

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 867 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| Robin Adair | 4700.0592 | Tape 867.1 | (Tape 1 of 4) |
| Mr. John Stubbs and Mrs. Kay Stubbs | 4700.0591 | Tape 867.2 | (Tape 3 of 4) |

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:

Adair: 4/10/1978, 4/12/1978

Stubbses: 4/9/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

RESTRICTIONS: Copyright retained by interviewee and/or the interviewee's heirs

NOTE: Copyright and property rights are assigned jointly to Centre of South Asian Studies at the University of Cambridge and Louisiana State University and A & M College Libraries and its successor agencies.

INDEX

Tape 867, Side A

Stubbses (Part 3 of 5) (867.2)

- 004 one of Stubbs' officers once told him that he should not go around to all the villages because it was dangerous and he could get plague; Stubbs asked him what the difference was between him getting it and someone else contracting it, and the officer replied that he was a superior person
- 012 if Stubbs would contract plague, he would have a much higher chance for survival than the villagers because they had no chance at all
- 014 in the east, there is no suggestion of democracy and very little respect for human life; this goes with the fact that life is very hard there; one cannot judge them based on their own society because of the harder lifestyle
- 021 the main problem is the population because it is growing extremely fast; when Stubbs first arrived, the population of India and Pakistan was about 300 million (which was about 1930); the population of India alone today (in 1978) is about 500 million, while Pakistan is about another three million

026 the awful part of having a job in India was trying to keep all the mothers and babies alive;
the more you would keep alive, the fewer resources you would have

030 Stubbs talks about Pearl Buck, a writer that had traveled to India, being extremely harsh on
the British about the beggars and poverty; her reply was that nothing like it had happened
in China

032 the answer to her reply is that China did not try to keep the people alive when there were
such things as famine or floods; in India, the British stopped famines and such

040 Stubbs was very lucky because he only contracted the “ordinary things” like dysentery,
malaria; Stubbs continued to be plagued by malaria even after he left; Mrs. Stubbs
contracted malaria, although it wasn’t the “bad type”, along with dysentery and anemia

046 there were medical systems everywhere, except for the very remote areas; for the British,
they would generally be alright

051 there were some very good Indian doctors, although there were the bad ones in some areas

052 also precautions one could take, like boiling the water and keeping up with vaccinations;
on the whole, they lived a very fit lifestyle

058 you would also become immune to some of the harmful bacteria and such after living there
for a period of time

060 Stubbs had an office tent, an ordinary double-fly tent; there would be a bedroom tent with a
bathroom, with departments in the inside and windows; there would also be a dining tent

070 camping was very comfortable; your servants would also come along with you

071 there was a little less luxury when they were in the hills; in many places there were
government bungalows for the officials to camp in, although you would bring your own
bedding

075 they were moving the courts; you would spend about six months in the winter touring the
villages and towns

079 when in the jungle, they would have their own elephants that would come with the jobs;
Stubbs also had a couple of horses that they would ride

083 there are not any roads in the jungle, except where the forestry department had clearings to
remove the timber; you were going through grass that could get as tall as an elephant

089 they would also have recreation times while on tour; they would go shooting often, usually
birds

090 while camping, you were dependent on what you could buy locally; you would be lucky if
you got an old goat, so it was nice to shoot nice birds and such

095 along with the servants, there were people along that were in charge of putting up and
taking down the tents, there were those that were in charge of the camels, there were people
that kept the feed for the animals

099 these were all people you had to feed, all being anxious to consume any game you could
shoot

102 Stubbs enjoyed shooting; Mrs. Stubbs enjoyed going out, but she was not very good at it

105 the trouble with the leopards was that they were scavengers and, after picking up a dead
body, would get a taste for human flesh

112 the famous man-eating leopard that is written about by Jim Corbett had been hunted by Jim
for a while; in the end, he shot it

121 there was once a leopard that was terrorizing people for nine years before anyone did
anything about it, which Stubbs hunted for a while but never really shot

123 Stubbs spent a lot of time sleeping in villages and sitting up in trees at night trying to catch

the panther

125 the Himalayas ran in horizontal ranges, with you being on top of one and having to go all the way down and back up trying to get to someone on another claiming they had seen the leopard; you could not “pop across”

