

Diary

The organization at an Oflag

This is the second in a series of articles written by R. E. Stewart on his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany after being captured at Stalag. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Stalag raid.

Article II
A prisoner of war camp was a highly organized unit. In command was the S.B.O. (Senior British Officer). Assisting him were an adjutant and a staff of advisers. Other officers looked after various departments. The most important of these was the Security Officer, whose duty it was to brief incoming POWs to make sure that they were genuine.

Quite often a prisoner arrived at camp professing to have been captured in a certain location. Before he was permitted to take part in special activities, he was thoroughly investigated.

The main responsibility of the security officer was organizing escapes, listening to the suggestions of various officers and deciding on the feasibility and priority of the schemes of escape. There was always a major one underway, but those involving individual officers or small groups had to be given careful consideration.

To make successful escapes, concealed facilities for various purposes were required.

Dummy rifles had to be made out of wood. German uniforms or civilian clothes had to be made out of such material as old blankets, keys to unlock doors had to be made and maps for escape routes prepared.

No camp would be efficient without expert technicians who saw that news of the war's progress was received, thus helping prisoners to weigh the possibilities of getting out from behind the barbed wire. A radio always seemed to be available. If a guard happened to find and destroy one, another was soon in working order.

For days on end, nothing was heard from the outside world and then the word that contact had been made once again was received with real satisfaction.

The recreation officer was a busy man. Under his direction were those who put on plays for enjoyment, led bands for entertainment, and looked after physical needs in such areas as softball, ice hockey and cricket.

Many duties were performed by the education officer. Any POW who wished tuition in a certain subject soon began his classes. In a camp of even medium size, instructors were

found for any subject such as mathematics, French, science, history or even Arabic.

Students could prepare for and write examinations from the Royal Society of Arts in London. When the paper arrived, the candidate sat for the test under the careful surveillance of the examining officer chosen from the camp or from the Red Cross representatives from Switzerland. After several months, the successful candidate received his certificate. I still have my parchment stating that I was proficient in the German language.

Possibly my friends and I ate a little better because I learned to say "Haben Sie eler far zigaretten?" If the student's mark was too low, there was plenty of time to try again, especially when no one was quite sure how long he might be at the same spot.

The cook and his staff were very important fellows. At our camp, as in most others, there was an officer who had been chef at a famous restaurant or tourist resort in Europe, and it was amazing what he could do with the meagre rations at his disposal.

We all liked to be on good terms with our quartermaster (appointed by the SBO) who provided our blankets and mattresses of old sacking filled with straw. He also saw that we received our fair share of the Red Cross parcels arriving in the camp.

During the last months of our confinement, he was not busy since the trains bringing food were bombed by our air force. As a result, we were hungry, really hungry, with one meal a day, but there was joy in our hearts because we felt that with any luck, we would soon be seeing our friends and loved ones again. (Continued next week)



BARBECUING ROASTS at Saturday's legion barbecue were these cooks, Harold Manes, Doug Mason, Harold Townsley, Ivan Kilby, Bill Spielvogel, Charlie Auger, Vic Patrick, Bill Taylor, Mick Holmes and Scotty McCristall who isn't shown. The meat was pronounced delicious by those attending. (Staff Photo)

Reeves meet, review consultative report

Reeves of all seven Halton municipalities met Thursday in a special meeting called by Halton Warden William Coulter, to make a final review of the Halton Consultative Committee on Education's draft plan for a single county board of education.

The committee's report will be voted on Thursday evening at a special meeting of the entire County Council in Milton. Burlington and Oakville have already expressed objections to the plan and prefer a two-tier education system, but all the North Halton councils and school boards are in favor.

Warden Coulter said Thursday's meeting was to give the Reeves a chance to review the report and ask questions of the Consultative Committee. "It was strictly informative, no decisions were made," he said.

Works of art, Fine Arts Museum at Expo 67 date from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt (2600 B.C.) to works by contemporary artists. Museums in 20 countries are lending paintings and sculptures for the International Exhibition of Fine Arts.



THE S.B.O. (senior British officer), seated, jokes with his advisers in the camp.

Candidates should also fill in this counterfoil. As soon as possible it will be returned to the Camp with the result marked thereon. It should be carefully preserved as official evidence that the candidate has passed the examination and should be produced to the Society later when the Certificate awarded is claimed.

1. Name in full (Please print name) Robert Shaw Stewart

2. Name of Camp from which you are entered as a Candidate Oflag 9 1/2 Germany

3. Subject of Examination Intermediate German



THIS IS A COPY of the Examination result from the Royal Society of Arts.

News of the District

FERGUS

On Friday, June 30, the Fergus downtown area is going to have a new look. The Fergus Chamber of Commerce and its retail section are turning St. Andrew St. into a shopping mall. Each of the retail merchants was contacted by phone and they voted overwhelmingly for the mall and sidewalk sale. Trees, shrubs and benches will be placed in the closed-off area for the benefit of those who would just like to sit and enjoy themselves. On Friday evening, a street dance will be held with music for young and old. Saturday a large parade is planned with many floats and bands. The Chamber of Commerce is hoping this will be the star event of Old Home Week there and invites everyone to participate.

FERGUS, ELORA

Groups of citizens and town fathers set out from Elora and Fergus to walk to neutral territory for a hatchet burying ceremony. The Elora group were led by sign bearers and the Fergus Brass Band. The Fergus citizens followed the Fergus Pipe Band on the mile and a half trip to the Wellington Home grounds. Reeve Arthur Hoffer of Elora and Mayor John Campbell of Fergus signed the "peace scroll" in ink, not blood, before it was rolled up and placed in the casket for the "burial" Sunday. Over 500 people attended the ceremonies and the picnic halfway between the two towns. At the end of one of the flower beds leading up to the Wellington Home, a sign was planted where the peace offerings were buried. However, as this might prove a tempt-

ation, they were later dug up and moved to the Elora museum.

MILTON

Milton's municipal centennial project, the improvements to the mill pond that has occupied a prominent spot in the centre of town since the early 1800s, was officially opened and dedicated. The pond was a contentious point of controversy at several times during the past couple of years. Beautification of the mill pond was decided upon as a \$20,000 centennial project in 1964 by a committee comprising representatives of several local service clubs, churches and organizations in town. They held their first meeting in February 1964 and before August of that year, the mill pond was decided upon as the main project.

Three plaques will be placed on the cairn. One tells of the pond's history and reads: "This Milton Centennial Pond was developed by Jasper Martin in 1820-22. Laborers dug it deep enough to float barges, and the earth was then drawn on barges by oxen from the north side to the south bank. This pond, which is on the Sixteen Mile Creek, supplied water power continuously for operating the grist mill from 1822 to 1960 under the ownership of the Martin family." The pond has been dredged and cleaned, a spillway built and a small

curved bridge added, like the one to Acton's centennial library.

GEORGETOWN

Walter Pacholok, newly appointed building inspector and zoning administrator for Georgetown, has a busy life ahead if his first council meeting is any criterion. The ink was hardly dry on the mayor's signature on a by-law appointing him to the post, when he was instructed to (a) interview management at Dornier Pulp and Paper and advise council when an odor problem in the mill's waste settling bed, will end; (b) advise the owners of property on Water St. where an apartment excavation has stood idle for some time, that weeds and dead trees must be cleaned up; (c) take action to overcome a dust and mud problem on Main St. N. caused by house building in the Wimpey subdivision. Three residents made bitter complaints about offensive odors from the mill.

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