

Tarlochan Singh Lally Transcription
Interview Date: November 27th, 2014

MB: What is your name?

TL: Tarlochan Singh Lally.

MB: And when were you born?

TL: September 11, 1962.

MB: Where were you born?

TL: Village Ucha. District Jalandhar.

MB: Village?

TL: Ucha.

MB: Ucha? What is the spelling?

TL: U-C-H-A

MB: Oh, okay. Ucha, Jalandhar.

TL: Yes, yes.

MB: When was the first time you immigrated to Canada?

TL: June 11, 1982.

MB: 1982. And what is your status right now? Are you a citizen or PR?

TL: Citizen. Canadian citizen.

MB: Canadian citizen.

TL: Yes.

MB: But on what basis did you come? The point system, by marriage, or sponsor?

TL: Family class.

MB: Family class. Okay. Um, how so? Did somebody sponsor you?

TL: My older sister had sponsored me.

MB: Your older sister?

TL: Yes.

MB: Okay. And before coming to Canada, were you residing in that same village, in Ucha?

TL: Yes, there.

MB: And what work did you do there, if you did?

TL: Uh, I was studying in college while also doing farming. I was helping mom and dad and I was studying when I came.

MB: What were you studying in college?

TL: Uh... basically it was arts.

MB: Art?

TL: Yes.

MB: And did you finish your studies?

TL: No. I had to leave it in the middle.

MB: So you only did one or two years?

TL: For 2-3 years I was in college.

MB: Okay. And when did you start farming to help your mom and dad?

TL: That was when I had gotten strong ("tukra"). I believe I was twelve or thirteen years old then.

MB: Okay.

TL: And after that I continued doing so.

MB: You continued.

TL: Yes.

MB: Okay. Now I will be asking you about your immigration story when you first came here. When you first came here, how did you think Canada was?

TL: At first I didn't think it was very good at all.

MB: Mhmmmm....

TL: Because as a newcomer, one doesn't feel at home, can't find work. When I came, it was the recession.

MB: Mhmmmm.....

TL: So I couldn't find work. So when I come into my own family here and can't find work and don't feel at home, then working for others seemed very hard to me. At first I didn't really feel at home. After a year passed, things started becoming alright.

MB: Okay. So for the first full year it was difficult for you.

TL: Yes, yes.

MB: So in what year did you find work?

TL: Work... I found work in 1984 in the mill.

MB: What that you first job?

TL: My first job was doing labour on the farm or in the nursery.

MB: Oh, okay. So in that time up to the mill that you didn't find work

TL: I did it there. Yes, yes.

MB: So did you say the nursery and the canary?

TL: Nursery and farm work.

MB: Nursery and farm work. How did that seem to you?

TL: Uh... it was alright. Not too good and not too bad. It had to be done.

MB: Mhmmmm..... So when you found work at the mill, how was the change? The shift?

TL: The shift I had was a day shift. But due to the recession the work in the mill was not really going. We used to get really hard work. Ah... for two months it seemed like well, getting laid off today or laid off tomorrow, in order to stay stable I learned a new job. But before that time, I had these thoughts that I'll either get laid off today or I'll get laid off tomorrow. But when I learned the work, then it was steady.

MB: Were many mills getting shut down at the time due to the recession?

TL: Yes, many mills were.

MB: Okay.

TL: There were many laborers but a lack of work.

MB: Do you remember the name of the very first mill that you found work at?

TL: Mission Shake and Shingle Ltd.

MB: Mission Shake and Shingle. And how long did you work there?

TL: Ten years.

MB: Ten years. So till '94.

TL: Till '94. For 3 years I was a supervisor.

MB: The first 3 years?

TL: No.

MB: Oh, the last.

TL: Yes, the last.

MB: And what kinds of jobs were you getting there?

TL: First, I got a job of packing shakes, for three days.

MB: For 3 days?

