The old man began laughing and said, “I just remembered that as I got onto the ship in Bombay in 1907”; Jones told his wife that they were getting out just in time; things kept changing; one of the governors of Bombay was responsible for the improved relationships in the business sector by founding a club; Bombay was full of highly intelligent business people; looking back, it is possible for one to realize that one was more liberal than wished to be; some of the British were a bit more superior, but it depended on their natural adaptability; some were much more adaptable than others; someone would walk into a situation assuming they were the upper class, but it is hard to
make any generalizations; when they would go back to some districts, it would be said how nice it was to have European officers; Jones tells of the police superintendent’s wife remarking how nice it was to have a white man as the deputy commissioner instead of a black man while the black man was standing in their presence; the new deputy commissioner (who was the black man) told the superintendent that he did not want to be put into that situation again; no one ever regarded the Punjabis as blacks; Jones’s Scottish friend once said that the Irish and Scottish tended to get along better in India than Englishmen because the Englishmen never picked up on the fact that the people never enjoyed being ruled by the English; there was a Scottish boy that went out and met the chief secretary; when asked if he was going to like the life, he said he would like the Punjabis but he had not made up his mind about the British; Jones does dream of India from time to time; he sometimes dreams of being back in the classroom as well; end of Jones interview.

Tape 874, Side A cont’d
Fairbairns (Part 1 of 3) (874.2)

071 de Caro talks of how he found Fairbairn

086 Fairbairn had lived in India for thirty-one years total; from the time he went out as a young man in 1925 until Independence in 1947, they lived under the British raja from 1947 until he retired in 1956, it was under the Indian raja; the exception was that all the civil servants were trained under the British Civil Service; the civil servants were mainly men from places like Cambridge and hardly westernized; these were the men that built up the new India from the Civil Service point of view after Independence; these two phases presented a tremendous challenge and an entrancing experience and career; he is forever grateful to India and the Indian people for the experience.

096 it was heart wrenching to see the old India they loved so much change because of Partition; about 1925, there was a recession in England and the surrounding areas; employment opportunities were not easy to find; Fairbairn became part of Scotland’s two exports: whiskey and men.

112 Fairbairn was appointed to a large firm that was prominent in engineering as an assistant; he shipped out from Liverpool to Calcutta, which took about thirty days; many passengers were bachelors who were either going out for the first time or going back out to jobs; the younger men who were married were the most helpful, giving them hints about what to avoid and such.

125 Fairbairn was met in Calcutta by some of his office men, who looked at him like he should not be wearing that topi.

134 Fairbairn’s introduction into Calcutta’s social life was by being pushed into a European-style boarding house where there were many young men; during the winter months, there were many young married couples; this setting helped break what was a sharp change from the life at home to basically bachelor life; you would eventually make friends and run a [chummery?] Fairbairn’s first chummery consisted of four men, who were all in different branches of activity; this was part of the system of education where they talked a lot of knowledge and nonsense and learned a lot as well.

144 they lived a hard work life because there was a great deal of competition; if you did not prove yourself in your first or second year, you were “out on your rear”

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187 they worked hard, lived hard and had a lot of leisure activities, such as golf or tennis.

192 they were always on the job, however, trying to do their best.
there were certain social divisions; the Indian Civil Service regarded themselves as relatively supreme beings, which in many cases they were

there were also many others: irrigational engineers, forestry men, along with other specialty jobs

men would be stationed for a time in the larger stations and then pushed out towards the country; Fairbairn and friends would always go out to the country to visit their friends that were posted further out

one of Fairbairn’s regrets from the early days was that he did not have a tremendous opportunity to go to the historic parts of India

this was tailored by two criteria, one of which was where the nature of your employment took you, like Fairbairn having close connections with the tea industry that took him to various places

it was important for a young bachelor to call upon the number one of his firm and perhaps many people that he had been introduced to

you would leave the card at the house in a small box, leaving two there if you were a bachelor so both the husband and wife could have one

the results of this was that, a week later, you would be asked out to dinner; at dinner, you would meet more and more people; this gave young men the opportunity of various forms of social life that they may not have been able to create themselves

