

KERPAUL AND SUCHA SALL

Interviewer- to start this off can I start with your full name?

Kerpaul- Kerpaul

Interviewer- and how do you spell that?

Kerpaul- K.E.R.P.A.U.L., Hayer, H.A.Y.E.R.

Interviewer- but you go by Polly? And can I have your name?

Sucha- my name is Sucha.

Interviewer- so Polly you were here before Sucha right?

Kerpaul- yes

Interviewer- how long has your family been in Canada for?

Kerpaul- okay, since, well my grandfather came in 1907.

Interviewer- and what's your grandfather's name?

Kerpaul- Diwan Singh Sall

Interviewer- and from what you know, did he come here by himself?

Kerpaul- that I don't know

Interviewer- were there any other family members?

Sucha- no he by himself

Kerpaul- there was no other family members because he brought a whole bunch of family members over after. Not even family, a lot of people from the village

Interviewer- so he came in 1907 so I am assuming he came by ship

Kerpaul- well I'm sure he must have

Interviewer- do you know what he did once he was here? Like as far as work?

Sucha- sawmill.

Kerpaul- everybody worked in sawmills at those times.

Interviewer- do you know what sawmill he was working at that time?

Kerpaul- no

Sucha- we should know that. Davinder knows more about it than we do.

Kerpaul- actually my cousin, he's always been on top of those things.

Interviewer- so, 1907, I guess then did he go back to India for marriage?

Kerpaul- he went back to India and never came back again.

Interviewer- do you know when he went back to India?

Kerpaul- what was the year when dad first came out?

Sucha- in '30 something.

Kerpaul- I'm really bad with numbers and I really never paid much attention to them but my dad came out in the '30s, late '30s.

Sucha- well he went back then came back in '51 with your mother.

Kerpaul- '52 actually, that part I remember

Interviewer- so what was your father's names?

Kerpaul- Beant Singh Sall

Interviewer- is it S.U.L.L. or S.A.L.L?

Kerpaul- we used S.A.L.L.

Sucha- actually her grandfather had his thing was, her dad wasn't educated, so he had an understanding that educated boys should come here so her dad's brother who was younger, and his name was Nand Singh, and he was educated and so was her dad's cousin, you know who I am talking about, Kabel Singh Sall, and they were both educated, and even though he was not his

real brother, but you know they were bringing his dad over but he brought his cousin, his nephew and his son over before her dad came.

Interviewer- so what year did they come do you know?

Kerpaul- they came, I have no dates

Sucha- we can get you those dates

Kerpaul- the dates I can get though.

Interviewer- and who are you saying has these things

Kerpaul- my cousin Davinder, he is really good with dates.

Sucha- but I don't think we can get them from her passports we have at home

Kerpaul- I don't have any passports.

Interviewer- does Davinder live on the island?

Kerpaul- no he lives in Richmond.

Interviewer- so okay, your father came in the '30s then.

Kerpaul- and he was a widower. When he arrived, so when he went back, he married my mom, and they came in '52.

Sucha- that's when she came

Interviewer- so what is your home village in India?

Kerpaul- Paheepur

Interviewer- and where is that?

Kerpaul- just outside of Phagwara, in fact very close to Phagwara now.

Sucha- District Kapoorthala but it's closer to Phagwara.

Interviewer- so he was married previously. do you know his date of birth?

Kerpaul- no his passport it said January 1st 1900.

Interviewer- on his immigration documents it said that

Kerpaul- all his documentation said that. When I saw that on the passport, I had to laugh.

Sucha- my name wasn't what I told you when I came, I was in my 40s but really 49.

Interviewer- so what happened to his first wife?

Kerpaul- she passed away

Interviewer- natural causes?

Kerpaul- yes

Sucha- sickness I believe

Kerpaul- something, I do remember she was very sick someone said and she passed away.

Interviewer- and when did your parents get married?

Kerpaul- it would be in the '50s

Sucha- no, no I think it was about '50

Kerpaul- early '51

Sucha- well you're born in '51

Kerpaul- well December '51 so early '51

Sucha- yea so it would be '50

Interviewer- and what was your mother's name?

Kerpaul- Nasib Kaur

Interviewer- so you were saying that your grandfather actually sponsored a lot of people

Sucha- yes he did

Interviewer- so, you were saying you weren't too sure about the dates, but do you know roughly how long he was here for?

Sucha- I think he went back in the '30s, but then again we are not prepared for that. If you had

told me we could have found out those things before hand. Because somebody asked me, reason I know, 1907, basically baba here sponsored so many families, you know, like basically not only his, like he didn't bring her dad over. He brought his younger son, which is her uncle, then he brought his nephew over, then he also sponsored two or three village people. There are family here, scattered all over. And they respect her because her grandfather helped their father, because that is the kind of person he was.

Kerpaul- he sponsored so many that the immigration officer said, and everybody he would say that is my son. That is my son. The immigration officer said 'I would like to meet your wife'.

Interviewer- so your grandmother was she here also?

Kerpaul- no

Interviewer- she was in India?

Kerpaul- my grandmother passed away when my dad was very small.

Interviewer- and she remained in India

Kerpaul- Davinder told me this story that when baba went back to India, he saw my uncle, the one he did bring over, and chacha, they were out in the field working and then he got mad, he said that is not the place for them, put them in the schools, educate them more. So, I guess coming out here learnt the importance of education.

Interviewer- so was your father the eldest?

Sucha- yes he was the oldest

Interviewer- do you know how many brothers and sisters he had?

Kerpaul- my dad had a brother and a sister

Interviewer- what was the sister's name?

Kerpaul- puah's name, what was puah's name? She never came here, she stayed in India.

Interviewer- so after your father arrived here in the 1930s, you said he went back in '51, got married

Kerpaul- I think it was '50

Sucha- I don't think he went back for a year, I think he went back in the '40s, he went back in the late '40s and he had four sisters

Kerpaul- his first wife had four daughters

Sucha- he had step-sisters, four of them, and he got remarried to have a boy, the only reason to get remarried

Interviewer- so then, you were born in '51 then? What is your birth date?

