

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 881 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:

Brigadier Frank McCallum and Mrs. Sybilla McCallum

4700.0601 Tape 881.1 (Tape 2 of 3)

Audrey Spence

4700.0602 Tape 881.2 (Tape 1 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:

McCallums: 4/29/1978

Spence: 6/4/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 34 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 881, Side A

McCallums (Part 2 of 3) (881.1)

- 002 McCallum tells of how the guards would go through all the motions, even when they knew who it was
- 014 McCallum was very keen on shooting; he would take his wife and child out along the town drain and the jail, where there was always a snipe
- 019 McCallum received a nomination for the Staff College; they knew then that they would never have to be separated again
- 025 McCallum was there during the earthquake
- 027 the people would say, "The devil looks out for his own" when discussing the Staff College
- 032 the Indian hospitals were terrible; fortunately, the army was there to set-up tents
- 036 Mrs. McCallum tells of how she would have to steal tea for the patients
- 041 McCallum tells of how Mrs. McCallum once poured tea into the mouth of a dead man; no one seemed to mind that she went around pouring it into the mouths of untouchables and high castes

044 all of the wives and families were evacuated back to England; the men were not allowed to
sleep in their bungalows, but had to sleep in tents outside
047 this was because the “rumble-tumble” went on for a while
048 McCallum was put in charge of riding around, keeping an eye on the villagers and
reporting what they doing
051 the villages seemed to be withering away, especially because water was such a problem
054 there would be water lines that brought water into the villages from the bottom of the hills
056 someone would dig a hole and a long ditch; someone would then come along and dig
another; no water was flowing
060 it was terrible because the villagers were afraid to go into the hospital because they were
afraid they would die
063 McCallum talks of other stations that he served; he also talks of the abandoned women’s
camp
070 McCallum borrowed the Gate Commander’s staff car; McCallum knew the car had to stop
in the early morning
078 McCallum went banging on every car until he found the man’s room
081 they arrived in the morning and had breakfast; after which, McCallum took his family to
the Abandoned Wives Camp
083 twenty-four hours later, he was off to battle
085 they eventually got a bungalow in Fort Edwards; named after Edwards who had made a
name for himself in the early days
088 it was a comfortable, two story bungalow
090 for the first fifteen years of married life, they were only together for five years
094 when on the Frontier, one got very good leave; there was three months of leave if you could
afford it
097 McCallum talks of how wonderful Kashmir was; the McCallums had a wonderful
bungalow there when they went up the second time
104 McCallum talks of a fishing expedition that he enjoyed
107 the McCallums began married life during a terrorist attack and survived an earthquake
110 people were very kind; Mrs. McCallum talks of being taken in by some troops while on her
way out to meet McCallum
123 there was always someone willing to help
124 the first time in Kashmir, Mrs. McCallum rented an improper camp that was very cold;
there were no servants, no stoves, no heating or fireplaces
129 Mrs. McCallum’s servants ran off to another woman, who offered for Mrs. McCallum to
stay with her; they found proper accommodations the next day
135 there was never a real problem with putting people up because of the servants
138 having family history in India did make things easier because you knew what to expect
when you reached India
146 the sad part was always when the children had to go back home
148 it would take six weeks to get a letter back and forth
149 Mrs. McCallum was considered “lucky” because she was able to stay with her brother at
her aunt’s house; some children were pushed from one relation to another
153 the McCallum’s children left when they were very young because of the war; they came
home and never went out again
162 it was months later before one was able to get free passages to and from home; when they
first went out, there were no free passages at all