Fairbairn’s earlier impressions were that the Europeans (whites) were “thrown together”

at that stage, about 1935, there was a great deal of coming and going in the business world, the civil service or branches of the civil service between the Europeans and the Indians

there was a great deal of coming and going as it developed with the highly Westernized Indian, most who were educated in United States or the United Kingdom; you would visit them but it was superficial because you could not get down to the Indian way of thinking

you would either hob-nob with a rajah, a maharajah, or head of an Indian firm, a huge social gap and then the lower class

Fairbairn worried about this somewhat

the normal procedure in the early days was travel by sea because there was no air travel

young men in all walks of life contracted for about four or five years; Fairbairn remembers being annoyed when he was kept in his first agreement for five years

they would go home by sea and leave was fairly long, for it took a good three weeks to get to Britain

as your seniority increased, the contractual period would shorten to three years or so; when air travel arrived, Fairbairn would go home for about a month every year, with the exception of during the war

one of the great joys of India to men like Fairbairn was the thrusting of responsibility upon you at a relatively young age; looking back, it seems almost ludicrous

one of Fairbairn’s friends was sent up as a district officer at the age of thirty-five; he would preside over local disputes and dispense justice with limited experience

the funny thing about the system is that it worked

the ICS was incorruptible and respected always by all communities and sections of the Indian community; they were known for their rational outlook and the justice they dispensed

Fairbairn joined the chamber of commerce after obtaining a degree in English and economics as a general assistant

it was a large organization that had about twenty university Europeans who were the
seniors, and about three or four hundred Indian employees, who filled more of the junior ranks; there were about one thousand employees that were outside on the docks measuring cargo and such

the Bengal Chamber of Commerce had gathered around a host of organizations and associations; as an employee, you were processed through these

you started among the smaller associations, progressing towards the larger ones

the Secretary General of the Chamber of Commerce advised the associations and the general membership on their commercial and industrial policy, being the link with the state and central governments

the various Chamber of Commerce offices were all linked through the Associated Chambers of Commerce

the Bengal Chamber of Commerce had traditionally acted as secretaries to the Associated Chambers; this gave you a tremendous view of all the industries, who were all merged into the Chamber of Commerce

apart from visiting the centers to keep in touch, they argue cases with the governments; this gave the job its charm and attractions

the Associated Chambers could be similar to the Confederation of British Industries

as time progressed, trade unionism began to emerge in India; various negotiations had to take place

part of the secretarial function was that every form of legislation that came out in the form of a bill had to be examined

in about 1939, with the interruption of the war, were the constitutional discussions that went along a number of years, leading to Independence in 1947

they had to give evidence for both British industry and Indian industry

with the British (and later Indian) government links, they were always addressed by successive viceroys; they would come annually to address the Associated Chambers

the viceroys made important announcements about the commercial, industrial, governmental and constitutional policies

in the post-Independence days, they had close contacts with such people as Gandhi; this is one of the things that one treasures in the memory

there was great anxiety during World War II; it was an unfortunate period

there had to be armed control because there were Indian nationalists, who were very anti-British at the time

the men were absorbed into the army and various branches of the Civil Services

World War II was a time of great pressure and personal anxiety over families and such

the immediate pre-and post-Independence years were also very trying and stressful; Partition was a tragedy

it was decided there would be a sudden and complete division of India; six months’ notice was given

there was then a “holocaust” of Muslim hatred; Fairbairn remembers walking through the street on day and watching a Muslim disappear into a side street, followed by the sounds of him being “knifed”

if a Hindu ventured into a Muslim community, he would also be killed

the Europeans were very modest in East Bengal

end of Side A
Tape 847, Side B
Fairbairns (Part 3 of 3) (874.2)

