

Women Share News of Men Who Are Prisoners of War

Group of Fifty Meet Each Month at Red Cross Headquarters Here — Personal Messages From Hamilton Repatriate Bring Comfort—Next-of-Kin Group Doing Good Work

AN EVER-WIDENING circle of people in Hamilton and district are receiving many a message of comfort and hope, as next-of-kin of prisoners of war in various parts of the world gather one evening each month at Rowanwood, the Red Cross headquarters here. These women, nearly 50 of them attending each evening, save every bit of information, such as letters and other messages that come to each of them, and share them when they gather.

News From Prisoners

There are, altogether, about 120 next-of-kin of war prisoners registered with the Red Cross in this district. While most of these war prisoners are in Europe, there are about half a dozen now in Japan who were taken by the Japanese at Hong Kong. Lately, some mail has come from them, both cards and letters, bringing reports that they are well.

A few others have word of the repatriation of their loved ones, and this week was a highlight for all these anxious ones, when Flight-Lieut. Ross Gillespie arrived home, and was the first repatriated one to give them personal messages about their own in Germany. Every word of his reports was eagerly received and stored away in the memory of those present. Mrs. R. M. Gillespie, his mother, has gathered with the group for some time. He described the conditions in prison camps and in the salt mines, and of other occupations at which they must work. These accounts were such as to give much encouragement to these women.

Share Information

Thrilling moments are experienced when such reports as one at this week's meeting are read and a member shared with the others the official word that her brother had arrived in a safe place after escaping from a prison camp. Another reported that "the chains have been taken off," which again indicated that airmen have been chained by the Germans as well as soldiers.

It is often discovered that relatives of various members are living in the same camps in Germany. Sometimes they receive photographs, and happy is the woman who discovers the familiar face of a loved one in the group.

It is interesting to learn that a good deal of mail comes through safely. Some of the men even describe gardens which they have planted during the last summer, the vegetables which they have been able to grow, augmenting the

rations sent in the Red Cross prisoner-of-war parcels. One of these parcels reach each man every week.

About Meals

One of the prisoners, who is a chef, described how the most was made of these parcels in the way of appetizing meals. Under his direction, other Canadian prisoners in this camp pool their Red Cross rations, and, by ingenuity, he is able to make much more variety in their meals by this method.

Continually, the story of the men expresses appreciation of what these Red Cross boxes mean in providing them with food. They also refer to the general influence of the Red Cross on their care while confined as prisoners. They are able to keep in comparatively good health, they report, and any doubts on this score were dispelled by Flight-Lieut. Gillespie, who appeared well himself, and told of the condition of others.

Kindly Interest

The interest and faithfulness of Mrs. R. K. Palmer, who is in charge of the next-of-kin group, has done much to build up the atmosphere of friendliness which has grown to mean a great deal to those who must be in suspense month after month about those dear to them. She also keeps them well informed about all the constantly changing rules and regulations regarding the sending of prisoner-of-war parcels. She emphasized the need of putting warm clothing in the first personal parcel sent by the next-of-kin, of which one may be sent every three months.

While they share all their news and experiences, the women's fingers are busy sewing for the Red Cross, all kinds of useful clothing and also patchwork quilts.

During each such evening, there is a period when tea is served. Those presiding at the tea hour at this month's meeting were: Mrs. W. P. Lowry, Mrs. Burns, Mrs. H. F. Tice and Miss Winnifred Kirkland.

149
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