INTERVIEWEE NAMES: Major General R.C.A. Edge, Mrs. Patricia Edge, Reverend John Debrett, Mrs. Diana Debrett
4700.0587  Tape 861.1  (Tape 3 of 3)
G.N. Jackson
4700.0588  Tape 861.2  (Tape 1 of 3)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

Jackson: 4/2/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes
Edges and Debretts: 47 minutes
Jackson: 46 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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Tape 861, Side A
Edges and Debretts (Part 5 of 5) (861.1)
002 the appealing thing about Islam is its cleanliness; no Christian could fight with the beliefs of one god; the mosques were very clean
008 trouble with the Greeks were the shady priests; they were lawless and “roughnecks”; could not believe a word they said
015 the ordinary instinct of the British was to prefer the Muslims over the Hindus, and the Turk to the Greek; this is because they were ordinary people
023 they were both in Cyprus at the same time and never knew each other
026 the cleanliness of Islam must appeal to those who like their religion free of superstition
029 she gave their neighbor’s Greek servant a coat and denied payment for it; after losing their
servant, the Greek servant came and said she would work at their house that day.

you were forced to pick a side between the Turks and Greeks when you lived in Cyprus when they were there.

in all fairness, they gave both of them chicken pox after picking up two hitch-hikers while their daughter was sick with chicken pox.

it’s dull living in England because there is not a real chance of your car being blown up.

while in Cyprus, she would always walk behind John so no one would shoot him in the back.

while going with their children on a trip, they had to stop and excuse themselves in a wide-open area because of security precautions; when they got out of the car, John automatically took out his gun, cocked it, and waited until they were back in the car safely to put it away.

different pressures; there were pressures of mutual absorption; the British and the Indians were all happy, but they all knew it had to end.

Edge never resisted the end; everybody always knew that India was a different country and it would have to run itself.

there were a few (Edge included) who were really fond of India.

no one would suggest that England should not have handed India back over.

those that were fond of India wanted it to be handed over peacefully and happily; they knew it would not happen that way though.

they cannot help but feel guilty about leaving because it felt like they were letting the Indians down.

you could see communal hatred growing and it could not be stopped; in the end, if you were Muslim you severely disliked the Hindus and you would murder them; same was true for the Hindus and their feelings towards the Muslims; the English were stuck in the middle.

there was a tented hospital outside Rawalpindi where they brought all the mutilated Sikhs and Hindus; there would be a line of women and children in line waiting for milk to be distributed.

the military policeman that was there to ensure no one came back up for seconds was unable to stop the children for going back up two or more times.

Mrs. King, the wife of the Commissioner, demanded respect; everyone listened when she spoke.

if you were the wrong religion in a particular community, you had a good chance of being murdered.

talk about the scared Indian doctor that would just pass out medicine.

talk about their cat.

end of March 31, 1978 interview.

April 1, 1978 session; went to Bombay Service Minors, one of the three corps of sappers and miners, when he first arrived in India; performed the regular garrison duties: built railways and bridges, waited on war supplies, suppressed the local riots.

there was always some type of intra communal riots because there was a great deal of Hindu/Muslim tension; both had very large populations.

whenever one would have some type of festival, the troops would always have to go and assist the police.

the rest of the time you helped train troops, practiced your shooting, engineering.

Edge’s company was due to go to the frontier; he looked forward to the frontier because
everyone wanted to go where the action was

there was a fairly long leave times: you were given eight months to enable you to go back
to England

because someone was going on leave, Edge was posted at a training camp instead of on the
frontier; he was very angry; that morning, he was given a great opportunity

learned how to make maps, triangulate in the jungles around [Dorado?]