005 many of the British companies were bought out
009 Fairbairn was interviewed by a firm in Scotland, who had been asked by the chamber of
commerce to look out for young men; Fairbairn went straight into the chamber profession
013 the chamber of commerce spoke for English and European commerce and industry in a
place were almost of the industries were British owned and developed
017 there was tremendous trade between Britain and India
022 the Fairbairens were in India in a very interesting time, both before and after Independence
023 one difference between the two times was the difference between the Europeans and
Indians: they were friendlier to each other; before Independence, Indians were not allowed
to become members of British clubs
027 there were certain clubs that did not allow for Indian membership, but that was changing;
there were also Indian clubs that did not allow for European memberships
033 the Fairbairens were once asked over for tea to an Indian’s home and the women were
terribly shy; they put out a nice spread, full of food that was sickly sweet; you had to eat
something
044 the thing to do in India was not to pay the original price for anything in the market; you
must beat the price down because they are robbers
047 Mrs. Fairbairn grew very accustomed to this, but she still felt guilty afterwards
054 when trying to bargain, you would walk away after offering a price and they would chase
after you
068 much of their work is done in missionaries or convents
072 neither Mr. nor Mrs. Fairbairn had any family in India prior to going out
073 they admire some “shadow embroidery”, which receives its name because it is done on the
wrong side
076 everything is done by hand; a [penwalla?] would go around trying to sell his goods
084 Mrs. Fairbairn never went to Kashmir
086 when Mrs. Fairbairn first went out, there were no air conditioners; there was so much dust
that you would be filthy once you got inside
089 after a long spell, the family would need a refresher in the hills
093 dysentery was a big problem at the time; fevers were also common, but there was not a
great deal of malaria around Calcutta
097 everything had to be boiled, from the milk to the water
100 one had to be very cautious with children
101 after about age five, the children seemed to become very pale and thin so they had to be
brought home; until then, children seemed to remain healthy and fine
105 no one is really sure why the children’s health declined after age five
107 another reason to send them home was from the educational standpoint; there were very
few schools
108 during the war, they tried to organize a school for European children because some of the
children were eight or nine but could not go home because of the war
115 tone school that is a typical English public school full of Indian boys in Dehradun
126 there would also be missionary-type people and others that went out as house mistresses
129 there are many people with Indian connections; Mrs. Fairbairn does not really see anyone
they knew from India, but they meet people that were there or have ties to India
140 many of the business heads were Scottish because of education and training; banks
throughout India were manned almost entirely by Scotsmen

there were some mills that employed close to 5,000 workers; jute was one of the biggest industries in India, particularly around Dehradun

Mrs. Fairbairn does not know why that many of the workers in specific industries seemed to come from specific areas on the whole

the tea planters were recruited from men whose fathers and grandfathers had been farmers; they knew soils and how to grow crops

the Fairbairn’s MP, Allan Smith, had a great grandfather that went out to India during the sailing boat days; they were a well-known family; he is in tea know because his family made a name for themselves during the pioneering days

indigo attracted many people from England to go out to India; it has been superseded by chemicals

markets could be down in the floor one day and then way up the next because a crop had materialized or something to that effect

whiskey was very popular in India; it was so hot that you would fill up most of the glass with soda water; gin was drank mostly in the mornings

malt whiskies were also very nice to have

the Fairbairn’s were once at a cocktail party where Mrs. Fairbairn was drinking a very strong martini; she has not been able to drink one since

there is much better fruit variety in the United States verses England, according to Mrs. Fairbairn; they discuss different types of fruit

