

MIRROR'S FLASH ATTRACTS FLYERS TO ENEMY CAMP

Canadian Prisoners Tell of Privations in Mine; Two Die in Accidents

(By William Stewart, Canadian Press
War Correspondent)

Manila, Sept. 17.—Three Canadians have arrived in Manila after a day's flight and a three-day train ride from a prison camp near Kawasaki, on Japan's Kyushu island where, with some 160 other Canadians captured at Hong Kong Christmas day, 1941, they had been working in coal mines since 1943.

The three, Lance-Cpl. John MacPherson, of Wolfville, N.S.; Rfnrn. Tom Henry, of Campbellton, N.B., and Rfnrn. Murray McColm, of New Richmond, Que., arrived as more than 300 liberated Canadians were expected to leave here to-morrow on their homeward journey by sea.

This group excludes 80 hospital cases who will remain under medical care until a Canadian hospital ship arrives to pick them up and 32 other Canadians, among the first to reach here from Japanese camps, awaiting air passage to the United States and Canada.

Die in Slave Mine

MacPherson and his companions were members of a draft of Canadian prisoners which left Hong Kong in January, 1943, and promptly were put to work by the Japanese enlarging shafts of the mine which went down at least two miles and from which poor quality soft coal was extracted for gasoline manufacture. During their two years at the mine at least 12 Canadians died of illness and two were killed while working in the sagging mine where there were so many accidents the shift groups of 60 men were gradually reduced to about 35.

Beatings for slackness during the eight-hour shifts on which the mine operated day and night were considered part of the daily prison life.

The Canadians, who looked for leadership to Sgt.-Major Harold Shepherd, of River Bend, Que.; Sgt.-Major Walter Parkes, Richmond, Que., and other N.C.O.'s, spent their captivity enlarging the shafts and finally cutting coal with retired Japanese soldiers from the Chinese campaigns.

At first the prisoners were permitted to clothe themselves as

heavily as necessary to keep warm, but last year they were allowed to wear nothing but a drill shirt, trousers and rubber shoes. They were allowed one cigarette daily and beaten if extra smokes were found in their possession.

The prisoners suspected the war was over when Allied air raids ceased suddenly. On August 15 (the day Japanese acceptance of surrender terms was announced in London and Washington) the mine ceased work, the Japanese explaining it was a day of prayer. It remained closed the next day also, on the pretext that there was a meeting of mine officials. After that, the prisoners knew the Japanese jig was up.

Prisoners attracted the attention of food-carrying American planes by signalling with a mirror and within a few days a party of flyers drove into the camp. One liberated Canadian said there were about 140 Canadians at the mine when he left.

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JAPAN
PRISONERS
CANADIANS