

## Reminiscences: 'With Compliments'

BRIG N B GRANT AVSM (RETD)

**B**y August 1944, the end of the war in Burma was in sight. The 4th Corps having been withdrawn to India at the end of July 1944 for rest and training, the conduct of the general offensive from Manipur devolved on the 33rd Corps under Lt Gen Sir Montague Stopford, whose instructions were to pursue the enemy along the Tamu and Tiddim Roads, to occupy Sittaung in order to deny him the use of the Chindwin River, and to capture Kalewa and establish a bridgehead over the Chindwin at that place.

The outstanding exploit on the river was the construction of a floating bridge at Kalewa by the 33rd Corps Troops Engineers under Lt Col F. Seymour-Williams RE. The Indian units employed on the work were 67, 76 and 361 Field Companies, 322 Field Park Company, and two Bridging Companies.

Unquestionably, the most difficult phase of the scheme was to transport the available bridging material from Dimapur to Indianagale, a few miles north of Kalemyo, and then carried a further 21 miles by road to reach the selected site at Kalewa. While negotiating a narrow thoroughfare cut into the cliffs of the Myitha Gorge, a 3-tonner vehicle in which I was travelling, broke down bringing a convoy of 100 bridging lorries to a standstill. I immediately got down and started repairing the vehicle with the help of my driver. Ten minutes had passed, but the vehicle was still stuck. There was complete chaos on this road, with people shouting and swearing to move on. I was getting panicky, specially so, as I was the only Indian Officer (Captain) on that road at that time, and that meant disaster for me.

Suddenly out of the blue, a jeep came along belting at full speed, and stopped near my vehicle. A British Officer, wearing an overcoat so his rank was not visible, got out and asked me what was the trouble. While I was narrating to him my woes, he called for one of his officers, and ordered him to throw my vehicle into the khud below. I violently objected, and told him that this was not on, as I alone was responsible for the safety of my vehicle. Nevertheless the vehicle was thrown overboard.

I was on the brink of tears, and asked the officer as to how I was going to explain this loss to my British CO. Seeing my plight, he took out a paper from his note book, wrote something on it, and told me to give it to my CO, and consoled me not to worry. He then left. The note had just two words written on it, "With Compliments", and was signed, 'General Slim'.

## To Our Members

The Annual Subscription for membership of the USI falls due in January each year. And therefore, this is to remind all our members to send their Membership subscriptions for 1989 so as to reach us by 15th February, 1989. This would ensure the despatch of the first issue of the USI Journal for 1989.

The Membership Fees and Subscription Rates have been recently revised by the Council. These are as follows:-

### MEMBERSHIP

	Admission Membership		Admission Membership	
	Fee (Old Rates)	Fee	Fee (Revised Rates)	Fee
Ordinary Member	30/-	30/-	50/-	50/- (w.e.f.1.1.89)
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