

Davinder Singh Dolla Transcription
Interview Date: November 10th, 2014

Meena: What is your name?

DD: My name is Davinder Singh.

Meena: Davinder Singh?

DD: Yes.

Meena: Last name?

DD: Dolla

Meena: In what year were you born?

DD: January 11, 1954.

Meena: Where were you born?

DD: Mmm... District Hoshiarpur, pind Monakalam.

Meena: Mona..?

DD: Monakalam.

Meena. Monakalam. When was the first time you immigrated to Canada?

DD: My first time... 1989, December 7.

Meena: Okay. When you immigrated here for the first time, what was your status?
Was it in regards to family class? Or marriage?

DD: By marriage.

Meena: Marriage based?

DD: Yes.

Meena: Okay. Now I will ask you questions about your story and the very first time
you came to Canada.

DD: Mhm.

Meena: When you came to Canada for the first time, according to you, what was
environment like?

DD: In the mills, there was work. In mills and farms. There was lots of work at
nurseries. When I came for the first time, I went to work at the mill-uh, in the farm.
When I came, after a few days... I went to work at the farm; it was very cold there.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And... there was lots of freezing. Snow had fallen.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: It felt very difficult for me. Then after that, in January-February, the two months
it was really cold; work was slow.

Meena. Mhm.

DD: After that, in March, in the mill – in Mission there was a mill- Inland was its
name, Inland Shake Shingle Mill.

Meena: Inland Shake and Shingle?

DD: Shake and shingle mill.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And there was my Masr Ji, Samara Singh. With him I- He was a foreman there.
With him, I began to go to work at the mill.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: For a little while I worked there as a helper.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: After that I worked on the chipper – the chipper was the main job at the mill. I began working on the chipper.

Meena: On the chipper?

DD: Yes.

Meena: What is that?

DD: Chipper.

Meena: Oh, chipper!

DD: Yes, chipper.

Meena: Okay.

DD: Umm... then after working a few day-time shifts, I had to begin doing night shifts.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: For quite a time I worked there, basically 3 years at that mill.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: After that, due to the mill shutting down, I had to change mills.

Meena: Okay.

DD: After that, umm, in Maple Ridge, there was a mill ... Fraser Cedar.

Meena: Fraser Cedar.

DD: Yes.

Meena: In Mission?

DD: In Maple Ridge.

Meena: Oh, in Maple Ridge.

DD: What they call a gill-mill...

Meena: Mhm.

DD: I had applied there. They had called me and I got a job of the chipper.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: Of the chipper operator.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: There I worked around 10 years consecutively.

Meena: Okay.

DD: Night shift.

Meena: Okay.

DD: Then after that, in the farm- well due to there being days off, days off in the mill, I began going with someone to work in the farm. There, as I was working in the farm and they saw that I did decent work...

Meena: Mmm.

DD: And after that, they offered me to stay there and work with them.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And 9 – uh – in 2000 uh....I began working in the farm.

Meena: Yes.

DD: And after that, consecutively for 14 years, I worked at that same farm.

Meena: Okay.

DD: And to this day, I still work at that farm

Meena: Okay.

DD: Continuously.

Meena: So, when you came for the first time in 1989...

DD: Yes

Meena: You spent three years at...

DD: The mill.

Meena: At the mill. What was the name of it?

DD: Inland Shake Shingle Mill.

Meena: Inland Shake and Shingle. After spending three years there, you spent ten years at Fraser Cedar?

DD: Yes.

Meena: Which is in Maple Ridge.

DD: Yes.

Meena: And that was your last mill.

DD: Yes.

Meena: Okay, that's good. Now I'm going back a little bit. Now I... before coming to Canada, what village did you live in?

DD: Village Monakalam.

Meena: And...

DD: I was born there.

Meena: Okay. And did you do any work in that village? Any type?

DD: In the village, our work was agricultural.

Meena: Okay.

DD: And... I... uh was studying and after studying for a little bit I had my marriage.

Meena: Yes.

DD: And after that, for a little bit I was learning welding.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And...

Meena: Of welding?

DD: Of welding.

Meena: Yes.

DD: And after learning the work I got married and after my marriage the plan had been made to come to Canada.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And...

Meena: And the welding that you were learning and left had then just turned into a job in the mill at Canada then?

DD: In the mill, I was also doing whatever welding work by helping along the side.

Meena: Oh, okay.

DD: In the mill. And the farm that I work at- which I now work at as a foreman...

Meena: Mhm.

DD: There, whatever welding work there is, I do it all and machinery.

Meena: Yes.

DD: What I learned about welding has come into great help here.

Meena: Okay. Uhhh... what kind of mill was it that you had worked at? Saw mill? Shingle?

DD: Shingle shake.

Meena: Both?

DD: It was both. It was both.

Meena: Okay. And I think that you had already answered your reply to this question about how you had found work at this mill.

DD: Yes, yes.

Meena: And you said that there was an uncle here.

DD: Yes, my uncle... he is my Masr – Shangara Singh.

Meena: Okay. And did he find you the job or did you apply yourself? What is the story?

DD: He was the foreman helper there. And with him I began to go to work.

Meena: Okay. And did you know prior to coming to Canada that you'd be working in the mill with your Masr Ji or did you find out after your arrival?

DD: Before I came I had told him that I am going to come and work with you. They had also needed men then.

Meena: Yes.

DD: Then after asking the owner, he had taken me with him.

Meena: So you were already set before in India. You had a plan...

DD: Yes, yes.

Meena: To come to the mill.

DD: Yes.

Meena: So with that being said, you didn't try to find any other job then? You went straight to the mill.

