

GURBAKSH SINGH DHALIWAL – TRANSCRIPTION ENG

INTERVIEWER: first can we have your full name please

GURBAKSH: Gurbaksh Singh Dhaliwal

INTERVIEWER: and Mr. Dhaliwal when did you come to Canada

GURBAKSH: October 27, 1948

INTERVIEWER: and did you come alone?

GURBAKSH: no I was with my mother and my father's cousin

INTERVIEWER: what are their names?

GURBAKSH: ah, Balwant Singh Dhaliwal, and my mothers name is Gurdev Kaur Dhaliwal

INTERVIEWER: can we get your date of birth

GURBAKSH: august 28, 1934

INTERVIEWER: so when you came to Canada who did you come to?

GURBAKSH: ah, my father was here, who was in the trucking business at mission city

INTERVIEWER: and when did he come here?

GURBAKSH: 1926

INTERVIEWER: what is your fathers' name?

GURBAKSH: Hari Singh Dhaliwal

INTERVIEWER: and you said he was part the trucking business?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: did he have his own truck or did he just drive a truck?

G no they has about 10 or 11 trucks called Paul Brothers wood and saw dust. There were a few visitors at that time. And there was no natural gas and everyone was burning wood or saw dust for heating and cooking

INTERVIEWER: and was your father the first person from your family here?

GURBAKSH: no my grandfather

INTERVIEWER: your grandfather?

GURBAKSH: in other words, my grand fathers younger brother, named Bhagat Singh Dhaliwal, my father and my uncle Paul Singh Dhaliwal who lives in Matsqui, they were both nephews to him but he told the immigration they were his and that is how they entered Canada.

INTERVIEWER: what year did your grandfather come?

GURBAKSH: 1908

INTERVIEWER: and your grand father came the same time?

GURBAKSH: my actual grandfather was in the British Army Force in Hong Kong

INTERVIEWER: ok

GURBAKSH: and most of the people, if they had brother here (Canada) he would claim another brothers or sisters son, as his own, and bring them to Canada under false statements, and so forth. which was cleared in 1946 when they gave everybody citizenship, they said everybody has to tell the truth if you're a nephew or an actual son, they said they would not send you back to India if you told the truth, so I would say about 99% of the people told the truth, that we came as sons but in reality we were nephews.

INTERVIEWER: so I am a little bit confused, Bhagat Singh was your grandfather's younger brother?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: and he came in 1908

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: and your grand father was in the British army in Hong Kong

GURBAKSH: yes, well in the police force in Hong Kong

INTERVIEWER: did he ever come here?

GURBAKSH: no

INTERVIEWER: what was your grandfather's name?

GURBAKSH: Surinder Singh Dhaliwal

INTERVIEWER: so Bhagat Singh immigrated your father and your uncle Paul Dhaliwal?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: and was Bhagat Singh the first member of your family here?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: do you know how he came here?

GURBAKSH: oh the immigration was open in those days; all you needed was a ticket from Calcutta
And everybody came by sea in those days. So you landed here and that was it. And around 1912 they stopped the Asiatic migration, the Chinese, the Japanese and all the so called east Indians, Punjabis from India.

INTERVIEWER: so you were quite young when you came here

GURBAKSH: ah I was fourteen

INTERVIEWER: and then you went to school here?

GURBAKSH: yes I went to Mission High; I was in grade 7 when I came. In 1952 I was out of school.

INTERVIEWER: so when you came here your father was already quite established

GURBAKSH: yes, very well established

INTERVIEWER: so did you have house when you came here?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: who lived in the house with you guys?

GURBAKSH: my father, my mother and my dad's first cousin

INTERVIEWER: you owned the house?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: would you know how much he bought the house for?

GURBAKSH: it was on the 8 lots, that is where they made the mission bridge, the waste land on horn ave, they were 25 feet lots, so that make 200 for 8 lots, we had 5 stores, and a house and in between is were we parked the cars and trucks and the gas pump.

INTERVIEWER: were the stores just there or were they yours?

GURBAKSH: no they belonged to my father and uncle

INTERVIEWER: but they were part of the family

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: what kind stores were they?

GURBAKSH: well there was a restaurant in one, an office in another, a repair shop in the other, the other one sold power saws and repaired them and the 5th one was sharpening saws

INTERVIEWER: and they were all family run?

GURBAKSH: those stores were rented out, to all these different people. I was going school at that time.

INTERVIEWER: and were they leased to other Indians?

GURBAKSH: no mostly Canadians, some were from France, some from Poland, some were Czech.

INTERVIEWER: were they all immigrants also?

