

Harbimble Singh (Bimb) Banga Transcription
Interview Date: November 21, 2014

MB: Uh, what is your name?

BB: Harbimble Singh Banga

MB: Harbimble?

BB: Harbimble Singh Banga.

MB: Okay. Um, when were you born?

BB: December 3rd, 1932.

MB: Okay, and where were you born?

BB: New Westminster.

MB: New Westminster?

BB: Queen's borough, New Westminster.

MB: Okay. Um... so you're born as a Canadian citizen.

BB: That's right.

MB: And...you have been a Canadian citizen since, yeah, so those immigration questions don't apply to you then **laughs**

BB: Oh.

MB: Yeah **laughs** that I was just about to ask you. Um, wow, a lot of these questions don't apply to you. Um... did you ever work in a mill?

BB: Yes, I did.

MB: And what was the first mill that you worked at?

BB: Uh...Western Forest Industries.

MB: West End Forest?

BB: Yeah, Western Forest Industries in the Honeymoon Bay.

MB: Did you say Western?

BB: Western.

MB: Western Forest Industries.

BB: Yeah.

MB: In Hudson Bay??

BB: Honeymoon!

MB: Oh, sorry! Honeymoon Bay! **Laughs**

BB: I worked part-time also for Hermen Sawmills.

MB: Ohh, okay!

BB: As a green chain.

MB: Hermen or Harman?

BB: Hermen.

MB: Okay. And, um, in what year did you begin your first job at the Western Forest?

BB: Uh...uh wait a minute, uh....'60...I think the '61.

MB: 1961?

BB: I think so, I went up... I, I just –hang on. Uh....I went...

BB's wife, Baldeesh Banga adds: When you guys had the farm, you worked in the mill before the farm or after the farm?

BB:...During the farm.

Baldeesh: During the farm?

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: So you guys had the farm till then about 1953.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: There.

BB: '53, yeah.

Baldeesh: Yeah, you guys had the farm.

BB: Yeah, that was '53. '52 ...or 3. '53, uh... I left the farm and worked part-time for Hermen.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And still in the farm, I then went to uh,

Baldeesh: Before you went to work in the Honeymoon Bay.

BB: No, after that.

Baldeesh/MB: After that?

Baldeesh: Okay. I'll help you with it.

MB: And that must've been 1954 when you began working in Honeymoon Bay?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Okay, and for how long did you work in Honeymoon Bay?

BB: Uhh, couple years, 2-3 years.

MB: So, maybe till 1957? '57, '58?

BB: Yeah, yeah, that sounds about right.

MB: And so, you also said that you worked part-time in Hermen Sawmills in Mission?

BB: Yeah, when –while we were farming.

MB: While you were farming. And, uh, from what year to what year did you work at Hermen Sawmills?

BB: Uh, that was just part-time in the 50's.

MB: Okay.

Baldeesh: While they had that farm.

BB: Farm, yeah. The farm was very close by, eh.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Mission. That was in Mission and they lived in Mission at the time.

MB: Oh, okay! So because you were living in Mission and the farm was nearby and the sawmill was nearby, you just did part-time.

BB/Baldeesh: Yeah.

Baldeesh: And I think he worked in the-

BB: I worked in the Wonnoc Sawmills too.

MB: You did? Okay. Was that right after then? The next stage, the next job?

BB: Uh..uh that was um....I gotta think about this for a second here.

MB: **laughs**

BB: I'm all fuddled up here. Uh... that was... that was in...'54, '55, something in there.

MB: Mmm..., well, you had mentioned that you had worked first at the farm and part-time, so this was around 1953?

BB: Pardon?

MB: This was around 1953. You worked part-time in the farm and also at Hermen's, then 1954-1958 you worked in Honeymoon Bay.

BB: Yeah, in between I worked for..