130 Stubbs spent about three or four days out, then in, then back out again; Stubbs finally got the leopard with poison because no other method seemed to work; you could never know the terror they would inspire

137 no one in the villages where Stubbs would stay left their doors open at night; the smell was terrible because there was no sanitation; you could smell the excrement

141 Stubbs remembers one village in which he was staying where he was hunting a leopard that had killed a boy; in the hot weather, they would sleep out on the mountain side to watch their goats

149 the boy left the area in the middle of the night in order to relieve himself and the leopard caught him, killed him and ate him; the villagers all said the leopard would come at night and scratch at the doors

155 it was not unusual for leopard to try and claw their way into the houses through the doors; they did go into houses and kill people; they would sneak in like a cat, not making a sound

157 Stubbs was in the village one or two nights; he sat up one night and did not hear a sound; he eventually got the leopard using a goat as bait

163 the one Stubbs chased for some time must have killed a dozen or more people, while operating over about fifteen square miles; he once attacked eight people in one stormy night, getting away with only one

190 after Stubbs finally shot the leopard, a dog hyena came underneath his tree and gave out a frightening sound; he was going to shoot the hyena when it gave a roar and attacked the dead leopard; the howl was awful and would have scared the “ghosts of hell”

204 Stubbs had to follow one leopard a few miles up the countryside; it was exciting

208 report of one leopard entering a house and killing a boy; when hunting it, Stubbs could not see him but could hear him; because of the noise Stubbs feared he would scare him off so he put poison on the bait and went to bed; they found the leopard later, dead

219 on technique that an officer and his brother used was to have one go to sleep on the veranda and the other sit up over him awake and waiting; the brother unfortunately missed

227 Stubbs made a coat out of the skins he acquired; his defense to complaints about the skins was to tell people the leopards were shot for a good cause

236 Stubbs was determined to catch the man eater before he left for India; it turned out to be the last thing he did; he hears there is another one

240 leopards live in and out the villages, killing a goat if they come across it; the problem is that there is no more prey for them because of all the hunting

244 overall, the leopards are harmless; the Stubbs had one in one of the compounds they stayed in; it never bothered anyone

256 you had to operate by yourself when hunting the animals because it is hard for two or more people to remain absolutely quiet

260 very few of the locals would agree to go out to hunt leopards; they never had a chance because, after sitting for about thirty minutes, the group of them would begin to cough, spit or start talking

264 when Jim Corbett was asked to go and hunt the leopard, he said he would only go if all the [shakarries?] left; after sitting up for eleven nights straight, the leopard came and he killed it

275 Jim could also call out tigers, perfecting the mating sound
283 Jim originally a railroad contractor, though born and raised in India; he trained troops in
jungle fighting techniques during the war, like what they could eat and where to get water
299 when fishing with Jim, he could tell you which fish to pursue because he could tell if they
were feeding or not; he also knew a lot about birds
305 he had wonderful films, once taking eight tigers in one; he did not shoot to shoot, he shot
only the man eaters
311 Stubbs has come to the conclusion that there is little game left in India; when asking a
friend whether or not all the game had been shot off, the friend replied that you never see a
black buck now but you would rarely go without seeing herds of them on the road to Delhi
318 the “blue bulls” would often do a lot of damage, enough for Stubbs to offer to kill one off in
a village; the villagers did not want that because they were holy
322 they now call them the “blue horse”, and have killed them all off
327 it was a gorgeous country, especially the many different bird species; you could always go
out in the evenings and shoot partridges
334 they were in the jungle a lot and did a lot of shooting in order to have food to eat; it was
great fun
348 they went out in November, being in the jungle and foothills for the first six months that
they were there; they made their way up to the hill station by summer, which also happened
to be headquarters for that district
370 there was a limited number of white officials in India at that time; if the district
commissioner was European, everyone else would be Indian; there were rarely more than
one or two white people in the district at one time, unless it was the larger cities
377 they were basically in places where they could only speak English when talking to each
other; you did everything at the clubs in Hindustani; they were more comfortable with their
own language, so you used it
385 in 1942 there was a rebellion; there was a problem because she was in the village with their
children when word reached them about the possible arrest of Gandhi; the district
commissioner’s wife told her that it was going to get bad
410 Stubbs had just come off of fourteen days leave when he returned and discovered that his
district had been flooded; he had great fun rescuing people from the waters
425 in the east, there was a more trouble; in one particular district, there was an Anglo-Indian
commissioner and an inefficient white police officer that got so scared they handed over
the district; Stubbs given 24-hour notice that he would go down there to take over
437 the house went with the job, if you got a new job you moved; this was bad because, at the
time, Mrs. Stubbs was ill and had nowhere to go
440 Another problem was that no one knew what was happening because telephone and
railway lines had been destroyed; communications were very bad for a short time; Mrs.
Stubbs was told to send Mr. Stubbs off with enough stores for six months
450 it did not take long before they were able to communicate with them; Stubbs informed her
that there was nothing going on and it was safe for her to go
454 during the time without communication, Mrs. Stubbs left the hill station with her two sons
and went home to begin packing everything up to evacuate to the next one; there was
nowhere for her to lay her head
461 one of the commissioners, who was also a friend of theirs, arranged for a train to come and
get her because John had taken the car and there were no means of communication; the

