



PHSC Journal

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... COMMANDER DONALD B. MacMILLAN will leave Boston for a Transatlantic flight on the airplane "The Viking" about June 30th to prove the feasibility of the Far Northern Air Mail route to Europe.

On this flight, the first of its kind, the airplane "The Viking" will carry a limited quantity of air mail consisting of souvenir post cards and envelopes which will be mailed in London and returned by steamship to the addressee.

Proceeds from the sale of these cards will be devoted to the support of Commander MacMillan's scientific, educational and welfare work in Labrador, in the establishing of free schools and dental clinics on the Labrador Coast.

Portion of MacMillan Aerial Expedition Poster. Courtesy of Bowdoin College Library.

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Table of Contents

Features

- 5 The 1931 MacMillan Aerial Expedition — Labels, Cards and Covers – Part 1
By Kevin O'Reilly
- 35 Canada to Palestine Postal History: 1878-1920 – By Ed Kroft QC FRPSC
- 51 They Came Home via The Philippines – Gene M. Labiuk
- 68 John M. (Jack) Wallace, FRPSL, FRPSC, OTB. (1921-2019)

Departments

- 3 Message from the President – David Hobden
- 4 Editor's Column – Bill Longley
- 72 Secretary's Report – Rob Leigh
- 73 Classified Ads
- 75 Officers of the Society

Advertisers Index (Alphabetical by Advertiser)

- 21 back2paul Stamps and Covers
- 74 Bow City Philatelics Ltd.
- IFC Canada Stamp Finder
- 69 Canadian Stamp News
- 71 CAPEX '22
- 69 Deveney Stamps
- 40-1, 76 Eastern Auctions
- 34 Greenwood Stamp Co.
- OBC Hugo Deshayé (Philatelist) Inc.
- 70 Jim Forte
- 39 Longley Auctions
- 42 R. Maresch & Son
- IBC Sparks Auctions

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THEY CAME HOME VIA THE PHILIPPINES

Continued from PHSC Journal 173

By Gene M. Labiuk

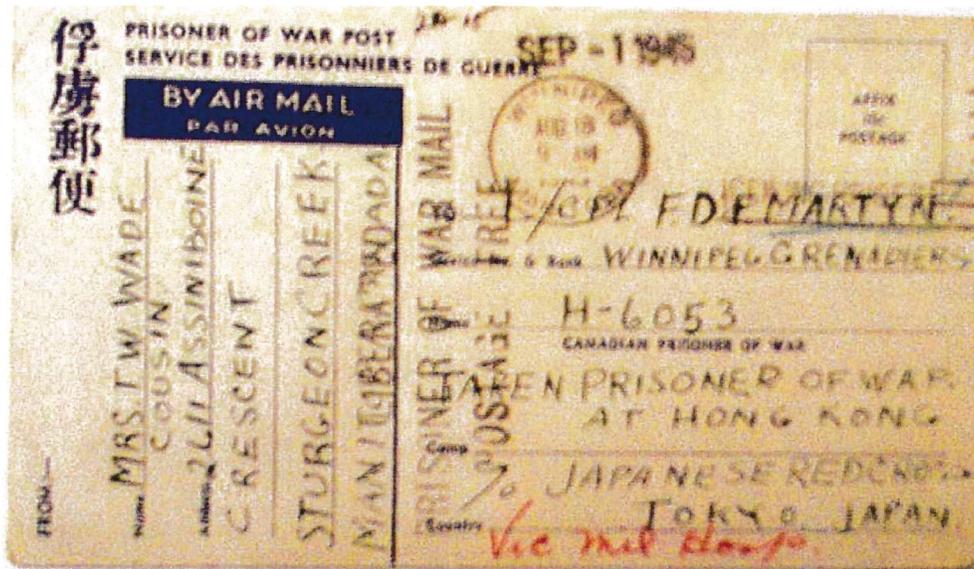


Figure 49. LIBERATED / PRISONER OF WAR MAIL / POSTAGE FREE post card from Winnipeg to L./Cpl. Marytn, who had been imprisoned in Japan. – CWM 19810276-010 George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canada War Museum.

An article in the *Hamilton Spectator* on September 28, 1945⁵ states:

Guam, Sept. 28. - A contingent of 426 Canadians liberated from prison camps in Japan was at Guam navy base to-day, awaiting transportation home. An additional 340 Canadians already have passed through Guam, homeward bound by sea and air.

...Red Cross Provides Funds

The prisoners have nothing but good words for their reception, which is really a welcome. They all have been able to send cables to their next-of-kin, although unfortunately they have received no mail, which has been directed from Canada to Manila reception organization for released prisoners. It is likewise impossible for them to draw money distribution of which is centered in Manila, but the American Red Cross is giving every prisoner \$5.

On September 20, *HMCS Prince Robert* left Hong Kong and arrived at Manila on September 30. She carried over 1000 pieces of mail that were sent to the Canadians while they were in the POW camps.²³ Over 200 bags of mail for Canadian prisoners who were held in Japan were released from Japan and forwarded to the repatriation group at Manila. POW mail was then sorted and delivered to the freed Canadians. If it was not possible to deliver it, it was returned to the sender.

Mail from Canada that had been held there for processing for the interned Canadian POWs was brought to Manila for sorting. This included mail for those at Guam.

Fig. 50 shows a POW air mail post card franked with a 10¢ Canadian stamp paying the airmail rate to a POW in Hong Kong.²⁰ This was held by the Japanese and was never

delivered to the POW while he was interned. Held mail such as this was taken to Manila by the *Prince Robert* and sorted there for delivery to the LPOWs, or if it could not be delivered it was returned to the sender. The An article in the *Hamilton Spectator* on September 28, 1945⁵ states:

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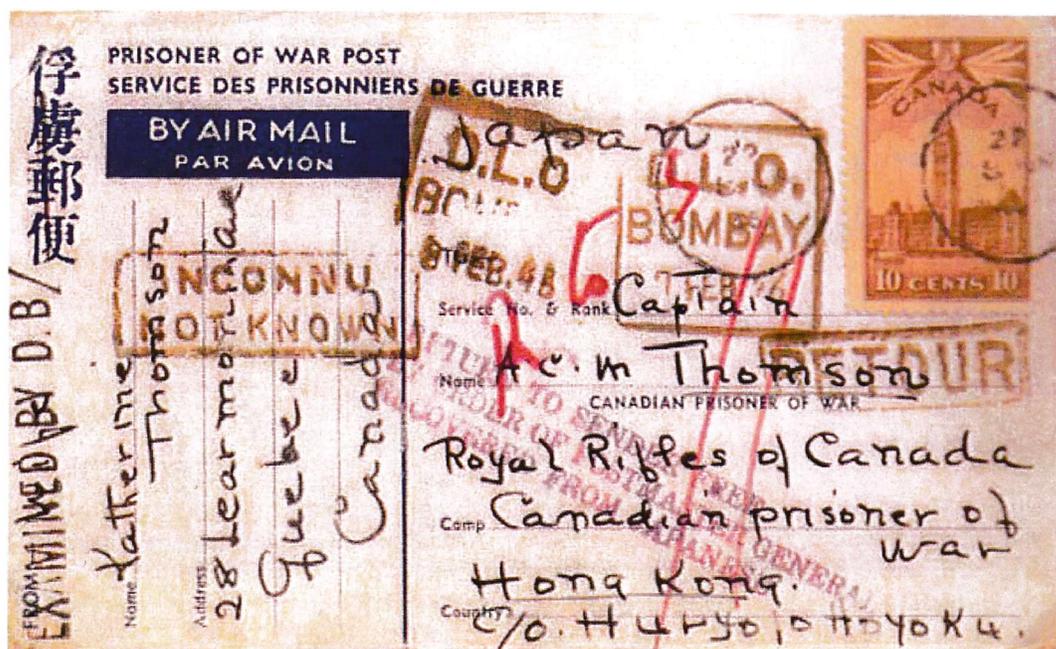


