

Landed IMMIGRANT
Dec 4, 1947.

History of the "Gill Family" in Richmond:

APRIL 6 / 1912

MAR 1, 1930

Dad (Phangan Singh Gill) was born in India in 1912 and arrived in Vancouver, BC in 1930? Mom (Banto/Betty Gill) was born in Vancouver in 1928. Her Grandfather had arrived from India in 1904, her parents in 1927.

Dad had met Thakar Singh, an elderly Sikh bachelor who owned race horses and lived at the Brighthouse Racetrack in Richmond. Thakar Singh was not well and he asked Dad to buy his horses, take over their care and send the money to his family in India. This began Dad's lifetime love affair with horses!

Mom and Dad moved to Richmond in 1948. Even though Dad had served in the Canadian Army, they were not permitted to buy property in Richmond. There was a covenant preventing non-whites from owning property. Dad and Mom solved the problem by buying property on Alexandra Road in his company's name.

Their home backed onto the Lansdowne Park Racetrack. Along with the horses, Dad had Great Dane dogs (10 at one time!). Charan (the first born daughter) was often bowled over by the dogs. Dad had jockeys from Mexico stay in the stables and he would train and race from Alexandra Road, at both Lansdowne Park and Hastings Park Racecourses.

By the time Vicky (Daughter number two) was born, Dad and Mom had moved to Lansdowne Road, across from the grandstand. Dad added to the number of horses in his stable. The pictures of the winners became our family album! The pictures show the friends and family celebrating and growing through the years. Dad now had jockeys from Cuba staying with the family. "Uncle Herbie" would watch "I Love Lucy" and laugh at the antics of the Ricardos.

In 1954, the family was completed with the arrival of a son, Hardave. By this time, the family was living at 838 Lansdowne Road, near the present entrance into the Lansdowne Shopping Centre from Cooney Road.

Lansdowne Road was often referred to by the families who lived there as "the League of Nations". The families included: the Matsuzakis, the Clarkes, the Fishers, the VanLoons, the Grafs,. The 1950's, '60s, and 70s were a great time to be growing up in Richmond. The life was simple, safe and friendly. Members of Mom and Dad's family would talk about coming out to the country for a visit. Family dinners at 838 Lansdowne could be for 5 or 50!

Dad was now breeding as well as training and racing horses. The races continued at Lansdowne Park until 1960(?). the track was then used for training only until 1970 and then became a shopping centre in 1977(?)

The horses then raced at Exhibition (Hastings) Park in Vancouver or at Sandowne Park in Sydney on Vancouver Island. It was on the Island that Dad earned his nickname, "Cousin Gill". One night after the races, a number of "racetrackers" had gone into Sydney for a couple of drinks.

One of the men was not allowed in, as he was First Nations. He asked Dad to tell the bar tender he was Dad's cousin and therefor, an East Indian, so he could be served! Dad was known thereafter as "Cousin Gill". His horse cooler, with his name "Cousin Gill" in his racing colours is now part of the collection donated by the family to the Richmond Archives.

The family

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