

Harnek Singh Gill

Harnek Singh Gill was born on December 6, 1947 in village Dhudike, district Moga (Punjab). His father, Prem Singh Gill belonged to Dhudike village and his mother Mallan Kaur Gill was from village Harika Burj located in the Faridkot District. Harnek Singh Gill had five brothers and five sisters. His brother's names are Pal Singh, Preetam Singh, Magar Singh, and Sukhdarshan Singh and his sister's names are Pal Kaur, Dalip Kaur, Surjit Kaur, Preetam Kaur, and Nashatar Kaur.

Harnek Singh Gill came to Canada on May 6, 1961. He landed in Vancouver and later on he stayed with his brother, Pal Singh, in Mission for 16 years who had arrived in 1952 on a quota basis and later sponsored his family. When Harnek came to Canada, he studied until grade six. In 1977, he moved to Abbotsford and decided to live there. His brothers and sisters also came to Canada with the exception of one sister, Pal Kaur. Five of his siblings Pal Singh, Pal Kaur, Preetam Singh, Dalip Kaur and Magar Singh are now deceased. The remaining family lives together in Abbotsford now.

Harnek Singh worked in an Abbotsford saw mill for almost 12 years. He did not face any difficulties during this time. After this mill closed down he bought ten farms in 1977 and started working on it. In addition to working at the farm he also worked at a graveyard, a factory, and a poultry farm as these multiple jobs provided him enough money for his living. He remembered that at first his pay was merely \$1.00 per hour. When he first came to Canada, he liked the country and the living standard of people but this low salary was not enough to support a decent living.

Harnek Singh was married to Bhagwan Kaur in Abbotsford at the old Sikh temple on October 17, 1964. Bhagwan Kaur came to Canada in 1964 and after the wedding began working at a local canary in Abbotsford. The couple had three children, a son named Satnam Singh Gill who was born on April 3, 1967 and two daughters namely Karamjeet Kaur and Charanjeet Kaur born in 1966 and 1969 respectively. Both his daughters work at an Income Tax office in Surrey.

According to Harnek Singh, he never faced any kind of discrimination in Canada as those around him did. He found that generally Canadians gave him a lot of respect and he respected them as well. On coming to Canada, he never took the help of his community and tried to manage everything on his own. However, he does admit that he also did not have any kind of social life as he worked all seven days of the week.

Harnek Singh is now retired and works on his raspberry farms, being a part of the very fabric that helped to build the agriculture community of the Fraser Valley. He has two grandsons and one granddaughter. Their names are Davinder Gill, Jastinder Gill and Kulwinder Gill. Both his grandsons have completed their graduation and are doing their diplomas in criminology and accountancy respectively. Harnek Singh visits the temple regularly and also has donated more than \$5000 to the temple. He recalls that when he came to Canada, the Sikhs were a very tight knit community and people lived happily and supported each other in needy times. He wants to live in Canada only as his family is here but continues to visit India occasionally to meet other relatives and friends.