INTERVIEWEE NAME:  Philip Mason

COLLECTION:  4700.0589  Tape 864  (Tape 2 of 3)

IDENTIFICATION:  Briton in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS:  Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan

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OTHER MATERIALS:  None

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Tape 864, Side A
Mason (Part 2 of 5)

001  after the Civil War, they were aware of their criminal work
003  their predecessor was a nice man who had been sent to school in England around age seven because his father believed he must be completely Anglicianized; his father was in the Indian medical service
007  their predecessor never returned to India until around age twenty-two; was very meticulous and spent all his time on his criminal cases
013  Mason decided he was trying to get up to date and “made some very arbitrary rules” for his court, but was lucky to never have been reported to the high court
015  Mason would allow an equal share of time for complaints, but neither one was allowed too much time; he considered ten lines of his writing to be sufficient, kept things fairly short
018  Mason would normally start an hour earlier than the courts so he could leave earlier to go and play polo; there was rarely a large workload in the afternoon
029  Mason was there three busy years; would work, play polo three days a week, exercise, play squash three days a week, go out riding before breakfast twice a week, write judgments before breakfast two or three times a week
when he returned from leave, Mason was posted to Lucknow; it was very odd
the annual administrative reports included facts and figures and would normally take at
least a month, but Mason had about four months to do it because most of the information
had not come in; they were very boring to write
Mason then went back to jobs that were like his previous ones; he was city magistrate for
the summer in Lucknow
being the magistrate was hard work and did not allow Mason to go out into the district and
see the villages; it called for more work in the city
there was a high rate of abusing loaned ponies; Mason suggested taking the animal away
for a month because giving the man a fine would only cause him to neglect the horse more;
or, if you would send him to prison, it would cause a great hardship on his wife and kids
and he would work his horse just as hard when he got out; there was no proper way to deal
with it
there were also many cases of people brought in for not having lights on their bicycles
when Mason was left in charge of Lucknow when the district magistrate took a leave, there
was a riot that broke out not one day after the district magistrate left
after Lucknow, he went to work for the government of India under the Secretary of
Defense; the Defense department wanted an I.C.S. Under Secretary
Mason served three years in the defense department and became very good with dealing
with the generals
when asked if he would like to stay in the government, Mason said no because he really
wanted to go back and be in charge of a district
by that time (1936), Mason had been in India eight years
when Mason went to request which district he wanted, he learned that they were the three
that everyone wanted; he was given a choice between what were considered the lower three
on everyone’s list
in November of 1936, he was moved to Gwalior, which was considered the best job in
India because there were few worries
when Mason was making cultivation maps for the district, he was camping nine months out
of the year; in Gwalior, there was also a lot of camping
there were people that were like Gorkhas, and were recruited into the army as such, that
were more Mongolian and Indian; people were not aware of the differences between the
two; Mason was very fond of them
the first principle was to always have the other person in order to make a decision; “Why
do you think God gave me two ears? One for me and one for him”
Mason spent three years in Gwalior, walking twenty miles a day in hill country
although they would carry sandwiches with them, one would never really get hungry until
you reached home; they would also get very thirsty
because of the conditions, everyone was very physically fit; it was rewarding
there would sometimes be cases that had gone all the way to the Supreme Court, only for
you to realize that it had been decided wrong the whole way up because no one had been
there to look at it
there would be complete records of every field throughout the district
it was a twenty-one day march to go completely across the district; 5,000 square miles
one of the jobs was to distinguish the boundaries between villages, which was considered a
waste land but seen as very important to the Indians; was often the focus of disputes
Mason learned early that the best way to make a judgment was to go out and see the land
for himself in every case; it took longer to do, but it was very interesting because the
discoveries of each culture that would otherwise not be known
one interesting thing was the realizing that every village has a little place where they would
bury children below age seven or eight that had died; Hindus burned their dead, unless they
were real small
on the way back from the burial area, they would plant a thorn hedge across the path to
keep their ghosts back
there was a further appeal in one dispute in which the commissioner was sent to deal with
the pleader
after that, Mason went back to the Defense Department
in 1946 it was obvious that India was not going to be a British possession for much longer
by the time Mason had two novels published, he was ready to leave India but he did not
want to lose his pension
hard to imagine living under an absolute power until you have experienced it
having the British there meant that the ruler had no defense or foreign policies; there were
always limitations to the rulers actions; the smaller the matter, the more absolute the ruler
was
southern India was also very interesting, although the upper classes were Muslim
kingdoms were run by deputies from the Mogul emperor in India; standards for politeness
and courtesy were very high
British culture in India was always at least thirty years behind the rest of the world, at least
in Delhi and the Punjab
Mason believes it is natural for India to be behind because of the tone of British society
Mason believes they were very immature when they left Oxford for India
discuss a movie that was on television the night before; Mason had once seen it in a theater
in Oxford played entirely by women at the local women’s college
they were very immature when they went out to India, and also had no experience with life
in India
servants had often been trained by one’s parents, which caused the culture in India to be
more outdated; one would often inherit servants from their parents
there was always the “A.D.Zs Element”: the governor always had two young, smart
A.D.Zs that were men from expensive regiments; their ideas about life was normally
different from most of the Indian people
a group of elites would always go into the A.D.Zs’ room and would be favorites that were
entertained at the government house
there was always a feeling of being more up-to-date in the A.D.Zs’ room
in Lucknow, there was a British cavalry regiment that had money and had been in London,
so they were also considered to be more modern in every way
the cavalry regiment was very nice to everyone, but they tended to despise the Anglo-
Indian society all-around
Indian cavalry regiments were better than infantry regiments
Anglo-India was a British subculture and should be regarded as such; Mason wrote an
article concerning this issue
the second generalization was that India was not only an out-of-date culture, but it was also
a Philistine culture that inflated such activities as exercise

