

2,500 GREET HONG KONG REPAT

First Grenadier Is Home



A MOB OF 2,500 greeted in the Pra. Herald Atkinson when he returned from the Far East Sunday night. Legions pushed a passage through to the waiting room. With Pte. Atkinson is his sister-in-law, Mrs. Ronald Atkinson.

Pte. H. Atkinson Gets Big Ovation

MORE THAN 2,500 people, most of them with sons at hand, greeted the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

The immediate family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. E. Larkins, his mother and step-father, and his sister, Mrs. Ronald Atkinson, were waiting for him at the station platform. He was the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

"Happy" cries by women, gasps by men, were the warmest welcome he received.

Mr. R. G. S. Graham, officer commanding No. 10 Squadron, Pte. Atkinson and his wife, the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

The Pte. Atkinson looked to the station platform and held his mother's hand. They stopped and looked for a few moments before going down the steps into the waiting room.

The crowd parted like a sea to give the Grenadier and his wife a clear path to the waiting room. They were the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

"It's best" people shouted in the ranks, but they still could not get down. They were the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

He looked well, and his sister was glad. He weighs 175 pounds and appeared in good physical condition. He wore an Army greatcoat, a cap, and his shoes were clean. His Canadian army uniform, issued in Vancouver, was complete.

He seemed surprised by the tremendous ovation which greeted him, and walked toward the crowd with his head bowed. He heard of the news of his return before, but the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

word by word of her husband's return was being passed to the crowd. When the Grenadier reached the waiting room, his wife, his sister's mother, and his mother, were waiting to greet him. They were the first Grenadier to return after almost four years of internment in Japan.

He had been advised of his brother's death while imprisoned, but maintained his confidence during his captivity. He had a fine family here.

There was much fraternal laughter, but the crowd was breaking into a gasp. He stopped for a moment, and looked for a moment at his mother and his sister.

Members of the local veterans association, present, the meeting [Continued on Page 5, N4, 12]

1 ATKINSON ARRIVAL

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room, and helped him to a bench. He brushed them aside, saying: "I'm all right." But he sat on the bench, cupped his face in his hands, and wept unashamedly.

He dried his face and posed with his family for news reel cameras and army public relations photographers. After listening to the addresses of welcome delivered by Mayor Garnet Coulter and Brig Morton, the family went to the home of Mrs. D. Kidd for a buffet supper and a family reunion.

"We have suffered with you in your terrible trouble," Mayor Coulter said. "We hope you find in the security of Canada some recompense for the suffering you have undergone. Good luck. God bless you."

Brig. Morton said: "We watched you from Italy, France and Britain. Our thoughts were always with you. Good luck."

The crowd had gathered at the C.P.R. station shortly after supper, and struggled for places until the train arrived at 7.45 p.m. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke. Men and women wiped their hot faces with handkerchiefs but refused to surrender their points of vantage.

"We want to see what he looks like," said Kathleen Kelso whose two brothers, Harry and Jack, were killed at Hong Kong. From Pte. Atkinson she, and hundreds of others, would judge how severely the Canadians suffered at the hands of the Japs.

Many of the people were anxious to ask questions about their loved ones. They wondered if Pte. Atkinson had been with their sons or husbands when they were killed or when they were in prison camps. They wondered when the others would be home, and whether the invalids would have to wait. They weren't able to speak to him.

Among the people at the station who cheered Pte. Atkinson was Mrs. D. Webster, 330 Edmonton st. When the cheering was over, and the crowd began to clear, she was notified her son, Pte. Robert McLeod, had died in the hands of the Japanese. Pte. McLeod enlisted in September, 1939, and fought with the Grenadiers at Hong Kong.

Other men returning from the Far East were Rfn. John Baskin, River Shilo, N.B.; Bert Comeau, Gaspé, P.Q.; H. A. Briard, Gaspé, L/Cpl. J. M. Blaquiere, Summerside, P.E.I.; Rfn. F. J. Babcock, Broadlands, P.Q., and Pte. B. Buck, St. Jerome, P.Q. They continued east.

The executive of the Ladies Auxiliary, Winnipeg Grenadiers, Hong Kong group, also greeted the men. They were Mrs. John Norris, Mrs. P. Keenen, Mrs. John Kelso, Mrs. H. Leblanc and Mrs. John Crawford. The train reception committee and Roy Snyder, com-

missioner of the Red Cross, welcomed the men.

Cpl. John L. Campbell, Elmvalle, Ont., went through on the 6.45 p.m. train. He was still muddled by his freedom.

When he arrived in San Francisco aboard an American army D.54, he didn't know what he wanted to do first. "There's one thing for sure. I wanted to eat."

He described a typical day's menu in camp Niigata as being: a small bowl of rice three times a day, plus a small bowl of spud made from greens, three times a day. The greens consisted of turnip tops or carrot tops, depending on what the Japs had. Cpl. Campbell worked in a coal yard, and his weight dropped from 162 to 108 pounds. He has made much of it up, and is looking well.

Asked if he was subjected to Japanese brutality, he said no man missed it. "They were a hard people to deal with. They wouldn't reason." Beyond that he wouldn't go.

L-Cpl. Blaquiere said he was the only one in his camp who suffered a day's sickness. The others had dysentery, malaria, pneumonia and diphtheria, he said.

Rfn. Comeau said that when they were taken to prison camp in 1941, they were crammed so tightly into a small freighter that their knees were against their chins. They were provided with a small portion of rice twice a day during the 18-day voyage. He frequently collapsed at his job as a stevedore and his weight dropped to 115 pounds.

Asked if the men were regaining their weight, Rfn. Briard said some men had put on 12 to 20 pounds since being released. He said the Red Cross was doing a good job of filling their stomachs in Tokyo.