

Manga Lagah Transcription

Interview Date: February 8th, 2015

MB: What is your name?

ML: Manga Lagah.

MB: When were you born?

ML: 1929. January 26.

MB: Where were you born?

ML: Pabma. District Jalandhar. India.

MB: When did you come to Canada?

ML: ...I came to Canada in '54.

MB: So you were born in '29 and came in '54. How old were you?

ML: Around 30.

MB: And on what basis did you come? Did somebody sponsor you?

ML: My in-laws were here before me. They had sent for us.

MB: Had your wedding happened yet or not?

ML: It did in India.

MB: When?

ML: It's been a long time!

MB: What year? If you don't remember it's okay. So what did you do when you came here?

ML: I worked at Langford. It was a factory.

MB: What kind of factory?

ML: It used to be here but not anymore. It was a mill factory.

MB: Where? In Duncan?

ML: No, no. It is nearby...

MB: So what did you do there?

ML: I just worked there.

MB: What kind of work?

ML: The work there was to see if somebody could do any work or if they couldn't. I've done lots of heavy work.

MB: So for how long did you work at this factory?

ML: 25 years.

MB: 25 years! Oh, okay. What is the spelling for the company's name?

Couldn't recall and had a hard time staying on track due to old age. Omitting all off-track conversation.

MB: What other mill did you work in?

ML: Nowhere else.

MB: And how did you find your job there?

ML: I just went there and they wrote my name. They said they'd call me. For 2 weeks I waited and the work started.

MB: Did you try to find work anywhere else?

ML: You know when somebody is a new person first they go somewhere and then they go elsewhere...

MB: So how did you like Canada when you came for the first time?

ML: When I first came I thought what am I to do here?

MB: Did you not feel at home?

ML: I had little money then. Very little. And I thought to myself, "I've got myself stuck by coming here". Then the work started and I sent for my family to come here.

MB: Who did you send to come here?

ML: My in-laws sent for me to come.

MB: Was anybody before you living here?

ML: My in-laws. Father in-law.

MB: And what kind of work did they do?

ML: He also worked in the mill.

MB: Do you know what company he would've worked at?

ML: ...no. I can't remember.

MB: That's okay if you can't remember. Was it a union or non-union?

ML: It was a union but it wasn't at first.

MB: It wasn't at first? Okay. And so what are the differences between union and non-union?

ML: There's lots of differences.

MB: Tell me.

ML: The difference is that if you are in a union then you have a stable and set job. If you're in a private mill (non-union) then you're... **his wife comes**

MB: Auntie just give us 10 minutes please.

Relative: That's his wife. Her dad used to work before then.

MB: Okay, then I'll get the details from you then. When did you get married?

ML's Wife: In 1942.

MB: Both of you.

ML: Both of us. Who else.

MB: How old were you then?

ML's Wife: 12 years old.

MB: 12 years old!?

ML's Wife: Yes, that was the tradition back then for your parents to set you up with who you'd marry. They'd pick the boy and the girl. It isn't like now where the girls and boys are free to choose. We all used to live in one village just like brothers and sisters.

MB: You were 12 years old when you got married. So when did you come to Canada? Did you come together?

ML's Wife: No, my dad had come beforehand. My date of birth is from 1930.

ML: First her Baba came.

ML's Wife: My Baba came in 1906.

MB: Okay, was that your dad or your grandpa?

ML's Wife: That was my grandpa.

MB: Do you know a little bit about what he did when he came here?

ML's Wife: No, I don't know. When I went back I was 10 years old. I don't know what they did here.

MB: He must've worked in the mill. Was he here by himself?

ML's Wife: My father was also with him. My father came in 1930. My birth is after that. My maternal side is from Pakistan and I was born in Pakistan.

MB: So when did Uncle (Manga) come to Canada for the first time?

ML's Wife: He came in '54.

MB: How old was he?

ML: 20.

MB: Why did he go to Canada then, to work?