Mason and those that were Oxford with him were not very habitual readers; this denied them some progress in their reading when they arrived in India

Mason did not really read frequently again until the very end, when he was posted and placed in charge of looking after certain Indian wives; he also wrote a children’s book while there

most of the time in India, you were worked very hard, especially using mental skills to make decisions

Indians would say that one would have taken less exercise and eat less in response the English always exercising

Mason did not believe the British ate very much; in the early days, it was worse and people did eat more

the British saw exercise as necessary in order to remain physically fit

the combination of hard work, accompanied with hard exercise, meant that there was a limited amount of time left for reading

the feeling of service that pulled Mason to India no longer exists today, but was very strong then

in prep-school, there were many stories concerning the armed forces going to foreign lands; one was always moved by the idea of going on a great adventure

in the stories, a man would not normally get married until age thirty, but always seemed to meet a girl when he was about twenty-one; he would tell her they would be together when he found a home for her; he would then leave for about nine years to go around the world

the stories were romantic and a bit unreal, but it was a strong influence on the middle-class education system

Mason does not think it is particular to Anglo-India

Mason believes India had an effect on the British education system; India encouraged people to believe that those stories were possible

Furse wrote a book concerning choosing people for the colonial service

It was tradition for one to be in some sort of service like the army, navy, I.C.S., or colonial service

Distance was important in the early days of Anglo-India because of the amount of time it took to get things to and from different places; it created isolation and made a great difference in the development of the British in India and the British and Africa

By the time the British got into Africa, there were telegraphs

when the British arrived in India, there were no maps detailing such things as cultivation and such

Mason had prior experiences to photographing and making maps before going to India, which helped him when it was time to make the maps of India

discuss the different tools the British used to develop the maps; there were limits on some instruments

As time moved on, things moved closer together; the first large step was the establishment of an over-land route that avoided the Suez Canal; the land route decreased the time to around three weeks to a month

the British people in India seemed to all have the tendency to place people into certain social classes immediately

end of side A
Tape 864, Side B
Mason (Part 4 of 5)

005 Mason tells the story of a man who was a practicing minister twenty-nine days out of the month; then, for the next three days he would stay in a drunken state

012 Mason would not make allowances for anyone under him that had “taken to bottle”

014 those that drank heavily provided entertainment from time to time for everyone else

018 everyone was based on someone else

022 Mason used a friend’s suggestion of using an extended family to tie all seven of his stories together

029 Mason also decided to use the idea of using the arrogance against the gods three times throughout the storyline

037 the English and Indian cultures are two very distinct cultures that allow two different views on things, which can lead to conflict; an example would be the characters and situations in Mason’s books, especially his first one

063 the English found that the Indian culture was very unsatisfactory; the British did put on a front and maintain the standards from home, like dressing for dinner

076 one put up a front because they wanted to maintain their standards and not “go downhill”; the English also wanted to maintain aloofness, unlike the French who did not and were faced with terrible consequences

080 the French exported large numbers of French men to their colonies, particularly the tropical colonies, that womanized to a great extent. It then became difficult for them to detach themselves

085 in Indo-China, the French ran into greater troubles; the English extradited themselves without much difficulty

090 the companies had a monopoly in India, which was really needed because of the many ships and numerous voyages that were required of them

101 after 1833, the East India Company ceased trading

107 Mason does not believe it is difficult now to make people see how sharp the division was between the club members and imperial services to the other ranks

112 Kipling was very strange about the division because he crossed the division and wrote about other ranks

115 this division did not happen so much with the French, mostly because they were not as commercially minded according to Mason

118 Mason believes the mutiny was not as important in some contexts as people make it out to be, especially in the context of inter-marrying

