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Tape 839 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:
Margery Hall and Kate Garrod  4700.0576   Tape 839.1   (Tape 2 of 4)
Major General William Odling  4700.0577   Tape 839.2   (Tape 1 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION:  Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS:  Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES:  British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:
Hall and Garrod: 2/1/1978
Odling: 2/22/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes
Hall and Garrod: 35 minutes
Odling: 58 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS:  None

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INDEX

Tape 839, Side A
Hall and Garrod (Part 3 of 6) (839.1)
007 lovely houses, conditions in Sunam
012 Margery says no use blaming Indians because they don’t do things our way
014 encountering dead rats, dogs, cats, learned to avert eyes
019 spoons were the most popular items for thieves; the only things you lost in India
024 Hall’s husband is working training overseas students in administration
032 Indian food has lots of curry according to Hall [they seem to be eating while recording]
042 Kate Garrod and her husband were the only Europeans in Bhatghar, in Lahore state
046 quality of servants in Bhatghar, Halls had to bring their own from Puna; they were not provided in Bhatghar
050 servants wouldn’t go to area where they anticipated big earthquake
054 Hall says Poona is a more emancipated place where you can play golf and tennis, if you could afford it
059 Kate being the only woman at Indian chief’s entertainments at Bhatghar, even his wife
didn’t go

Indians feeding Kate tidbits with chopsticks after the chopsticks had been in their mouths because it was supposed to fight cholera, food would be covered solid with flies; it took a lot of self-control to eat it

prevalence of smallpox and cholera outbreak

had three young children; Margery felt responsible for their safety because she took them to where these diseases were

Margery and her family quarantined during cholera, precautions, for ten days had to disinfect everything and kill every single fly

Hall hasn’t been in India since 1947, would love to go back but is too busy fighting for welfare of mentally ill in Britain

Hall remembers everything anyone said to her since she was two, and the attenuating emotions, long term memory better than short term

For Margery, much of India was a terrible experience

writing about India made her so anguished Margery couldn’t sleep; she finally wrote a book about her experience about ten years ago

people who admire her manuscript, but she doesn’t have time to pursue it

de Caro heard her manuscript is a good read

they talk about the woman in charge of the Indian history archives in Cambridge, a Mary Thatcher

De Caro talks about who else he’s going to interview, twenty or thirty more interviews

some people who went to India escaped all the horrors and had unrealistic experiences

Margery has heard British people who claim India as their spiritual home; she thinks that the couple lost a child in an earthquake in India

encountering other British people who spent time in India is like having a reunion of a small private school, where they always tell what their children have done

In India fancy clothes the men wore for special occasions, acquiring dress uniforms; they were expensive, costing hundreds of pounds, so you bought them from someone who retired or died

difficulty of getting clothes or fabric in India, even had trouble getting bed sheets

loaned another British woman her only stockings for a special occasion, she ruined them

Margery discusses a big occasion greeting a British visitor, everyone dressed in terrible clothes

Margery recalls the splendor of visiting the viceroy’s house, immaculate servants, everyone splendidly dressed, compares it to movie “Pygmalion.” The viceroy looked like he was straight out of a movie

she couldn’t afford good clothes, cost of clothes was expensive, three months’ salary for a nice dress

refused to curtsey to anyone, including viceroy; Margery thinks it looks damn stupid

viceroy came straight to her, asked what he was doing there because she looked so out of place, he was charming, so she instinctively curtseied

everyone was jealous because she won viceroy’s attention

felt like around every corner there was a kind of magic, even in slum areas its full of character even if it is bad (i.e., stealing and cheating)

Margery discusses her decision to go to India for the first time on holiday, to visit friends

she was an absolute nobody in India, you or your father had to be important for anyone to
take notice of you
292 a friend told her after she’d been in India for a week that she must be last to enter or exit
door because she had no rank; Margery knew everyone’s behind because she always saw
them
300 she had to use lavatory last, too
303 whole pattern of Indian life built on rank and protocol, nobody stepped out of line except
one American girl who broke rank at a party and used toilet before senior ladies
324 Margery and her husband rebelled after war broke out, started writing critical letters to
the authorities about rank; they felt they could because they were essential during war
time, they complained they did not get paid enough
340 relatives who served in Indian Army, including her parent’s fathers
350 her work for people with mental illness