Kerpaul- December 5

Interviewer- so your father, when he came did he come straight to the island or did he settle somewhere else? And when he arrived I guess his brother was here and his cousin was here, is that who he came to?

Sucha- that's right

Interviewer- and you were just

Kerpaul- I was 9 months old

Interviewer- your mother ever tell you stories about when she came, what it was like?

Kerpaul- actually she's told me more stories about the ship when they came over

Interviewer- so in 1951, you and your mother came on a ship?

Kerpaul- 1952, mid September '52

Sucha- they came to San Francisco, then took the train over

Interviewer- so it was Calcutta to

Sucha- San Francisco I believe.

Kerpaul- to Hong Kong, Hong Kong to Honolulu, and then San Francisco

Sucha- then San Francisco train to Vancouver

Interviewer- did she ever mention the name of the ship?

Kerpaul- no

Interviewer- what kind of stories did she tell you about the ship?

Kerpaul- mostly about me, everybody was bored and I was the only child so I got sent over, she hardly got to see me all day long, and the one thing she always liked to tell was that they had big fruit , you know bowls and I used to pick them all up and take a bite out of each one. She loved to tel that story

Interviewer- so I'm assuming there were a lot of Indian families that were traveling at that time?

Sucha- there were, yes that's right

Kerpaul- there weren't a lot of families, she used to say there were a lot of single guys, single young guys

Interviewer- so I'm assuming when your mother came in the '50s, there were a few women still here at that point

Kerpaul- very few

Sucha- there were two families, her mom and her chachi (dad's sister-in-law) they traveled together. Chachi was on the same ship. I'm assuming...

Kerpaul- baba's nephew, the one he brought over with my uncle

Interviewer- which was Kebal Singh

Kerpaul- that was Kebal's wife

Interviewer- so did then Kebal Singh and your father come back together to get married?

Sucha- no so chacha was gone there too but...

Kerpaul- I cant even remember how long chacha stayed there.

Interviewer- so by 1952 your immediate family was here, your father. Do you know from speaking from your father, if you came to a house?

Sucha- it was basically bunk, it was a house by the company, like where they, when she came to the, her mom came to this country, the lumber company and they had the bunkhouses for the single people, I saw those myself, they were about 3 of them

Kerpaul- there were four

Sucha- plus the cookhouse, that was any people who didn't have a family, single people used to live there. They also had 8 houses, was that right?

Kerpaul- they actually had 9 houses

Sucha- there was 9 homes, built by the lumber company on their property, adjacent to the mill, and they were given to them for very minimal, I don't think it was any rent

Kerpaul- no there was rent but I think it was ridiculously low rent. I remember there was \$20 taken off for rent

Interviewer- off the paychecks?

Sucha- and that include the Hydro and heating the home.

Manj- Same thing like how it was at Paldi right?

Kerpaul- I'm not sure how Paldi operated

Sucha- it was actually better than Paldi, they didn't have, they did have a mill which I never saw. But they have bunkhouse, and that situation is the same. And the houses were not built by the company, they were private. And these were actually on the Hilcrest Lumber company's property. Which you can see where approximately it was, where the bunkhouses were. Because I was just there last year when we went for the 40th anniversary. And they also had a family, see

the thing in those days, from the stories that I heard, it was hard to get the people to work. Basically there was a shortage of people, we are talking about the 40s, people were in the wars. See a lot of people are gone to fight in the second world war. So there was a shortage of people, because her uncle used to be, Nand Singh, was a supervisor, and so there was a shortage of workers so a private company they provided the living for, initiatives so they could keep the people steady for work

Interviewer- so that probably, the war provided for more Indo Canadians to be getting positions in the mills

Kerpaul- but even in those days, the Indians were paid less than the whites. They had a scale.

Sucha- your dad told me the story, when her dad was working, and chacha told me too, in the early 30s I am talking about approximately, 31-32 they were working in central lake, which is just past Port Alberni, on the island, they were working there and I think I got that document, that was not for that mill but for the mill I am working in, and they used to pay the white, \$0.25 an hour and the Indians would get \$0.10 an hour. It was like a 15 cent difference

Kerpaul- and the Chinese too

Sucha- if you want the document, I can give you the document. It's not related to that, its for the mill I am working at from 1906, I got that pay schedule, what it was at that point. And I have it, they said the Japanese, where I work now, there used to be Indians there too, they don't mention Indians on the pay scale but they show the Japanese.

Kerpaul- I thought it did

Sucha- getting back to the 30s, her chacha and her dad used to work for Hilcrest and that was the pay scale. In 1935, that is when the union was formed. IWA, so that is when the Indians started getting the equal pay. And chacha told me, her dad's cousin, used to tell the story. Even those days, the union was formed, the company then didn't want to deduct, now by law they have to deduct the union dues and give that to the union. And company didn't want to help because that would be like helping the organization. So anyways, then it was that for the union they had to pay the union dues themselves. Indians are kind of cheap they didn't want to pay so that was a problem. Some people did not pay the dues, but they want the benefits of the dues. So those are the kind of struggles I heard from her chacha and her dad. That is about your dad coming in the early 30s, because I heard the stories about chacha.

Interviewer- so did you find some documents?

Sucha- no we talked to her cousin, so he knew. He's in Vancouver.

Kerpaul- see nobody kept documents in those days, I wish they had

Manj- because those things are priceless. Some of the stuff, there is a guys who settled in Richmond in the early 30s, Jack, all the stuff he gave was all invaluable. Like letters from the Queen.

Interviewer- so do you know how long your father, like when you came you lived at one of the houses

Kerpaul- provided by Hilcrest

Interviewer- do you know how long you guys stayed there for?

Kerpaul- yes until I was 17 years old.

Sucha- most of her life.

Kerpaul- yeah when the mill shut down in 1969, that is when we moved

Interviewer- so your father worked there right until the mill shut down.

Sucha- yea actually I worked there for a few months. I just came to this country then people started leaving, then I had to go to school. I think I worked 3 or 4 weeks.