TL: For 3 days. Then to pack shingles...for about 3 weeks. Then after that they said that you can learn whatever work you want to learn, but just make sure that you stay working for us, we'll teach you the work. So they began teaching me the work. Then after a month I had learned the work and for ten years I continued working there.

MB: So what was that work?

TL: Shingle sawyer.

MB: Shingle sawyer?

TL: Shingle sawyer, yes.

MB: And what does a shingle sawyer do?

TL: They make the shingles that go on the roofs. They are made with machines that have saws on them. They are made with those.

MB: Mhmmmm....

TL: It is a dangerous job.

MB: Mhmmmm..... And how did you find that work? Because for 10 years, or say 6-7 years, you were a shingle sawyer?

TL: About 7 years. Yes. For three years I became a supervisor. But one wouldn't really find work at the time. Yes, it was dangerous but you had to work and the money was nice. And the job was stable. But not many men were learning the work because it was too dangerous.

MB: Mhmmmm.....

TL: The new men who were on that job had suffered from many accidents. Some cut their hand or more. Many things had happened. In other mills too. It wasn't just this one, accidents were happening on other mills too.

MB: So why did you pick this job? They said you had the option right? To learn what you wanted?

TL: It wasn't that they said I could learn whatever I wanted. They asked 'Do you want to become a shingle sawyer?' I didn't even know what a shingle sawyer was. But to me it was just that I'd have a steady job.

MB: Ohh, okay. Because you knew they'd keep you.

TL: Yes, yes.

MB: So your last three years, I guess '91-'94 you were a supervisor.

TL: Uh, '90-'93 I was a supervisor. Then for one year I stepped down and worked.

MB: Oh, okay.

TL: Yes. Then I went to a different mill.

MB: The one year that you stepped down to do some work, what did you do?

TL: It was cutting up, or splitting by saw. I had learned everything, I knew it. By being a supervisor, you learn all the jobs, you get the chance to learn everything.

MB: Oh, okay. What kind of work did you do as a supervisor?

TL: Arranging the men/crew, getting work done by them, being mindful of production so not much waste would go out. That's all, those were basically the main things. All the things were under my control.

MB: Okay. So a very important job.

TL: Yes. Because I was the middle-man between the employer and the employee. For the employer, you have to make them happy and get them their money. And as for the employees, you have to keep them happy as well.

MB: So, you said that you had left the job in '94 right?

TL: Yes.

MB: What was the reason behind that?

TL: Then I was receiving better pay from a different company.

MB: What was the name of that company?

TL: S & W

MB: Mhmmmm....

TL: S & W Forest Products. This is in Maple Ridge.

MB: In Maple Ridge.

TL: There I worked from '95-2005.

MB: Oh, okay. So ten years here too.

TL: Ten years here too.

MB: And you had left that job because this was better pay.

TL: Yes.

MB: So what was your job here?

TL: Here, my job started off as a shingle sawyer.

MB: Oh, same thing.

TL: Yes. From there ... after that ... for 5 years I did work as a shingle sawyer then I became a supervisor there.

MB: Oh, okay. For the last five years then?

TL: No, for the last year I did work as a shingle sawyer again. For 6 years I did shingle saw then 3-4 years as a supervisor. No, 5 years. 5 years I did shingle saw. Then 4 years as a supervisor. Then the last year I stepped down again and did work as a shingle sawyer.

MB: So how did you find the work here at S&W Forest if you compare it with Mission Shake and Shingle?

TL: Here, I found it a little hard, it was a lot of responsibility there. But over there, the "tunkha" was more there. But there I had a lot more freedom when I worked too.

MB: In Mission?

TL: No, the one in Maple Ridge. There I had a lot more freedom and got to work as I pleased. That one was 'Gora' owned.

MB: Oh, it was 'gora' owned.

TL: Yes.

MB: But the Mission was 'apna' owned.

TL: Yes, 'apna.'

MB: ... So you worked there till 2005?