GURBAKSH: yes, they were all immigrants

INTERVIEWER: was Mission a very big immigrant community then?

GURBAKSH: ya there were a lot of different people who went to school with me, they were from all Nations, Britain, Scottish, um polish, Czech, there were some Hungarians some from Austria and some Italian boys, but they all spoke better English than I did, because I was a new arrival.

INTERVIEWER: what was your first impression of Canada when you came here?

GURBAKSH: well the first impression was that I was a little lonely and I didn't know how to make a beginning, but it took a few months to get on with it. And the school staff were very kind to me. They understood my problem with English, they tried to help me every way they could

INTERVIEWER: were there many Indian children about your age at school at that time?

GURBAKSH: no there were total about 10, my age and older

INTERVIEWER: so you were one of the youngest?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: besides going to school did you hold down a job, or did you help with the trucks?

GURBAKSH: I use to work during school holidays, for a month or 2 months, there was a lumber mill called Mission saw mill, I was there 2 summers, and 2 summers I worked in Lake Cowichan, Honeymoon Bay, Vancouver Island. Then I got out of high school and started to drive a truck, which was after 1952.

INTERVIEWER: was your graduation a formal graduation?

GURBAKSH: no I never finished my graduation, dad's health was not good, so I had to quit school.

INTERVIEWER: and what grade was that?

GURBAKSH: grade 11

INTERVIEWER: when you were working in these mills do you remember what your wages were?

GURBAKSH: well they paid me 75 cents an hour at mission saw mill. Then the following year the IWA worker had about \$1 an hour, I being student only got 75cents an hour, but that's ok. In 1950 we renewed our IWA contract; the wages were raised up to \$1.25 an hour.

INTERVIEWER: what is the IWA?

GURBAKSH: international woodworkers of America, it was a union.

INTERVIEWER: but as a summer student you probably were not part of the union right?

GURBAKSH: no I was not part of the union because I was a student, so I did not have to pay any income tax or anything from my paycheck.

INTERVIEWER: how much did you make at the western forest industry

GURBAKSH: I worked there 2 months, they had a cookhouse, a bunkhouse, and I saved \$350.00.

INTERVIEWER: for the 2 months?

GURBAKSH: yes for the 2 months

INTERVIEWER: how long were the shifts, how many hours did you work?

GURBAKSH: 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week

INTERVIEWER: that was at the mission saw mill as well?

GURBAKSH: same thing

INTERVIEWER: after completing grade 11, when started working with the trucks, how long did you do trucking for?

GURBAKSH: I did trucking from, through 1963

INTERVIEWER: when is the first time you went back to India after you had come to Canada?

GURBAKSH: that would be 1957, June I left I came back end of October same year

INTERVIEWER: and what was your reason for the trip?

GURBAKSH: well my dad was telling me to settle down and find a wife

INTERVIEWER: and what day did you get married?

GURBAKSH: august 14 1957

INTERVIEWER: when did your wife come to Canada?

GURBAKSH: that was January, 1958; I think it was the 21st or 23rd, one of those dates.

INTERVIEWER: what is her name?

GURBAKSH: Prit Dhaliwal

INTERVIEWER: what was maiden name?

GURBAKSH: Prit Mohinder Grewal

INTERVIEWER: you came back in October, so it did not take very long to come?

GURBAKSH: no, she made her medical but some people had a hard time getting through medical,
because... I don't know whatever the reason was, they had some eye problem or had malaria or something else. It's very difficult to tell what the reason was, but see India being a warm country, most of the people had a problem with their eyes. Either they were red or something, it's really hard to say, I can't really describe what the problems were

INTERVIEWER: so your mom came with you in 1948, when she came did she work?

GURBAKSH: no, after arriving due to the climate she started to have asthma attacks, then around 68, 67, 66, she found that if she went berry picking in the summer for a month or two helped her, the attacks were much less. Because she probably sweated a lot, more physical activity

INTERVIEWER: when your mom first came did she wear suits (traditional) or western clothes

GURBAKSH: she started to wear western clothes in about a year

INTERVIEWER: did most East Indian women wear western clothes

GURBAKSH: yes, right

INTERVIEWER: was it strange for you to see your mother in western clothes?

GURBAKSH: no

INTERVIEWER: how many people lived in your house when your wife arrived?

GURBAKSH: oh, it was my mother, and my father passed away October 5 1957, that is why I had to come back from India, so there was only three of us

INTERVIEWER: did your uncle no longer live with you

GURBAKSH: no, my dads cousin moved out in 1951 I think.

INTERVIEWER: all your children were born here?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: how many children do you have?