Figure 50. Post card mailed Quebec City on June 9, 1945 to a Captain Thomson, who was a POW at Hong Kong. The card could not be delivered to him at Manila and it was returned to sender. – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰

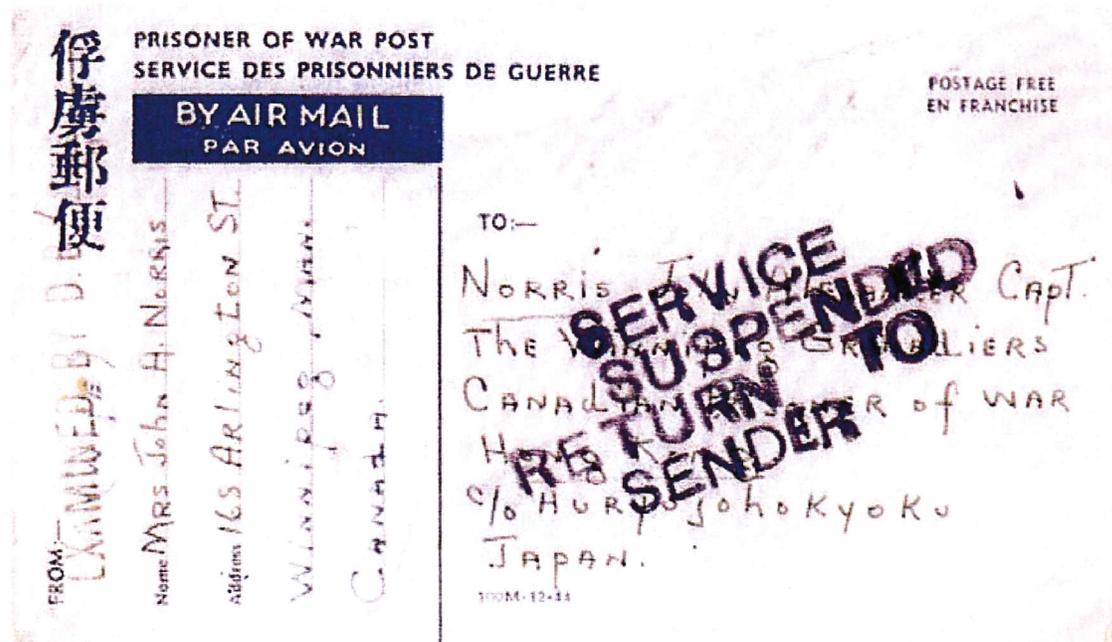


Figure 51. Post card to Captain Norris, who was on his way home. Note the SERVICE / SUSPENDED / RETURN TO SENDER hand stamp. – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰

This was held by the Japanese and was never delivered to the POW while he was interned. Held mail such as this was taken to Manila by the *Prince Robert* and sorted there for delivery to the LPOWs, or if it could not be delivered it was returned to the sender. The addressee, Captain Thomson, could not be found because he was already on his way home to Canada. This air mail card was posted on June 9, 1945 and was received and held by the Japanese. Hand stamped in red RETURN TO SENDER FREE / BY ORDER OF POSTMASTER GENERAL / RECOVERED FROM JAPANESE . For some reason this post card was returned to India, where it was hand stamped in a black box INCONNU / UNKNOWN and two D.L.O. BOMBAY markings were applied in black in February 1946. Red Manuscript “R to S” (Return to Sender).

Fig. 51 shows a POW post card dated July 1945 sent from Winnipeg to Captain Norris at a Hong Kong camp. Norris was on

his way home when the card was delivered to Manila and sent back via England with the hand stamp “SERVICE / SUSPENDED / RETURN TO SENDER”.²⁰

Fig. 52 shows a MAIL FOR L.P.W. cover posted at Hamilton, Ontario on September 16, 1945 to a Canadian merchant seaman, addressed as follows: “Radio Officer, Collett, Oswald, M. / Canadian-Merchant-Seaman-L.P.W. / 7th Base Post Office / c/o Canadian Postal Corps Headquarters / Ottawa, Ontario”. The 7th Base Post office was the address to which mail was sent when forwarded to Manila. It first was sent to Ottawa (see the single-line receiving hand stamp dated SEP 17 1945). The envelope is one of those supplied to family members of POWs. It was forwarded to Manila and returned to Ottawa because Radio Officer Collet could not be found, postmarked Ottawa M.P.O. 318. It then was redirected to Transcona, Manitoba, Transcona receiving date stamp January 11, 1946.