Interviewer- you're family lived at Hilcrest, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Kerpaul- yes I've got a younger sister and a younger brother

Interviewer- what are their names?

Kerpaul- my sister's name is Kuldeep but my brother has passed away and his name was Surjit

Interviewer- and they were born here on the island?

Kerpaul- yes

Interviewer- what hospital?

Kerpaul- Duncan

Interviewer- and do you know Kuldeep's birth date?

Kerpaul- her's is June 17 1954

Interviewer- and Surjit?

Kerpaul- August 4 '59

Interviewer- and when did he pass on?

Kerpaul- he passed away may 19 1989

Interviewer- did you go to school then?

Kerpaul- Masachi Lake, when I first started school, they had a one room, literally one room school house. And they had grades 1,2, and 3. Kindergarten wasn't offered in Masachi Lake, I didn't go to kindergarten because when I was registered I was 5 years old. And they say at 5 years old you are supposed to be in grade 1, well maybe I was going to be 6 that year so I was in grade 1. But my cousin she was a couple of months younger than me but the way that her birthday fell, she was told she had to go to kindergarten. So she was bussed from Masachi Lake to Lake Cowichan for kindergarten, but grade 1,2, and 3 was like we had 4 rows of desks, and this was grade 1, grade 2 and that's grade 3, and that was for the left overs.

Interviewer- in your class, was that mostly children of all the workers?

Kerpaul- everybody in Masachi Lake, everybody that lived there, worked at the mill.

Interviewer- and in your class, was it a mixed group, or was it predominately Indo Canadian?

Kerpaul- very little, we were probably the only two families. Just a few. It was mostly white.

Sucha- out of the 9 houses, those were the only families there

Kerpaul- in my class, in my grade, there was 4 kids. I was the only east Indian.

Interviewer- so the houses that your speaking of then, they were 9 occupied by Indo Canadian families?

Sucha- those were the only families at Masachi Lake, the rest were all single in the bunkhouse.

Kerpaul- then the community grew, so up to grade 3 I went to that school, 4 and 5 I was in Lake Cowichan, we were bussed, and then grade 6, they expanded the school, the Masachi Lake school. So my grade 6 was back home

Interviewer- where did you go to school after that?

Kerpaul- up to grade 6 I was, I went back and forth. 1-3 in Masachi Lake, 4-5 in Lake Cowichan, 6 back in Masachi Lake, then I graduated from Lake Cowichan.

Interviewer- all the way through high school

Kerpaul- except for 3 days. Well the mill closed in December, at the end of November was when we were moving.

Sucha- mill closed I think in August

Kerpaul- yea it closed in the summer. A lot of the families had moved out by then we were one of the last to move because we had a house in Duncan where we were going to move into the house. And so I did start my grade 12 year in Lake Cowichan, and then my family moved here, then I went to school for 3 days here, I cried for 3 days at home, I wouldn't speak to anyone, I

wouldn't eat, basically I was miserable. And so it was my dad, I was away from my friends, so my dad said there must be a teacher that I could ride with. He said I will pay her, go back to school. So then I did phone up a teacher and she was thrilled to take me and she did, for the rest of the year she took me. When I went back to the school, I went up to the principal and said I want to graduate here. He said no problem.

Interviewer- when you were young, growing up, your mother, did she work?

Kerpaul- nobody in those days worked outside the home. Actually my parents, they kept their own cows, so we had our own milk, kept chickens, my mom had a terrific garden, we had more garden than lawn. And you know, life was rough in those days, we had a wood stove for cooking and heating, and we had to pitch in too. Mind you all the wood was supplied to you from the mill, and when you're running low, a truck would come and dump a bunch of it at your place. And as soon as you came home from school, you saw it.

Interviewer- so your brothers and sisters also went to school then. So, after you had to leave, Hilcrest was closed, what did your father do then?

Kerpaul- retired

Interviewer- and so you were saying that you were 17 years old at that time, and you were also working

Sucha- actually I knew her then, through family relation, her uncles actually sponsored my dad, my brother, my brother sponsored for me to come, I came to this country in 1967. The mill was working then, I saw all the setup, their house. So I came in 1967, my brother used to work at the mill and live in Lake Cowichan. So I stayed from there '67 to '68 I went to school.

Interviewer- so what year did you get married?

Kerpaul- '72

Interviewer- the date?

Sucha- July 30th. When I went to school and took auto mechanics, so in '68. So that is why I only worked 3 weeks at the mill then I had to go to my school in Nanaimo. I think September

Interviewer- did you hold a job during high school?

Kerpaul- not at all. My sister did because we were in Duncan at that time, she was grade 12 and she waitressed.

Interviewer- do you know where?

Kerpaul- it's no longer there, Mill Bay, it was a small café.

Interviewer- and by that time, was it common for Indian girls to work?

Sucha- it was not common, it was becoming, it was coming as a few Indian girls started working. It was just starting to

Interviewer- and when your family, when you came here with your mother, did your mother wear traditional clothes, or did she adapt to western clothes.

Kerpaul- traditional all the time but if they were ever going to go somewhere, like Masachi Lake had a little corner store, but you would have to walk through the white people's houses to get there, they would have, my mom had a beautiful wool 2 piece suit, she wore that or she would make her own dresses. They would always wear something like that if they stepped out of the house. But where we were, the community, like the mill was all around, but our houses were in the middle. And we were kind of secluded because there was a kind of lumber yard on that side and then the white people had their houses on the other side.

Interviewer- were those ones also owned by the mill?

Sucha- no those ones weren't

Kerpaul- they were rented, no all company homes

Interviewer- but there was a seclusion then

Kerpaul- there was a seclusion, even with the bunkhouses, of course the east Indian bunkhouses were where ours side was, the Chinese were the furthest, if this was the white side, the Chinese were on the other side.

Sucha- the point you might want to add, in that mill, there were 3 supervisors, one was for the Indians, her uncle Nand Singh, so he hired or fired Indians. That was his responsibility. So when the Chinese worked, they had their Chinese supervisor. He did their hiring and firing, and there was also a white supervisor.