119 however, you cannot under-estimate the importance of some of the movements that did come about because it affected everyone, from military to civil

124 some people, influenced by the movements in England at the time, thought it was very wrong to live with Indians

126 with the introduction of the over-land route, there emerged another change in opinion

140 the term “griffin” is said to be Welsh and was used at first to describe horses that were used for racing for the first time

145 Mason believes it is a stereotype that the Anglo-Indians spoke a different type of English; when hearing the different versions of one word coming from people with different enunciations, one tends to pick up the words
to this day, Mason is inclined to use words most other people don’t understand.

there is still a remnant of an Anglo-Indian subculture in Britain, seen mostly when everyone gets together.

when Mason does meet someone that was from India, they tend to use the Indian words more frequently in conversation.

the word “Anglo-Indian” took the place of another word, but there is no word that has taken its place.

in Kipling’s time, it was seen as rude to say “half-caste” and the proper term was Euro-Asian; by Mason’s time in India, Euro-Asian had become rude and the new word was “Anglo-Indian” when referring to someone with “mixed blood.”

Mason could only use a phrase like “We [saubs?]” in fun to refer to a collective group of British in India.

no other word ever replaced “griffin.”

Mason believes there was a movement against slang words in general after World War I; there was a period was slang was heavily used.

there were British commissioners that, while they were slightly idealized, were active, always in control and rarely had doubts.

each commissioner and deputy was based on something else.

the first was Mr. Bennett, who was based on two previous deputies.

there was a district book that described the past commissioners and deputies; the Indians would remember past commissioners.

Mason saw the poem as a description of the failure and inadequacy of a dream; the point was having the boy taking a high ideal to the district, only to fall very short of them.

Mason was trying to make the point that it is an inescapable part of Indian life and everyone must accept the fact that ideals fail short.

the title Garlic and Sapphires stands for moments of intense vision and pungency.

the failure to reproduce the moment of intense living in memory.

Mason believes that there some British that believed they were doing a good job at keeping things under control.

it can be argued that anyone that went out to India did so because of the potential to obtain a large amount of power in a small amount of time, as opposed the harder task of doing so in England.

it is proposed by a French psychologist that people chose to go out to such places as India, or in his case Madagascar, because of an inherited weakness; he dominates there when he may not do so otherwise.

Mason remembers thinking that a guest speaker at Oxford had “missed the boat” when speaking of the still many opportunities in India; he argued in terms that did not contribute to idealism.

many went to India because they felt there was something that could be done in India and they could be very helpful in achieving it.

people, with certain qualities, can get along fine anywhere and in any situation; one quality that got one very far was being generous and emotional, which would appeal to the generous and emotional side of the Indians.

Mason recalls the story when a British writer learned, before going into the diplomatic service, that it is better to be gullible than suspicious. This came from the Foreign Secretary.
what the Secretary meant was that it was better to like the people you had all around you rather than being suspicious of them.

Mason believes this was especially true for the district officers in India; the man who really liked the people in his district may be lead-on occasionally, but he would get more out of the district and do more good for it overall.

Irish temperament, with sudden rages and “bashes” but emotional responsiveness, did well in winning people over more often than not, especially in troublesome times.

“An open face and the closed mind”; Mason does not think this policy lasts very well for very long.

The Indians always appeared to know which British regarded them as a separate people and different from anyone else.

Mason began to write more historical and sociological works because of the lack of materials for fiction novels.

While writing one of his novels, Mason wanted to “get back to the basics” of living; after a while, he learned he was trying to do things that were not meant to be done together.

While working in a publishing company, someone suggested to Mason to write about race relations because of the seriousness of the subject and the demand of attention on it.

While Mason was writing about race relations, he felt it was very wrong to write anything in his spare time because the project took all of his time.

Between his books *Founders in the Garden* and *A Matter of Honor*, Mason wrote about race relations; Mason knew it was time to quit when he realized he was about to start repeating himself; he also found he was becoming slower in making decisions and was very tired by the end of the day from the office atmosphere.

Mason wrote his first book under a pseudonym because of the suggestion of the Civil Service Department in India to protect themselves, even though they found no real harm in the book; Mason had to ask permission to publish a book while working for the English government in India.

Mason thought about arguing the suggestion, but realized it would take months and was a silly thing to fight over.

By the time he returned to England in 1947, Mason had already published two books and was considering using his real name. However, his other name was becoming established, so he decided against it.

Mason decided to use his real name when writing about the racial tensions because it was a new publisher and completely different material.

Discussion about Mason’s agents; when he was writing nonfiction, Mason did not see a reason for an agent because it was more academic.

Since Mason has gotten an agent, he has been published by several different companies in two countries, receiving advancements from both.

Skinner is interesting because he has different personalities; his mother was from a high-class family that fell in love with a Scotsman.