

Air Marshal (R) Harish Masand says...

I learnt more than flying from them: Jeff D'Souza



I came across this unsung luminary of the Air Force pretty early in life when I was in Adampur on my second tenure in 101 Squadron in late 1976. My first tenure in 101 was on Su-7s in 1972-73 and this time I came back to 101, then commanded by Pratap Rao, in 1976 on MiG-21Ms as an instructor and a Flight Lieutenant. Jeff D'Souza was then in 1 Sqn on MiG-21 FLs. We didn't spend much time in Adampur together and didn't really get to know each other, in the sense that he didn't know me but I knew of him and his wife Betty since we saw them around in socials and exchanged brief greetings.

Soon, though, we were destined to be together for the Fighter Combat Leader's Course in TACDE when I was detailed for the 11 FCL Course starting January 1978. Unfortunately, that was not to be since I was taken off that course, as described in my article on Air Marshal Denzil Keelor published earlier, available at <https://www.vayuaerospace.in/article/835/air-marshal-r-harish-masand-says-i-learnt-more-than-flying-from-them-denzil-keelor>. In any case, our tryst was not overly delayed since I came to Jamnagar in March 1978 for the 12th FCL by which time Jeff was on the staff of TACDE having



won the Jam Sattaji Sword of Honour for standing first in the order of merit in 11 FCL. While I was on the Course, Jeff Sir was a bit reserved with me like all other staff in TACDE due to reasons again mentioned earlier in the article on Denzil Keelor but Betty D'Souza was very friendly in the socials and I recall, even very enthusiastic in learning the new group dances like "Slosh" etc that I had learnt from Malini and was

demonstrating these to the ladies like Linda McMahon and Betty D'Souza in TACDE. In any event, Jeff was a man of few words and spoke in a laconic manner with short and crisp sentences which sufficed to convey the meaning, particularly in debriefs for the sorties we carried out during the course. Though reserved in that manner, he was always polite with everyone and always had a gentle hint of a smile even while giving out his one-liners with a great sense of humour.

It was after the course when I got back on the staff of TACDE in September 1978 when Malini and I got to know Jeff Sir, Betty and their three lovely daughters, Sandy, Christine and Carol well. Betty and Jeff were then staying in the temporary accommodation called Honeycomb quarters due to lack of married accommodation in Jamnagar those days while Malini and I were given two-room accommodation on the other side of the Officers' Mess called Honeymoon quarters. Some other staff were staying in reimbursed houses in Mahavir apartments in town. Staying close-by meant we met fairly regularly, generally in the Officers' Mess since none of our