his next job was in southern Indian, where he did triangulations; it was different type of
country because it was a dense, tropical region

while serving in India, you did all the field work during the winter months because the
weather was nice then; in the hot weather, you usually went into a hill station where it
tended to be much cooler

you drew up the maps and did the calculations for the in the summer months; you surveyed
in the cooler months

was posted in northern India at a station named [Murray?]; it was a hill station that
concentrated on land surveying; made maps of the less accessible areas on the frontier that
dealt with the tribal rulers and tribal control

was then sent to Calcutta, where he got married; he began printing and drawing positions;
also did research; when the war started, they were shipped away from Calcutta

they shifted all four anti-aircraft guns to Calcutta; the highest their guns could shoot was
well below the modern aircraft, but they did not want the general Indian population to
know this

the guns were operated by British personnel, but they had to have a local defense, which
was run by one of the Calcutta volunteer regiments

there were territorial volunteer units; the Calcutta Scottish regiment was comprised of
Calcutta business men

the Calcutta Scottish were in charge of local defense; they had the machine gun set-up
under a nearby tree with table full of whiskey bottles

he was sent back to the frontier, where they started doing exercises and things concerned
with duty

to add to his frustration, he was then sent to Delhi; then the Japanese war started and he
began to be mobilized

he was sent out to survey an island area the government wanted to use to hold of the
Japanese, who had taken control of the Indian Ocean

the guns the used were so sighted that they could not see beyond the breakers on the reef
the island was a pleasant place to be

he would eventually move into Burma and found himself AD Survey for Fifteen Corps;
failed to bring any of the maps of Burma out of Burma, so they were forced to start again
from scratch

came back to [Cambe?] and was in India for a while; rejoined former corps

when they arrived, the war had actually finished by then, but only for a few days and it was
still unknown as to what the Japanese would do

was also given the job of taking group of troops to survey islands around Singapore to
determine if there was a good island to put all the Japanese prisoners on; threw all the
Japanese rifles (which were really Belgium rifles) into the sea because they saw them as
useless

present when the Japanese surrender envos arrived; the Japanese arrived in an airplane
painted white, a signal of the surrender

from Rangoon, Edge went down to Singapore; there, the Japanese surrendered in an official ceremony; they were determined to humiliate the Japanese generals to some extent, so they made the generals walk through the streets to the place of surrender (the town hall); the generals were not forced to walk much, as there was a fear that the crowd was going to get out of hand and hang the generals themselves

the next day, there was an open-air service of thanksgiving near the cathedral

Edge then went back to India and was put on peace time duties

on the twenty-fifth, Patricia was sent back to England and Edge was put in charge of the training school

then the pre-independence riots began; there was burning down of Hindu villages by the Muslims, along with the murdering of many Hindus

every now and then, you would come across a huge crowd of men with knives spread all over the road going from Hindu village to Hindu village, burning everything and killing everyone

Edge had a Muslim orderly with him, so he was fairly safe but you could never be too sure; it was very unnerving

Muslims were particularly anti-Sikh

Patricia had been asked by the governor’s wife to help at the local hospitals with the large numbers of Hindu and Sikh patients that were coming in

Edge went out again; he was making arrangements to get some of the Sikh (or Muslims) to India, which was a little safer

on the way back, there was a man in the road so Edge nervously stopped. The guy was a Muslim and asked Edge to take the Sikh he had hidden into Rawalpindi; the Sikh was a member of the anti-Muslim league

end of tape

Tape 861, Side B

Jackson (Part 2 of 4) (861.2)

He was over the frontier in the political agency, then he was the state’s royal battalion in the Rajput states; he was then an assistant agent to various commanders in the Persian Gulf; he was then in Iran on the staff of the resident for the Persian Gulf, who was also the Council General for southern Iran

He also acted as political agent of Kuwait a couple times; acted as an ambassador at one time for Kuwait

then he went to western India; he was on the staff of the resident

on Independence in 1947, he went to England and took the exam for the diplomatic service; he was accepted and was sent back to the Persian Gulf

his close friend that had already gone out to India had written to him, talking of how nice and how much fun it was in India; that made him decide to go

Jackson agreed that it was very fun

it was a wonderful life for a young man; you had large responsibilities at young age with great opportunities; offered a great experience; there were a large number of young people out there in a variety of services