Mrs. Fairbairn does miss the variety of fruit that was available to them in India

if you treated your servants reasonably, they would do anything for you; Mrs. Fairbairn would get very upset when she would see a European making a fool of one of the servants

there was one servant that would always open bottles of whiskey; they later learned that he would hide the half-full bottles and only serve out of full bottles

the caste system is very strong; Mrs. Fairbairn recalls all the “terrible shacks” in Calcutta

there was a Chinese community in Calcutta

Fairbairn would go snipe shooting, but you had to go to the out country; the tea plantations would be great places to shoot when Fairbairn would go and pay his regular visit

the Fairbairn’s friend Cameron would go snipe shooting almost every weekend; he was killed trying to protect his Hindu servant from the Muslim mob

there were two types of tea gardens

one type of tea garden was on the hills, which was a base type of tea; there was also a common variety of tea elsewhere, which was a heavier-liquoring type of tea and very popular around the world

some of the tea gardens would extend hundreds of acres; the bushes were trimmed to be flat

the leaves would come up during the plucking season, which is until about August

the tea gardens would normally be run mainly by corporations; some were registered in India, but a great many were registered in London; all of the staff would be Scotsmen depending on the size, you would have about three or four young European assistants to help the manager; they would manage the labor

the family would be with the manager, except when the family would be sent home for education

one was isolated in many tea gardens; there were little clubs within about thirty miles of each tea garden, where they would all go and congregate once a week

the dancing in Calcutta was beautiful; the women are lovely, with wonderful movements
Fairbairn came home in the end of 1945
it was very difficult to divide the family; it also made it very expensive because you had to
maintain two different worlds
end of Fairbairn interview

Tape 874, Side B cont’d
York (Part 1 of 3) (874.3)
beginning of York interview
after you are commissioned you are posted; York was commissioned into a line cavalry
regiment and received orders
York remembers there being many trips and many officers on the voyage out; there was
trouble getting through the Bay of Biscay
the orderly had to go up and down the troop decks, with everyone being sick
they landed in Bombay; everyone in the regiment was sent a bearer to look after them, who
met them at the dock
the trains were staggering: each sleeper had a bunk on each side (two in all) and a
bathroom/lavatory
they started slowly from Bombay to Hyderabad, one of the princely states; it took an
overnight trip to get five hundred miles
the military station was about three or four miles north of Hyderabad; the barracks were
large blocks of buildings, one block to each squadron in the cavalry; the officers had a mess
and bungalows
there were married bungalows and singe bungalows; there were so many bachelors that
they were removed from the bachelor quarters; York was sent into a married bungalow,
along with another friend
their staff included a bearer, a dressing boy and a [chokara?]; the dressing boy would be
related to the bearer; the chokara was a little boy that “did all the dirty jobs”
there was also a night watchman, which was basically a way “to get grand papa a job”; if
you did not have a night watchman, you would be burglarized; if you did have a night
watchman, you would avoid being burglarized
there were also gardeners; the same gardeners would work in several people’s bungalows,
although they never realized it
the question of Indian servants was a matter of family, for if one servant would be lacking,
they would all begin to lack and all be fired; you were looked after by an Indian family,
who was normally very good and paid very little
York’s bearer was the highest paid, receiving fifteen rupees a month
the sweeper would be a low caste Hindu; they emptied the bath water, toilet and such
in addition to all the servants, there would be two chargers, a polo pony
York had nine or ten servants in all; the total bill was 100 rupees a month; these people
were well off
York had trouble with his bearer and decided to change him; the family then went broke,
living on the money lender
the money lender charges the English officer two percent per month, “so heaven only
knows what he charges his neighbors”
after changing the bearer, all of the staff changed
the routine of life, except for the climate, was very pleasant
an orderly officer would have to up around five in the morning; the officer would have to
turn the guard out at six in the morning; the first parade would be about 6:30 a.m.
you would go and check the horses and stalls around eight or nine, after which you would
return to breakfast
there were “powerful breakfasts”: eggs, bacon, cold duck (if there was shooting), etc.
after breakfast, there was some type of instruction and then the stables; it was amazing how
well kept the horses were
if the horses were not kept well in such a hot climate, they quickly deteriorated
the young officers would have about six months of riding school, learning how to ride in
the proper fashion; it lasted about two hours
end of Side B