned to India in July 1944. In December that year, 26 Indian Infantry Brigade of the which the Battalion formed part, moved to Burma to participate in General Slim's famous campaign. The Brigade joined 36 British Infantry Division at Katha in North Burma. The Division was part of the American Northern Combat Area Command ( Lt Gen Daniel I. Sultan). Its task was to clear the Japanese from North Burma.

The 1st fought its first important action of the war on February 9, 1945 at Myitson, a small village at the junction of the Nanneik Chaung with the Shweli river; the Japanese were determined to hold on to it till their forces would withdraw from the area. After a frontal assault by a British battalion had failed, the 1st was ordered to attack from the flank.

The main hurdle of such an attack was, however, the Nanneik Chaung. The success of the operation depended on whether the Chaung was fordable as it would have been foolhardy to attempt a crossing in boats in the fact of the Chaung at various places. It was on the fourth night that a patrol led by Lieutenant Raina

spotted a Japanese party fording the Chaung. This crossing place was then selected for the Battalion's assault. It succeeded and Lieutenant Raina was mentioned-in-despatches for his part in it. After the action at Myitson, the 1st entered Mongmit on March 9 and, ten days later, occupied the ruby-mining town of Mogok. By April 8, the Battalion had reached Maymyo. Soon after, 26 Infantry Brigade was broken up and the 1st joined 80 Indian Infantry Brigade. Lieutenant Raina saw more action in the final battles that took the fourteenth Army to Rangoon. After the Japanese surrender, he went with the 1st to Indo-China and Indonesia where the Battalion, together with other Allied forces, helped to restore law and order in the war-ravaged territories.

In December 1946, Lieutenant Raina became a paratrooper after his unit had joined 2nd Indian Air borne Division at Karachi. Early in the following year, he was promoted and became the Adjutant of the 1st. In November 1947, he was posted to Infantry School Mhow, as Instructor. Soon after, he was selected for a course at the Defence Services Staff College and, on its completion, was posted in September 1948 to the MO Directorate at Army Headquarters.

The year 1949 was perhaps one of the most momentous in General Raina's life. It was in that year he found his life-partner, Mile Marie Antoinette Florence Kurt whom he married on February 25. It was also during that year that he was sent as liaison officer to the British School of Infantry at War - minister in England. Later that year was born his only son, Jyoti Narain. On return to India in January 1951, Major Raina was again given an

instructional assignment at the Infantry School. The following year brought more joy to the Rainas when their only daughter Anita was born.

May 1953 saw Major Raina return to regimental duty. He was posted as second-in-command of 14 Kumaon, a unit that had been newly integrated from the Gwalior State Forces into the Indian Army. Any one could see at the time that the man who had come as 2IC to the 14th was no run-of-the mill officer. He was with the Battalion when he was whisked off to Wellington; he was to be an instructor at the Staff College in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

But the 14th was to forge a lifelong link with General Raina; he returned to it as its Commanding Officer in August 1957. And once he had assumed command, he decided to bring the battalion to a pinnacle of efficiency. This did not apply to military efficiency alone; he wanted his men to excel in sports too. It was largely as a result of the intensive training that sportsmen of the battalion received that an NCO from it broke two national records in swimming in 1958. It is typical of General Raina that his efforts were not confined to making his own battalion come on top; he wanted the whole Regiment to do well and the training camp that he set up for his sportsmen and athletes at Ferozepore was open to all Kumaon battalions. This was one of the traits that later made him the Colonel of the Regiment by unanimous choice.

A factor that bound him to the Kumaonis long before he became Colonel of the Regiment was his love for them. Again, it was not confined to units placed under him or those with which he had official relationship. He could visit a Kumaon unit whenever opportunity offered itself, be it in the mountains of Garhwal,

Sikkim and Ladakh or in more inhospitable regions.

Before Lieutenant Colonel Raina had completed two years with the 14th, he was posted a second time to Delhi for a tenure at Army Headquarters. By the time he had completed two years in Delhi, ominous clouds were gathering on our northern borders. The Chinese had decided on a showdown with India. Random clashes on the border had gone on for some time but October 20, 1962 brought the invasion. As the reader is aware, Ladakh and Arunachal were the targets of the Chinese attack. Till 3 Mountain Division was raised in the 1st week of October of that year, 114 Infantry Brigade had been responsible for the defence of the whole of Ladakh. And a month before the attack, Brigadier Raina had taken over command of that brigade. It was his stand against the Chinese that won him the Maha Vir Chakra. It also brought out his capacity to absorb a shock, a quality that has marked great leaders of men through the ages.

Due to superior numbers and better equipment, the Chinese were able to over run most of our forward posts. But that did not weaken 'Tappy Raina's will to fight. He gathered all his forces to give battle to the Chinese at Chushul - the pivotal point of our defence in Ladakh. Even there the Chinese were able to make some gains, though at heavy cost to themselves. There was, however, no panic no stampede as in the eastern theatre. The troops took up new positions a few miles behind their original positions and were ready as ever under their doughty commander to face the invaders. His leadership saved Chushul.

A course at the National Defence College is a must for higher commanders. Brigadier Raina did it in 1964. Then after a year as BGS XXXIII Corps, he was appointed GOC 25 Infantry Division in XV Corps in

March 1968 and Deputy Adjutant General at Army Headquarters in September 1970. Shortly before the 14 day war, that liberated Bangladesh he was appointed GOC of the newly raised II Corps and promoted Lieutenant General. This formation played a decisive role in the campaign and his masterly direction of the operations in his sector brought him the Padma Bhushan.

The next assignment came two years later, when he was appointed General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Command. March 1974 brought yet another test of his ability to absorb a shock. He lost his son, Jyoti Narain, who had joined his own battalion, the 14th. The whole Regiment mourned with General and Mrs. Raina, but he did not let his bereavement come in the way of his duty. His work still received his undivided attention.

He took over as Chief of the Army Staff on June 1, 1975. His resolve, determination and will to safeguard the interest of the country and the Army has always been his supreme consideration during his tenure of three years as Chief of the Army Staff. His only concern has been 'soldier' and he ensured that Army was never stagnant and rank and file never felt frustrated to the service condition. In his touching farewell message, General Raina said:

"As I lay down my office, I thank you all, from the seniormost officer to the newly joined recruit, and also all civilians in Defence Services for the cooperation, loyalty and support you have given me in my tenure. I retire from the Army with a feeling of immense satisfaction and utmost admiration for the Service which both nurtured and matured me. I shall always remember with a deep sense of of gratitude the spirit of comradeship and fellowfeeling which cannot be matched

elsewhere. I shall take away many impressions into the evening of life, but the one which I shall treasure above all, is the picture of the Indian soldier - staunch and tenacious in adversity, humane and gentle in victory - the man to whom the Nation has time and again, in the hour of trial, looked upon to ensure its safety and honour. I will conclude my military service by paying homage to him, my friend and comrade-in-arms during the last thirtysix years.

I also take this opportunity to wish good luck, success and all happiness to my successor, General Malhotra. I am confident that all of you will continue to discharge your duties with the same zeal and dedication as you have done during my tenure as your Chief.

"God bless you all. JAI HIND."

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