

# Acquit Veteran Guard On Trio of Six Charges

Buckingham, Que., March 28 (CP).—Cpl. William Lee of Montreal, member of the Veterans' Guard of Canada was today acquitted by a court-martial of charges of conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline; failing to return German prisoners of war at the required hour to the Thurso, Que., lumber camp at which they were employed, and neglecting to see that they were under reasonable supervision at all times.

The court-martial withheld its findings on three other charges faced by Lee—those of allowing prisoners to fraternize with civilians, being intoxicated while in charge of prisoners of war and permitting prisoners to consume intoxicating beverages.

Lee's acquittal on three of the six charges was announced by Col. S. Echenberg, officer commanding Military District No. 4, Montreal, who presided over the court. The court's findings on the three other charges will be released only after

they are confirmed and promulgated in orders.

Trial of Pte. N. R. Skinner of Granby, Que., on similar charges arising out of alleged misconduct while guarding prisoners of war at Thurso, March 15, was adjourned until tomorrow.

Earlier, Simone Lefebvre, waitress at the Myres Hotel in Thurso, testified she had seen Lee drink only one bottle of beer.

That bottle, testified Miss Lefebvre, was served while Lee was having dinner. She saw him about 7 p.m. and he was sober.

Previous witnesses had testified that Lee, a member of the Veterans' Guard of Canada, had purchased beer for the prisoners, had been drinking with them and become intoxicated.

Miss Lefebvre testified that Lee sat at a table apart from the prisoners. There was no beer on the prisoners' table and she did not serve any and knew of no one who had served beer to them.

## Special Meals Ordered.

She said that on Lee's orders, special meals were prepared for the prisoners, who had had teeth extracted here earlier that day.

"Did you see the prisoners drink beer at any time at the hotel?" Miss Lefebvre was asked by Lt.-Col. R. Fortier of Montreal, judge-advocate.

"No," she replied.

Lieut. F. A. Smith of No. 2 Company, Veterans' Guard, Ottawa, was called to testify concerning Lee's arrest.

On instructions, he said, he proceeded to Thurso early in the morning of March 16, arrested Lee at about 2 a.m. and returned him to Ottawa.

"What was the condition of Cpl. Lee when you arrested him?" asked Capt. T. B. Brown, counsel for Lee.

"He was in a confused condition when I awakened him, but he soon recovered," Smith said. He had two corporals with him to carry out the arrest. He said he smelled alcohol on Cpl. Lee's breath, when he leaned over the bed to waken him, but he was under the influence of liquor "not to the extent that he was incapable of carrying on his duties."

## Confused at First.

Cpl. F. J. Magnus of No. 2 Company, Veterans' Guard, who was with Smith, said Lee was confused when awakened, "but after that he seemed quite normal."

L. Cpl. W. J. Kingdom, corporal of the guard at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa, testified that Lee was under the influence of liquor when he was brought there, but was not drunk.

Maj. T. L. Golden, commanding officer of No. 12 Company, of which Lee is a member, at Farnham, Que., said he had the "very highest opinion of Lee, and considered him 'an excellent soldier.'"

"His qualifications as a non-commissioned officer are excellent and he is extremely conscientious in the performance of his duty and above average in efficiency," Major Golden added.

Lieut. J. J. Walker, also of No. 12 Company of the Veterans' Guard, gave character evidence, testifying that he could "place all faith" in Lee in "duties he has to do."

In his summing-up address to the court, Capt. Brown said it had been proved that Lee had been unable to

read his standing orders because they could not be posted in the prisoners' camp, 48 miles northeast of Thurso, without civilians and prisoners seeing them.

## Blames Presence of Girls.

Capt. Brown laid blame for the incident at Thurso on the presence of six girls involved in the case, and said evidence had shown they had helped consume two bottles of whiskey at Buckingham before going to Thurso.

"These girls were in no condition to judge whether Cpl. Lee was doing his duty or not," he added. "They were under the influence of liquor."

The manner in which Lee had ordered the women out of the hotel where the prisoners were, prejudiced their statements, said Capt. Brown. They had "got back" at him by giving evidence that he had been drinking.

Capt. L. C. Carroll, prosecutor, told the court in his address that Lee had possession of the standing orders, and could have read them before locking them in his barracks box.

He alleged that Lee had shown throughout his testimony that he knew it was wrong to permit fraternizing by prisoners, and the prosecution had proved there had been such fraternizing. There was no doubt, he said, the prisoners had consumed beer.

## Suggests Lapse of Memory.

"I strongly suggest that the accused does not remember all that happened that night," said Capt. Carroll.

Earlier today Lee testified in his own behalf, and denied that he had purchased beer for the prisoners and had been drinking with them.

He also denied seeing girls arrive at the hotel with the prisoners, returning from Buckingham on their way back to the lumber camp. There had been girls in the hotel before the prisoners arrived, and he had stopped them from dancing with the Germans, he said.

The allegations had been made by witnesses testifying shortly after the open court-martial began yesterday in the town hall of this town, 25 miles east of Ottawa.

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