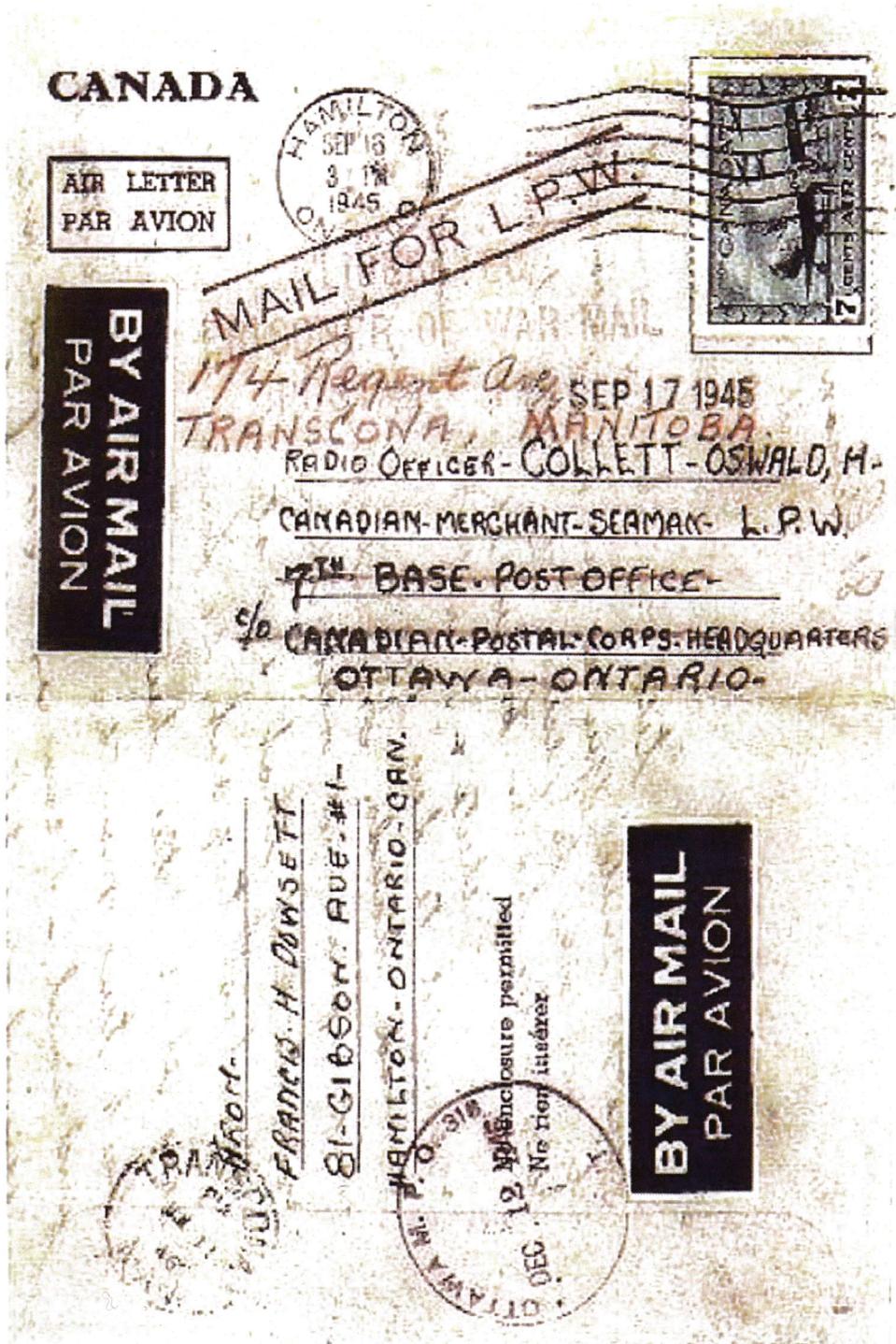


Figure 52. Cover from Hamilton to a liberated Canadian merchant seaman in Manila, undelivered and returned to Ottawa and redirected to Transcona, Manitoba. – Courtesy David Tett²⁴

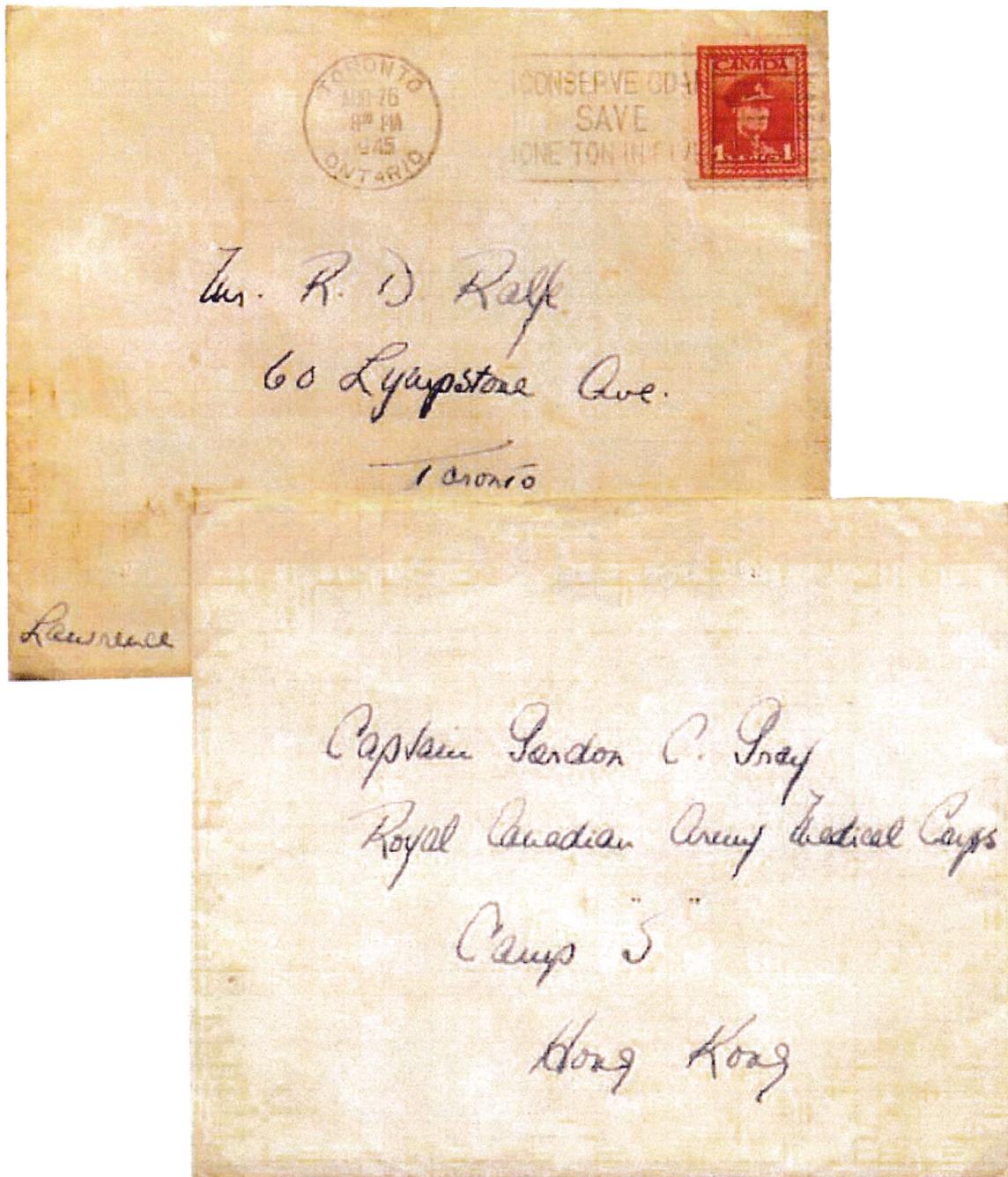
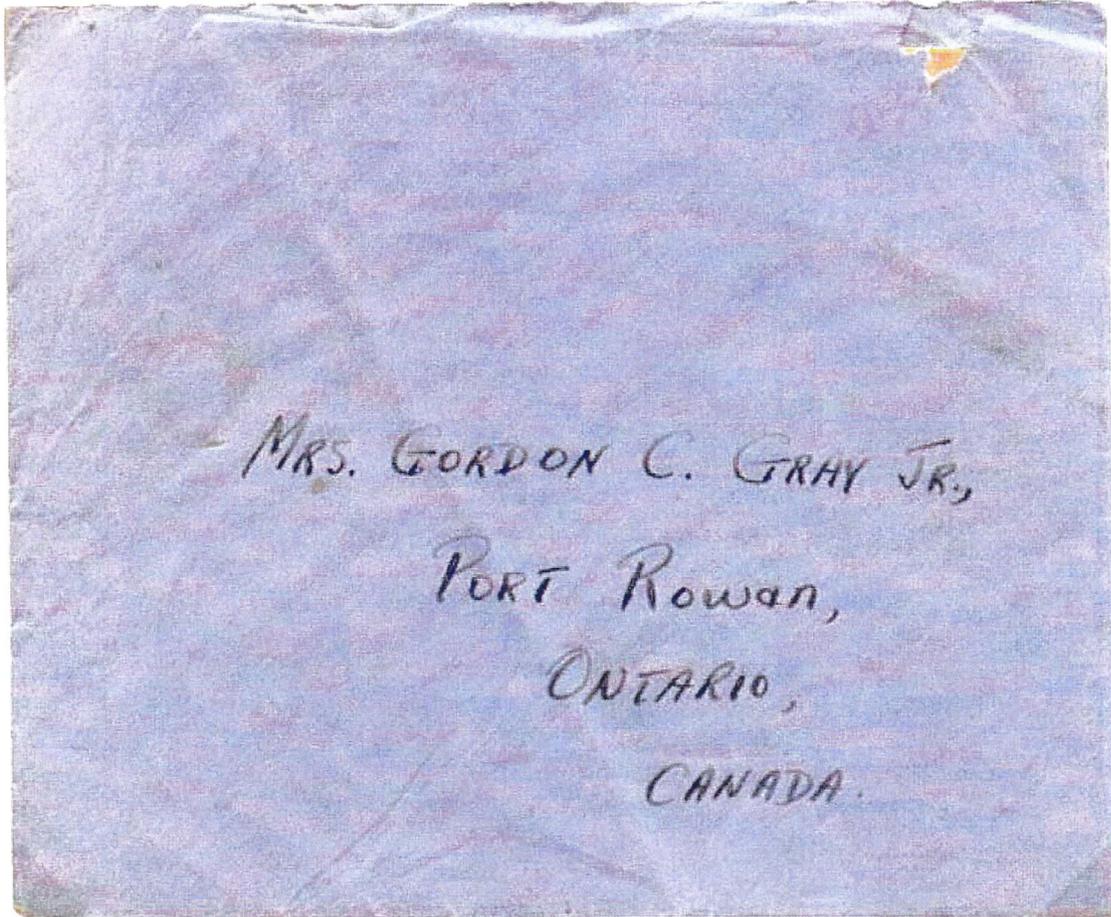