Kerpaul- but a lot of it was for the language, because when you are fresh off the boats from India, you have no idea what the boss expects of you

Manj- yea, you need a liaison

Sucha- not only that, you have to go back to the history of the Stone family, that family was as they were, they felt like they were east Indian, family provided for them. At Hilcrest Lumber company used to be close to Duncan, and in I think in the early 30s, there was no timber left in this area, so they had to move to Masachi Lake. Closer to where the timber was. And, even those days, the Indians didn't work. Then her uncle was really good, he was educated and was a really good worker, and he became a supervisor, even at the old mill here. And, they Stone, there were 4 brothers, but the dad, his name was Carlton, he actually respected the Indians through her uncle. You have to imagine those things went on in the 40s when the war was going on. And I even remember the story, her uncle, it's very hard work for the Indians, the labor, and it was really hard work loading the cars, basically piece work. The quicker you fill the car, the more money you make. So, when the Indians would eat, they eat 'Pinnies', they wanted milk and butter, and in the 40s, there was no, there was a shortage of butter. You couldn't get butter because of the war. So, the story, her uncle used to be the only person having a car in those days, he said when there was a shortage, that the workers will work, but there is no butter at home for cooking, so they said 'you guys work and I will provide the butter' so they went across the line to the states and get all the butter they want, so he provided for them.

Interviewer- so, this was

Sucha- that was in the early 40s

Interviewer- was that, Mr. Stone that would go across the line?

Kerpaul- no my uncle.

Sucha- he was supervisor.

Manj- he was the only one that had the car. And he went across the border?

Kerpaul- yea to get the butter for the workers? Mind you he had a lot of, he was a very charismatic guy. And at that time there were no ferries, there was the CPR boat and if he was running late, he would run and say I want to be on that boat, hold it for me.

Sucha- he was a fun loving guy.

Interviewer- speaking of your uncle, this house that you lived in, was it your immediate family that lived there, or your full family, like with your uncle.

Kerpaul- no they had their own

Interviewer- but in the same area?

Kerpaul- same area

Interviewer- so out of the 9 houses, 2 of them were yours, like your family, and I'm assuming one was maybe...

Sucha- Kabel Singh. Actually what it was that he was very smart, our chacha. he was very smart. He said he wanted to build his own house so he built his own house on their property.

Interviewer- on the Hilcrest property?

Sucha- that's right. So his was also nicer than the rest of them. Somehow they provided all the heat they provided everything, but he built his own home.

Kerpaul- he got to sell it afterwards with the land

Sucha- they bought it off him

Interviewer- so they provided everything for it but he owned it

Kerpaul- actually the Stones were very generous people. They were an awesome family

Sucha- when I came to this family in 1967, that was in one company that used to give a turkey, of whatever size you want, they used to

Kerpaul- you tell them how many you have in your family

Sucha- there used to be the Overwaitea, or the COOP. store, and they used to know that whatever size turkey we need we could go pick up.

Kerpaul- every year they would pay for a pageant for the kids that they would put on, we used to do little skits, do songs, it was pretty decent, it wasn't just a dinky little thing, the teachers were told to stretch it out, it was at least an hour long. After that, one of the guys would dress up as Santa Claus and the company gave a nice gift to each child. My sister still has a little china set that her daughters play with. From those days.

Manj- is the Stone family still around

Sucha- yes they are. The last one died but their kids.

Kerpaul- still in the area

Manj- are they still in business?

Sucha- only one. Doug is the only one.

Kerpaul- the old man, the one who started the mill, Carlton, the way he was, all five sons were the same way. Usually you find somebody, a little different, but no they were all the same. But after that, I guess, it changed.

Sucha- they socialize like with their family, like with their uncle. They were at our wedding.

Interviewer- so, it seems like that particular community was very friendly with each other

Kerpaul- it was so close knit it was like family.

Interviewer- so did the Indians and the Chinese, did everyone get along or was there no mixing, how did that work?

Kerpaul- there wasn't that much mixing to the extent where you socialized with them, like I would bring friends home from school, because basically they loved to eat roti and mom would make it for them. That was the main reason. And we would go play with them. But the older generation, that is why they never kept the language. My mom would never, she knew who Mary's mom was, who Sherry's mom was, like my friend's mom she would know who they were, and they would smile and say hello but never.

Interviewer- so it was the children that mostly mixed with each other. And growing up in this area, like even going through school and stuff like that, did you feel that it was a harmonious community or did you, was there ever any racial tensions?

Kerpaul- actually there weren't. Everybody was accepting, you knew you were different, they knew you different, but it was more accepting.

Interviewer- everyone knew their place

Kerpaul- I think so

Interviewer- and, there's a temple at Hillcrest too

Sucha- there was, the temple moved to Lake Cowichan, when the mill shut down, that society, obviously the mill was to shut down, even the temple. We got a picture of that by the way. And,

the temple was on mill property, all the lighting, heating was provided by the mill. Obviously the mill was going to shut down, so there was no need for people, everybody moved out. The Gurudwara was moved to Lake Cowichan. Tore down all the lumber, so Lake Cowichan is an extension of Masachi Lake.

Interviewer- so do you guys know when that temple was built?

Sucha- the Masachi Lake.

Kerpaul- as far as I can remember, it was always there.

Interviewer- and so were there quite a few functions at that temple then?

Kerpaul- every Sunday. We went to church every Sunday, we had a granthi. Every Sunday we went to church.

Sucha- not only that, all the functions were divided between the Gurudwaras, the India independence day was celebrated at Masachi Lake.

Kerpaul- people from Vancouver would go there

Sucha- and Vasaikhi was the Victoria temple, that was their celebration so everybody would go there. So when Independence was at Masachi Lake, everybody would come there and Canada day was this holiday at Paldi

Kerpaul- it was always at that gurudwara

Sucha- so everybody would come to those Gurudwaras, so that's how it was in those days. I don't remember what days were where but every gurudwara had, it was small community, so they divided up the days.

Kerpaul- people were excited in those days, like we used to have company a couple of days before hand

Interviewer- like when people would come from Duncan?

