

CANADIAN PUNJABI LEGACY

Duck and Sharon Dalep <[REDACTED]>

Tue 2017-10-10 4:43 PM

To: 'Joan Mayo' <[REDACTED]>;

sorry, meant to say if anyone has other questions, they are welcome to email me.
thanks, Duck

-----Original Message-----

From: Duck and Sharon Dalep [mailto:[REDACTED]]**Sent:** October 10, 2017 4:43 PM**To:** 'Joan Mayo'**Subject:** CANADIAN PUNJABI LEGACY

Joan..... since Duck could not make the meeting on Monday here is a story he promised to send you on his family. He hopes this will be of some help.

This is a story of how the entire community of Paldi came to the rescue of an orphaned family - The Daleps.

Paldi was a thriving sawmill town in the 40's and 50's. The community was made up of a variety of 'races' - Whites, Japanese, Chinese and Indo-Canadians (who were predominant). They were all employed by the Mayo Lumber Co. The company's owner, Mr. Mayo Singh, who lived in Paldi was a philanthropist, and cared deeply about the community and the hard-working individuals that he employed.

My name is Ajit Singh Dalep and this is my recollection of my childhood days in Paldi. My father, Dalep Singh, came to Canada from India in the early 1990's and found employment. He returned to India to bring his wife, Karma Kaur, to this foreign land. Due to the special bond that existed for all Indo-Canadian families living in Paldi, it was an easy adjustment for my mother.

Thus was the beginning of the existence of the Dalep family. In rapid succession were born four daughters and two sons - Daughters Swanni Kaur, Ajit (Jito) Kaur, Bachese (Bea) Kaur, Seab (Nasiv) Kaur and sons - Mahindar (Mindi) Singh and Ajit (Duck) Singh. A few happy years together soon began to unravel. Between the years 1940-1946 we lost our mother (pulmonary embolism), our oldest sister Swanni (tuberculosis) and our father (sawmill accident, fractured skull). At the age of 6, I had lost my sister, father and mother. Five surviving orphans, what do we do?

A friend of my father's, Mall Singh, a batchelor, came to live with us in 1946. As much as he contributed to keep our family together,, he did not understand our needs so we were basically unhappy with our situation. Our oldest sister, Jito was married off at an early age and took up residence with her husband in New Westminister. At this time, Mall was still trying his best to look after us. However, when he passed away in 1951 that left four orphans, again.

Between the elders in Paldi and our now government-appointed 'official guardian', a very difficult decision had to be made. It was soon decided that the two oldest - Bea and Mindi would remain in the house in Paldi with the neighbourhood overseeing their daily lives. My youngest sister, Nasiv and I had to go, reluctantly, to New Westminister to live with my married sister Jito and her husband.

With the family split, Nasiv and I pleaded with our official guardian and the Paldi community to let us return to Paldi to re-unite with our brother and sister (whom we dearly missed).

After a year or so in New Westminister the strangest thing happened. In the middle of the night, while my sister and I were sleeping, we were woken by a knock on our bedroom window. The window opened, frightening us, but a familiar face put our minds at ease. It was one of the elders of Paldi, Mr. Munsha who put a finger to his lips to 'hush us'. "Come", was all he said. We crawled out the window, totally confused, but made our way up the road to a waiting car. (this today would be considered kidnapping!!) These elders in Paldi knew of our unhappiness of being away from our siblings so took it upon themselves to reunite our family. Once we were home again, they told us "we decided the best way to get you kids back was a "no fuss - no bother - no requests - no questions" attitude - Just Do It !!!

Upon our return to Paldi the 'official guardian' was updated on events and was informed that the Paldi community would be responsible for the upbringing of the Dalep family. He agreed to this arrangement.

Ever since that joyful reunion there have been many trials and tribulations in our lives, but the 'will to survive' overcame any and all obstacles. We all grew up supporting each other through good times and bad.

Never have we forgotten that the good people of the Village of Paldi, being our 'surrogate parents' gave us the opportunity to raise our own families, to be productive, successful citizens and be appreciative of all that each one of us has accomplished.

The family bond still exists to this day albeit a smaller family. Sisters Swanni and Bachese, and brother Mahindar are deceased, but sister Nasiv, Jito and I still reminisce regularly about 'the good old days in Paldi'.

Ajit Singh Dalep