Figure 53. Favor cover to Robert Rolfe, a Canadian Red Cross officer who was on this way to Manila. – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰



Caption Figure 54. [Show cover] Favour cover to Mrs. Gray from her husband. It was delivered to her by a returned medical officer of Force "C". – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰

Fig. 53 shows a favor cover sent to Robert Rolfe, who was a Canadian Red Cross officer in Toronto and was being dispatched to Manila to assist with the Canadian LPOWs. Robert volunteered to take any mail given to him prior to his departure to the Canadians. Mrs. Gray, wife of medical officer Captain Gordon Gray, sent a letter under cover to Mr. Wolfe for delivery to her husband in Manila.²⁰

Fig. 54 shows a favour cover from Captain Gray to his wife at Port Rowan, Ontario. The letter was written at Manila on September 18, 1945 and given to John Crawford, a Force "C" senior medical officer who went home in the first draft from Manila to Cana-

da. Crawford delivered it by hand. Here are a couple of excerpts from the letter:²⁰

I use all channels... to get letters home.

We arrived in Manila Bay on the morn of the 13th and anchored, apparently we weren't expected & we did not dock until about 10:00 pm we got off about 11 & with great speed drove about 20 miles to this camp... The best thing of all was getting your lovely letter darling from Bob Rolfe

Fig. 55 shows a Canadian air letter stamped with a U.S. 6¢ air mail stamp and cancelled by a U.S. Army Postal Service / 1945 machine. These Canadian air letter forms were given to the liberated Canadians

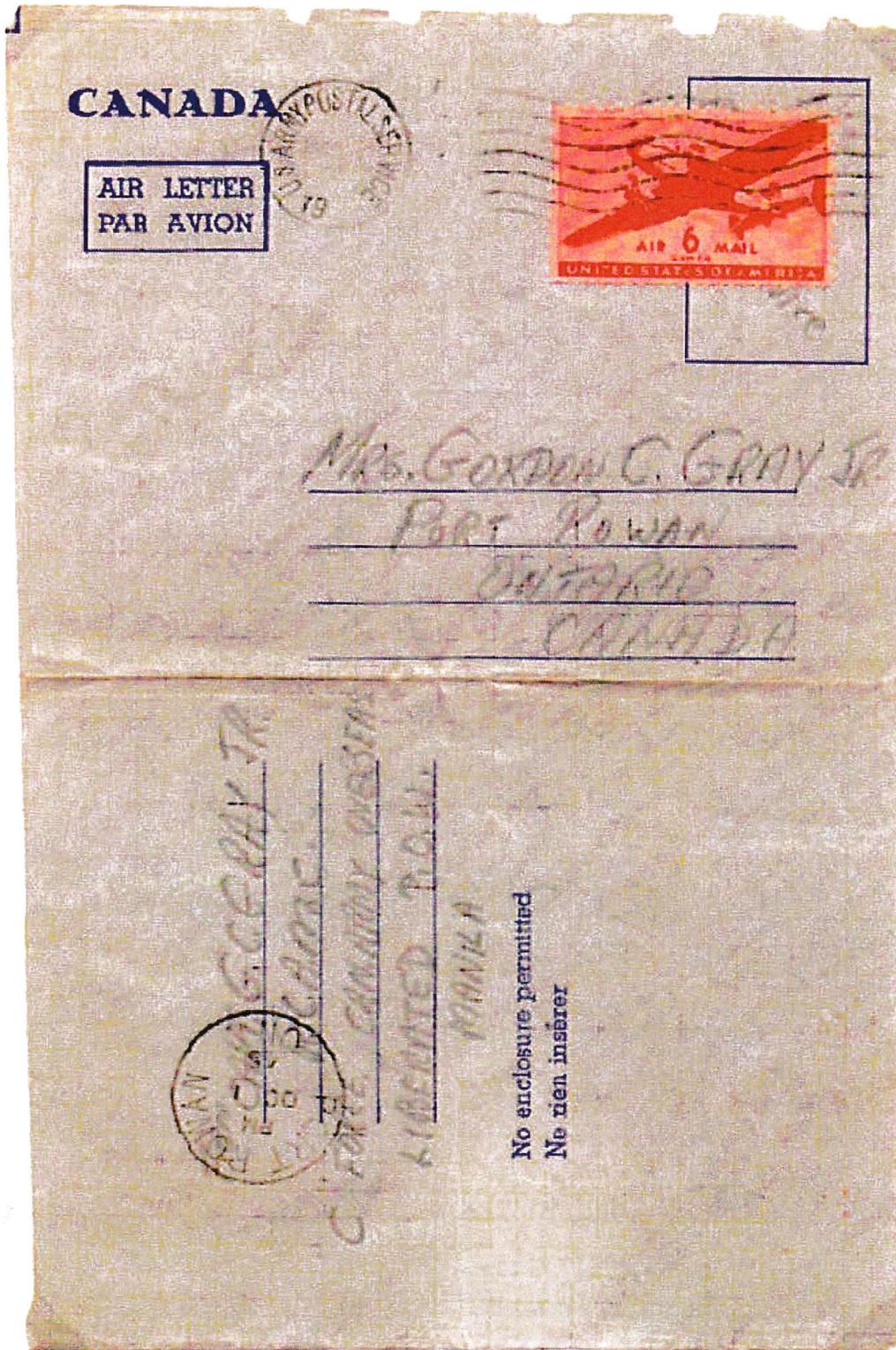


Figure 55. Canadian air letter form with a 6c U.S. airmail adhesive cancelled by a U.S. Army Postal Service machine cancel. – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰

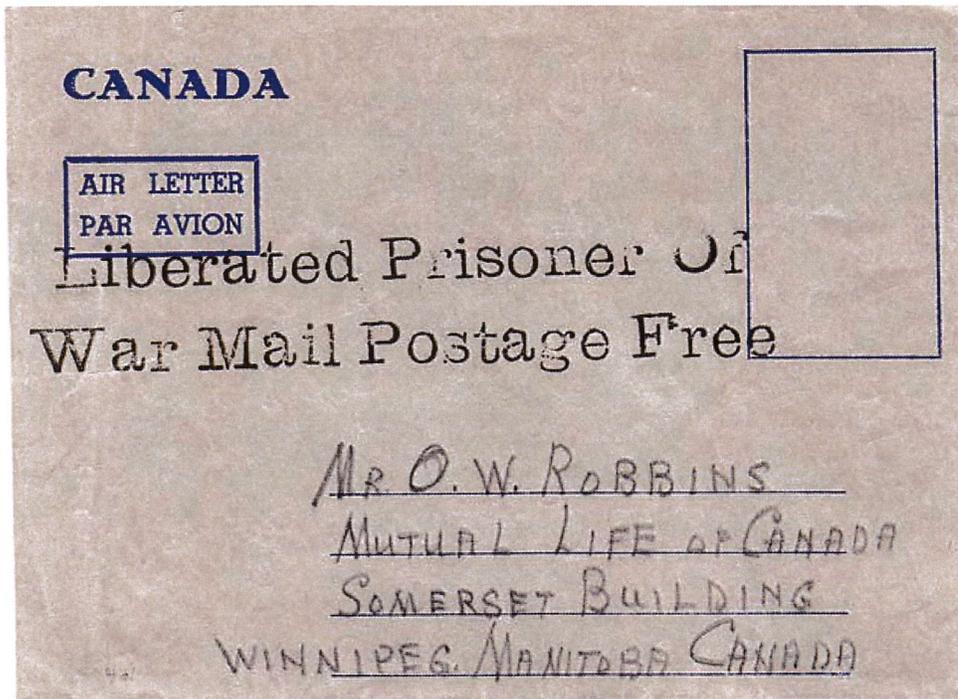


Figure 56. Cover showing the Type 1, two-line serifed overprint "Liberated Prisoner Of / War Mail Postage Free", written by Major Baird on September 17, 1945.

at Hong Kong when the *HMCS Prince Robert* arrived on August 30. Because it was franked with a U.S. air mail stamp, this cover was flown from Manila to San Francisco by either the NATS or ATC and then by commercial flight to Ottawa. There, it was docketed and forwarded to Port Rowan, arriving there on October 1, 1945. The U.S. Postal Service did not recognize free postage for LPOWs even if the covers were so endorsed. Therefore the U.S. military made available to the LPOWs air mail stamps that could be used on any postal stationery of any country (see figures 36 and 37, which show British and Australian air letters franked with 6¢ U.S. air mail stamps on mail to Canada).

Types of Hand Stamps

There were three distinct types of overprinted hand stamps reading "Liberated Prisoner Of War Mail Postage Free" used on the Canadian Air Letter forms supplied to

Canadians at Manila. Type 1 had two lines of serifed lettering "Liberated Prisoner Of / War Mail Postage Free" (Fig. 56). These probably were printed in Ottawa because the three known examples all have the overprint in the same position, which would indicate printing on a printing press. They were waiting for the Canadians when they arrived in Manila.

The air letter shown in fig. 56 was written at Manila to a friend in Winnipeg on September 17, 1945 by Major K. G. Baird. Baird was a member of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. The message of this air letter reads:

*Manila, P.I.
Sept. 17th , 45
Dear Orville*

Have never been able to write a letter to you before. The nips weren't very co-operative.

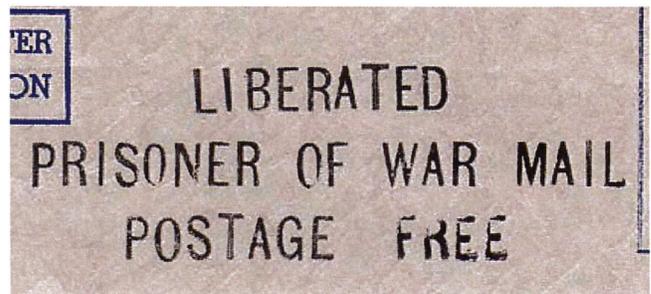
We arrived here from Hong Kong five

days ago and have been spending most of our time in eating and sleeping under most agreeable circumstances. We still have a lot to make up as far as eating goes and believe me we are working hard at it and getting results too. Have gained 20 pounds in the past five weeks. Now weigh 145. We expect to sail from Manila tomorrow for home. You can imagine how pleased we are. We are in an American camp, believe me the Yanks know how to do things in the right way. They have a system and work it, the results are astounding. They know what they want done and do it. Their equipment seems to be limitless and one can readily understand why the Nips folded up so soon after the Americans got organized and under way.

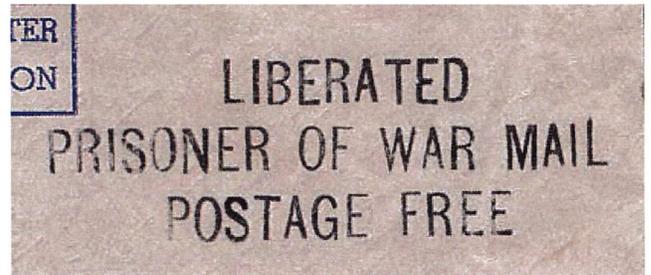
I hope you have been in the best of health and getting your fair share of business. I received one thousand cigarettes from the company. They were most gratefully received I can tell you. Please pass on my sincere thanks for them. Will be seeing you soon. Yours,

K. G Baird.

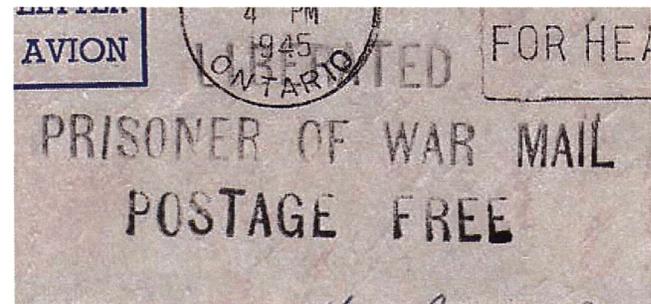
When quantities of these overprinted air letter forms were insufficient, the postal authorities produced a second type of handstamp. This second type was a three-line sans-serif rubber hand stamp used with black ink. The wording of Type 2 was LIBERATED / PRISONER OF WAR MAIL / POSTAGE FREE. These new forms were used in Manila for the troops to send mail back to Canada, and in Canada for the families to send mail to their men in Manila. Type 2 is divided into Types 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D all using the same font. The overall lengths of these subtypes differ. Type 2A measures 66mm in length, Type 2B measures 63 mm, Type 2C measures 64mm and Type 2D measures 63mm. Even though 2B and 2D measure the same, the word spacing



