

Jasmer Kaur Alamwala

Jasmer Kaur Alamwala arrived in Canada in 1959 from the village of Alamwala, Punjab. Before her marriage, she grew up in Nathuwala, Punjab. Jasmer Kaur was married to Daljit Singh Alamwala in 1957. Daljit Singh was born on June 28th, 1934 in Duncan, B.C. to parents Kishan Singh and Harnam Kaur; however, he moved to India at the age of three due to his mother's health problems. Daljit Singh was married when he returned to Canada in 1951, two years after his elder brother, Sarwan Singh. After arriving in Canada, he sponsored Jasmer Kaur and she arrived in 1959 with her eight month old son, Harminder.

When they first arrived, the Alamwala family resided in Lake Cowichan along with Daljit Singh's older brother, Sarwan Singh's family. At first Jasmer Kaur wore traditional Punjabi suits, however she started wearing dresses and pants because of the influence of the majority Caucasian society in Lake Cowichan. At the time there were two mills in the area and all the Indian men worked there. Daljit Singh worked at a mill in Honeymoon Bay. Daljit Singh and his brother would share one car during the days in Lake Cowichan. Later on, Jasmer Kaur gave birth to four more children, Sukhwinder Singh, Kulvir Singh, Kulwant Kaur, and Baljit Kaur at the Duncan Hospital. In total, Daljit Singh's family consisted of five children, three sons and two daughters.

In 1968, the mills in Honeymoon Bay shut down and the Alamwala family decided to work and live on a farm in Abbotsford. They purchased a ten- acre farm so Jasmer Kaur worked on the family farm while her children attended school. At first, she recalls working in other farms and explains how at the time, the berry flats would only be accepted if they were filled to the top, not by weighing them like present day farm work. During this time, Daljit Singh and his brother found work in a mill located in Squamish so they moved out there. However, they would always return back home in Abbotsford on the weekends and leave again at the start of the week. Daljit Singh only worked at the mill for approximately a year and then started work in Langley.

Jasmer Kaur remembers wearing Punjabi suits when they would visit the gurdwara. They only attended on special occasions though due to the distance it took to travel there. Routine errands such as grocery shopping would be done at the Funks Food store, Super Value, or Co-op located near the Clearbrook area at the time. Jasmer Kaur states how she went shopping every time they were out of something because the stores were at a walking distance. **She would go and put the groceries on her tab and later when paid, her husband would pay the bill.** Since Indians did not own many stores at the time, most of the stores were run by French Canadians. She says that to communicate, they would simply place the items on the counter and pay the price they were told. The average cost of groceries for their family was \$100-\$150 per month. She would go and get about \$15 worth at one time. Sometimes she would even go to the Overwaitea store and purchase three to four loaves of bread for only a dollar and butter used to be a few cents per pound.

When Jasmer Kaur first arrived in Canada, she already had a brother who was settled here. Her brother, Bikar Singh Gill, had come to Canada when he was young and resided in Duncan at the time.

The first time Jasmer Kaur returned to India was in 1974 to visit relatives and for her nephew, Jasvir Singh's wedding. Instead of the entire family, it was her daughter, Kulwant, who accompanied her on the trip for four months.

Today, the Alamwala's continue to live on their farm in Abbotsford and remain a prominent fixture in the Sikh pioneering history in the Valley.