Baldeesh: I don't think you worked for that long in Honeymoon Bay. You guys had the farm '55, '56, till '59, '58 when Bhayiya went to India.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: And you sold the farm in '57 –I mean '58. Then you went back to India in '59... So '58 he went to India.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: So you guys had the farm between –you guys had the farm uh, '52, '53 in Mission!

BB: Right.

Baldeesh: And then you.. I, I think

BB: We had the farm here too.

Baldeesh: That was after that.

BB: No, that was before that.

Baldeesh: You had a farm here before?

BB: I worked on the farm when we farmed. No, it goes back this way. We farmed here on Angus Campbell Road uh, Harry or uh, Harry Daulatpur, was the owner. He got sick and leased the land to us...

MB: Mhm.

BB: For '52 and '53. Yeah, that was it. And '53. And then we uh, then what did we do? Oh, boy!

Baldeesh: Then in Mission, you guys had the farm.

BB: Then, we uh, yeah. Ken Neil was the owner of the farm in Mission and he wanted us to go over there or he consented to build a dairy barn for us and uh, and get us set up there. So we moved our cows from our farm over here over to Mission. And we, then Mission –I farmed, I stayed on the farm with dad. Uhh stayed with me there or I went stayed with him. I worked part-time for Mrs. Singh on Whatcom Road.

Baldeesh: At the time you guys were up here in uh...

BB: No, no, this was after. I worked part-time for her and we took the cows over there. Dad tried to milk with the hired man, was my brother Banjo...Jeet Singh Banga.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And then uh, he had a hired friend with him to help milk the cows. And then in '53...end of '53 he took off to trail Salmo.

Baldeesh: That's when you were in Honeymoon Bay and you had to come help your dad.

BB: That's right.

Baldeesh: So, you were working at the sawmill in Honeymoon Bay at the time when they were farming in Mission.

BB: Mission, right.

Baldeesh: '52, '53 when you were working. And then '53 you come down and you had to help your dad with the farm.

BB: I worked for Mrs. Singh at the same time for part-time and then to begin with, when I come down here, then dad said he can't handle it anymore so I went back there to the

farm and upgraded a lot of the stuff there. I bought a tractor with a loader on it and I put the uh, tank in for the, cool the milk cans. And stuff like that, I put up the hay and everything else.

MB: Mhm. So, that is your history of working in the mills?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Is that it?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Okay.

BB: And after that I didn't

MB: And after that you didn't.

BB: No.

MB: Okay. Um, what contributed to you finding work at the mills as opposed to other jobs?

BB: Oh, it was manual work. It was hard work but you get used to it.

MB: Mhm.

BB: It's not like it is today with the automatic rotors and everything else. We had just the chains there and **laughs** you dragged the lumber off of it.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And I, uh, when I was working in Wonnoc I was the, pulling trimmers off the chain there too, so...

MB: So is that the green chain puller?

BB: Green chain, yeah.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah. Even at Hermen's it was all bull work there too. It was heavy work there was no rollers no nothing, you just pull the stuff off and pile it.

MB: So at Wonnoc mill you were a green chain puller. Uh, what was your job at Honeymoon Bay?

BB: Trim saws.

MB: Trimming saws?

BB: Yeah. I trimmed saws and tailed saws, the headrig, for a short time because a guy got hurt –Diljit Ahluwalia? Got hurt.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And I said well, I'll try it for a bit. Yeah, they were looking for somebody to do it so I tried it and oh, boy I tell you, you had to have your eyes alert and be able to move.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, you could see the lumber when they take it off the gunshot carriage that sometimes it splits especially the outer layers of the tree and when it splits you take off. You gotta know that.

MB: Mhm. Um so, what does –what is it called? Is it called it a trim saw man?

BB: Trimmer, yeah.

MB: Trimmer?

BB: It was a gain mill.

MB: Yeah, so what does a trimmer-man do?

BB: Well he cuts –well it comes from the trim saws from the chains or the belts and falls in there, you sort it out and put it on the chainsaw so that you can –uh there's two guys on that chainsaw. And you cut the ends off that are bad on your end and then pass it on to the other guy on the main trimmer, he does the sizing of it. If the stuff is bad in the centre, he pulls it out and cuts it there and then sends it back.