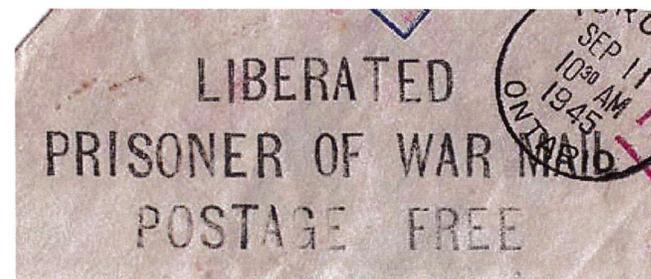
Type 2A



Type 2B

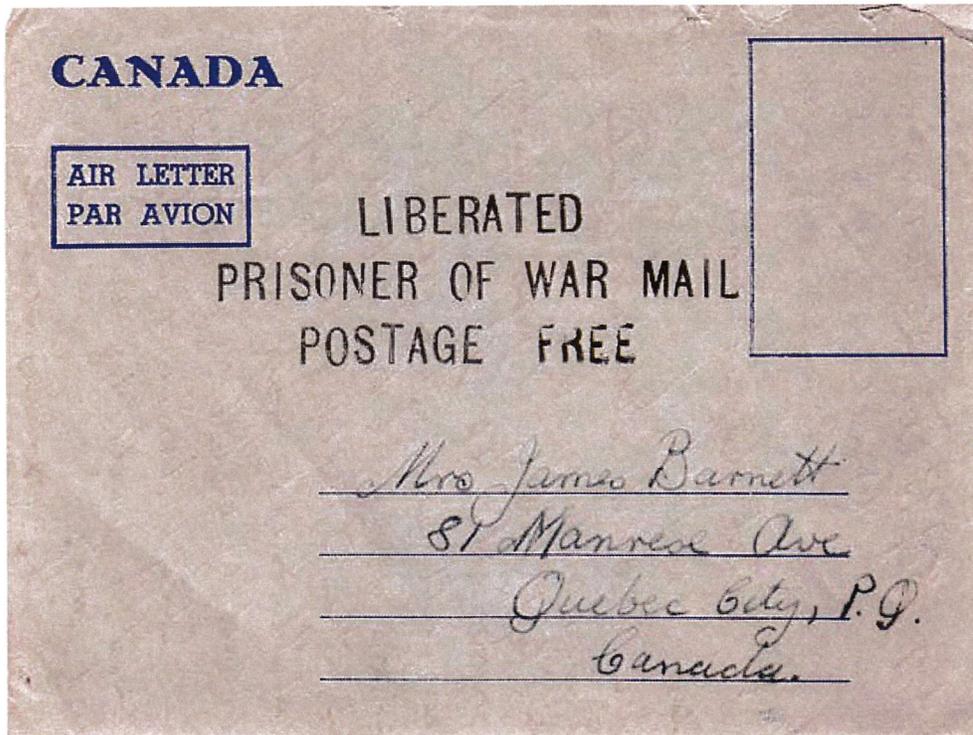


Type 2C



Type 2D

Figure 57. Types 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D, 4 types of the sans serif rubber stamps. Their main differences are the spacing of the letters.



Caption Figure 58. [Show cover] Shows a cover written at Manila to Canada with the Type 2A hand stamp.



Caption Figure 59. [Show cover] Shows a cover with the Type 2D hand stamp written at Toronto to Ottawa and re-directed from there.

is different. Fig. 57 shows the 4 sub-types of Type 2. It is believed that these were rubber hand stamps produced in Canada and flown to Manila along with blank Canadian air letter forms for hand stamping there. These handstamps were of the same style as those used on air letter forms supplied to the families in Canada. The heat and humidity in Manila would have affected the rubber; letters of several of the types had warped.

Fig. 58 shows the Type 2A hand stamp on an air letter form written by Chaplain James Barnett on September 20, 1945 while he was still in Manila and to be delivered to his wife in Quebec City.

Fig. 59 shows the Type 2D hand stamp on an air letter form which was written on September 10, 1945, post marked at Toronto on September 11 and forwarded to Ottawa, where it was received and docketed on September 12, originally addressed to "Canadian Postal Corps Headquarters, Ottawa Ont.", which was crossed out in blue pencil before the form was forwarded to Manila. Its contents start:

Dear Bob.

Owing to the shortage of these envelopes that were issued to us I had to cut out the address...

Type 3 is shown in Fig. 60. It has a smaller 3-line serifed type "Liberated Prisoner / of War Mail / Postage Free" in black. This rubber hand stamp probably was manufactured in Manila after Type 2A was damaged. The air letter form in this figure was written by Captain Gray, who was leaving on the *U.S. Admiral C. F. Hughes*. Boarding began on this ship on September 22nd; she sailed from Manila on the 24th. In his haste to board, Gray forgot to mail the letter, discovered it among his belongings and mailed it upon his arrival in Canada. The *USS Admiral C. F. Hughes* arrived

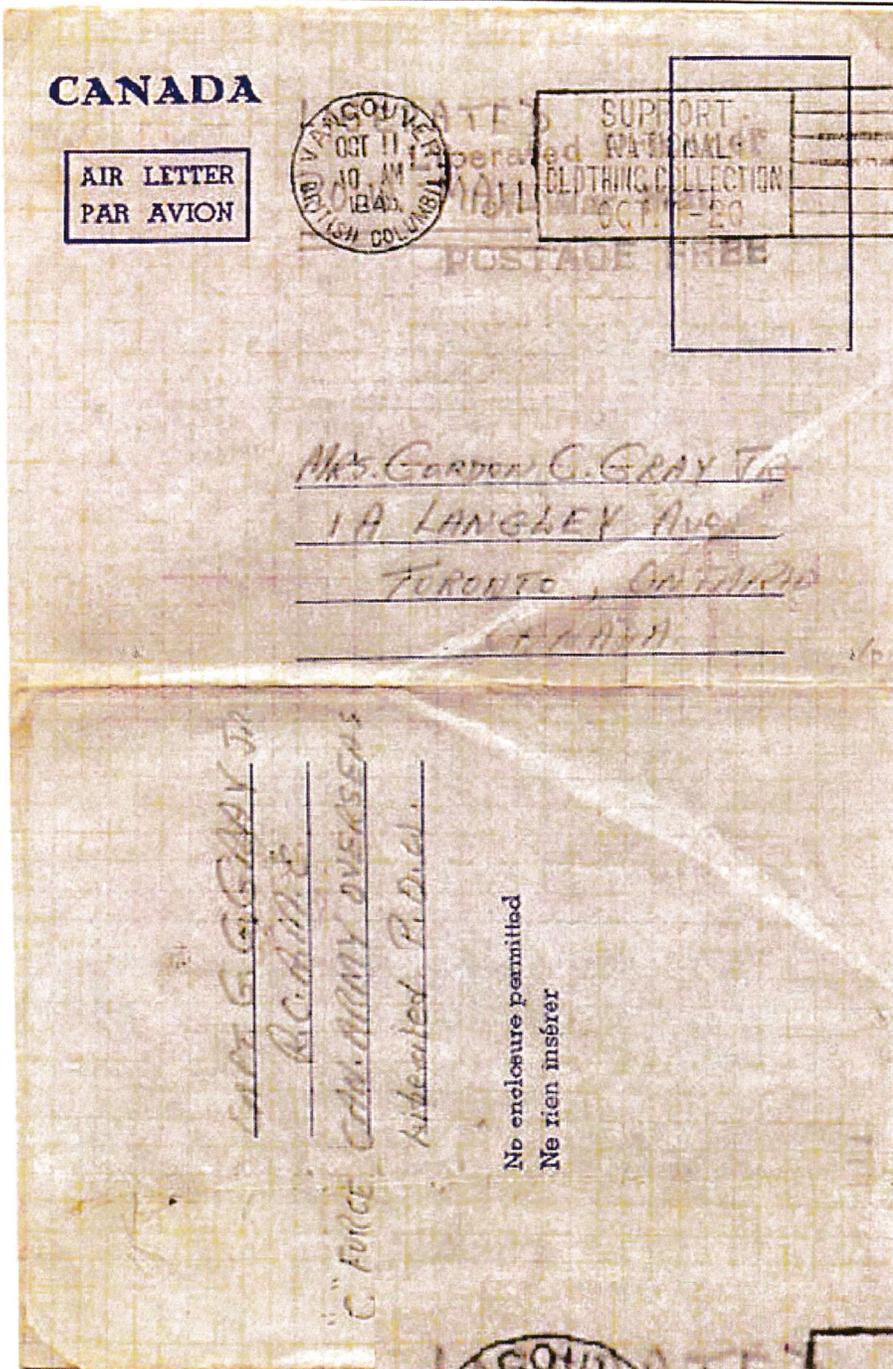
at Victoria on October 9, 1945. A postmark over the handstamp makes the reading difficult (see the enlargement of the handstamp).