Kerpaul- we used to have people from Vancouver. We used to have a lot of company. In fact there were a lot of mattresses stored at the gurudwara, and a week beforehand, my mom would tell the guys and say okay, we had a big house, we had a huge house it was really open, and she would have them bring the mattresses over and she would be busy washes the linen and whatever.

Sucha- so the independence day, which is August the 15th, and that was actually celebrated on August 15th close to weekend that was Masachi Lake day, which then transferred to Lake Cowichan of course, but now it is kind of lost. And I remember even going to Vasaikhi in Victoria because it was a big thing, the tournament, and it was Victoria's function.

Interviewer- so I guess, do you know from maybe, if this story was ever shared in your family, but maybe from your chacha ji, but he was here when India got its independence right?

Kerpaul- Chacha Kabel would be here, so would chacha Nand. They would both be here.

Sucha- I think they were both here. What had happened was when the fight started, they were stuck in India, but after the fighting stopped, then they came.

Interviewer- do you know from stories how they celebrated it here?

Kerpaul- nobody shared anything like that.

Interviewer- let me ask you a little bit about your chacha, what was his wife's name/

Kerpaul- Manjit Kaur

Sucha- did they live in the same house you were, or the next one?

Kerpaul- see we lived in the one with Buja guys, and they lived in the one we lived in, so when they moved out, we moved into that one.

Interviewer- and how many children did they have?

Sucha- four

Kerpaul- two boys

Interviewer- what are their names?

Kerpaul- Jeevan and Gurvinder, Parmjit

Sucha- that is a daughter

Kerpaul- and Gary

Interviewer- so then living in close quarters, it must have been a nice family atmosphere

Kerpaul- it was, like even some of the friendships we had then, you feel like their family, you carry on today.

Sucha- there is another family in Port Alberni and she makes the same connection now when we see her. She lives in Port Alberni, she was their neighbor

Kerpaul- but even now like Shirley, when it was my son's engagement, that is how I now, that is the only way we are connected, and when I phoned her up, and she said she even told her kids, this is like family, you guys aren't going anywhere that weekend. So it was, it was very, very different. Like what I find really strange nowadays, is my son lives in Vancouver, the people across the street are Indians, but they don't know each other. In fact I don't even think he know how many people, who lives there. Both sides, he's got a German couple on one side, really nice, they talk to each other, he's got a young gora (Caucasian) on one side, their fine, mind you the Indians in the back are fine but that's mainly because one of the boys is Reggie's age, so they talk to each other. But in those days, we made the effort, because they are Indian, let's go find out where they are from or whatever.

Interviewer- like the word 'apnay' actually applied.

Kerpaul- it really applied

Sucha- and I noticed that when I came to the vasaikhi at Lake Cowichan, everybody from the town came to see me.

Kerpaul- he came from India, lets see what's happening

Sucha- my brother, they all came to visit, to see his brother

Kerpaul- see I did too

Interviewer- so when did your brother come here?

Sucha- my brother came in 1964

Interviewer- and what's his name?

Sucha- Taru Singh Hayer

Interviewer- and who did he come to?

Sucha- he came to actually, a strange situation, her chacha, Kabel Singh, he was lets explain a little better, he was actually just like a brother, there were 3 close friends with my brother's father-in-law who was in Canada. They actually lived in the bunkhouse. Together so they were really good friends, they socialized so much that when my brother got married in India, the chacha's family went to my brother's wedding.

Kerpaul- he wrote to his wife and said make sure you go to my best friend's daughters wedding.

Sucha- so actually, he, because he, my sister-in-laws father was a Canadian, so she was automatically a citizen, but to do the paperwork you need somebody here to do the paperwork from this side so my brother and sister-in-law can come here, because her father had passed away. So her uncle actually helped my brother to do his the paperwork in this side, so he actually came to chacha family.

Interviewer- so after that another thing, if your father was a Canadian citizen, and you were born in India, you were still considered a Canadian citizen?

Sucha- the way it used to be, I can tell you about my sister-in-law's situation, if you were a

Canadian citizen and this is a prime example, my brother's father-in-law was a Canadian citizen and he went back and got married. And he had my sister-in-law, who is the only child by the way, and when she was born, because he was a Canadian citizen, even though she was in India, she was raised in India, she married and had 3 children there, she was a Canadian citizen. But when my brother's father-in-law was alive, they never pursued it, it would have been better to pursue it himself because he himself would talk to chacha, that we should try to go to Canada. So then you need, when they go to immigration in Delhi, they said we somebody to kind of give you some kind of sponsorship in Canada like if you go there who are you going to go to. So just letter, they never met or see anybody, each other.

Interviewer- just out of curiosity do you know when your sister-in-law's father came to Canada?

Sucha- they have a passport, I could find out, but I don't know for sure. I do know they have a passport.

Manj- he was probably here for a long time, he was a Canadian citizen

Sucha- he would say, I would say, I would only be guessing because chacha Kabel Singh was here in early 30s, so he was here in either late 20s or early 30s, he was here for a long time ago, because chacha was actually a very young man at the time, my sister-in-law's father was an old man, he came here then went to India very old and then got married. And so, he actually came to the bunk house, where chacha was a cook there for a while, and your chacha actually cooked there in the bunkhouse. So I think somehow he would come eat and chacha would read the letters, and they became friends some how. And the friendship was so, like at my brother's wedding I was a baby so her chachi talks about me being at the wedding and stuff like that. So it was really good connection between chacha's connection with my sister-in-law's father.

Interviewer- that brings me to my next question, since your families were already intermingled, was it an arranged marriage?

Kerpaul- it was

Interviewer- you were married in 1972, so did your family remain in Duncan?

Sucha- yes

Kerpaul- actually you know what we did do, is after when I graduated, well I wanted to, I did get a scholarship from school, I was going, in academics, biology and math is what I did, and I thought okay I'm going to go to university. And my dad, old school, nope she is not going by herself so the whole family moved to Vancouver. Well dad was retired so the whole family moved to Vancouver. And, as we get there, one of my sister-in-law, she was going to become my sister-in-law yet, she said why do you want to go spend four years of school for? I am working in a bank, you are not going to make that much more money. So I thought, okay why not, so I went and applied and I got a job in Vancouver.

