

Paldi residents celebrate Jor Malla

Each year on the week end closest to the first of July, the congregation of the Paldi Sikh Temple celebrates Paldi Jor Malla. A Jor Malla is a gathering of people. Jor means gathering and Malla means Festival.

Paldi's Jor Malla commemorates the building of the first temple here in 1919 and the festival has been held every year at this time for 67 years. It is a happy occasion, combining a religious service with sports, games and traditional foods. A festival of this type requires much planning, organizing and a lot of hard work. However, as many hands make light work it quickly becomes a time of sharing and helping. First the church, cookhouses and grounds have to be cleaned and tidied up. Extra beds are made up for out of town guests and the

playing fields raked and limed ready for the sports.

For 2½ days very few people will eat at home. Whole families take their meals at the church cook house after first entering the church and sitting quietly, listening to the reading of the Holy Book which continues non-stop from 9:30 a.m. Friday until noon on Sunday. Everyone wants to help. It is called "Kar Seva" God's work, and somehow no matter how many potatoes need peeling or dishes washed everyone comes away with a wonderful feeling of satisfaction and peace.

The nicest thing about helping at these functions is listening to the women singing as they work. 6 a.m. is pretty early to have to get up, drive to the church, and begin making rotis for so many people. The women work in an assembly

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line taking turns shaping the small balls of dough, rolling them out with a rolling pin or standing over the hot stove turning them with long handled egg lifters but as they work they sing God's praises repeating the verses from the Holy Book.

The founders of the Sikh faith wrote the entire Garanth Sahib, or Holy Book, in the form of poems

which can and should be sung as you work. The Sikh faith teaches that one should rise early in the morning and meditate, to keep God in your mind all day as you work or play and then to end your day with quiet meditation remembering that when you die the only thing you take with you is God's name.

This year's festival had a special

added attraction. No one knows from where but on the first day of the festival a beautiful male peacock landed near the church and all through the weekend adults and children alike offered food or stood and admired the beautiful bird. He had a tail over 4 feet long and seemed to take great pleasure in showing off his splendid plumage. The peacock is the national bird of India and is treated with reverence. Everywhere you travel young boys are offering peacock fans for sale to decorate the homes. Surely this year's attraction was a gift from God.

All grandmothers enjoy watching their grandchildren participate in the races. So I cunningly slipped away from my duties whenever one of my own was competing and thoroughly enjoyed taking them back into the

church at the end of the service and watched proudly as each one was called forward to receive a trophy. There was a trophy for each child who competed so everyone was a winner. Then large juicy oranges and apples were distributed to everyone in attendance. What a time to be without a camera as I watched the children return to their seats beaming broadly and looking so proud.

The men's games, soccer, volleyball and weight lifting are far more serious and competitive but they too take great pleasure at receiving their trophies to the cheers from the younger ones. The distribution of trophies and fruit marks the end of the church services following which everyone crowds into the cookhouse one more time for a well deserved and extremely delicious meal.