train was an armored train consisting of an engine and a little truck
 470 the land was so peaceful as they rode through; the boys had fun with the soldiers and all of
 their equipment
 474 they then had to get on a country cart because they had forgotten to send a car for them;
 they had to travel through the city, which could have been the largest hot bed for
 incidences; no one did anything to them except smile
 482 when John got through, he told them it was safe to join him and then they went on down
 490 they were there for about four weeks, then went to a larger district
 499 in 1943, during the war, John organized to send workers down to Calcutta do help “double
 up the line”; he was taking control of the labor corps while tending to his position
 responsibilities
 514 they were there until the war ended; it was the first large station they had been at for longer
 than six months at a time
 521 they then came home, for Stubbs had not had leave since 1938; in April of 1945, they
 decided he deserved leave because the only leave he had between 1938 and 1945 was for
 fourteen days
 528 they were tied up in one port for a week because they were waiting for convoys; it was
 overcrowded; they were given attachable torches that you could plug in to activate in case
 you fell overboard at night; you had to carry life jackets all the time
 551 end of Side A

Tape 867, Side B

Stubbs (Part 5 of 5) (867.2)

002 you were supposed to work in their favor and not do what you wanted to do; it was
 expected of you
 004 if Punt did not like him, what was the good?
 008 it was a difficult position because they never expected to win the election, so they went
 underground to get support; some of the people were absolute gangsters
 013 they would throw their weight around in the district, acting as if they “ran the show”
 014 Stubbs got along well with some members of the local Congress party; they were excellent
 men that did their jobs well; however, there were some crooks
 016 you would go up against the crooks, only to have them run to the minister, saying “that
 chap is against you”
 017 it was not easy; they were also not in for very long; then the war came, and they took the
 earliest opportunity they could to retire
 021 one came to see Stubbs and told him that they were resigning; he said he was pleased with
 resigning because they had gotten things into such a mess
 024 end of interview

Tape 867, Side B

Adair (Part 1 of 5) (867.1)

028 beginning of Adair interview
 030 when Adair was in school, his father was an architect and received an assignment to go to
 Morocco to build a new British consulate; his father thought it would be good for Adair to
 learn French and attend a French-speaking school in Morocco, so he took Adair with him
 038 while there, the family became good friends with the British Consulate; at the time, Adair

thought being a consulate would be fun and enjoyable; his parents also thought it would be a good career move

041 Adair attended a French school there, becoming bilingual; the first few months were very tricky

046 this was an added bonus for going into the consulate services

047 at the time, the Foreign Service and the consulate services were separate services; the consulate services seemed to be a branch of the foreign services

049 it was decided that the consulate service would be Adair's career if he could "make the grade"; the French was the useful beginning

052 two years later, they returned to England and Adair began school there; after that came Cambridge; everything he took was geared towards the consulate services

055 Adair had never thought of the Indian Civil Service

057 when it came time to take the exam, the consulate, civil and foreign services were all the same exam; they did have some different requirements: for the consulate positions, two languages were required; there was a one language requirement for the Indian Civil Services

060 for luck, Adair wrote his name down for the Indian Civil Service as well as for the consulate services