TL: Till the end of 2005, yes.

MB: Okay.

TL: Then, alongside that from '93 I was also doing farming. From '93 to 2005 we were doing small farming on the side ... then 2004 to now, till however long I worked in the mill...

MB: Till '11?

TL: 2004 to 2011. On the side we did full-time farming while also working. Then after that I decided that it was too much and I should leave it, so then I left it.

MB: Mhmmmm..... Retirement?

TL: No, not retirement, just

MB: Just left it.

TL: Then for about two and a half years I did part-time and whenever they needed me they called me. Then from the beginning of 2013 I had just left it full-time. Now, it is full-time farming.

MB: Okay... and farming...what is the story behind that? Was it your farm?

TL: Yes, ours. Because my thinking from the early days of when I was working in the farms was that till the age of 65 I don't want to work for anyone. That one day I will be able to have my own work and support my family my own way. That I would be self-employed and wouldn't have to work for anyone. That was my thinking from the early times.

MB: Mhmmmm..... So did you thinking shift since then?

TL: Yes, now it has. Now it is just full-time farming and I don't work for anyone.

MB: You work for yourself.

TL: I work for myself.

MB: Um...what kind of mill was it? Because Mission was a shake and shingle.

TL: Yes.

MB: But S&W, what kind was that? Shake and shingle was well?

TL: That too was shake and shingle, yes.

MB: Okay ... and how did you find work at Mission Shake and Shingle? Did someone else find it for you or...

TL: First I would like to complete what I was saying.

MB: Okay.

TL: From the end of 2005 to 2011 I also worked at another mill.

MB: Oh, okay.

TL: Yes. 8 years.

MB: What mill was that?

TL: Walden.

MB: Walden?

TL: Walden Forest Products in Maple Ridge.

MB: Okay.

TL: There I just did work as a shingle sawyer.

MB: And what was the reason from changing your job from S&W to Walden?

TL: Uh, there was a bit of better wages. And at S&W I was also doing full-time farming and so that ensued a lot of headaches. So in order to lessen that, I changed companies. I had talked to them beforehand and told them that when I need a day off, I'm going to have to take it because I am doing farming as well. Before, I wasn't getting any days off.

MB: Oh, okay. It was too stressful.

TL: Yes, yes. Too much. There I had to work seven days a week.

MB: Oh, okay. And you were in agreement with Walden...that you wouldn't be doing part-time exactly but a bit more.

TL: Whenever it was necessary for me to be at the farm then I would take days off. In the summer I would take two months off.

MB: Oh, okay. Because it was necessary.

TL: Yes. Because over there I wouldn't get any days off. That's why.

MB: Okay. So was this your last mill that you worked at?

TL: Yes, this was the last mill. But when I was working at Mission Shake and Shingle I also worked three years on the railway.

MB: Ohhh! While also working at the mill?

TL: No. I'd take the summer off and work at the railway and go back to the mill in the wintertime.

MB: Mhmmmm..... and how did you find work at the railway?

TL: Uh, my friend was there already working there.

MB: Okay. What year was this that you did it for the very first time?

TL: ... '88, '89, '90.

MB: Okay. So three years.

TL: Yes.

MB: And how did you like the work there?

TL: The work was hard but the "thunkha" (Salary) was a lot better.

MB: What did you do there?

TL: Uh... basically labour of the railroad. The labour of it. Then at the end of '90 I left the work because one would have to leave and go out of town.

MB: Mhm. Okay. And Walden Forest Products, was this too 'gora' owned?

TL: This too was 'gora' owned.

MB: And how did you like that?

TL: It was good. It was nice. Whenever I wanted to work I would go and whenever I didn't want to, I'd take a day off.

MB: So there was even more freedom than from S&W.

TL: More freedom, yes.

MB: Okay... were there any 'apney' working there as well?

TL: Yes, there were many 'apney.'