DD: Yes. Whatever time work was steady at the mill, I didn't find it necessary.

Meena: Yes.

DD: Because the work was running at a steady pace.

Meena: Okay. Now I will ask you about your earliest memories about working at the mill. What are your memories of working at the mill? Your earliest memories about when you started for the very first time.

DD: When I first started, it seemed very difficult. It was hard work because being new here, I didn't even know much about this place. About work and other things.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And then slowly, slowly, as I got to learn I began to adjust and things seemed to be fine. To many others, their thing was that they couldn't find a job. For me, it was that the owner (Malik) wasn't letting go of me.

Meena: Mhm. Mark??

DD: Malik.

Meena: Malik.

DD: Owner.

Meena: Oh, okay. Owner. Was the owner related to your Masr Ji?

DD: No.

Meena: Okay. What was your job at the mill?

DD: Chipper operator.

Meena: And what does a chipper operator do?

DD: Uh... whatever waste there is of lumber at the mill...

Meena: Yes.

DD: It comes through the conveyer and there is a very large machine in which it falls through. And with that it breaks into tiny little pieces. Into chippers.

Meena: Yes.

DD: And that chipper... There are more things ahead of that. There is a chipper board, sheets; the ones that are made out of wood. Those get prepared. So the main job in the whole mill is that of the chipper operator's.

Meena: Oh, okay. And all the years that you saw at the mill, you were a chipper operator?

DD: Yes, I was a chipper operator. And I learned other things as well like cubing and packing.

Meena: What does it mean to be cube?

DD: They are called Cuber men there; they make the shakes. Shingle shakes.

Meena: Yes.

DD: Those who rip apart the wood/lumber. Those are the Cuber men.

Meena: Oh, okay. After that, you said that you had spend ten years at Fraser Cedar.

DD: Yes.

Meena: And after that, how did you find your next job?

DD: The next job... my brother's parents had come from India and were looking for work. Where I work now, at Lally Farms, when I had first come from India I had worked there for a few days. They had known me and when my brother's parents had arrived I took them to that farm to inquire about work.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And due to there being days off at the mill, I too began working with them at that farm. When I was working there, the owner had seen me and said "start working with me here. Come here." Then after that, very slowly, slowly I.... For 6 months I had gone as part-time at the farm and I also went to the mill. Then after that, I consecutively began working there.

Meena: Okay. Tell me about a day as working in the mill in your shoes. How your life was in those 24 hours, your work, the environment, and the way you were treated.

DD: In the mill, the work was okay. Everyone that was working there, basically, was good. During the day my work was at the chipper and at night the work was considered a lot better work. There were no problems. It was good in the time that we were there and the time that we worked.

Meena: Who else was working at the mill? Those of different background? Were they all 'apney' or 'gorey'?

DD: Uh... they were all 'apney'. There might have been one or two 'gorey' but it was all Punjabi men working at the mills. Where I worked at first for three years and where I worked later for ten, there was just two or four 'gorey' otherwise it was just all Punjabis.

Meena: Okay. So at both the mills that you worked at, it was mostly just Punjabi owned?

DD: They were owned by Punjabis.

Meena: Okay. While working at the mill, what kind of challenges or difficulties did you face?

DD: Work at the mill was heavy. It was really hard. It was all heavy work. Because of that, when I first began working, and we all worked with lots of energy, I had gotten a back problem. And at first, for the first little while, it was very difficult for me because I couldn't even walk or sit.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: It had gotten that bad. I had went to the doctors and he had said that my disc had slipped.

Meena: Ohh!

DD: They had moved. And after that, I began to know about work. And after that, slowly-slowly, everything started getting better again.

Meena: Okay. So what was difficult for you was that the work was very heavy and it wasn't good for your health.

DD: Yes.

Meena: By working at the mill, what advantages did you see?

DD: The advantages of working at the mill was that there were two-day day offs on the weekend.

Meena: Hmm.

DD: Saturday Sunday. And the work, no matter what it was, we had to do it. There had to be some sort of income, so we had to work. Back then when I came, there was mostly work in the mills. And one couldn't really find work anywhere else.

Meena: Mhm. On what date did you leave your last job at the mill and why? I think you had already answered this question, but on what date did you leave it?

DD: Um, the last date that I left the mill was in December, 2000. The first week of December maybe; when the mill closed down during the winter. I had told them that I wouldn't be returning when it's running back up again in the next year. The owner had told me that I could still come back if I ever needed to.

Meena: Mhm. So, the first week of December in 2000?

DD: In 2000?

Meena: And at this time, your job at the farm had started. Right?

DD: Yes.

Meena: My last question is, if you can tell me, what was the nature of Canada like? What was the environment like when you first got here?

DD: In Canada, there was no rush. There were even very few homeless. And slowly, slowly now, there is a big difference in the gas and groceries compared to back then. And according to that, the income hasn't increased much; the expenses have increased. The money made was little and in turn the expenses cost us so little.

Meena: Mhm.

DD: And now, the money hasn't increased much but the expenses certainly have since then.

Meena: And.... Your job at the mill... did it help in any way in becoming a citizen in Canada?

DD: Uh.... no, working at the mill didn't help me become a citizen did. We applied to become a citizen....uh...by ourselves. We went and got our citizenship.

Meena: Yes.

DD: It didn't have any relation with regards to the mill.

Meena: Yes. And do you have any photos of that time of when you first came that I could use?

DD: Of when I first came?

Meena: Yes.

DD: Yes. You can have them.

Meena: Okay, that was all there was to my interview. Thank you.