Fig. 61 shows a Canadian air letter form, with the Type 2D hand stamp, postmarked by the Australian Army P.O. 241 on October 3, 1945. It was unusual for the Australians to process Canadian mail because this was to be handled by Canadians. Possibly the sender dropped it into the wrong mail box. The cover was sent to Canada by the regular forces mail service.

Ottawa Docketing

Mail from Canadian LPOWs was docketed and recorded in Ottawa before it was sent to family members. Fig. 62 shows a date stamp OCT 12 1945, indicating that this air letter was received and accounted for in Ottawa on that date. The letter was written at Manila on September 24, 1945 by Chaplain James T. Barnett. Chaplain Barnett came home on the *USS Joseph T. Dickman*. The LPOW hand stamp is Type 2B.

Fig. 63 presents a Canadian air letter postmarked at St. Catharines, September 24, 1945. It was to Signalman Dowling, Canadian Liberated P.O.W. Manila via Melbourne. This air letter does not have the two- or three-line "Liberated Prisoner of War Mail Postage Free" hand stamp, only the red "MAIL FOR L.P.W." This marking in red entitled the letter to free postage. Since it was going to a Canadian LPOW, this cover first went to Ottawa for docketing purposes and then was forwarded from there. OCT 1 1945 was the Ottawa docketing date stamp. The address "Manila via Melbourne" was crossed out in blue crayon at Ottawa because they knew that Dowling was on his way home. This would have been put in a closed bag and sent to the port of his arrival, so that it would be waiting there for him. Dowling came home from



Manila via the *USS Admiral Rodman*, arriving at Vancouver on October 7, 1945. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

Dear Lawrence

Well here I am at last with a letter, I hope you will be able to read it as my writing has't improved any. We just received your telegram yesterday and we were sure glad to get it. We had received three from Ottawa before that but it was sure swell to get one from you personally. It will be still better when you back here again. Everybody at home if fine Art is still in Holland but expects to be home for Xmas...

Floyd (P.S. I am still single)

Caption Figure 60. Example of the Type 3, the smaller 3-line serifed rubber hand-stamp "Liberated Prisoner / of War Mail / Postage Free".



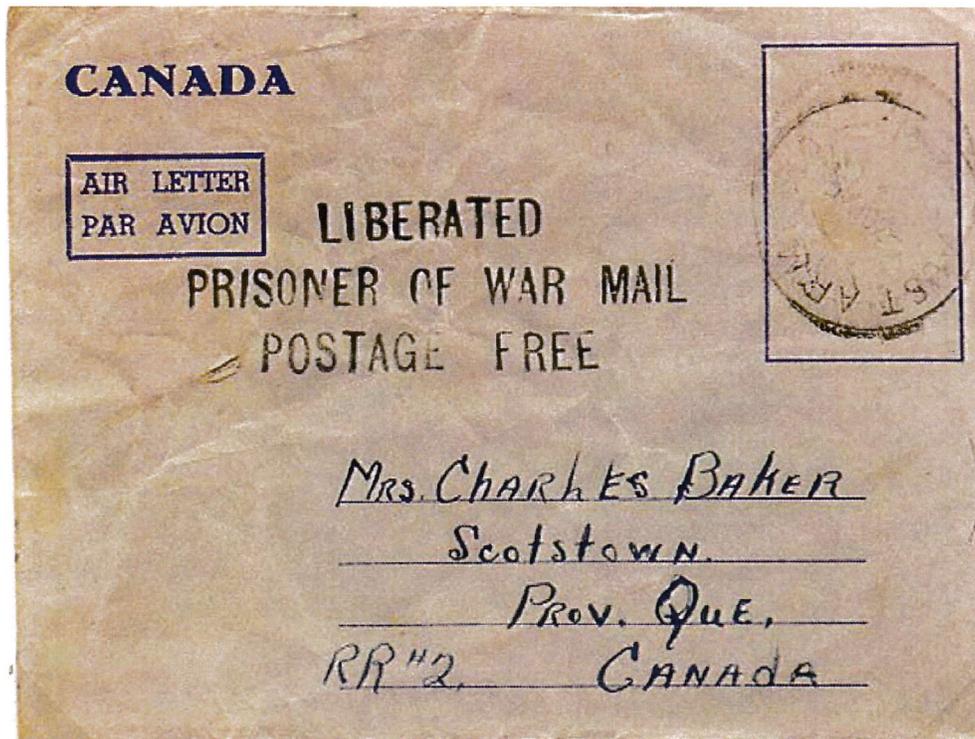


Figure 61. Canadian air letter form postmarked with the Australian Army P.O. 241 cancel. – Courtesy of the Ken Ellison Collection²⁰

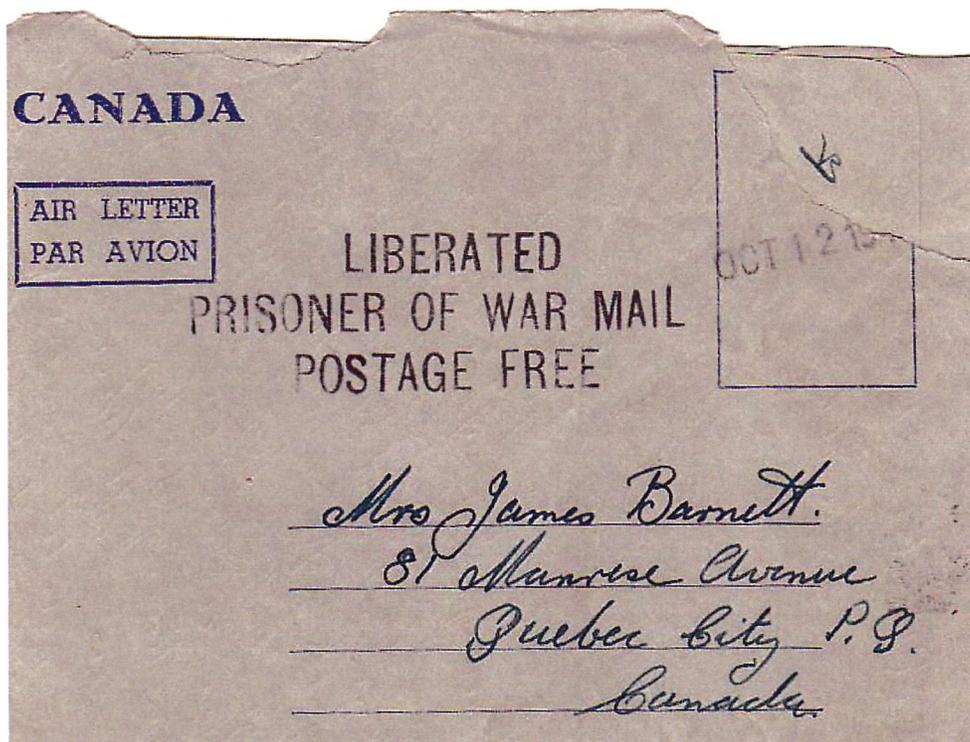


Figure 62. Shows a Canadian air letter with a docketing date stamp of OCT 12 1945.