MB: More 'apney' or 'gorey?'

TL: Uh... I would say about 75% 'apney' and 25% 'gorey'

MB: At Walden.

TL: At both places. At both places.

MB: And were there any other people of different cultures there as well?

TL: Uh... no, not others.

MB: Of other places. So just 'gorey' and 'apney'?

TL: Yes, just 'gorey' and 'apney.' I don't know where the 'gorey' would be from, but I think they were from here.

MB: Okay... ah, yes. I was asking at Mission Shake and Shingle. You found work there after one or two, no, after 2 years in '84. In '82 you came. How did you find this job? Did someone find this for you or was it by applications? Because you had mentioned that there was a recession during this time.

TL: Yes in that time that we didn't find work we'd apply at nurseries or canaries, but mostly we wouldn't really get a response from the mills. This was a brand new mill and they needed men. I applied there and got work. Yes. In the beginning first 3-4 days it was nothing, we wouldn't even make money. Then they said sorry, you're not making any money here but I said don't worry, I'm just going to keep working anyway. Perhaps they thought that I was determined to keep working because they said okay, keep coming to work.

MB: Mhm. In Mission?

TL: Yes.

MB: Okay. Uh, now I will ask you about your earliest memories of working in the mill. If you can tell me a little bit of how the treatment was towards you, what the culture was like of working in the mill, whether people were friendly or not..

TL: In the beginning, nobody was friendly. Now, the time has changed. Back then in our own culture, there was a lot of difference between "Doaabvi" and "Malveyi". Me, and another, the two of us were the only Doaba and the rest of them belonged to Malwa. The one had a friendship with the others so he was okay, but I was alone, so they didn't treat me very well. But the owners, out of the three, two of them liked me, one didn't. In the beginning I faced a lot of hardships. That is why I learned to do the dangerous job in order for my job to remain stable.

MB: Ohh, okay! Okay. At Mission Shake and Shingle.

TL: Yes. The difference still exists but it isn't as relevant as it was back then.

MB: So East Indians 'Apney' were discriminating within themselves then.

TL: Yes, within themselves. The 'Gorey' would do it anyway, of course, but the 'apney' were also doing it.

MB: What was it like with the gorey? Were there even many gorey at Mission Shake and Shingle?

TL: There were only two or three.

MB: So how was it with them? What was the difference?

TL: They weren't saying much because they were a minority. But the 'apneys' were doing it to themselves.

MB: Oh, okay. So S&W did appeal to you then, right? It was better because it was 'gora' owned. What was the environment like there? How were the people there?

TL: In the beginning when I first began working, there was discrimination between the 'apneys' and 'goreys.' After about two years it began to be okay. But when I became a supervisor, then it was definitely okay. Because then it was my choice, how I wanted to run things. If there was an 'apna' with English problems, almost 75% of 'Apneys' there had that language problem, so I used to translate for them. Then when I became a

supervisor, the owners had made me one, they were 'gorey,' and then I was the first man working there who was a Punjabi man with a turban. And one time when I was wearing my turban, in the first three months they had actually fired me, by saying "there is no work for you."

MB: At S&W?!

TL: At S&W.

MB: In the first three months?

TL: In the first three months, yes. But then I kept trying and trying and since they needed men, they kept me once again. When they wanted me to become a supervisor I was reluctant to be one. The 'goreys' were discriminating and now I had to as well. They said no, you have to be one, and we have heard recommendations about you from other people, whether from 'goreys' or 'apneys.' I knew how to do it. They said that our company is 55 years old and you will be the first Punjabi Sikh man to become a supervisor. Keeping that in mind, I worked even harder to make sure that the company would keep making money so that later on nobody would say that the Punjabi man with the turban got them broke. So I had to work even harder.

MB: Ohh. So there was more pressure on you.

TL: Yes. That was the story.

MB: So, Mission Shake and Shingle and S&W, where did you face the most discrimination? It sounds like it was at S&W.

