

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 841 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Major General William Odling

COLLECTION: 4700.0577 Tape 841 (Tape 2 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION: Briton in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATE: 2/22/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 93 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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Tape 841, Side A

Odling (Part 2 of 4)

- 003 had to be tough to stand the heat of India
- 005 was keen on pig sticking
- 010 winter social activities, differences in season, typical winter day
- 025 rainy season
- 032 describes pig sticking expeditions, strategy
- 075 injuries from pig sticking
- 081 putting stitches in dog and horse from pig's tusks, description of tusks
- 089 good pig sticking country, competitions
- 105 frequency of pig sticking expeditions
- 114 in winter, spent a day or two per week in jungle as gamekeeper, made sure natives weren't damaging jungle, Odling rode camel on these expeditions
- 125 attending to people's medicine needs, brought medicine bag with him on camel
- 139 famine, problems before Odling's time in India, government relief works, famine relief
- 155 difficulties of learning Indian languages, language that had only one verb tense

- 177 man who was excellent with languages, became first class interpreter
- 189 how Odling learned language, lots of contacts with Indians
- 203 division of officers into batteries
- 208 customary to never talk English to an Indian soldier, so got fluent
- 213 events that had to be conducted in local language
- 225 lots of exercise, stayed fit, lots of riding
- 233 riding horses
- 250 pay, accommodations
- 275 people going into debt, never getting out
- 299 Indian bankers, Ugandan merchants
- 309 stores at crossroads run by Ugandans
- 319 training, preparations for India
- 325 went to India to escape parental control
- 330 compares other countries he could have gone to with India: Egypt, Hong Kong
- 337 also considered Egypt, but didn't have same sporting facilities
- 350 decline of tigers in India, practically extinct
- 375 most pig sticking expeditions took place along rivers
- 390 flooding after rains, changes in rivers
- 405 rocky hills where wild pigs dwelled
- 415 March to June were prime pig sticking months
- 445 shooting camp
- 460 fewer officers in summer, people went to hill stations
- 484 Odling found hill station boring
- 510 gymkhana was a horse show, competition, silly events
- 530 description of officers' mess

Tape 841, Side B

Odling (Part 4 of 4)

- 010 enjoyed driving a regimental coach pulled by four horses
- 014 good relations between regiments and different services
- 025 rivalry between those who were mounted and those who weren't
- 033 no antagonism between ICS and army
- 045 dedication of district officers
- 049 adamant that there was no antagonism between services
- 054 formality of regimental life, dressing for dinner, visiting viceroy
- 073 different traditions in different regiments
- 085 ranks of officers
- 090 king's commissions
- 100 feelings on being far from home
- 110 Indian culture, religion, Odling has attended Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim services
- 128 isolation of military stations, story of holy man who died in a village that was half Mohammed, half Hindu, died while being carried in procession, debate over burial of holy man, got British corporal to mediate
- 160 story of dentist coming to nearby village, Odling brought an Indian officer with him, came across man speaking about Gandhi

- 205 availability of dentists, doctors
215 warned not to get appendicitis after ten o'clock
240 job satisfaction
256 closeness of Eurasian community
265 skin color
270 social differences between Brits and Eurasians
278 religious differences
288 enjoyed Hindu temples and movies
300 left India in 1938, has been back to visit
304 visiting Gorkhas in Nepal
313 wearing topees, Odling wore his from sunup to sundown; that was the law
324 Englishman who walked from Peshawar to Calcutta, in hot weather, without hat, took three months, to prove to doctors that hat wasn't necessary, but everyone dismissed him as crazy
333 people who rode five days on horseback without hats, thought they'd die of sunstroke
354 in Egypt, only wore topees when on parade
356 small pith hat worn with civilian dress
370 pith hat was heavy for wearing all day
400 two different topi styles
455 gunners
496 Odling has never written about his time in India, too busy
520 television
526 Odling's neighborhood