165 they were later given five free first class passages during their service
 172 Mrs. McCallum talks of the way things are now in regards to the soldiers and families, such
 as the now available schooling and such
 176 although they had servants, life in India was very hard; it was the kind that was difficult
 with great weather extremes
 182 there were the “Kojak Winds” that would cut through everything; they would put oatmeal
 in the bath to avoid too much drying of the skin
 188 people continued going to India because of the limited open positions for men in those days
 200 there was always a chance at excitement
 204 there was a bearer, a butler/waiter, a cook and apprentice, a sweeper, a stable keeper, a
 gardener and a water carrier
 219 there was no running water in any of the bungalows, just a turn pipe
 221 the dobee would do the washing; he would work for a number of families; the way they
 washed clothes was “marvelous” although one tended to lose a number of buttons
 229 they ate the English food, for Indian food was very rich; they had fruit and breakfast,
 followed by lunch and then dinner; when you were entertaining guests or out to dinner, you
 would serve five courses
 240 in old India, there were enormous dinners
 245 Mrs. McCallum loved Indian food, but for everyday meals, one would eat English meals
 247 people would take several things out to India to make it feel more like home; they would
 not take furniture but knick-knacks and such
 258 the servants were extremely honest when you think of what their wages were
 262 the cook usually knew a certain amount of English dishes, unless there was a family dish;
 they were very good with learning and doing
 268 when you would go on leave, the cook may leave you and go to work for someone else; as
 soon as you would return, they would return to you
 269 there were two or three popular dishes among the cooks; “Sin Pancakes” or “Fruit baskets”
 281 at Christmas, the servants would make “jollies”
 282 the British were not allowed to take any gifts from the Indians except for baskets of fruit
 285 Mrs. McCallum remembers all the Indian gentlemen sending Christmas cakes when she
 was younger
 289 there would be rows of Christmas cakes with delicate icing
 293 all the Gorkha officers would come to be greeted by the C.O. at Christmas; they were all
 dressed in their very best with all their medals and such
 304 on one occasion, they introduced Snapdragon; it is hot brandy poured over nuts and fire is
 set to it; it was a big hit at parties
 312 the officers would drink either whiskey or rum
 325 Christmas was a great time for shoots and get-togethers; the forest people, mostly the
 Indian Forest Service people, would invite people out to their Christmas camp
 335 it was a jolly vacation; shooting was not the main thing, it was mostly a “get-together”
 337 McCallum tells the story of a medical servant and one of his patients
 360 there’s not much to say about mess life; he tells of the various messes
 365 there were some beautiful messes; some were very strict
 367 you had to be at the mess for a certain time to eat your meals; you generally had tea in your
 own bunker
 372 on Mess Night, you were required to be there on time; he tells of the procedures that went
 on that particular night

384 at the entrance hall was an enormous red book; it contained everyone's name and how
many drinks you had consumed that evening; this book was inspected by the C.O. and at
the annual inspection by the Brigade Commander

393 once a week, there would be Band Night; the band would come out and play; guests were
invited

400 there were great games; there were two forms of fighting; McCallum describes various
games

426 no one ever seemed to get hurt when playing; they never played any "stupid" games
428 there was one mess that was known for playing stupid games, playing a "William Tell" on
one occasion

447 McCallum talks of trying to drink whiskey while standing on one's head; one night while
dining out, the Head Forester and two C.O.s tried to do it

463 one of the men was brought home on top the car, singing about his little blue home in
Bloomsbury

468 the women also had a very happy, exciting life; they were all the same age and same
amount of income; there were no great differences between the women

473 Mrs. McCallum did not enjoy club life very much, so she did not join or go to often; there
were always picnics and dances, however

484 the club was the place for those that enjoyed playing games, like cards or golf
489 there was some riding

492 McCallum tells of the Saturday afternoon tennis games on the court behind the mess
497 Mrs. McCallum was able to be with her children up until World War II
503 sending the children off was terrible in the early days; it was common for the children to be
sent to grandparents, aunts and uncles who did not really want them

511 there were schools in India, but most of the good schools were for the children of soldiers;
before, the regimental children were raised in the barracks and sometimes orphaned

532 Mrs. McCallum talks of the Lawrence School and the Roman Catholic Schools
537 it was always believed that the children should go home and not stay; unlike the French, the
British were never allowed to believe India was theirs

548 the British were not allowed to buy land in India
554 people now think differently about education

Tape 881, Side B

Spence (Part 2 of 2) (881.2)

006 on Sunday afternoons, everyone in the school was told to sit and write a letter to their
parents under the supervision of a mistress

008 Spence remembers trying to find things to stay; her father had the same problem; when her
grandfather was writing, he talked of catching the steamer

012 in one of her grandfather's letters, he is on his way out to India; they had to wait a day and
a half at one of the ports to allow the mail to catch up and transfer onto the steamer

017 airmail made the letter writing easier, which began in the 1940s

019 Spence's mother landed in Bombay and was married to her father in the cathedral; they had
met while he was on leave

023 men went down and got married at Bombay because they would meet their brides off the
boat; this was probably because the girls rarely had relations

025 all of the people on the boat attended the wedding

029 Spence was born in Shimla at the nursing home

031 at that time in Shimla, only the viceroy and commander and chief were allowed to have a
 car; everyone else either walked or rode a horse; there were transportation alternatives, but
 they were expensive to have and maintain