MB: Okay, so at Wonnoc mill you were a green chain puller and at Honeymoon Bay you were a trimmer-man.

BB: Yeah.

MB: And what about at Hermen Sawmills? What were you there?

BB: Green chain man.

MB: Green chain man? Same thing then right, green chain puller?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Okay, and um... how did you find work at this mill? Or how did you come to know of finding work at this mill?

BB: My brother phoned me from down, he was there. And then he says well come here; there is a job here for you. And he asked the foreman and they says well go ahead, get him out. So I went up there.

MB: Mhm, up to Honeymoon Bay.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: And Banjo was already there.

BB: Yeah.

MB: Okay.

Baldeesh: His older brother.

MB: So your older brother was who got you working in the mill basically after permission of the foreman.

BB: Yeah. Right.

MB: Um, so you didn't really have to apply for this job because your brother found it for you.

BB: Yeah.

MB: And this decision was made prior to you leaving..

BB: Abbotsford.

MB: Leaving Abbotsford, okay.

BB: Or Mission.

MB: And did you try to find work anywhere else or was this just your first job?

BB: Well, like I said, I did part-time farming and part-time working for Hermen Sawmills and I did a doing that- I did a lot of custom works while we were farming.

MB: Yeah.

BB: For Canadian canners.

MB: Yeah.

BB: I hauled pea vines uhh....during the summer months.

MB: So you were doing trucking? As well?

BB: Oh yeah. At the same time.

MB: Oh, okay.

BB: Because there wasn't that much on the farm to do, it just gave you some extra money.

MB: Yeah. So you did farm work and you also worked in the mills and you did trucking.

BB: Yeah.

MB: Any other jobs?

BB: There, before all this? No. That's about it.

MB: That's about it?

BB: Yeah.

MB: And driving...

BB: What?

MB: Driving... or it was just trucking right?

BB: It was just part –summer job for the canary.

MB: Oh, okay.

BB: So we hauled peas and all that to the fishers? And then sometimes we load the peas, they were in boxes, eh.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And we took them over to the canary in Mission. Every once in a while they says well how about taking a load into uh, into....Vancouver, to the main street.

MB: Okay.

BB: Off main.

Baldeesh: And then after that we had our own truck.

BB: Well that was in the 60's.

Baldeesh: '61.

MB: You owned trucks?

Baldeesh: Yeah, we had a trucking business.

MB: Trucking business. And is that at that point you had entirely left the mill when you began trucking business?

Baldeesh: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, that's about it, yeah.

Baldeesh: He drove for the trucking outfit because his brother was driving for them in Salami and so he just got him and said well come on, drive trucks. And so, he drove trucks for, I think he drove only...

BB: 6-8 months.

Baldeesh: 6-8 months, then after that he bought his own truck.

MB: Oh, okay.

BB: Yeah, because Sucha Thandi. I guess he lost his license or something and he says come on give me a hand. So I hauled, I drove for him for a little bit then at the same time I ordered a truck, from built in Vancouver.

MB: Mhm.

BB: And with uh –a sealed box and everything. And I started my own trucking.

MB: So you started your own trucking business in the 1960's.

Baldeesh: 1

BB: '61, yeah.

MB: 1961. And so your last day at the mill would have been in like, 1959, 1960?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Okay. Was there any particular reason for your having left the mill completely?

BB: No, I, not really, no. I just didn't – I could've gone back anytime time I wanted because they wanted the skill level of the trim saws.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Cause not too many people can do it.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Because the first one, when I first went in there oh, my wrist just swollen right up!
From the

Baldeesh: Hard work.

BB: Yeah, flipping it and all that. The board are long, some are 30-40 ft long. And it was hard work but that was about it.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Yeah.

MB: So, tell me about a few of your experiences of working in the mill as a worker –A day in the life of green chain man, green chain puller.