Interviewer- what bank was it?

Kerpaul- Bank of Montreal. It's right at Main, it's that old building, it still had Bank of Montreal on it, they shut down after, but the building is still there. It is right after you get off the George divide, it's right there.

Interviewer- so did your sister get to go to university?

Kerpaul- no she didn't

Sucha- then they moved back to Duncan by the way

Interviewer- but it wasn't that your father didn't want you to go to university, he just wanted to be there.

Kerpaul- I couldn't go by myself

Interviewer- but he was okay with you going

Kerpaul- he was okay with me going.

Sucha- but she got talked out of it

Kerpaul- my sister-in-law talked me out of it, we did not like living in Vancouver, but we just didn't like even in those days, the hustle and bustle of you know, we liked the easy life here and so then I told my dad that there is a Bank of Montreal here so I can apply and get transferred. My whole family was delighted, my little brother included, so we moved back

Interviewer- so how long were you, was your family in Vancouver for?

Kerpaul- we, I started work in August and I was back in mid-March

Interviewer- so you graduated in '69, so August of '69 you guys moved out there?

Kerpaul- yes

Interviewer- so you didn't attend school at all?

Kerpaul- no

Interviewer- where in Vancouver did you guys stay?

Kerpaul- my dad bought a house there, 57 th, between Main and Fraser.

Interviewer- and at that time, do you know how much that house cost?

Kerpaul- I have no idea

Interviewer- so at this point, you had just graduated from high school, and your father was retired, how, what was the source of income at that point?

Kerpaul- just from his retirement, plus my mom did still, even when we came here we came on the farm, like where, Amarjit guy's house is, behind that, the whole strip

Sucha- there was about 27 acres

Kerpaul- that my dad and his cousin, Kabel Singh owned, they still had, she made money selling the milk from the cows and stuff like that

Interviewer- so the 27 acres then, what was on that farm?

Sucha- basically just cows

Kerpaul- just land, they would give, it would produce hay for the animals

Interviewer- and how long did you have that property for?

Sucha- from 60s, they bought it in the early 60s, to I think, '62

Sucha- they bought it for \$7000

Interviewer- and how many acres was it?

Sucha- that was 27 acres and plus there was a house on it

Kerpaul- which they rented out

Interviewer- do you know how much the rent was for that house?

Kerpaul- you know that it what I was just thinking, it was ridiculously cheap, I cant even remember if it was \$30 or whatever, it was ridiculous. Mind you it was a little house, an elderly couple lived there, I think they were Scandinavian.

Sucha- they bought the land here, they used to come and visit, then when they moved here, they built a house just in the beginning of it. Then slowly they sold it.

Interviewer- okay so, when you moved back in Duncan, you built a house?

Sucha- it was already built

Kerpaul- before my dad, when he was still working in Masachi Lake, we built a house then.

Because we knew that we will have to move anyways so it means we have a house

Sucha- there was a rumour that the mill will shut down, there was a rumour three years before.

So they built a house when the mill was still running, they built a house on that land, prior to the mill shutting down.

Interviewer- what I mean is when your family moved to Vancouver, you guys still had that house

in Duncan?

Sucha- oh yea

Interviewer- do you guys still have it?

Kerpaul- until just a while ago, mom passed away

Interviewer- so after you moved to Duncan, did you work at the Bank of Montreal?

Kerpaul- oh yea I did

Interviewer- and then you got married?

Kerpaul- I got married

Interviewer- and where did, were you guys living in the same house or were you guys living in a different house

Kerpaul- we lived in an apartment

Interviewer- just the two of you?

Kerpaul- just the two of us, we lived in an apartment for almost a year, then we built our own house.

Interviewer- I guess your dad was living pretty comfortably then off the retirement, and the 27 acres, and rented house. How long did they have that property for?

Kerpaul- they sold it

Sucha- from '62 they sold it until dad passed away in '74

Kerpaul- dad passed away in '73

Sucha- we got married in '72 so

Kerpaul- sorry my mistake so yea '74.

Sucha- dad passed away in '74. The property was sold in 1980.

Interviewer- I'm sure for more than \$7000?

Sucha- it was about \$300 000, I think it was \$300 000

Kerpaul- if not close to

Interviewer- so did, your sister, is she still on the island as well?

Kerpaul- she is now

Sucha- she got married and moved to Vancouver

Kerpaul- her marriage broke up and she was struggling at that point, struggling and her job situation was to where she wasn't working, they had shut down. She was, what do you call it, a typesetter for a newspapers and whatever, so she started subbing in here and there, sometimes she'd have to go to Abbotsford, sometimes she was working a day a week, and she had she was raising the two girls by herself. No support of help from her ex. Then there was a job offer that came up with the Queens printer in Victoria, so she applied and got that.

Interviewer- if you don't want to talk about it, you can stop me at any time, what year was your sister divorced?

Kerpaul- we were in this house, I say about '93-94.

Interviewer- so my question kind of is, I'm sure it's still a little bit tabooed, but how did your parents handle that?

Kerpaul- you know, of course my dad wasn't around then, she, we were so surprised. He was abusive, and we suspected, because she never shared it with us. And, mainly because they figured we would stop going there and she would the relationship with us. So she kept it hidden. But when, how it really happened was, the older daughter, she was having problems, she's got two girls, at school she just broke down and started crying one day. And the teacher took her to a councillor and the councillor started talking to her and she was saying what had been happening at home. And Sukhveer, that was when Sukhveer locked her Iqpal, and she spent the

night outside and that's how bad it was. So they called social services and they took both the girls and they phoned my sister at work, and said do you want your daughters back and if you do you are going to have to chose between the girls or your husband, so she chose the girls. And she phoned my mom and she just told her

Sucha- she phoned you first

Kerpaul- she phoned me first and I said we'll be behind you, whatever, and then she drove down and told me, she said that's the reason I wasn't telling you. Then she phoned mom and the first thing mom said was bring the girls and come here.

