

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

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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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
- 065 Indians feeding Kate tidbits with chopsticks after the chopsticks had been in their mouths
- 069 Hall being invited to lunch, kept waiting for hours to eat, drank lots of soda water because it was supposed to fight cholera, food would be covered solid with flies; it took a lot of self-control to eat it
- 075 prevalence of smallpox and cholera outbreak
- 082 had three young children; Margery felt responsible for their safety because she took them to where these diseases were
- 084 Margery and her family quarantined during cholera, precautions, for ten days had to disinfect everything and kill every single fly
- 087 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
- 093 Hall remembers everything anyone said to her since she was two, and the attenuating emotions, long term memory better than short term
- 104 For Margery, much of India was a terrible experience
- 108 writing about India made her so anguished Margery couldn't sleep; she finally wrote a book about her experience about ten years ago
- 111 people who admire her manuscript, but she doesn't have time to pursue it
- 115 de Caro heard her manuscript is a good read
- 118 they talk about the woman in charge of the Indian history archives in Cambridge, a Mary Thatcher
- 123 De Caro talks about who else he's going to interview, twenty or thirty more interviews
- 125 some people who went to India escaped all the horrors and had unrealistic experiences
- 129 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
- 133 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
- 148 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
- 160 difficulty of getting clothes or fabric in India, even had trouble getting bed sheets
- 169 loaned another British woman her only stockings for a special occasion, she ruined them
- 174 Margery discusses a big occasion greeting a British visitor, everyone dressed in terrible clothes
- 202 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
- 214 she couldn't afford good clothes, cost of clothes was expensive, three months' salary for a nice dress
- 226 refused to curtsy to anyone, including viceroy; Margery thinks it looks damn stupid
- 231 viceroy came straight to her, asked what he was doing there because she looked so out of place, he was charming, so she instinctively curtsied
- 239 everyone was jealous because she won viceroy's attention
- 258 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)
- 268 Margery discusses her decision to go to India for the first time on holiday, to visit friends
- 284 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

100 advantage of riding camels over horses, taller, better view
 105 camel walked straight to tree, brushed him off
 110 after initial bad behavior, things worked out fine with camel
 120 beautiful gardens
 130 water supply in compound
 138 had electric lights and fans in every room
 149 slept under mosquito net
 158 afternoon nap, had tea when got up
 162 meals
 180 people sometimes served by own servants in mess hall
 188 going out in field, camping, bringing servants
 195 generally camped near water supply
 220 they walk around, bringing the tape recorder with them somewhere
 235 Jordan talks about their research and interviews
 250 two conversations going on simultaneously, one about servants
 258 woman talking about her first visit to Pakistan recently
 273 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
 280 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
 290 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
 300 Jordan says perhaps they'll eventually make interviews into a book, or at least articles
 312 woman says she's not familiar with the academic line of life
 320 Jordan describes classes that she and de Caro teach, their specialty is folklore
 326 de Caro wants to teach class in literature of imperialism
 340 Odling says there were very few British women in India early on
 360 Skinner family in India
 395 more questions from interviewees about whether de Caro and Jordan paid during their
 sabbatical year, what kind of money they get for expenses
 405 de Caro explains a special travel deal they got on airline
 429 Odling talks about driving from Miami to New York
 435 British clubs in India, tennis, golf and squash
 449 clubs provided activities for wives, British socializing
 456 clubs were controversial because Indians were not allowed to join
 462 some Indian civil servants were senior to some British
 469 [Weddington?] Club open to all, but most were segregated
 475 clubs in small station, only a couple of British people posted, would include Indians
 482 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
 490 problems related to Indian women not being allowed to socialize freely, seldom met
 Indian wives, certainly couldn't dance with them
 512 club was center of social life for British, other social place was mess hall, but ladies never
 went in mess except very special occasions
 530 club question complicated by lack of contact with Indian ladies
 540 tall tales about sporting prowess, hunting tigers
 550 gossip about girls