

**"TELL MOTHER AND DAD I'M FINE"**

## Five Grenadiers Recovering on U.S. Hospital Ship

By **GORDON ROOT** (Tribune Far East Correspondent)

TOKYO, Sept. 22.—"Tell mother and dad I'm feeling fine and am coming home soon."

"Say hello to my girl friend for me."

"Tell the folks there is nothing to worry about because I'm in great shape and getting better every day."

On U.S. Navy hospital ship *Benevolence* at a Yokohama dock, I spent Sunday with five Manitoba soldiers just released from prison camps on the main Japanese islands. It was a happy afternoon because the boys were so pleased to see some one from home, so pleased to hear about things in Canada, so keen to know about their opportunities after they are discharged.

There was Cpl. Don MacPherson, 584 Sherbrook st., Winnipeg; Pte. William Krohn, Carman; Pte. Alfred Wagner, 58 Gertie st., Winnipeg; Pte. John Beltz, Rivers, and Pte. Alfred McIntyre, who used to live in Winnipeg and whose sister, his next of kin, is now in Kenora.

It was a good show from the start. As I entered the neat white ward on the *Benevolence*, the orderly explained the boys had been asking if there were any Canadian newspapermen around. It was a fair indication of their interest in things at home.

Although they are on a hospital ship, they are all able to get up and move around. There is nothing wrong with them that nourishment, rest and good treatment won't cure.



Gordon Root

All are suffering from beri beri, a disease resulting from malnutrition, that causes legs and ankles to swell and temporarily weak eyes and leg muscles. But in the week since they were released from prison camps at Osaka and Sendai, treatment they have received from American naval doctors has put them well on the way to recovery.

They told of hardships at the two camps, where men were forced to work in coal and silver mines. They told how beri beri swept through the camps and how, when a man was too weak to walk, he was hospitalized on half rations.

"If you went to camp hospital it was a pretty sure thing you wouldn't get out again," said Cpl. MacPherson. "The amount of food they gave you wasn't enough to get your strength back."

MacPherson was in a position to know. He had been in a camp hospital since last December.

Said Pte. Beltz, "Even among their own people, the Japanese figured a person who couldn't work was no good and cut his rations."

Sheepishly Beltz rubbed his full stomach and admitted he had overdone it at lunch time when he had had his first chicken dinner in four years.

"But it was worth it," he added. "If you ever want to torture a man do it through his belly," he suggested. He is rapidly getting back some of the 90 pounds he lost in Japanese prison camps.

To Pte. Wagner the most pleasant experiences in prison camp were Allied raids on Yokohama.

"We were sure glad when they started coming around," he declared. "We knew things were going our way then. We used to see the new damage every day after a raid when they took

[Continued on Page 7, No. 1]

# 1 ROOT DISPATCH

[Continued from Page One]

us to work and it was a great morale builder."

Apart from the subject of food, which was No. 1 topic in all camps, conversation centred largely around the future. They were very pleased to hear that army pay had been boosted to \$1.50 a day and a brief outline of government rehabilitation grants was a little more than they could comprehend all at once.

"I don't know what I'll do with all that money," said Pte. Krohn, who was a dairy farmer before the war. "The government is sure looking after us O.K. this time. We used to have big arguments in camp about what we would get when we were discharged but nobody figured it would be that good."

The limited rice diet didn't hurt the prisoners' sense of humor.

"We used to talk about different kinds of food," Beltz declared. "We would dream up recipes with flour and baking powder and milk and sugar and raisins and nuts. There were some lovely concoctions figured out in those camps."

We chatted for more than an hour about little things like the price of cars in Canada, rationing over there, sports and jobs.

As I prepared to leave they asked if it was possible to draw some pay because they were broke. A check disclosed there were apparently no arrangements to fix them up in Japan but after meeting and talking to them it wasn't hard to find a \$10 bill that wasn't working to keep them going until they reach a Canadian base.

Their future movements are still indefinite but they expect to be moved to Guam where other Canadians are being gathered and to go home from there.