

special accent, "WELL CALI...FOR..NIA is the most BEAUTI...FUL valley in the world." "Who cares?" I thought, not knowing that California would become my home after marriage in November 1983, till this day.



Vibha with her father Mr OP Malhotra

Maths class with Bond (SK Vohra) used to be interesting with Rajiv Singh Hooda, Shruti, Raven, Pavan Sher Singh and GT when Bond would say, pointing to one of the boys, "My friend...are you in or out? Physically, I know you are in but mentally you are counting the leaves of the tree outside."

Once a year, approaching Founder's Day in October, we would start preparing for the three-act school play. After Himani Bhat (three years my senior), a gifted actress in all school plays, passed out of School, I was made the heroine of every school play. The play practices would mostly be after dinner during toy time in the School Hall and I would return home late, sometimes after 11pm. Strangely, dad would not worry as he knew I was in the headmaster's hands. As per his instructions, I would always be chaperoned by a group of boys who would willingly walk me home. We all felt part of a close-knit family thanks to the warmth and perfect direction of the Simeons. So all of us would actually miss being together once Founder's was over. We also missed the attention from the thundering applause that followed each performance.

My first Play in School was 'Thark' with Kanti Bajpai, Himani Bhatt and Vinit Khanna. I had a small part as the maid in the city of Bath and Vinit was the butler! I remember acting in the School Play Charlie's Aunt, directed by our English teacher, Mr AN Dar with late Rohit Khosla and Kavita Sinha (daughter of a Dosco, the then Bursar Major (retd.) Vikram Sinha.) Rohit was fun to work with as he used to mimic Bollywood actors, Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh in their film 'Khel Mein' by singing "Chuk, chuk, chuk, chuk, Bombay se Baroda tak, dil kare dhak dhak hum.....ere hum....) and left everyone in fits of laughter during play practice. He had successfully played the role of Charlie's Aunt wearing a lady's wraparound throughout the play.

In my final year, I realized that I would no longer be studying with my fellow batchmates. I became emotional listening to the Carpenters' records repeatedly! I had bloomed from a sixth grader to a young and confident adolescent. I personally think I accomplished more than I could have in an all-girls' school. Dad was supportive in whatever career I wanted to pursue and between pursuing further studies in drama, becoming an air hostess and working in a chain of Welcome Group Hotels, I chose the latter. I worked as a banquet sales executive for two years before getting married and becoming a wholesaler for Ayurvedic beauty products for Shahnaz Husain in the US.

Being a minority in The Doon School was by no means a disadvantage as those who wanted to excel did so without any hang ups whatsoever. However, when asked if The Doon School should be converted to a co-ed school, my answer is no. With few girls on campus, the boys knew exactly where to draw the line, which perhaps would not be so if more girls had their hostel on the premises. I am of the opinion that the co-ed situation might invite unnecessary trouble on campus. A few notable women excelled after School including Himani Bhatt and my two sisters,