GURBAKSH: three, Hardeep was born on July 9, 1958, and Harvey was born December 9, 1960 and Pooma the youngest one was born February 3, 1962

INTERVIEWER: you said you did trucking until 1963, what did you do after that then?

GURBAKSH: I worked for Watkins saw mill until September 1967, from then until April 1970 I worked for Canadian ply woods in new west minister, I was a shareholder there.

INTERVIEWER: when stopped trucking what happened with the trucks?

GURBAKSH: I sold them to Fraser valley pulp, they are Gladwin road, and the owner name is Cornelius Klassen.

INTERVIEWER: how much did you sell them for?

GURBAKSH: \$5000 I believe

INTERVIEWER: what year was that?

GURBAKSH: 1963

INTERVIEWER: how much do think your father had bought them for?

GURBAKSH: he bought them second hand and paid about \$5000

INTERVIEWER: oh so you got what you paid for them>?

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: how many trucks did you have?

GURBAKSH: about three

INTERVIEWER: so after 1970 what did you do?

GURBAKSH: Canadian plywood closed down and I started to work for Acorn Forest Industry, but anyway, then it became Gregory Industries and then BC Forest bought it in 1973. Then around 1988 Fletcher Challenge Canada bought it from them then they closed the place down in 1989 and offered anyone member that was 55 a pension package, I took the package and retired. After that for eight years I did a security job, and in 1999 I really called it quits, and retired.

INTERVIEWER: you stuck with the company through out the changes.

GURBAKSH: that's right

INTERVIEWER: back to you children they all went to school here, and was that in mission?

GURBAKSH: Hardeep went up to grade 4 in mission, and Harvey till grade 2, and Poorna started Grade one in Surrey we moved out to Surrey in 1968, our property in mission was bought out by highway commission to build the bridge.

INTERVIEWER: when you first came was there a small bridge then that linked you to Abbotsford?

GURBAKSH: oh that was a small bridge the Highway commission rented from the CPR, when the train came we waited 5 or 10 mins, and then one side went, and then other side it was only one way.

INTERVIEWER: and you have been in Surrey ever since?

GURBAKSH: yes it will have been 40 years this August

INTERVIEWER: once your wife came were there other members that came?

GURBAKSH: no but there were another 4-5 families in mission.

INTERVIEWER: what is the name of your village in India?

GURBAKSH: Chananwal district Sangroo, Punjab India. In 1948 the Punjabi population was very small, the Toronto population was 4 bachelors, and then there were 2 families in Calgary, the Harry family and the Rama family, and maybe 4 or 5 families in Kamloops, 3 in Chilliwack, 11 in Agassiz, 2-3 families in Abbotsford, 10 bachelors from 1906, mission had 4-5 families, the rest of the populations was in New West, Vancouver and Vancouver Island in Lake Cowichan, Port Alberni, Duncan, the total population in Canada was about 1800 all over Canada.

INTERVIEWER: so then you probably all knew each other?

GURBAKSH: yeah, most of the elders from 1906, then the other group which was here in 1932, just about everybody knew everybody

INTERVIEWER: everybody probably helped the new immigrants

GURBAKSH: yes

INTERVIEWER: when you mom came here, she mostly stayed home?

GURBAKSH: yes she was a house wife, she did the cooking, the laundry and kept the house clean, That's about it.

INTERVIEWER: were there any ladies that lived nearby?

GURBAKSH: ah later on in the 50's, the new families came in about 52, 53, 54. The quota was set up by the Canadian government, there were allowed 150 nephews in 1951 and then started to arrive in 1952 then after 2 years they changed to rule to brothers, no nephews. And with brothers, his sons, son in-laws, daughters, with one application a group of 25 began coming. They also extended from 150 to 300 people. Then after that in 68, Trudeau changed the paper, he said as long as a person has proper education, physically fit and below 30 we will accept. Visitors began to come; you applied for it and stayed. The new immigrant was more and more. I think now we have over 700,000 all over Canada.

INTERVIEWER: what was the requirement when you applied for some body?

GURBAKSH: if you had a job, and you were who they would stay with, and they were young enough to work and pay taxes, which is good, and a low burden on older generations.

INTERVIEWER: your family has been here for some time, and just looking around this room they seem very established, your daughter Hardeep went on to become...

GURBAKSH: a school teacher, she got BA in education, she had a diploma from BCIT in Communications. And she also had a master degree in Journalism. She worked in Quebec, Montréal she spoke French. She then came to Vancouver and worked and produced for CBC radio. My sons went on to pursue business careers.

* note after the recorder went off we found out that Mr. Dhaliwal's daughter Hardeep had passed away from cancer a few years back.