

Also two of our officers died here and the Germans gave them a Military funeral with a full firing party and placed two wreaths on the grave. Twenty of our officers were allowed to attend.

Red Cross Parcels were now beginning to arrive regularly and as soon as a truck arrived from Geneva the Commandant contacted one of the senior officers and on arrival at the truck broke the seal in his presence. They were then carted up to the camp where they were locked up in the Red Cross room. The Commandant held one key and the S.B.O. the other. I well remember on one occasion I went to help with the parcels and on this particular occasion they were Canadian Parcels and these were packed six in a case. An old German with a cart and horse loaded four of these cases marked "CANADIAN RED CROSS". They had been told that all our shipping had been destroyed and I suppose this old chap began to wonder for he asked me in German: "From Canada eh?" I said "Yaa" and he immediately said: "War Komen - Schwemen eh".

A lot of our private parcels we received but they and letters took up to six weeks or more to reach us. It was the letters that we longed for. How were our folk at home, and then we received two letter cards a week to reply.

Private parcels were of course always opened by the Germans looking for contraband. There were, however, means of getting stuff for escape purposes etc and our escape committee always had someone either helping the Germans handle the parcels or watching. They could usually spot the phoney ones. For instance, I received a parcel from the Old Ladies of Kensington and in it was a chess set and board. The committee chap got the parcel and they split open the board and in it were concealed several hundred German Marks. Now and again having been advised in a coded letter that a certain parcel was being sent, the chap helping the Germans would tell them he was in no hurry for it and please store it in his box. Each officer had a box in this room where he could keep stuff ex Red Cross and private parcels until he wanted it when he could draw. Later when there was a friendly German on duty there the parcel would be opened and the contraband sneaked out.

They did, I must say, on occasion find the contraband but quite a few were friendly and could be bribed.

To give an illustration of what one could do with cigarettes and food stuff (I am getting away ahead of things but as I have mentioned I just sit down and type as items of interest strike me).

It was during the period when we had the privilege of watching our bombers in action, British at night and American during the day. The raids were by two and three thousand bombers. At night all power was cut and so our wireless would be out of action but for the fact that we were able to purchase, with the help of a German Officer, for 5,000 cigarettes, a battery to operate the machine.

When these raids were on and bombing Cassle twenty miles away one could read a paper by the light of the bombs. What a sight it used to be.

We had a grandstand seat watching the big bombing raids of two and three thousand machines. In the distance one heard the sound of approaching planes and the German sentry would say "Dar Kommen" and sure enough they came over in waves of sixty, three groups of twenty in arrowhead formation. No sooner had the one group passed than the next came on and the enemy anti-aircraft guns opened fire, one saw puffs of smoke away up near the invading planes, and now and again one was hit. They, at first, had no fighter escort but later these fighters were fitted with an extra tank and then you saw them chasing through the sky round the bombers. When these fighters emptied the emergency special tank it was jettisoned and the Germans were keen on retrieving them. Our German Sgt. Major found one and very proud of himself, came up and offered us a light from his lighter filled with British petrol.

When there was a raid we were supposed to get under cover, why, I don't know, as it was no protection. However, on one occasion the planes came over and we were ordered under cover.