the Indian Civil Service was considered the elite of the groups

it was a very nice community because members of the groups were hand picked
the Indians were nice people and easy to get along with; there was a happy relationship between the British and the Indians;
there was a consciousness of the movement toward independence
the Indians were a very capable people, able to run their own country
the problem was trying to establish everything while trying to avoid fighting between the religions and between the sexes; the matter was not about whether or not the Indians should have independence or whether or not they were capable of running their own country
did plenty of research before going out to India, mostly by talking to people who had been there or who were on leave
Jackson was not surprised when he went out; he felt like he had been there for years after about a month
Indian police were like any other police force; it administered British concepts and law, which was implemented into codes that were the models of all the colonial police codes
there were sections of the codes that dealt with personal religion; they were adapted to the laws of the people as well as it could be
there were British procedures in the courtrooms
the police tried to maintain law and order; tried to keep crime down and prosecute criminals; they wanted to look after the people, just as any other civil police service
there was separation of the executive and judiciary; every opportunity given for defense, sometimes too much opportunity and that made it difficult to get convictions
in India, there was no such thing as conviction on the entrance of a police officer, not even being allowed as evidence
the law served to ensure there was no arbitrary behavior and that the people were looked after
the police were not an instrument of rule, but of maintaining order and public safety; it was designed to protect and was very liberal
the British frontier was patrolled by armed police; their job was to stop raiding parties from entering British India; when the raiding parties would raid a village, the police would provide a pursuit party
the frontier police’s main concern was closing the frontier passes to keep the parties from escaping to their own land; the civil police would chase them from behind
the raiders undertook easy operations because they knew the land so well, from growing up in the area to using the area to raise livestock
it was disastrous if they were caught; they could not stand casualties, but they could inflict them easily
the frontier police recruited most of their men from tribes outside British India and generally not from inside British India; this provided the disadvantage because they were not as familiar with the territory
British would be the supervisors in the pursuits and very rarely went on pursuits; there were times when there were a supervisor frontier officer and an assistant officer, but they were not always filled at the same time; if the assistant was there, he would be involved in the pursuit
Jackson was once involved in a pursuit; he was pursuing them in a large personnel carriage that had gotten stuck on a mountain road and was forced to get out and walk
there were both foot and horse-mounted pursuits; there was a force that would leave from headquarters that would try to get the raiders from behind
raiders normally had a camel or two and a pony to carry their gains and hostages, but they never really raided on horseback; they would always abduct girls and sell them back to their fathers
the raiders would steal anything they could carry away; usually all they would ever capture were the camels
the frontier life did have a romantic feel because, when you were not at war, you would have a good relationship with the people; it was a rugged, tough life that is loved by younger adults; it was no place for married couples with families
it was a hard climate; very hot in the summer, but a nice winter
the British administration was a very serious, hard-working administration
the people devoted themselves to India, more than a contract could; it was very hard to give so much when being compared to the diplomatic service, where everyone is comfortably housed and fed with office hours
the physical living conditions of India were very demanding, except in the large capital towns that had established housing; for example: Jackson never sat in a soft chair, like the one he is sitting in now, while in the Punjab, except when in the government house, because there were not any
if you went to see a district officer at his house in the winter, he would not be there because he would be in camp; in the summer, his house would be furnished with camp furniture that he had used all winter
you would only see furniture in a government house or a senior district commissioner’s headquarters in the winter; the comforts of today did not exist there
in the area of political officers, the more senior officers did more administrative tasks; young officers were very active, as well as some of the senior officers
the officers would visit with the maharajahs every winter, along with inspecting the administration in every state to help complete each state’s annual report
he was an assistant political agent in South Waziristan; by being neighbors with other states, he was able to look at the border from the other side
the problem in South Waziristan was that the people spent most of their time stealing from each other or fighting; when not doing that, they would go across the border to British India and steal such things as girls, money, and livestock
the political agent’s problem was to pacify the tribes; the main problem was to find a better standard of living for those that were stealing livestock because they were hungry
their first task was to make peace between the different tribal groups in the area; the second task was to keep these groups from raiding British India; the main task was to establish an economic base that would support the tribes and not force them to steal from each other
the British taught the tribes how to grow different crops, including things like peaches and apricots, and how to better their agricultural system; they tried to get them into contracts with British India; they tried to recruit them into government services to allow them to earn money for themselves
