

REMINISCENCE

General Bull Weeratunga.

A little incident which took place when I was attached to the GW in Thallady Camp in 1964/65



By CDR (G) Cecil Gooneratne Rtd

I was on week-end leave from Colombo, and on my return to Thallady, Bull Weeratunga (Capt then, and I a Sub Lieutenant) was full of smiles. He told me that the owner of the TAOS Boatyard (a friend of Bull's) had come to see him and left behind his boat for temporary use by the Officers – a very sleek speed boat equipped with a very powerful Outboard Motor. Bull wanted to go for a boat ride and along with my Petty Officer we did have some splendid boat rides on a regular basis – Bull was enjoying himself thoroughly. I laid down one proviso though, and that was that whenever he wanted to go for a boat ride, I would accompany him and he wouldn't issue orders to my Petty Officer about handling the boat. Of course with the passage of time, Bull got bolder and suggested a trip in this speed boat to the Sillavaturai Camp, quite a distance away, – which I duly agreed. Anyway, on the way back to Mannar, Bull took the helm (for the first time) and opened up to full revs and the boat just shot out of the water came crashing down and needless to say, capsized.

The boat was in a capsized position for quite a while, and Bull was clinging on to the boat for dear life (albeit with his usual toothy smile). Anyway, to cut a long story short, some fishermen who had been following our antics came by and rescued us. I was seething with rage because someone could have lost his life, and anyway if something did happen, I would be held responsible, and the TAFII Commander was Lt/Col Halangoda! While in the water, in no uncertain terms I told Bull that this was the last time I was going with him for a boat ride – to hell with Rank!

That same evening, while sipping a few Arracks in the Mess, Bull indicated to me with a sheepish grin that he had a confession to make, and being in a mellow mood (helped by the Arrack of course) I asked him what it was. He told me that he couldn't swim! I nearly swallowed my glass. Mind you, thinking that he was a swimmer, I did not insist on the use of life jackets!!

I am not much into Army politics, but to me General Bull didn't have a malicious bone in his body. He was always smiling and cheerful and I am sure, from where ever he is at the moment, he will be having a smile on his face in the knowledge that I am passing on this story to you. I think that I am the only Naval Officer to have had such a happy relationship and association with your Regiment – I consider myself fortunate.