ML's Wife: He was there to work just like everybody else. There was lots of poverty back then.

MB: Was anybody there with him?

ML's Wife: He had his cousins there. His mother's brother's sons.

MB: What kind of work did he do in England?

ML's Wife: Ask him.

ML: I worked in a factory.

MB: What kind of work was it?

ML: Of lumber. In the mill.

MB: So when did you come Aunty?

ML's Wife: I came in 1959.

MB: Did you have your kids already then?

ML's Wife: My kids were all born in India. I had 2 elder sons and my younger daughter was here since the age of going to kindergarten. She was born in '54.

MB: So you already had people here before your arrival.

ML: Yes, I had my dad and my Uncle.

Relative: Tell her about the story of your father.

ML's Wife: My dad came when they didn't allow them to come.

Relative: When did he come?

ML's Wife: In 1930.

Relative: He worked in the mill.

ML's Wife: Yes, he worked in the mill... My birth happened after he came here. My maternal side's grandparents lived in Pakistan. Then my father came and brought us here. The stories are very long and I only know a little.

MB: It's okay. So when you came here, did you just come to Victoria?

ML's Wife: We came here and we have been here since then.

MB: And how many Punjabi families were here at that time?

ML's Wife: There were lots. Because when I came here around Christmas time I thought to myself, "there's these many people?!" I thought I was just the only one!

MB: And there was a gurdwara here too.

ML's Wife: Yes, there was a gurdwara here and an old one that got taken down later. The first gurdwara here was built by my Baba. The men would carry the bricks and bring them here.

MB: And so was the community here coming together and celebrating things like Lohri, Vaisakhi, Nagar Kirtans, and Diwali?

ML's Wife: Yes, they would. Even if there was just somebody's birth, we'd all come together. There was quite a large crowd in that small gurdwara. They'd get the men to bring the wood and they'd make the lentils.

Somebody nearby: There used to be a wood stove, that's how they made their food.

MB: Oh in the old gurdwara?

Somebody nearby: No the small gurdwara. It was on Graham Street.

MB: So did you have a grocery store here where you were able to get your Punjabi groceries?

ML's Wife: No, there wasn't anything. There was an Italian store where we were able to get our lentils and flour.

MB: There wasn't any other store?

ML's Wife: No, there was just that Italian store that kept the lentils and different kinds of flours. It was near the mill.

MB: Uncle (Manga) said he's only worked in one mill. Is that right?

ML: **(Unable to recall name. Name of the mill kept changing)**

MB: ... And what was your position at that mill?

ML: Grading.

MB: Does uncle not remember things then? Does he know more or does he not remember?

Relative: He doesn't remember.

MB: I was just going to ask more what the challenges were and what the difficulties were.

ML's Wife: After we came here, we didn't face many difficulties. However, at first, we all faced them to some extent upon first coming here.

A Relative: Even your clothes – you didn't wear Punjabi suits much, did you? At the gurdwaras?

ML's Wife: We didn't wear them quite often. Not outside.

Relative: They couldn't wear them outside. If they did wear their Punjabi clothes, the gorey would start swearing and cussing at them.

MB: Oh, so uncle had to wear a dress?

Relative: It wasn't like that when I came.

MB: She had to wear Western clothing.

ML's Wife: When my dad and Baba Ji were working they were only earning ten cents an hour! That's how they used to live back then.

A Relative: The cost of things was low then too.

ML's Wife: The milk and butter used to come be just twenty five cents.

MB: Have you also worked at the mill then? (Referring to the relative)

Relative: No, I never worked in the mill. I just know because my dad did.

MB: So when did Uncle (Manga) leave the mill then?

ML's Wife: Around '84. Then after that he never worked again.

MB: Did he get early retirement then?

ML's Wife: He was getting sick pay.

MB: Why did he get sick? Was it from working in the mill?

ML's Wife: No, no. He had something with his stomach

MB: Okay, that's it. That's all I can ask if he doesn't remember.