Tape 839, Side A cont’d
Odling (Part 1 of 4) (839.2)
370 Feb 22, 1978, begin interview with Major Odling
376 little change in India until 1939, advent of Suez Canal
385 traveling through Suez Canal
395 Canal made tremendous increase in speed of cargo
407 Indian Army was permanently in India, had Indian troops, and the British Army in India,
entirely British
412 two battalions of Indians paired with one British battalion
418 gunners were all British, because the Indians were such good gunners during their mutiny
435 Odling was a gunner, commissioned in 1929
440 how soldiers got sent to India, had some choice in matter
453 easy to get sent to India if you requested post there
461 but didn’t get to choose what part of India
468 went to historical part of India, Uttar Pradesh
483 sometimes paraded at five AM, because too hot later, took afternoon off and slept
490 many young soldiers rebelled, preferred to parade when it was hot and sleep when cooler
506 Indian climates, dampness
530 monsoons, urge to run outside naked in rain
544 effects of dampness: mushrooms in shoes, couldn’t light a match

Tape 839, Side B
Odling (Part 3 of 4) (839.2)
002 water carrier fetched water from well, cleaned “Thunder boxes” (toilets)
007 bathtubs in India
009 snakes getting in bathroom
015 killing snake with golf club versus killing snake with walking stick
021 cobras and kraits
031 trying to kill snake in carport
040 Englishmen wore boots, so were seldom fatally bitten by snakes
046 heard stories about lethargic snakes that bite second man walking on trail, not first
060 description of Indian bungalow, huge staff employed by each officer
071 night watchmen supposedly in league with thieves, very tough
084 had horses, camels, didn’t know what to do with a camel
advantage of riding camels over horses, taller, better view
camel walked straight to tree, brushed him off
after initial bad behavior, things worked out fine with camel
beautiful gardens
water supply in compound
had electric lights and fans in every room
slept under mosquito net
afternoon nap, had tea when got up
meals
people sometimes served by own servants in mess hall
going out in field, camping, bringing servants
generally camped near water supply
they walk around, bringing the tape recorder with them somewhere
Jordan talks about their research and interviews
two conversations going on simultaneously, one about servants
woman talking about her first visit to Pakistan recently
Jordan talks about how project grew out of de Caro’s longtime interest in India, starting
with seeing movies set in India when he was a child
woman asks Jordan about funding of project, Jordan talks about getting sabbatical from
university, explains they can take one semester at full pay, or a whole year at half pay
woman asks what they’ll do with interviews when they return, Jordan says they’re not yet
worried about what to do with tapes, they’ll deposit the tapes somewhere in an archive
Jordan says perhaps they’ll eventually make interviews into a book, or at least articles
woman says she’s not familiar with the academic line of life
Jordan describes classes that she and de Caro teach, their specialty is folklore
de Caro wants to teach class in literature of imperialism
Odling says there were very few British women in India early on
Skinner family in India
more questions from interviewees about whether de Caro and Jordan paid during their
sabbatical year, what kind of money they get for expenses
de Caro explains a special travel deal they got on airline
Odling talks about driving from Miami to New York
British clubs in India, tennis, golf and squash
clubs provided activities for wives, British socializing
clubs were controversial because Indians were not allowed to join
some Indian civil servants were senior to some British
[Weddington?] Club open to all, but most were segregated
clubs in small station, only a couple of British people posted, would include Indians
Odling almost prepared to justify that it should be British, because it was supposed to be
like home, but sees it caused a lot of ill feelings
problems related to Indian women not being allowed to socialize freely, seldom met
Indian wives, certainly couldn’t dance with them
club was center of social life for British, other social place was mess hall, but ladies never
went in mess except very special occasions
club question complicated by lack of contact with Indian ladies
tall tales about sporting prowess, hunting tigers
gossip about girls