036 there were bullock carts, which were very common form of transportation

039 Spence's father never learned to drive; when cars came out, they hired a chauffeur

040 Spence's mother never drove either; they did not own a car when they returned to England

045 Spence explains their house in Shimla; she remembers always finding a monkey in the
 swing on the veranda

048 the windows had to be wired to keep the monkeys out

050 they look at pictures; Spence explains who and what is in the pictures

055 Spence remembers the servants, especially the bearer

060 Spence always went to school on her pony; she began kindergarten in India

062 except for the very beginning, Spence's father served in the central government

068 Spence's family would always rent a house when they went home on leave

073 there was a giant anthill in their house in Delhi

082 Spence remembers India very well; she was seven when she left

085 one was allocated a house, based upon your position

091 it was hard to see because of the funny hats worn

093 Spence remembers being terrified of the nurse; the children had a nanny

100 Spence admits to being a naughty child, but also an amusing one

101 the would bring the nanny back to England with them when going on leave

104 when coming back to England, one would always rent a furnished house; it was always a
 different one, which meant you traveled around with a large amount of luggage

108 Spence would buy one film a week with her "pocket money"

110 you traveled around the country; always one taxi for the luggage and another for them

111 in one house, there was one room that was stuffed with trunks, suitcases, etc.

113 the government houses were furnished by the government; they did not have a house of
 their own until Spence was twenty

117 you often lost things you were fond of because things had to be thrown out; Spence
 suspects her mother did it in the dead of night when they were all asleep

122 you had to have a great deal of personal stability to survive the moving around

126 it was, to an extent, a shock for children going back to England after growing accustomed
 to life in India

128 Spence's sister was sent home first and was alone the longest; her mother came home every
 six months after that initial eighteen months

133 Spence believes her sister felt rejected, hidden by her self-defense mechanism of teasing

143 it was unusual for a mother to come home every six months; her mother spent most of their
 money because of this; her father was good in that he agreed to this

147 her mother would stay for the summer holidays; Spence remembers eagerly anticipating
 her return to England

159 Spence recalls a conversation between herself and her sister concerning their play names

168 moving around so frequently meant there was never much continuity

170 people returning from India tended to go back to their parents if it was possible; people
 tended to go to the West Country

174 Spence talks of the boy that teased her throughout elementary

180 for her seventh birthday, Spence had a camel for the afternoon that would take them around
 the garden

182 there was a certain frock that was always worn in England during the summer
 183 when her mother returned in May, there was snow on the ground and her sister in the dress
 with chill bumps up to her elbows
 185 the headmistress said she could not put on her winter clothes because it was the beginning
 of summer and the children had to wear their summer clothes
 190 once a year, there was a great party and everyone always had a marvelous time
 198 when Spence's father would return from work, he would read *Winnie the Pooh* to the
 children; he would always be back at five because he went to work early in the morning
 200 Spence's second cousin married a general
 204 when they were younger, all of the children went to the same school
 207 Spence's sister put roller skates on her home-made hammock
 212 Spence's brother was not well when he first came back
 214 the houses were so expensive that it was impossible to live in unless you shared them with
 other people
 220 Spence believed New Delhi was a beautiful place
 226 they put some of the servants on pension after leaving because the servants remained with
 them for so long
 240 there was a problem with wasps and hornets
 249 on her mother's side, there was a cousin that went into the Gorkhas and her uncle taught in
 an Indian school and wrote a book
 254 her mother's side tended to be more in the church
 255 there was a church that was buried in the sand; Spence's grandfather was responsible for
 having it dug out
 258 there were various furnished houses at all of these places; all of the houses were different
 259 they would always go to the sea in August and then to visit their grandfather in October
 265 the books Spence had showed a different type of childhood when compared to her own; it
 would have been a different sort of experience
 272 her sister went back during the war in one of the women services; at the end, she went and
 joined her parents; she would later marry there
 280 going to India was a tradition for families; there were those families that did not adjust well
 283 people from Ireland tended to go out to India; this is probably because of the economic
 conditions in Ireland
 294 because of the hot climate, nothing really grew well
 302 Mrs. Roosevelt went to the same school as Spence's aunt, which was run by a French
 woman in England
 310 Spence adored the nursery man the most when she was younger
 315 the adults had a more paternalistic relationship
 319 the servants loved children; they enjoyed playing with them; the servants still ask about her
 nieces and nephews as well as her children
 328 Spence talks of the people in the various photographs and sketches
 339 her great, great uncle was supposed to go out to India at the age of seventeen
 340 Spence reads her family history with India
 364 Helen married Sir Bradley Leslie, who built a lot of the Indian railways
 365 Spence continues talking about her family tree; an uncle was in the Indian Police
 385 many of the girls went out to India to meet someone and get married
 412 Spence made out a family tree; her grandfather went out in the British-Indian Army and
 stayed for thirty years