

## [Narrative of Raghbir Singh Dhaliwal]

### Saw Mill Worker Stories

#### Raghbir Singh Dhaliwal Narration

Interview Date: February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Raghbir Singh Dhaliwal was born on February 3, 1946 in the Village Dhaliwal located in Punjab, India. While in India, Raghbir worked in an office position for a short time and also attended school in his village.

Raghbir Singh first immigrated to Canada on November 2, 1972 on a visitor visa at the age of 28. Soon after arriving in Canada, Raghbir Singh began working at the Harroze Forest Products Mill Company owned by Maya Singh Minhas which was located in Chesham, in the mill, Raghbir Singh was required to work as a lumber puller on the green chain, which was a very difficult job as it required pulling very heavy lumber blocks. He also worked other positions in the Harroze Mill including: trimming, crop setting, etc. According to Raghbir Singh, the Maya family were good employers as it was a unionized company. After a short time, approximately three months at the Harroze Mill, Raghbir Singh then went to work in Haskine at a mill called Saw Workers Mill where he continued to do job: lumber pulling. According to Raghbir Singh, out of the approximately 85-100 men working in the particular mill, 15-40 of those men were Punjabi. Raghbir Singh claims that all the Punjabi men who worked in the mills were very hard working because that was their nature, for example, the men would be physically exhausted but they would not leave the work.

During this time, Raghbir Singh lived in Danvers while his wife was in India. However, one day a half a few years after Raghbir Singh's migration to Canada, his wife also came and joined him. Raghbir Singh recalls that there were around 200 Punjabi families living in Danvers at the time of his migration. According to Raghbir Singh there were however incidents of accidents in the mills. For example, one time recently here at the Harroze Mill, thirty five or thirty six years ago, a young boy was crushed under a lift butt. There were other minor accidents here and there but nothing major. Overall, though Raghbir Singh recognizes the benefits of unionized work as well as the Union Pension, MOP and Dental coverage, he says mill work was never guaranteed because if the mill stopped, the work stopped. Unfortunately, due to back problems, Raghbir Singh had to stop from his mill work in 2008.

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