BB: Well a green chain man is, they have a, it depends on how long the chain is and how much lumber they put out there, different sizes. And what the orders are to pile it onto different skids. And you know that, what you have to do, you do it. You know.

MB: Mhm. Okay. Um, who else worked in the mill of different racial backgrounds, ethnicities, any names you might remember.

BB: Oh my brother, Baljeet, uh there was all kinds of guys there. I knew Sarb and them all, Dalit Alhumalha? Uh, there was a whole bunch more there, I kind of lost their names there some way.

MB: Mhm. And what about ethnicity wise?

BB: Hm?

MB: Ethnicity wise? Um.

BB: There was, most of them were East-Indian guys working on the chains.

MB: Mhm.

BB: There was, the only English guy that worked on them was the grader maybe.

MB: Mhm.

BB: He marked lumber, eh.

MB: Yup.

BB: Yeah.

MB: Um, and so, was Honeymoon Bay owned by East Indians or

BB: No, no no. Western Forest Products

MB: Western. And Hermen's I assume was Indian owned?

BB: Indian owned, yeah. The Braich family.

MB: Yeah. Braich?

BB: Yeah.

MB: And what about Wonnoc mills. That's also White owned or East Indian owned?

BB: White owned.

MB: Okay. And so, what is your first memory of working in the mill? Do you remember the early days of when you first started?

BB: Oh, the early memories are when we were on the farm in Mission there and working for Hermen! **Laughs**

MB: Yeah.

BB: That was really brute, hard work.

MB: Yeah.

BB: That was all really muscle-talk.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Yeah, and in that days I was pretty tough I guess. **Laughs**

MB: Cause you were young.

BB: Oh, young and built!

Baldeesh: See that picture over there? **Laughs** In the centre over there? (Pointing at a framed black and white picture of a young Bimb smiling)

MB: Yeah, yeah. **Laughs** Um, so you said it was hard work, which brings me to my next question. What were some challenges you faced as a worker, some difficulties, if you want to expand a little bit more on the hard work.

BB: Well, the thing is, you had to get used to pulling lumber off the chains. And pull it once without having to go and size it up again in the packets and the slings there because the carrier comes in and picks it up and you gotta have neat sides on it. And the ends have gotta be pretty neat.

MB: Yeah. So very particular.

BB: Oh, yeah. You get used to it.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

MB: What are some successes and advantages you saw of working in the mill?

BB: Oh, the means to the end really is money. The paycheck was better than working in the farm. You know from going thirty dollars a month to going two hundred was quite a change.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Yeah.

MB: So you would see money being the biggest success.

BB: Right.

MB: And I believe you answered this before but the date that you left was 1960, the year? That you left the mill.

BB: '50 or '60.

MB: 1959 or 60. And you had left this because you brother had requested for you to begin joining trucking.

BB: Yeah.

MB: Um so, in total, it seems as though you had worked eight years in the mill. Is that right?

BB: Part-time yeah, here and there, yeah.

MB: Eight years. Okay. Um, and what can you tell me about the nature of living in Canada at the time of working in the mill. So, bringing you all the way back to 1950's, what was Canada like?

BB: Well, the mill here in Mission we lived in our own house in Mission and then on Vancouver Island we lived on a camp. It was an East Indian camp and a Chinese camp on the other side. And it was all a bunk house deal, eh. Yeah, there was all kinds of guys there that **laughs** I can't remember the names of them, you know it was so long ago.

MB: Mhm. And what was the nature of living in Canada as opposed to, you know, um..

BB: Well, the nature of Canada, I was used to living here!

MB: Yeah, cause you hadn't lived anywhere else. So it was affordable to you as opposed to an immigrant who would find seeing a grocery store very difficult right. The bank and everything like that.

BB: Yeah. Well, living here, born you, you grew up with it.

MB: Yeah. You grew up with it so it's all you had known.

BB: That's right.

