

## Richmond Gills and Horseracing:

Dad (P.S.Gill) was one of the first Race trackers of East Indian heritage. His entry into the "Sport of Kings" began in 1946. Dad and Mom (Betty) were married and living in Langley, where Dad was the owner/operator of a trucking company when he met Thakha Singh, a bachelor with a love of horses and racing. "Old Man Thaka" knew that he was not well, and to ensure that his family in India, as well as his horses in Richmond would be well taken care of after his death, he asked Dad to buy his horses and to send the money to India. That was 1946, and as they say, the rest is history!

Dad and Mom decided to move from Langley and tried to buy property on Alexandra Road, the selling point was location, location, location! The barn backed onto the Lansdowne Racetrack backstretch! There was however a "covenant" on the property which restricted selling to anyone of "Asian" descent. This was not that uncommon in post World War II British Columbia. Dad had the property purchased in the name of a Holding Company, and he and Mom, the horses, the Great Danes and their first born daughter, Charan, moved into 888 Alexandra Road. Dad became one of the many race trackers who lived in Richmond, establishing business dealings and friendships that would span the next 50 years.

Dad was not just an owner of thoroughbreds; he was a trainer, a breeder, an employer, an entrepreneur, a rescuer of strays, a medicine man, a "TV" star, and an International businessman. Dad trained our own horses and over the years trained for Mr Norgan, who owned the xxxx (the Vancouver Mounties Baseball Team) and for Mr P.D. Gordon who .....

We had Mexican and Cuban jockeys who came up every year to ride for Dad. They stayed with us on Alexandra Road and then later on Lansdowne Road. As well as the jockeys, Dad employed many neighbourhood boys as "hot walkers" and "grooms". Like all good trainers, Dad had his own secret concoctions for taking care of the horse's aches and pains. The smell of Vicks vaprorub, malt vinegar and liniment still bring memories of Dad!

If a dog or horse or human being needed a temporary home, Dad would bring them home. He thought nothing of saying "come on in, make yourself at home, we're making curried chicken for dinner".

Dad was a guest on the "Jack Short Show", interviewed by the voice of the races, Jack Short who was the highly respected and talented track announcer.

The racing community was "white" in those days, and Dad was accepted as one of the boys because of his love of horses and his love of Canada. Dad did not believe in hyphenated Canadians, he was proud of his East Indian heritage, but adamant that he was a Canadian!

During the 1940s-1960s, the racing circuit went from Richmond's Lansdowne Park in the summer to Exhibition Park (Hastings Park) in the fall. The old Brighthouse Park stables in Richmond, where the City Hall and Minoru Park are today was used as a training facility. In 1950, Mom and Dad moved to Lansdowne Road, and more horses, plus a second daughter were added to the family! Vicky was born in 1951. It was in the early 1950s that Dad boarded one of his horses at the Blair's farm on Number .... Road. The "six degrees of separation connection", Vicky married Chuck Stickwood, The next move was only three doors down the road, to 838 Lansdowne Road in 1954; this was when Hardave was born.

Lansdowne Road was home to many members of the racing community: the Fishers, the Cliffes, the Van Loons, the McDougals, the Russells. The stories about growing up across from the Racetrack are many and varied. Parking cars in the field for the incredible price of 25 cents for the day! Ice skating on the frozen racetrack ponds in the winter. Walking the horses down the road and across the street to the "Backstretch". Dad being approached by one of the local bookies to set up a phone line in our house (this was way before cell phones!), but Dad turning down the illegal offer! The many hours spent "mucking stalls", sitting up all night waiting for the mare to foal. The Sunday dinners, when Mom's family would make the all day trek from Vancouver to Richmond, there might be 5 or 40 for dinner!!

Mom and Dad sold the property at 838 Lansdowne Road in 1970, when construction began on the Lansdowne Mall. The house once stood across from what is now the entrance to the Zeller's parking.

Dad moved back to Langley, where he lived until his death in 1994. The rest of the family still lives in Richmond.

The racing connection went beyond Dad.

Mom worked as a cashier at Hastings Park.

Charan's university education was paid for from summer jobs at the Racetrack.

Vicky is currently the .....

Hardave has "done it all", from hot walker to groom, to mutuel employee, to track photographer, to owner. Hardave also established Post Time Technologies, a company involved in internet .....

Travis, Vicky and Chuck's son, is continuing the racing connection, not only is he a supervisor at PPT, he is shareholder in two thoroughbreds currently racing in Kentucky! Grandpa would be proud!!!