it was an extremely hard area to try and raise the standard of living; the various rivers did help
they tried to get the tribes to go into British India, but they did because they did not want to go there
the British never considered themselves as very successful; however, after the war broke out, there was no trouble in that area throughout the war; the British also pay subsidiaries in
order to help keep the peace
all the roads in the area were built by the British government and were guarded as such; they would pay road guards
the British never considered themselves successful, but they never had any trouble with the Indians until independence
Jackson assumes that, when the Pakistan government took over, they abandoned the Indians
the political agent had two headquarters: a tent in [Guama?] and a house in Tank, inside British India; the agent was rarely at his house; his assistant was always in Guama
when there was a tribal disagreement, the agents would go and try to resolve the conflict
the British would ride around in armored cars if there was a real danger threat when dealing with a large amount of money; most of the time they would drive in regular cars; they would travel by airplane sometimes
the British political officers felt caught in the middle sometimes because they were the arbitrators between the tribes and the British government; would regularly receive a hostile greeting from both sides
they wore white flags on their uniforms
after the frontier he went to the Rajputana States
there were civilized maharajahs
they represented the crown to the maharajahs and to carry out the treaties the maharajahs has entered with Britain; they were trying to raise the standard of administration to equal the one found in British India
there were one or two richer states that may have had a higher level of administration than those in some parts of British India
it usually dealt with getting the states to agree to bring their levels of administration up to the levels found in British India; suggested naming them in personnel or finding them suitable administrators and by simply giving them advice
under the treaty, they were supposed to accept the advice and suggestions the British made; most of the treaties had a clause, stating their recognition by the British crown; some offered protection against aggression from anywhere
Jackson was the assistant to the resident for the western states; he was first the personal assistant to the resident of the Rajputana
while living in [Byronia?] as the assistant, he was concerned the smaller states
immediately after the war, there was widespread famine
while dealing with the famine and the ending of the war, the British were trying to get the smaller states with the same ethnic background to join and make larger entities; they were trying to prepare for independence
there was a great move before independence to move about 600 states into around 150 states; in the end, because the British were unable to achieve the a certain level of unity, the maharajahs were unable to confront the Indian nations
there were a great number of maharajahs, ranging from larger to small; because there were around 600 of them, which were all seen as administrative figures, you are unable to avoid the eccentrics
it is cited that one of the causes of the mutiny was the absorption of the states without an heir by the East India Company; Queen Victoria reconciled this by guaranteeing the maharajahs their positions and, if an heir could not be found, the country would begin a
414  the maharajahs were firmly in place and it was very difficult to remove them; there was a
strong security, which made them very arbitrary
426  the political officers had the task of instilling a sense of responsibility to their subjects,
while trying to preserve the maharajah; the lesson would be learned the hard way by the
maharajahs if the British had not been there: they would have had their heads taken off
435  there was a balance of maintaining their position and trying to make them act responsibly;
there were eccentrics: one maharajah’s pleasure came from writing and producing his own
plays, funded by the money designated for education and schools
466  another maharajah had a fine administration, but his oldest son thought of himself as an
amateur doctor. The son would go into the hospital and perform some surgeries himself
479  in all, the maharajahs were not irresponsible in their conditions; they were not unpopular
amongst their subjects and maintained excellent administrations
489  the India national congress took them all over
497  in some of the Indian states, there were small British communities; in many Indian states,
there was a political agent and no other British person there; very few had British
businesses, which seemed to be more concentrated in Calcutta and Bombay
507  very much on your own in the frontier; the British military was the only time you would see
another British. Once you left that area, you wouldn’t be able to speak English for days
516  you picked up language by reading it, writing it, and taking exams to test your knowledge
522  almost everywhere in India, if you wanted to be social, you would go to the club; there
were tennis courts and a bar at the clubs; you could go for months and spend time with your
English friends, just as you would have done back home
533  there were clubs in places even when there were not any British; in British India, the clubs
would begin being European clubs but soon Indians would join; by the time Jackson went
out, there were more Indians in the clubs
559  the British “were very thin on the ground”
563  you were discouraged from marrying until you were twenty-seven years old because the
junior officers had to be extremely mobile, being dragged many different places and not
always guaranteed a place to stay at night; the junior officers were not paid enough to
support a wife
578  the opportunities for temptation were enormous
587  in his first fourteen years of service, Jackson lived in about twenty-five different places
590  you become settled at moving around
594  the junior officers would live in tents or with someone else when housing was unavailable;
India has the perfect climate for tents, you could almost live in a tent all year long; it is a
“highly organized tent country”
605  the British did not live in great style in India; there were not many accommodations or big
houses
608  end of tape