TL: ... At Mission Shake and Shingle it wasn't this much because once I had learned the work I had started not to care much about it. Because I had known that I am now stable and the owners like me. I had stopped caring about the other employees there then. The first two years at S&W I had to face it a lot because there the 'goreys' were doing it. There the 'apneys' weren't doing it much; the 'goras' were. The 'apneys' could have been doing it as well a little, but I began working later. After that it had begun to be okay.

MB: Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences of facing discrimination? By example.

TL: When the supervisor had said that thing to me after 3 months, because it was wintertime and I had begun in October, before December it had been 3 months and the supervisor had told me that work has slowed down and there's only one shift, so they'll begin laying off people. They said maybe if we need, or if one of your men go to India we'll call you. I waited 1-2 weeks thinking they'll call me, they'll call me, but they didn't. Then I had a friend there who was already working there. I then asked him, since he was close to the supervisor, and the supervisor said 'No, we've fired him. We aren't going to call him. Because he is wearing a turban.' So I told my friend 'When you were working at Mission Shake and Shingle, I helped you a lot. Now you help me in return.' So then he helped me in getting rehired again. Then it was okay.

MB: That is why you were reluctant to become a supervisor when they had requested for you to.

TL: Yes. 'Apney' men can complain and 'Gorey' can say all they want, but when it is an 'Apna' East-Indian man, then 'gorey' complain a lot more. And it happened to me a lot too. I tried to disregard them and in the end I helped them too. And then it was fine.

Because I had a First-Aid ticket, a mill-right ticket, I was a supervisor, and I did farming, as well as seven days in the mill and it began to be too much work so I finally said no, I can't. I stepped down and began to do work five days a week then. Then for a year I stepped down and did shingle saw and I saw that the pressure was still the same so then I thought to myself that no, I'm just going to change companies.

MB: So because of the pressure you changed jobs?

TL: Because of the pressure and my job was still the same; I still had to do the same amount of work. And plus, I wouldn't get any days off from there.

MB: No days off, yes. So it sounds like there was a lot of discrimination at S&W then.

TL: Yes.

MB: So how was Walden Forest Products then in comparison?

TL: Uh... the discrimination?

MB: Mhm, or even just the environment in general and how the people were.

TL: The environment was very nice and I didn't feel much threat because I knew my job. I knew my job and that's why they kept me. There wasn't much discrimination there. If there was any between the 'goreys' doing it to the 'apneys' I couldn't really even tell that they were doing it?

MB: Yeah.

TL: It could be that because I knew my job was stable so I didn't have to face any but others did. I found it to be good there.

MB: Here you did shingle sawyer too I think, right? At Walden?

TL: Yes, all those years I did.

MB: All those years.. I think 11 years.

TL: No. Not 11.

MB: Around 6 years.

TL: Yes, 6 years.

MB: So all those years as a shingle sawyer, so that is what you have the most experience in.

TL: Yes.

MB: So what other difficulties did you see working in the mill? You said it was hard work, dangerous, and discrimination. Is there anything else that you found difficult?

TL: No, nothing else. It was mostly that.

MB: It was mostly that? Okay. What were the advantages of working in the mill? From all those different positions.

TL: Advantages... there was a little more "tunkha" ... and the hardships that I faced, whoever else, whether it my friend or my brother, whoever is in the need for work, wouldn't have to face the same things. As a supervisor I did things at my own and kept who I wanted to keep. Then I gave priority to those that I knew, to make sure that they had work. Because it made it easier for me. For the men that didn't get along with me and sometimes took days off, then I had problems. But I tried to make sure that I'd keep the men that were on my side.

MB: Your side, as in 'apney'?