063 at the time, the Consulate Service was divided into three sections: the Far East, General (Europe, Americas, etc.), and the Levant; his preference was the Levant because of his time spent in Morocco

070 about a month later, he received a letter saying that the only posts available were [Pinking?] or Bangkok

075 at the time, the Far East seemed too far away; in the letter, he was given the option to change to the Indian Civil Service; he took India because it did not seem as far away

084 originally, Adair had no contacts with India and no desires to go out to India

087 he was posted to Bihar

088 in those days, you were posted to a particular province and had a probationary year at the university of your choice; after the year was over, you were given an exam to test your knowledge of the language in your particular post

093 you were also tested on Indian criminal and civil law and codes

095 there was also a course on hygiene in the tropics; you also learned how to ride because most of the touring was done on horseback

102 Adair did his probationary year at Cambridge; it was very enjoyable

103 after passing the probationary exam, they considered going out to India; he got the idea of going out by car

105 he convinced three other probationary students; none of them were going to Bihar, but one was going to Burma, two were going to Bengal; they aimed for Calcutta

115 it was a three month trip, which was very interesting; one of the most interesting things was that they had bought a second-hand car, which they sold in Calcutta for more than they paid in England

122 after arriving in Calcutta, Adair took the train back to Patna, then to serve under Ranchi

132 it seemed that there were always exams to be taken at that time in one's career; you were required to take the lower-standard and higher-standard language tests because the initial exam was not as high of a standard that was required for the service

139 during the six months with Ranchi, Adair took the exams and courses in surveying and

such; these exams and courses gave insight into the job requirements of an administrator in the country

144 the next was being posted as an assistant magistrate and work under the district magistrate; in some parts of the province, the administrator is called the collector while in others they were called the district magistrate or deputy commissioner

152 Adair had been both collector and district magistrate, while in other areas he was deputy commissioner; they are the same jobs

154 the hierarchy was: beginning by working under a district magistrate as an assistant, then graduate to a sub-divisional officer

157 the sub-divisional posting was really like a miniature district officer posting; you had a smaller area, but you were doing all the administrative work for the area; a typical subdivision in Bihar would be about half a million people

163 after being a subdivisional officer, you would become a district officer or collector or deputy commissioner, whichever the case was

165 Adair's first posting as an assistant was in the area just south of the Ganges River; he spent about six months there

171 he had a nice bungalow to himself that was surrounded by banana trees; the tennis courts were about half a mile away, which was nice because Adair loved to play tennis

177 while he was riding across the field and a large black snake came out in front of the bicycle; the snake was so close, Adair was forced to ride over it; it was about six feet long; Adair was amazed by the speed at which the snake could move, it seemed to shoot off like a spring; he later learned that type of snake was harmless

195 there was no central sewage system and no plumbing; there was a thunder box in the bathroom that was cleaned out by a sweeper; there was a tin tub for a bath, to be filled with cans of fire-heated water

209 there was no running water supply in the headquarters, which was surprising to Adair

212 when he first arrived, he stayed with the chief's secretary as a type of hospitality gesture; it was a beautiful bungalow and grounds, and a lack of what could be considered a basic for human civilization

221 there was not even a well and electric pump; you usually did not have electricity in the districts and subdivisions; there were pressure lamps

230 you would have a device hanging from the ceiling with a rope going over a pulley with a man pulling the pulley back and forth

234 the man would be in the corner and usually have the rope attached to his toe; he would then fall asleep, while tapping his toe to keep the pulley going

236 this was the method used to keep cool; there was no air-conditioning nor electric fans

237 in the headquarters of the province, there was electricity; in most of the district headquarters there was electricity

241 now, there is air-conditioning almost everywhere

242 life was primitive; surprisingly though, one never really missed these things because you were not used to having them; you grew accustomed to the way things were there

245 Patna was a relatively large city and served as headquarters; Bihar, at the time, had a population of about forty million; Patna must have been close to two or three hundred thousand, most of which was rural

254 when he was a deputy commissioner, his district had a population of about two and a half million; when he was a collector, the district's population was about three million

