

Admiral "Chippy" Samson: A Tribute

17 December 1974, Ashoka hotel Conference Room, New Delhi.

AIEI NC meeting.

The President had flown in early morning from London.

Things were in a mess.

The Inaugural Convention was on 18 December but there were many loose ends.

The President showed his displeasure in public with me, as the Head of the Secretariat.

Then, Admiral Samson, who was in the meeting, got up from his seat, walked across to the President and whispered in his ear.

Suddenly, the mood changed from anger to consideration. Admiral Samson had just told him that I lost my father the week before, from a first heart attack, in Calcutta. And, that picture has always stayed with me.

The Admiral, striding across the room, straight as ramrod. Dashing as cavalier. Smart as only the Indian Navy can make them.

And, so, when Leela called and asked me to come and speak today on the 100th Birth Anniversary of Admiral Samson, her father, Dick's father, David's father, there was not even a moment's hesitation.

Because, he was my father too.

I lost mine on 7/12/74.

I gained another soon after.

But, let me take you back a few years. Before AIEI was formed by merger in 1974 April.

It was 1968. IEA was riddled with strife and dissent. In particular, the East which controlled IEA was facing huge issues with the West, which was deeply unhappy with the domination of the East.

Two men emerged at that time to lead. Sanjoy Sen in the East. Admiral Samson in the West. Sanjoy Sen said to me, lets go to Bombay, lets meet Admiral Samson, lets try to resolve the issues by meeting face to face.

And, so we went.

And, met in the Bombay Chamber.

Admiral Samson in his special cream linen suit.

And, I can never forget how he introduced himself.

“Call me Chippy”, he said.

And, the world changed for the better.

The 2 leaders hit it off like a house on fire.

All differences were resolved.

A new Constitution was adopted.

Proposed by Admiral Samson, Sanjoy Sen became President and proposed by Sanjoy Sen, Admiral became VP and, the next year, the National President.

Our first PSU President who then headed Mazagon Docks and was building the Naval Frigate.

Admiral went on to be honoured for his services to MDL.

And, he was honoured by Industry as he then worked to forge the merger which created AIEI, CII's predecessor body.

After his retirement from Mazogon Docks, he moved to Delhi with Philips and continued to be deeply involved in the building of AIEI/CII.

As a Council Member.

As the Chairman, Trade Fairs, a new, highly successful activity.

As Chairman of the Members Committee.

As a Mentor to the Secretariat.

Those were golden years of building AIEI and we were so fortunate to have a deeply caring father figure resident in Jorbagh, around the corner from our office.

The uniqueness of Admiral was his Japanese-ness. Country first, self last, very unlike and Indian who normally puts self first.

He was firm and direct in his manner but full of charm, connecting him to people with warmth and affection.

He could 'sweet-talk' anybody, anywhere, anytime. The charm offensive was always ready. Always connecting him to people who then just loved this amazing personality. Full of humour, usually cracking jokes at himself, ready for a laugh and making everyone around him feel the happiness of being with him.

This multi-sided person had the unique quality of courage and determination, perseverance and patience, underneath the humour, the charm and the light-hearted banter. Building ships in Mazdock or commanding the NDA or a fleet, he was a flag bearer of courage.

So, necessarily, in today's world, when people speak of Values, he was a role model. He did not know any other way than to be honest, to be a person of the highest integrity, to be absolutely upright in all his dealings. So, where does one find such a man? "The Complete Man". Combining in himself so many qualities and strengths. If we had even one of these, we would be fortunate. Not just the complete man, but a great man. A man to follow, to love, to respect and to admire.

Sometimes, such people are not family-minded, only driven by career and work. Not so, Chippy Samson. His family was his first love and a source of immense pride.

I remember this man of many parts especially for his incredible role of leadership in the CII, of the CII in the 1970s and 1980s. We were few then. All soldiers, no "Generals". We worked side by side, through the most difficult years to build a different kind of institution. Going beyond industry, being national, engaging the world, creating partnerships and building up brick by brick. He held our hand and lifted our spirits And his pride in the institution, and all of us in it,

was limitless. He gave of himself, took nothing. Let us draw strength from this giant whose byline was 'Call me, Chippy'. A truly great man has passed.