Interviewer- so she was quite supportive

Kerpaul- very, very supportive. And we were very, very surprised, because of old school, what is going to say, you're supposed to tough it out or whatever. But I think that's all that my sister needed to hear at that time.

Interviewer- and how did, and you can stop me at any time, but how did the community here react to that, you said that all the families were kind of interconnected and stuff

Kerpaul- I think a lot of people basically knew what an ass he really was

Sucha- I don't people were surprised because the person you are dealing with, everybody doesn't find out right away in the community right away, so close family members find out, like our family my side of the family, her side of the family. But, it was kind of okay because you knew the kind of guy he was

Kerpaul- a lot of people say that it was a blessing, it was a good thing

Interviewer- so everybody was supportive

Kerpaul- they were and now she just got married

Sucha- so that happened '94 so you can imagine things are changing now, you are going to change even though we are an older generation but things are starting to change.

Kerpaul- well she just got married in September. She married a white guy. And my aunt, my masi (mom's sister), at my son's engagement, first she said she wasn't going to tell anybody, and I said now you're being silly. People are going to find out. She said if they find out that's fine, but I'm not going to go spread it that I'm getting married. But he's a really nice guy and if he's really good to her, for the first time in her life she has somebody that actually cares about her. But my aunt, she actually, well we didn't want her to be surprised, I told my mami (mom's sister-in-law) and my masi, I said I don't want you guys to be shocked, but she did get married, and both of them said good. And at that engagement my masi went upto my sister and she said introduce us.

Sucha- just minor changes, like imagine that 40 years ago when we got married.

Kerpaul- well even mami, said he's a member of our family, introduce him to your brothers, like our cousins, she said take him around and introduce him

Sucha- we are still the older generation but a lot of the times have changed.

Kerpaul- a lot of it is still the families right, it's the way the families are. But a lot of it, you have to change with times. You don't have a choice.

Interviewer- I was just curious to know what the response was at that time. I know it's the 90s but still

Kerpaul- at that time, for her, everybody was supportive of her.

Interviewer- and you, your mom she passed away also?

Kerpaul- 3 years ago, in December of 2005

Interviewer- so you yourselves have two boys, after living in the apartment, which was in Duncan, you were working at Bank of Montreal, and you were working at the mill, what mill

were you working at?

Sucha- I was working at Chevanous Sawmill

Interviewer- and when did you have your first son?

Kerpaul- February 18 1976, makes me feel so old.

Interviewer- was he born at Duncan hospital?

Kerpaul- yes

Interviewer- and what's his name?

Kerpaul- Sandesh, we call him Sandy

Interviewer- and your other son, when was he born?

Kerpaul- May 20 1980

Interviewer- and his name?

Kerpaul- believe it or not, his legal name is Reggie but his middle name is Manraj. Well I figured, even with Sandy, he was always gonna be called Sandy, he was always gonna sign Sandy, so then with Reg came along, we thought he is always gonna be called Reggie, that's gonna be his legal name, so he was Reggie Manraj

Interviewer- do you still work at Bank of Montreal?

Kerpaul- nope, actually when the kid came along

Sucha- she was supervisor at the bank

Kerpaul- I was supervisor of all the deposit account, which was basically half the bank at that time. But, when the kids came along, I decided I wanted to stay at home with them, my mom was very upset

Interviewer- that you stayed home?

Interviewer- because she couldn't babysit, she said I raised you guys didn't I, did I do something wrong? And I said, thank you very much for raising me but I want to raise mine just like you raised me. She was quite upset at that time

Sucha- see after that she said move near us. We had a mother-in-law near by, we chose, her to quit her job to raise our own children.

Kerpaul- I wanted to stay at home

Interviewer- so how long did you stay home for?

Kerpaul- I stayed home til Reggie was in Grade 2, I remember, what I did was I just took an income tax course just for my, because I did it for everybody, I did it for my whole family, just for my education. And the one teaching it was a friend of mine that I worked with at the bank. So she had her own little shop set up so she asked me to do income taxes for her and my condition was I start after I drop the kids off at school, I'm there to pick them up and I don't come back after that. And I get the week of spring break off. Because my boys are in hockey. She just looked at me and said you have got to be kidding, and I said no, but she said okay you're hired.

Interviewer- are you still there?

Kerpaul- no I worked with her for, after that she needed a little book keeping help so I took a little book keeping course and I was working Tuesdays and Thursdays 4 hours and that was it. But it was in the 1994 that I started working in the accounting office and then I started, even then I wanted part time and that's what I told them, because I still had the kids at home. And his parents were with us part time at that time too. So we had a house full and our hands full but they need help too at work so you thank the odds and say well it's a nice job so it became pretty steady

Interviewer- are you there now?

Kerpaul- no actually I left that too. I stayed there for about 3.5 years but they went through a lot of cut backs, business was getting sold and stuff like that so then I working for this fellow that owns this mall, this office mall and he's got businesses all over the place so I do his book keeping and I've been there for 12 years.

Interviewer- and you were saying that your older son is married and has a boy

Kerpaul- a little boy

Interviewer- and your younger son just got engaged and if you don't mind me asking, what do they do now?

Kerpaul- Sandy is a banker, takes after his mom, he's with HSBC and the reason he moved to Calgary is they offered him a really nice promotion. He moved 3 years ago. He was in Vancouver and about 3 years ago they offered him a really nice promotion and he said now they are asking me, rather than me asking them so they took it.

Interviewer- and what about Reggie?

Kerpaul- Reggie is, actually he went into trades, he's an electrician by trade but because it's slow now, he got into a place where they, a brokerage firm for lighting and stuff

Sucha- electrical lights

Kerpaul- so what they do is somebody has a big apartment building or whatever going up they tried to put in packages for them from different companies and whatever

Interviewer- and your sister, she lives in Victoria now?

