

Gurdev Singh Dhaliwal was born in the village Patishakma located in the district Barnala in Punjab, India. Gurdev Singh's parents' names were Mr. Jaginder Singh Dhaliwal and Mrs. Sham Kaur Dhaliwal and he has two siblings, a brother and a sister. As a child growing up in India, he went to school and helped his father with farming. He arrived in Canada on July 11th, 1952 by flying to Hong Kong and then a connecting passenger line ship took him to San Francisco. It took him 26 days to reach San Francisco and from there he took a train to White Rock, B.C. He met many South Asians both on the plane and encompassing ship who accompanied him throughout his journey to Canada, even though he did not know any of them prior to his travel. Before arriving to Canada, Gurdev Singh made the very difficult decision to cut his hair and remove his turban as well as to shave his beard and mustache. He anticipated the racism beforehand and wanted to ensure that no one would abuse him. As a result of the drastic change in his appearance, even the immigration officer doubted if he was the same person as his passport picture looked very different.

He was encouraged to come to Canada by his Uncle, well known pioneer, Paul Singh Dhaliwal. Paul Singh, who was an avid wrestler and even contemplated becoming a professional wrestler, wanted Gurdev Singh to pursue the same career path as Paul Singh had plans to send him to the United States for wrestling. Unfortunately, the wrestling career did not come to fruition for Gurdev Singh. When he first reached Canada he was extremely happy and excited at the future prospects in his life. His uncle picked him up from the railway station at White Rock and took him to his home in Mission, BC. Gurdev Singh's parents were upset when he left India for Canada as his mother asked him to promise that he would visit as soon as he got his citizenship. It took him five years to get his citizenship; however, he kept his promise to his mother and would revisit India in 1958.

Indeed, over the years, Gurdev Singh would continue to visit India a number of times. The first time he went back was in the year 1958 and he stayed there for about one and a half years. He continued with the family farming during that period. He then returned to Canada as his sister and paternal aunt's applications had been accepted and they were joining him in Canada. There was a time when he had to fly back to India five times a year; therefore, he had enough mileage with Air Canada to occasionally win a free ticket.

In Canada, Gurdev Singh began his professional career by truck driving. He worked with a lumber company for some time and then changed his job. At his new job he drove large rolls of paper to the United States and brought back the produce. He loved his job greatly and found crossing the border a very exciting experience. Although he mostly lived in Mission, Gurdev Singh did live in Northern BC, in Houston and Smithers for two years while working as a truck driver. His family then bought a piece of land in the United States which they contracted out for three years until the person went bankrupt.

During all these years in Canada Gurdev Singh asserts that he did not face any kind of discrimination perhaps because Mission was a small town and maybe because his uncle Paul Singh was highly respected in the region. Despite there being just about six to seven Indian families in Mission, Gurdev Singh is

particularly proud that a Sikh, Mr. Grewal became the mayor of Mission for two terms. This is a testament to the respect the Indo Canadian community has attained in Mission.