

We had no written stuff to go on but as several of us had seen the play in London we got together and wrote up the whole show. It was very well produced and the scenery on our stage in the big hall was excellent. The scene painters were very good and made do with the available. Apart from the plays that were put on we had concerts and various other forms of entertainment. Even "twenty-one" though not known by that name. This consisted of teams to whom questions were put. Most interesting - without the hundreds of Rand prizes as in today's radio show. Then there were the various classes where one could study engineering, languages, history, Botany etc. For there seemed to be any number of professional men in the camp who were only too interested to be able to help chaps continue their studies - for it must be remembered we had numbers of students and articled clerks.

There were the various clubs where one could go and listen to a talk on shooting by the Gun Club, yachting by the boating enthusiasts, and various others. I actually took an exam in Horticulture but never heard the results as the Normandy landing upset that. The papers were received via Norway and the pupils answers returned through the same channel.

I gave several talks, Trekking the Great Thirst, Three weeks in an ox wagon to Ngamiland, Fighting in German East under the command of ex-Boer enemy commanders, etc. These talks I used to enjoy giving as they needed no preparation.

The Italians for security reasons? had two of their men patrolling inside the camp. The one a soldier and the other a carbineer (Policeman) the reason being that they could not trust two soldiers or two policemen together as they were very susceptible to bribery. Hence they set a thief to catch a thief. From their workmen who happened to be working on something in the camp (who these two were supposed to keep an eye on) we often borrowed one or two of their tools which, of course, were never returned. I remember one very hot and stuffy day we caught these two patrol men asleep, and took away their rifles. Was there a flap when they woke? The two looked very sheepish as the whole camp was watching. However, we returned the arms knowing that we now had two compatriots. Shortly after this two of our officers, dressed in sloppy home-made ItI uniforms and wooden rifles, marched up to the gate and the guard on the gate, whose attention was being distracted by a number of chaps carrying on a fight near the gate, just opened the gate and let these two out. They actually got through to Switzerland. A short while later the two real guards turned up at the gate - what could the poor chap on the gate do but let them out and he dare not say a word about two lots having come out.

I am afraid I am making this rather a long story but it is interesting. The Italians - on account of the roll call having been faked - did not realise for a few days that two chaps were missing. They began to wonder how they had got away. Maybe they had made good their chance when they went out of our area to the Italian Admin. block to receive private parcels. For there we were allowed out in small batches to collect the parcels - a list of which had been posted.

Well, to stop any further use being made of this chance the Commandant had placed, at the guard room on the gate, a book in which each one as he passed out signed his name. How this was to help I do not know for about a week later the S.B.O. asked the Commandant if his book was any use and, probably not having even looked at it, said "Quite". Well, the book contained the signatures of Churchill, Stalin, Clark Gable etc. We also received parcels of private books which, when read, we passed on to our camp library which, before we left, had a couple of thousand including many from the Red Cross. These book parcels were opened for you and then kept by the Ites to be sent to Rome for censoring.