MB: Okay. And what kind of mill was Honeymoon Bay? Because I see Hermen Sawmills was a sawmill, obviously. What kind of mill was Honeymoon Bay's Western Forest Industries?

BB: Well, it was a big mill. It was, uh

MB: Sawmill, shingle...

BB: Saw.

MB: Sawmill?

BB: It was a combination of sawmill and they had shingles in one division of it but that was in the sawmill end of it.

MB: Oh, okay. And what about Wonnoc mill?

BB: It was just a green chain sawmill.

MB: So that was also a sawmill.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: And at Mission, Harman had a planer.

MB: Oh, Harman had a planer. And did you work in the planer?

BB: No, no. I didn't, no.

MB: Okay.

Baldeesh: But they had the planer though.

BB: They, after yeah.

MB: But you worked in the sawmills.

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: I remember that, yeah.

BB: Yeah, that was later.

Baldeesh: In the 60's.

BB: They put it in there cause it was very crude to begin with, with Harman there.

Baldeesh: I remember they added it in there, yeah. And I remember what's her name, Rattan, worked in there too. And but their planer, they'd run it at night. After the middle was finished, and then they'd run the planer. At night time. That's how I knew because we lived close by there.

BB: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MB: Um, and so, from what year to what year did you work at Wonnoc mill?

BB: Oh, jeeze **laughs**

MB: I'm trying to create a timeline here but I'm having a hard time piecing in together.

BB: ... I think when I was in Mission. And then I went to Wonnoc.

MB: Mid 50's would you say?

BB: Yeah, we farmed and then I worked for Wonnoc at the time we were farming.

Baldeesh: When you were at the place before you bought a truck, right

BB: Yeah.

Baldeesh: Where were you working then? ... What's his name was...

MB: Okay, so um, I'm just gonna re... uh, re-tell what I believe the timeline is.

BB: Yeah.

MB: And you can correct me if I'm wrong. I just want to get your confirmation.

BB: Okay.

MB: Um, in 1952 you were working part-time at Hermen Sawmills in Mission while also working at Western Forest Industries in Honeymoon Bay?

BB: Ah, no. That wasn't right. Hermen sawmills was when we moved to Mission. That's when I worked for Hermen.

MB: Oh, okay.

BB: And the same goes for Wonnoc.

MB: Oh, okay! So, I think that was my confusion. So you worked part-time for Hermen while you were

BB: I was farming.

MB: While you were farming. Okay. And after that did you go to Honeymoon Bay.

BB: Yeah.

MB: And after Honeymoon Bay I think you said you had a few in-between jobs?

BB: Yeah, in-between there when we were farming in Mission, we were still farming in Mission and GT, he had left there and he was going to farm there and help dad and my uncle had come in and they kind of crossed ideas and we took off for Salamo and called me at the same time to get over and help dad. So....

MB: And after that was the last one which was Wonnoc mill which was the late 50's you would say?

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

MB: How many years did you work there?

BB: Wonnoc?

MB: Yeah.

BB: I worked there quite a while.

MB: 4-5 years?

BB: Yeah I worked the sawmills a couple of years I think three years maybe.

MB: Okay.

BB: That was for Paul Dhaliwal.

MB: Mhm.

BB: He had the green chain contract there.

MB: Okay. What was your family life like at this time? That you worked in the mill. Were you married or..?

BB: I was married but it was no wives.

MB: No wife?

BB: No wife, no, she was in India.

MB: Oh, okay.

BB: That was in '58 and '58 yeah... no, I'm gonna have to back up. We went to India in '49.

MB: Mhm.

BB: Got married in '50. Arranged marriage. But in Mission here we were "bacheling" with dad. We were all bacheling. We did the cooking and we did the cooking! **Laughs**

MB: **Laughs**

BB: Yeah, so if we leave that part of it, the marriage part of it, out.

MB: **Laughs** that's okay, we totally can. Um, I believe those were all of my questions. And yeah, that's it!

BB: That's it?!

MB: That's it.

BB: That was easy enough.