260 it is a heavily populated area
263 the simple amenities of civilization just had not made it to places like Patna in 1937
266 Patna did seem to be a very busy eastern city
268 hill stations were considerably cooler than those in the plains because of the difference in
sea level
276 halfway from Patna up to Ranchi, there was an escarpment that had a rise of about 1500
feet in a short time frame; after the rise, however, you could immediately feel the
difference in temperature
284 at the next posting, he was working towards becoming a subdivisional officer; he was “the
#2 man”
292 this stage called for a lot of court work; you were a magistrate, so you had to try cases
295 by this time, Adair had first class magistrate powers, which meant that he was trying cases
in which he could give up to six months imprisonment; murder cases went to the district
judges however
300 this seemed to be the system everywhere; the magistrates would try the less-important
cases like theft, burglary and such
303 many of Adair’s cases concerned personal attacks, like someone being beaten with bamboo
sticks, known as [laities?]; many people had them
313 his first subdivision on promotion was to Araria, which was in the Purnia district
318 this posting gave Adair a wider scope because subdivisional officers are responsible for the
administration of the area; the administration including everything, like union councils or
local governments and positions
326 writing judgments was another tedious job because it required so much time, from the time
in court to the actual writing of the judgments
328 it was a strenuous life; there was also a lot of touring
332 Adair bought a horse early on; this was a good thing because it provided more opportunity
to get around the country; you could not go by car because the roads were so bad and you
could not reach some of the villages in a car anyway
344 there would be irrigation disputes or land disputes, like two people claiming the same land
area
346 at the time, land disputes were extremely tricky; one had to learn how to deal with them
early on
351 horseback was really the best way to get to most of the places plagued by these disruptions
or natural disasters
353 subdivisional officers often had to deal with situations that would suddenly rise up; horses
allowed the officers to get to the area quickly
362 you would take you food you in a tiffin carrier; it had different tiers of small containers,
with your food separated into the different containers; you would heat them separately
372 it was a strenuous but interesting life; Adair enjoyed time as an administrator in India
because it was so interesting
375 you felt you were really doing a worth-while job because the administrator was like the
mother and father to the villages; a good district officer could make a dramatic difference
to the life and style of the area in which he was in charge of
383 it was not by what he actually did himself, but by the means to which he got things done
and encouraged people to do work, like getting extra water to the villagers
390 if you were really keen and interested, you would get other people involved because the

district magistrate was considered to be a “big shot” and could get anyone to do just about anything, including voluntary services
405 in Adair’s first subdivision, he had a “funny little bungalow” with about three or four rooms
411 the bearer was one’s head servant and tended to become very attached to you, following you for the rest of your career; Adair had the same bearer for ten years
418 the bearers would always come to you because they always seemed to know when new recruits were arriving; they were always anxious to get jobs and all you had to do was let it be known that you desired a bearer
429 they all seem to produce certificates from their previous employers; some of them were “fantastic”; one produced a type of petition that listed his credentials, then stated at the end, “And for this act of kindness, I shall ever pray to J. Christ Esq., who your honor so notably resembles.”
449 you would normally check the recommendations through people that you knew
455 it was never hard to find servants because everyone wanted jobs; the pay was considered riches by their standards; there was tremendous competition
464 you would sometimes end up with a “rogue servant” and you would have to get rid of him as fast as possible; there would be a number of applicants more than willing to take his place
470 Adair’s bearer was from a middle class or [Kiest?] caste; the Brahmin are the top caste, followed by the [Rajhputs?], [Kiests?], and then the lower orders; the Kiest were the “writer” caste because the word itself means “scribe”, which does not really exist anymore
494 the little bungalow Adair made reference to earlier included the head bearer, a cook, house boy, and someone to look after the horses
502 the total population of Araria, which was the subdivisional headquarters, was about half a million, but the town itself was very small; Adair was probably only Englishman there
512 all the men Adair would work with would be Indian; the deputy police commissioner, local doctor, the numerous lawyers and the other professional people would all be Indian
520 they had a small tennis club and Adair would go and play a game in the afternoon with his Indian colleagues
524 in a district’s headquarters, you may have an English district magistrate, or he could be Indian; many of those Adair worked with during his probationary year were Indians, of some he still knows
534 there was a particular chap Adair was close to that eventually got into the diplomatic or foreign services; when Adair saw him last, he was the Indian Ambassador in Kathmandu
544 end of tape