TL: 'Apney' at Mission Shake and Shingle. Over there the 'gorey' too it was whatever 'gora' was good, I'd keep him or whatever 'apna' was good, I'd keep him. For those who

always got injured or always complained too much, I didn't care because it would always be giving me headaches. It was just that if I've kept you, don't take any days off, and if you've requested for a day off then you'd get it. Otherwise not to just take days off at the mill. At the most I was trying to make sure that the money would be shared with the 'goreys.' For the 'apney' men to make their money, to make sure that they get their money. Because I had given them the incentive of five days of regular work and on the sixth day not to bring lunch, as I'd provide lunch, and to give them the best lumber to make sure that in their six hours of work, they'd make the same worth of money as eight hours of work. That was their incentive to go to work.

MB: It almost sounds as if though you were trying to protect your 'apney' men. A little bit?

TL: A little bit because there is a difference with the 'goreys' right. Because some didn't know how to speak English and I tried to keep it fair so that the 'gorey' didn't misinterpret us to be a group of illiterates. From the inside, I always tried to help my 'apney' men.

MB: So the advantage here was that as a supervisor you had full control.

TL: Yes, I had 100% control.

MB: But when you weren't a supervisor, what advantages did you see of working in the mill?

TL: The advantages were the benefits and the good wages.

MB: Okay. And your last year in the mill was in 2011.

TL: Yes.

MB: And the reason behind that was that it was too much work and you wanted to leave.

TL: Yes, it was that but more so when I took my days off in the summer, the mill had caught on fire.

MB: Oh, Walden Forest?

TL: Yes.

MB: Oh!

TL: Yes, it had caught on fire and then they got a small mill, which they lease. The mill hasn't been rebuilt. In that, they needed less men. Then, they had told me to just help here and there and so I said okay. I didn't want to, because they were paying my benefits, right. So then in the beginning of January in 2013 I had told them that I didn't want to do it anymore and they said okay.

MB: In 2013.

TL: Yes.

MB: So for 2-3 years you did part-time for them just to help?

TL: Yes, for 2 years.

MB: So 2013 was your last year.

TL: Last year, yes.

MB: And after that, you didn't go back.

TL: For 2 years I had done part-time there. But up until 2011, I was working there full-time.

MB: Mhm. By working in the mill, was that related to you getting your citizenship in any way? How did you get your citizenship certificate?

TL: No. For that I had just applied. It didn't have any relation with work.

MB: Okay. And do you have any photos or old passports from that time which we can scan?

TL: I don't have any picture of the work. Uh...but I have paystubs of my work.

MB: Oh, okay.

TL: Yes.

MB: Can we scan those?

TL: Yes, you can. I have those. And more...I don't any photos of work, no.

MB: Mhm, but maybe when you first came you'd have pictures of that time? When you came in '82.

TL: Yes, I'd have those of when I first came.

MB: You were twenty years old when you first came.

TL: Yes, yes.

MB: So we will scan those from you.

YL: Yes, okay.

MB: Um...and if you want to tell me a little bit once more about the nature of living in Canada at the time. Maybe with regards to the weather or the town, anything that may have shocked you first-impressions wise.

TL: There was no shock with regards to the weather; it seemed fine to me just like India. In wintertime it was cold in the town, but not as cold as it is in other places. Here I remember one thing, in 1984, there wasn't any snowfall at all. Maybe there was for 1-2 weeks but not much at all. That's one thing that I remember, that in 1984 there was no snowfall whatsoever. The weather was okay, not that bad.

MB: And in the town, seeing the grocery stores and everything else seems very unusual at first, doesn't it?

TL: Yes, yes. Yes. But here it didn't seem too unusual because it is farmland and our background is in farmland as well. It didn't seem all that bad. It seemed good.

MB: Mhm. And so, when did you wedding happen?

TL: November 16, 1991.

MB: '91.

TL: Yes.

MB: So did you go back to India? For the first time?

TL: No, it had happened here in Vancouver.

MB: Here?

TL: In Vancouver.

MB: Okay. I think this was all to the interview and you that you answered all the questions very well.

TL: Thank you.