Kerpaul- yes she does

Interviewer- and her daughters are they

Kerpaul- her daughters, one moved out to Calgary a few years ago and she is moving back next week. One went to SFU, stayed in Vancouver on her own for about 5 years and now she's back home too. She's just finishing off, there's one course she could do online, so she's just finishing that off then she's going to be out in the job force.

Interviewer- sorry to bring this up, but your brother had passed away what year?

Kerpaul- '89

Interviewer- he wasn't married?

Kerpaul- he was married, he had a little girl

Interviewer- and how is she doing?

Sucha- well don't ask that question

Kerpaul- she's a nice kid, it's just that she's got not so nice relatives on that side.

Sucha- she gave us a lot of trouble

Kerpaul- after my mom died, her mother's family took us to court and did all kinds of things, so needless to say I have nothing to do with her anymore which is sad because that was the last connection I had to my brother.

Manj- and she's younger

Kerpaul- she's 23 now

Interviewer- change the topic a little bit, when was the first time you went back to India?

Kerpaul- after I got married

Sucha- when I took her back in '75

Interviewer- and was that just for a visit?

Sucha- yes, well my family was still there and it was my first time going back too. Since I've come.

Interviewer- but you were saying your parents also were here?

Sucha- they came after.

Interviewer- what year did they come?

Sucha- '85

Interviewer- did they stay, or did they go back?

Sucha- not they actually came, both of them came different times before to visit, then in '84 my father got sick so we went back in '84 again after the '74, so then, me and my other brothers we decided to bring him over because it's easier to take care of him.

Interviewer- and just a general question, especially here on the island, how do you think the Indo Canadian community has changed, progressed, like what is your view on it?

Kerpaul- I wish we had progressed, yea because I don't think we mingle enough with, and I'm just as much to blame as anybody else, with the other, Duncan should be our community, not just apnay community, I think we should be mingling more with them. Still keep your identity, still keep all your stuff, but I think we should be more a part of what happens.

Sucha- I think her question was as how our community has to get a long

Interviewer- no just, I'm just throwing that out there

Kerpaul- that's what comes to my mind, we still kind of, I wouldn't really say secluded, we're living amongst them, getting along with them, but still you know, one of my ex-neighbours, like when we were living on the other end of the town, he said that 'we are not prejudiced, you guys are', and me I'm getting ready to argue with him, he said, 'look how many houses you walk past to go visit so and so, just because they are the same colour or whatever'. He was very blunt, he was very English.

Sucha- he said that your community has been here for a while now, I don't see them in any

Kerpaul- any clubs or anything

Sucha- Lions club or the other

Kerpaul- oh there's zillions of them

Sucha- the clubs, they are not, he was right there

Kerpaul- we still can

Manj- we do segregate ourselves a little bit

Kerpaul- and I think now, where we are at this stage, we shouldn't be doing that anymore

Manj- even when you walk into class, university first day, you'll see the apnay here, even the Asians, the Mandarin people will be here

Sucha- well you know I saw that, I try to make the point that I, I have a pretty good job, I'm a lumber inspector, I'm basically dealing with a lot of white folks basically, so apnays when they had lunch they were all together, in one lunchroom. So I had to sit with them because I didn't want them to say that I'm trying to be a white person, you have to kind of keep your, I kind of remember I used to take, yea lunch with the apnay guys, both the coffee breaks with the white guys, I used to walk just by them, because the job I did pertained to the lumber, just checking the number, what was done the previous year. Just going to the office and making sure what was the day shift, just for knowledge, and the other two that went with me, if I didn't go with them, it wouldn't be very nice. So I tried to do that, all my work, same thing when I was working my other job. Same thing I sat with white guys and the Indians.

Manj- I do the same thing, it still exists.

Kerpaul- but I think it's a little bit of a security thing too, especially, like you said the first day of school and stuff like that, you feel kind of safe.

Manj- like how you guys were saying earlier on, how even like in the properties where you were living on at the mill, like how all the Indians were supposed to live here and the white people here. You see that in the community too like in Abbotsford, all the white people live on this side

of town, Indians live on this side of town.

Sucha- that is the, see how we are when we barbeque here, this house is white people, the next is Indian. 90% of the time, we don't socialize with them, they just moved in two days ago, you go around and socialize with them, and so basically that is wrong. So we do, we socialize with everybody, I didn't invite any, I invited all three neighbours to the engagement and the upcoming wedding, because that's how we normally would do Indian people, like whoever was our neighbour, we would invite them all to the wedding. Why should white people be any different.

Kerpaul- somebody you see everyday, check my mail whatever, somebody you rely on

Sucha- they, like when I go on holiday, I turn the water off, it's a good idea to do, make a turn the water off, turn your hot water tank on because why waste energy. And the water turn off, even if somebody is going to look after the house, you can have them overnight, it would still be flooded, so if your turn the water off, it's one thing you don't have to worry about. So we had the water turned off but by the time we came back, they had the hot water tank turned on. They do that for you.

Interviewer- do you still work?

Sucha- yes I do

Interviewer- same mill?

Sucha- same mill

Manj- is IWA still around

Kerpaul- they don't call it that anymore

Manj- yea they went downhill, last 5-6 years maybe

Kerpaul- back to your question, what the community is going, our community as a whole, I think we area losing our family values. Everybody is too busy working, running around trying to get ahead or whatever. I think it's catching up and I think that may the problem plagueing the lower mainland right now. I mean everybody's families are different, we don't know, but when you generalize and look at it, that comes to mind.

Sucha- well if your comparing to Vancouver I can say one thing, that on the island, the community is a little more closer than Vancouver basically. Vancouver, I remember when the step sister was the only connections we had at the time, I wasn't married in the family or anything. So that connection we knew her through the family, so if we went anytime, we would go to Shino's house, crash at her place. Not only the family, close family, but some of the friends.

Interviewer- the step sisters, did they come with you guys too when you immigrated?

Kerpaul- the younger one did, the older ones were all married, the older three were married, and the younger one came with us.

Interviewer- what was her name?

Kerpaul- her name was Shino

Interviewer- and how old was she when she arrived

Kerpaul- she'd be 16