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Tape 841 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Major General William Odling

COLLECTION: 4700.0577  Tape 841  (Tape 2 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION: Briton in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATE: 2/22/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 93 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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003 had to be tough to stand the heat of India
005 was keen on pig sticking
010 winter social activities, differences in season, typical winter day
025 rainy season
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075 injuries from pig sticking
081 putting stitches in dog and horse from pig’s tusks, description of tusks
089 good pig sticking country, competitions
105 frequency of pig sticking expeditions
114 in winter, spent a day or two per week in jungle as gamekeeper, made sure natives weren’t damaging jungle, Odling rode camel on these expeditions
125 attending to people’s medicine needs, brought medicine bag with him on camel
139 famine, problems before Odling’s time in India, government relief works, famine relief
155 difficulties of learning Indian languages, language that had only one verb tense
man who was excellent with languages, became first class interpreter

how Odling learned language, lots of contacts with Indians

division of officers into batteries

customary to never talk English to an Indian soldier, so got fluent

events that had to be conducted in local language

lots of exercise, stayed fit, lots of riding

riding horses

pay, accommodations

people going into debt, never getting out

Indian bankers, Ugandan merchants

stores at crossroads run by Ugandans

training, preparations for India

went to India to escape parental control

compares other countries he could have gone to with India: Egypt, Hong Kong

also considered Egypt, but didn’t have same sporting facilities

decline of tigers in India, practically extinct

most pig sticking expeditions took place along rivers

flooding after rains, changes in rivers

rocky hills where wild pigs dwelled

March to June were prime pig sticking months

shooting camp

fewer officers in summer, people went to hill stations

Odling found hill station boring

gymkhana was a horse show, competition, silly events

description of officers’ mess

Tape 841, Side B

Odling (Part 4 of 4)

enjoyed driving a regimental coach pulled by four horses

good relations between regiments and different services

rivalry between those who were mounted and those who weren’t

no antagonism between ICS and army

dedication of district officers

adamant that there was no antagonism between services

formality of regimental life, dressing for dinner, visiting viceroy

different traditions in different regiments

ranks of officers

king’s commissions

feelings on being far from home

Indian culture, religion, Odling has attended Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim services

isolation of military stations, story of holy man who died in a village that was half Mohammed, half Hindu, died while being carried in procession, debate over burial of holy man, got British corporal to mediate

story of dentist coming to nearby village, Odling brought an Indian officer with him, came across man speaking about Gandhi
availability of dentists, doctors
warned not to get appendicitis after ten o’clock
job satisfaction
closeness of Eurasian community
skin color
social differences between Brits and Eurasians
religious differences
enjoyed Hindu temples and movies
left India in 1938, has been back to visit
visiting Gorkhas in Nepal
wearing topees, Odling wore his from sunup to sundown; that was the law
Englishman who walked from Peshawar to Calcutta, in hot weather, without hat, took
three months, to prove to doctors that hat wasn’t necessary, but everyone dismissed him
as crazy
people who rode five days on horseback without hats, thought they’d die of sunstroke
in Egypt, only wore topees when on parade
small pith hat worn with civilian dress
pith hat was heavy for wearing all day
two different topi styles
gunners
Odling has never written about his time in India, too busy
television
Odling’s neighborhood