

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 842 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:

Margery Hall and Kate Garrod

4700.0576 Tape 842.1 (Tape 4 of 4)

Brigadier Richard Gardiner and Mrs. Catherine Gardiner

4700.0578 Tape 842.2 (Tape 1 of 7)

Michael Underhill

4700.1910 Tape 842.3 (Tape 1 of 1)

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

Gardiners: 2/7/1978

Underhill: 2/5/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 31 minutes

Hall and Garrod: 44 minutes

Gardiners: 39 minutes

Underhill: 8 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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Tape 842, Side A

Hall and Garrod (Part 6 of 6) (842.1)

002 degree of male domination in British India

020 Indian men with multiple wives

027 getting sent to a terrible post with no preparations for hardships

033 mosquitos

- 038 monsoons
- 040 books written by British servicemen show lack of humanity in dealing with Indians
- 049 last five years of husband's service were spent in Bombay
- 054 gave up nursing after married, too much to do around bungalow and garden
- 060 kept cows, sheep and chickens, ducks, turkeys in their compound
- 065 she's not interested in politics
- 072 did some Red Cross work in India
- 076 easy to run a house in England or other modern countries, labor-saving devices
- 080 fascinated by primitive nature of India
- 085 consequences of dismissing a servant, other servants refused to work
- 103 she had to take the servant back, otherwise no one would ever work for them
- 107 her husband didn't warn her about the consequences of dismissing servant because he knew she wouldn't believe it
- 110 chauffeur who was a drunkard in Barbados
- 115 after time in India, went to Australia, helped prepare for king's visit
- 120 returned to London, ran into a friend who told him about civil engineering opportunity in Barbados to design water system
- 129 stayed for ten years in Barbados, very different from India
- 134 one house servant would do all the work in Barbados
- 137 her interest in people, no use trying to change people
- 155 people she doesn't like on instinct
- 161 if you spend enough time with anybody, you can find something to like about them
- 168 her husband's boss in India
- 178 tries to recall other Britons she met in India
- 188 British men in India were terrible gossips
- 196 an ambitious man will go to endless lengths
- 200 ladies' gloves
- 206 men's scurrilous gossip linked to their ambition
- 210 ICS was recruited from UK, cream of the civil servants, PWD recruited at home
- 220 reads poem she wrote about a knight aspiring to power
- 237 "K" is slang term for knighthood
- 249 slang of the British in India, she didn't understand half of what they were saying
- 260 self-contained world
- 265 people were well-groomed
- 275 military life was self-contained
- 282 Margery and Kate both knew someone named Nan in Poona, Nan looked after Margery
- 307 had to keep whiskey in the house, required of living there
- 312 protocol of visiting, drinking together
- 318 hoped no one would call on them because they could only afford one bottle of whiskey per month
- 325 Nan interrogating Margery to make sure she was calling on people appropriately
- 350 Nan had a fat butt
- 368 Margery's feelings were hurt by Nan's treatment
- 378 their family's country seats
- 390 asks interviewers about snobbery in US, especially Washington, DC
- 396 younger generation in Britain have lower moral standards but are more tolerant, less

- snobby
- 405 stigma of dark-skinned Britons, “chi-chi” accents
- 410 her own children had funny accents from growing up in India
- 425 servants, had to keep them no matter how poor you were
- 435 rules and expectations of rank
- 450 Margery wanted to go home to visit relatives
- 456 perception of station at Poona as “outpost of empire” versus “jewel of the East”
- 461 Poona was a nice place, had race course, club
- 469 Kate got engaged at club in Poona
- 473 other amenities of Poona
- 482 other parts of India Kate visited, territory under her husband Bill’s jurisdiction

Tape 842, Side A cont’d

Underhill (Part 1 of 2) (842.3)

- 519 visited home of Michael and Rosalee Underhill. Rosalee is cousin of Griselda Richardson. Didn’t record interview, so de Caro relates two anecdotes from memory
- 528 writer John Masters published his first novel by walking into publisher’s office and convinced him to publish it, plus six previous novels

Tape 842, Side B

Underhill (Part 2 of 2) (842.3)

- 001 de Caro talking about someone who gave order to lay down smokescreens but burnt supplies of tribes people who were shooting at them
- 015 got into Indian Army as volunteer during war, critical need for officers, initially sent to Bangalore, joined 2nd Gorkhas
- 029 facilities of British officers; hunting, squash, fishing, holidays
- 033 preconceptions Underhill had regarding India
- 036 was plunked down into an essentially British culture in India
- 044 Underhill had little contact with Indians, his general attitude regarding image of old-time Raj was self-conscious, thought of it as a joke
- 052 differences between regiments

Tape 842, Side B cont’d

Gardiners (Part 1 of 10) (842.2)

- 074 Gardiner worked on railways in India, by 1940, enormous amount of Indianization of railways
- 082 worked on East Indian Railway, worked beneath an Indian superior
- 086 people don’t realize how much we did for the country
- 090 socialization between Britons and Indians, Indians were nice people
- 098 many Indians in ranks of civil service
- 102 East Indian Railway runs from Calcutta to Delhi, other railroad company’s routes
- 112 state built railways, private companies operated them
- 117 East Indian Railroad built at time of Mutiny, history of East Indian Railroad
- 125 operating costs
- 130 from 1920 on, company started to hand operation back to government because it wasn’t profitable

- 141 Railroad built on strategic lines for defense
- 146 Bengal and Northwest Railroad ran through old indigo country of India, building and running Bengal and Northwest
- 157 huge earthquake circa 1937, lost many stations and railroad houses
- 170 Bengal and NW kept trains running whole time of earthquake's aftermath
- 179 reason for multiple railroads, gauge of railroads
- 185 engineering problems of smaller lines
- 197 British Royal engineer's alliance with regular army engineers, training for engineers
- 225 Railway Board in Delhi that oversaw separate railway systems
- 240 after war, he didn't return to India, could see what was happening, got job in Peru
- 248 every boy wants to be a railroad engineer, father worked on railroads
- 252 father was also in India, managed state railroads
- 257 railway mergers
- 263 his wife talks about being only white woman in their part of India
- 268 they seem to be sitting down to tea
- 272 their eighteen year old grandson also crazy about railroads
- 288 try to remember name of a school
- 297 her son was a postmaster
- 301 grandson is so mad about railroads that he's an absolute bore, enjoys reading train timetables
- 307 de Caro had high school friend who was fascinated by trains
- 311 taking grandson to opera, hoping he'd show up well-groomed
- 321 made her grandson bathe
- 324 recommends Bergman movie
- 335 their enjoyment of opera
- 342 recounts plot of movie
- 346 description of opera season, opera house, summer opera program, cost
- 372 rave about wonders of opera
- 377 cheaper on weeknights, and can bring picnic
- 381 expensive restaurant near opera house
- 399 take train from London to bus stop to opera, wear evening dress, Victoria Station
- 427 plans for next opera performance
- 435 music in India, Peru
- 448 Italian opera company
- 460 cooking meat techniques, crock pots
- 478 family connections; father and grandfather served in India on railroads
- 490 father was killed in 1914
- 497 he was born in North India
- 503 came home to England for education when he was about six
- 508 no suitable schools in India, so children sent to England for education
- 517 recalls father's bungalow, push trolleys kept under the houses, veranda above
- 530 remembers watching trains pass from verandah
- 541 every engineer had a bungalow