

September 8 2008 (3:22pm)

Pritam Singh Deo (Sohan Deo's father)

[Looking at pictures which were taken]

Interviewer- we would like to ask about your father, Asa Singh?

Pritam- we have his picture

Interviewer- we already saw that picture in this book here also.

Pritam- well I don't even know because I was 3 months old when he left.

Interviewer- what about letters?

Pritam- letters had been coming since '33.

Interviewer- according to them...

Pritam- in '34 he died and since then there was very good correspondence. When he passed away, then the government said that...if there's a question you want to ask go ahead then I will answer. They said that me or my uncle (father's older brother), due to the last will, one of us should come. I was young at the time, 16-17 years old, my birth date is December 17th 1908.

Interviewer- what we are doing is, those who have come here before 1970...

Pritam- it is written here already in this book...

Interviewer- well, in addition to the book, we have gotten a little bit more information from you

Pritam- the things which I have heard, I can tell you also.

Interviewer- in the book, it has only been written that he came in 1908 and then went to the states and then that's it.

Interviewer- so he used to send you letters...

Pritam- yes he used to send letters and he said that he worked as a farmer. When he went there, after coming here he went there, and then bought a farm with someone. They must have told you already...

Interviewer- yes

Pritam- well it was with someone. Then after he worked in the Ghadr Party, from '25 or '26 on. He sent money to our village, at the time when there was a conference in '26, and it was my father's money that the most sent by anyone. They told me then that he sent this much money. Then my son probably told you how in the Stockton Gurudwara he participated.

s- I don't know much about that so I didn't say anything.

Pritam- where they used to meet, he would participate in the Ghadr Party. He would sometimes meet in the Stockton Gurudwara, by coming from Clint, Texas Arizona. The Ghadr Party report then reached the police in Mahilpur, and even though I was only in Grade 9 or 10 at the time, they still interrogated me. My thaiya (father's older brother) had told be before to think about what I say and not say the wrong thing. They asked me questions very politely because I was still a kid, about when a letter would come and when did it last come, and if we went places. I told them that we get letters sometimes and sometimes money also. Then he would requested one of us to go and accompany him so due to family circumstances, my thaiya was the head of the family, he went abroad due to working on the ships. When his ship went to the states he immediately told his brother to go back home due to him being there. Then he went back to India. Since I was still young and he knew that if someone young goes, he's going to change anyways, so then he didn't want to send me as a kid and have my father's name not known. The passport that was already made, he ripped it in front of me. He said that he didn't want me to think that I have a passport available and that I would go abroad. Then I enlisted in the army and then in '54 I was in Calcutta. My talking to other people, one asked me why I didn't apply to go abroad, since it was easier for qualified people. They were Bengali people and they went and got me the form and applied for me. I got a letter from the states stating what information I needed to send. Then I got transferred from there and didn't take any interest any further.

Interviewer- how many years did you spend in the army?

Pritam- I did service for 28 years

Interviewer- during your service, what countries did you travel to?

Pritam- first in India mostly, three years I stayed overseas in the Middle East, in Iraq, Iran, Serrria, Jordan, Egypt, in all those places. I stayed in Egypt a couple of months. Then the war ended in '45 and a tourist party came to England for which I was selected to go. I remained about three months there, in England. There was an option then that if you want to stay there then you can by getting a discharge but I didn't get a discharge.