

Jagat Singh Gill Transcription

Interview Date: November 21, 2014

SB: Uncle Ji what is your name? Full name.

JG: My name is Jagat Singh Gill.

SB: Yes sir. What is your birth year? And birth place?

JG: July 1944.

SB: And where in India?

JG: My maternal grandmother's house Sidhmi.

SB: In what year did you come to Canada?

JG: 1970 November 29.

SB: At that time what was your immigration status?

JG: Immigrate.

SB: Immigrate...Like family class, point system, how did you come here?

JG: Immigrate. My brother sponsored me.

SB: Ok and at this time what is your immigration status? Are you a landed immigrant, citizen, or...?

JG: Citizen.

SB: Ok. Umm before coming to Canada where did you live?

JG: Punjab, Dhudike.

SB: Dhudike, ok. And at that time were you working in India?

JG: Farm work.

SB: Umm did you do work in the mill when you came here in Canada?

JG: Yes I worked in the mills.

SB: What mill did you first start working at?

JG: First I started near Kamloops. Lou's Creek is 40 miles away. I worked there.

SB: What was the name of the mill? Do you remember?

JG: No, I don't remember the date.

SB: That's ok, no big deal. Around what year did this happen in?

JG: In 1971.

SB: 1971. What work did you do in that mill?

JG: I did work on the green chain.

SB: Did you stay on the green chain in that mill? Or other work---

JG: ---on the green chain only. No sorry, I...you know those rails that we filled with lumber? I did that too.

SB: Ok. But in that mill, how long did you stay?

JG: About six months.

SB: Six months...so then did you go to some other mill?

JG: Then I moved and came to Maple Ridge. And Hammid Mill now they call it cedar mill- it's a very big mill. There I worked for **savah sal**. Then I started getting asthma from the cedar. So then I left work there. Then I went and started at another mill.

SB: The mill that you stopped working at when you got asthma, approximately what year was that?

JG: In '74.

SB: Then the second...you were just telling me now...

JG: Uh, and then I worked in another mill. Do you need the name?

SB: If you remember it then yes sir. If not, that is ok.

JG: Its name was Pitt River.

SB: Yes sir so then that started in 1974?

JG: Yeah.

SB: How long did you work there?

JG: There about three months.

SB: Yes sir, there did you work on the green chain or something else?

JG: On the green chain.

SB: On the green chain...And when you first came to Canada, the first mill that you worked in, how did you find that job?

JG: There, our good friends were living in Kamloops. My brother used to work there before me.

SB: Yessir. That's good. And did you try finding work elsewhere?

JG: At that time there was mill work only...you would find work in the mills. Then from the Pitt River work I left....they laid me off then I worked in Squamish for three weeks.

SB: Do you remember the mill's name?

JG: That I don't remember.

SB: No problem. Thank you.

JG: After being laid off at that mill, then I did Campbell River. I went there twice. Once I got laid off and then I went back there. Then I left there and went to Campbell River. After that... Should I tell?

SB: Yes, keep telling!

JG: After that I worked in Mission at gora's private mill. There I worked 3.5 years.

SB: Do you remember which years?

JG: I started in 76 until 80...till 81, 82 up until 83. In 83 I went to Wonnock Mill. My brother will have come and told you same thing.

SB: Wonnock Mill in Haney? The one on Lougheed Highway?

JG: Yes. I worked there. Then we got laid off there.

SB: Do you remember in which year...approximately?

JG: There starting from 83, I don't remember uhhh until something near 90. After getting laid off there then I got a farm. Then I ran a farm. Then I got a job in New Westminster. Its name was Western Whitewood. They would call it 3 W's.

SB: Yes sir. This is something new I'm hearing.

JG: Then from there in 2007 they gave an offer that you can work or retire, it's your choice. Then I was **baat** years old and then I thought I can just do farm work. Then I retired from there.

SB: Yes sir. Actually this was me next question—how did you stop working at the mills? Ok, alright--

JG: --uhh first I missed telling you that when I came from India I worked in Kamloops. There I went and worked and got sick.

SB: Ohhh! Did you get sick from the work or normally?

JG: Just normally.

SB: Just normally. The true story. I'm telling you the true story. There I came to the doctors in Kamloops. The doctor checked me and he said I have suspicion that you have cancer. After being checked by that doctor I came to Mission because back there [Kamloops], there was no one to look after me. I went to my brother's in Mission. Here my brother took me to a family doctor. There the family doctor sent me to Chilliwack. The Chilliwack doctor took pieces from my mouth inside there was cancer. They took me to Vancouver General Hospital. There they hospitalized me. Then I had 11 radiation treatments...on the side. I had 10-11 radiation treatments then they asked me what do you suspect the disease is. I said, they call it cancer. They said it's just about cancer. But now you have had good treatment. Beyond here if you want to do more treatment or not it's up to you. They said you will have needles after a week. Second week here [points at jaw], here [points to another point near jawline]...then three weeks, then month, after two months, then 6 months they would check everything. Then after a year they checked. They kept checking me for 20 years. After 20 years they said it's a waste of time that we've checked

everything and if you have any problems just come to us. Then, God bless, I haven't had any problems. I'm healthy, I go to the gym, I eat good food.

SB: Yes sir. You look good.

JG: Very good! My age is a lot but it doesn't look like it.

SB: Your health looks good.

JG: There were small, small mills and I worked in one or two others. There's no need to tell.

SB: No, I just wanted to find out--

JG: --are there any other questions you wanted to ask me?

*SB: Umm I think mostly---I wanted to ask this: when you worked in the mills, were there a lot of **apnai** men? How many of them were there? Other men?*

JG: A lot of men were apnai. Where our men stayed there were a lot.

SB: What did you find hard about working in sawmills?

JG: I didn't find anything hard. I used to be quite happy working. I want to tell you a story about India. Then I was 21 years old. I had a passion to pull kanak (wheat) from the ground because I wanted to see how much power was in me. In 19(chiath) I pulled the Kanak...the drum players were called there and the pehchath-wala Bandeh were invited. Do you know what the pehchath wala bandeh are?

SB: No.

JG: Like how we have the men of the city here. The mayor, the men underneath him. They were there to witness that no one else was helping me pull the wheat. They thought someone else would help me. Then we had a record in the pind that the best of the best would pull for 13 to 14 hours. In 11.75 hours I pulled a greater area: 1 acre. It was my record.

SB: Haha! Has anyone ever beaten your record?

JG: No.

SB: Still not even now?

JG: I was about 26 years old when I came to Canada.

SB: Wow. Then the work here wasn't have seemed hard at all. I understand. That's all. I just have one more thing...how was life here for you when you came here from India and started doing the work in sawmill?

JG: Very happy.

SB: Very happy?

JG: Yup because after working I would really enjoy- I would eat good food, I would live well. There it was hard after working. The food was good to eat there too. But not like here. Here we're completely happy. The house is quite nice. It is big and the kids have good jobs.

SB: That's it my questions are done!

JG: Thank you.