ISHAR KAUR MAHAIRHU (Nee Banga)

Granddaughter of Thakhur Singh Banga.

Ishar Kaur was born on the 15th of October, 1934 in Burnaby, B.C Ishar's family has a very long pioneering history in British Columbia, Canada. Thakur Singh Banga, Ishar's grandfather first came to Canada in the year 1906. During his early days he spent some time in Vancouver Island, New Westminster and Abbotsford. His fourteen year old son, Nand Singh Banga (Ishar's father) and his younger brothers Pritam Singh and Hardit Singh joined him in the year 1920. They began working along with their grandfather. The family also worked in Coombs on Vancouver Island and later moved over to the mainland Vancouver to work for the Mohawk Lumber Company in the city of New Westminster. The entire Banga family: Thakur Singh Banga, his brothers Pritam Singh and Hardit Singh, Pritam's wife, along with the brothers' three sisters lived together in two houses which were constructed very close to each other, spread in about 4 acres.

The Banga family leased Harry Singh's farm for two years and after the family bought cows and some of the equipment, they slowly established a dairy farm. When Harry Singh passed away and his children decided not to lease the farm to the Banga family, they decided to pursue other entrepreneurial interests. When a family friend of the Banga's, Mr. Ken Neil from Mission and owner of Canadian Canners, suggested to them to use some of his land, it was certainly a great opportunity. Consequently the family moved to Mission and remained involved in the dairy farming business until the year 1958.

In 1938, Ishar Kaur's mother went back to India along with Ishar, her two sisters and her brother Mohinder Singh to stay. Ishar's brother's Bimb and Ajit Singh continued to stay in Canada with their younger Uncle Hardit Singh, who had earlier returned from Punjab and their grandmother. The family from Canada all got along very well with cousins in India. Ishar was only one year old when her family went back to India and only returned back from India after getting married to Rattan Singh Mahairu in the year 1956. Her father, brothers, uncle had all moved to Canada by then.

As soon as she came to Canada her family visited the Gur Sikh temple. The family did not have a car hence they did not frequently visit the Gurdwara. The first time when she visited the temple was on a big occasion- the birthday celebrations of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji were taking place here in the Gurdwara. That was in the month of November in the year 1956.

Ishar Kaur very clearly remembers her father doing sewa in the Gurdwara. "He would do langar sewa. In those days everything had to be done by oneself, there were no machines to help you," remarks Ishar. "Where everyone used to cook is the same place where there is a kitchen in the Gurdwara now. They used to use coal, then." According to Ishar there were many ladies who used to help make langar. Among them taking the lead was the Tayiji aka, Mrs. Mohinder Kaur of the Thandi family. There were few families in Abbotsford and Mission. Thus, the Gurdwara was the focal point for everyone. It was the site to celebrate occasions there together.

Ishar is able to recollect that there was a tall cedar Nishan Sahib. She would like to see that the Gur Sikh temple, which has now been considered as the National Historic Site, to be remembered for times to come. It represents her community's history but also the very intrinsic history and involvement of her grandfather Thakur Singh Banga and father Nand Singh Banga.