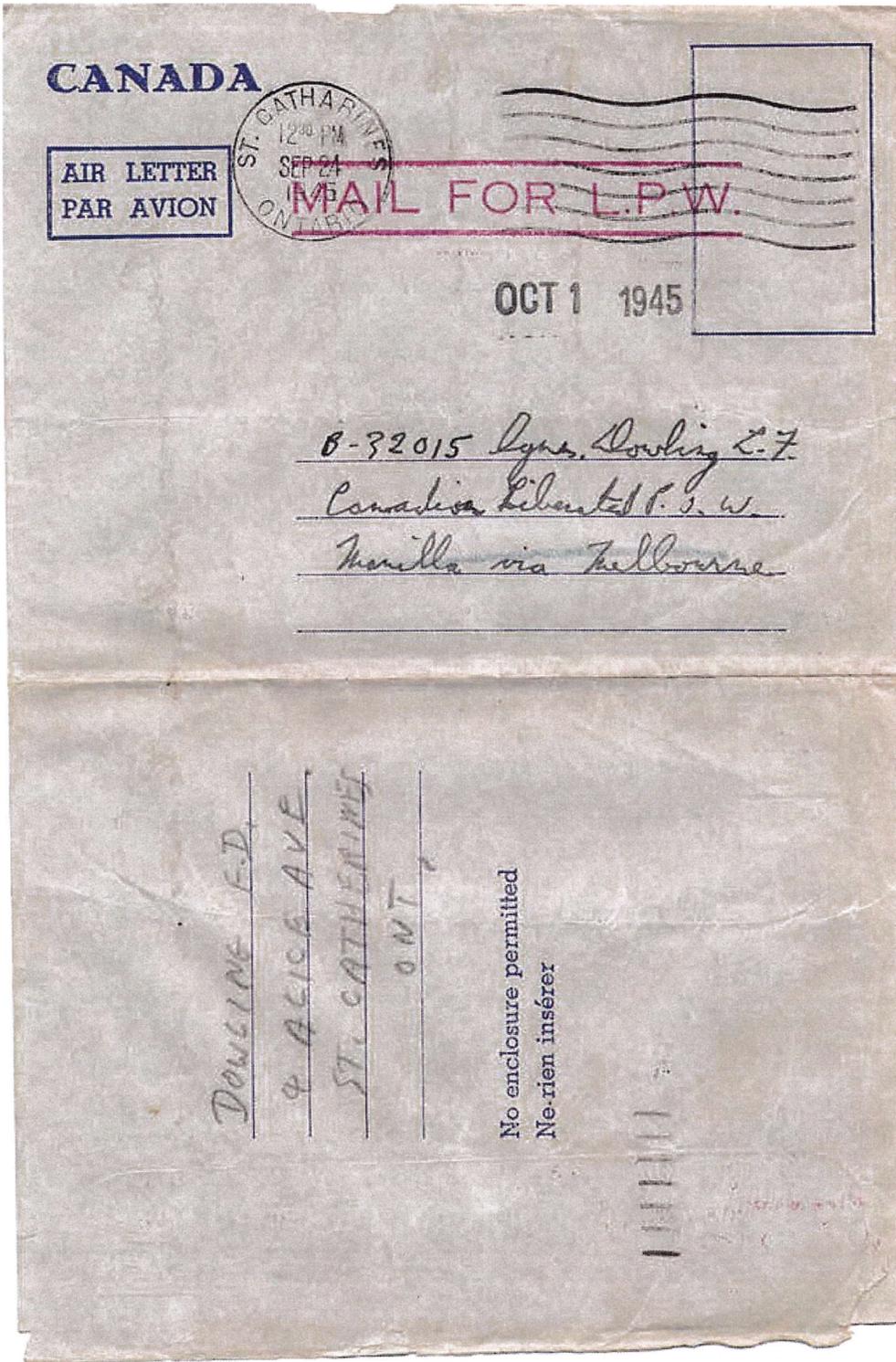


Figure 63. Canada air letter mailed to Signalman Dowling at Manila at St. Catharines on September 24, 1945. – Larry Dowling correspondence, Courtesy of Sam Chiu.



Figure 64. Canada air letter from St. Catharines, (October 1, 1945) to Vancouver M.P.O. 1106. – Larry Dowling correspondence, Courtesy of Sam Chiu.

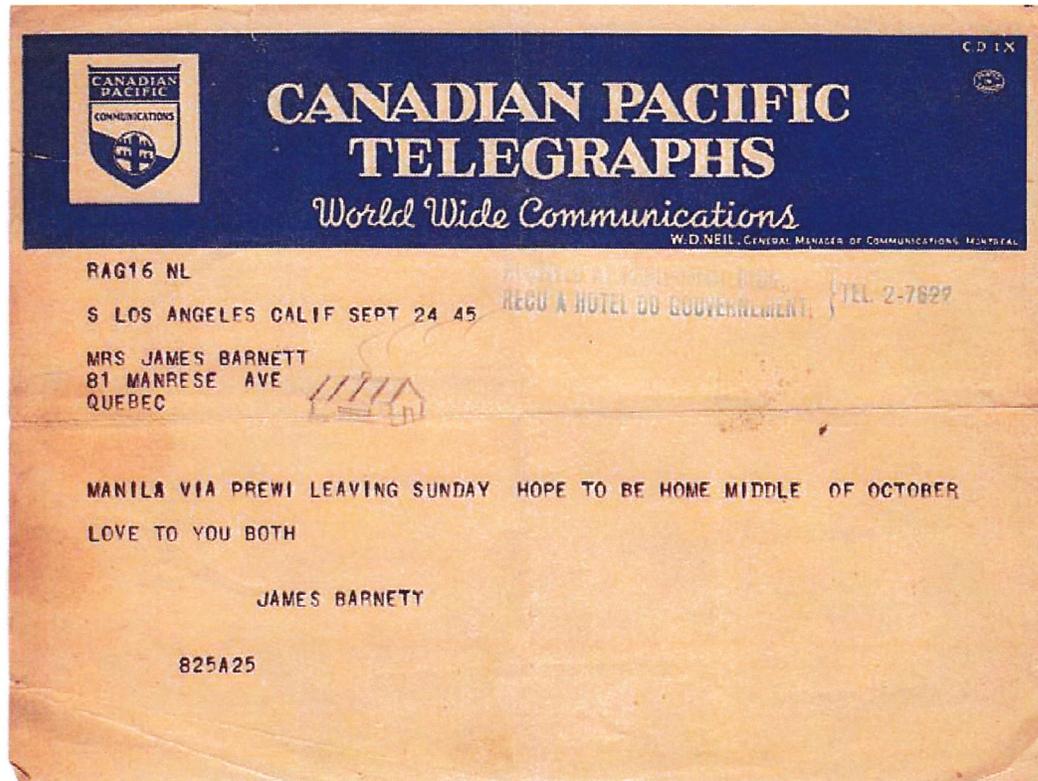


Figure 65. Photo of Signalman Dowling showing his parents a Japanese sword. – *St. Catharines Standard*.²⁵

Fig. 64 shows a cover similar to the previous figure except that the air letter has been paid with 7¢ postage for air mail service. Since the cover was paid with postage, it did not go to Ottawa for docketing purposes and went straight to Vancouver, B.C. MPO 1106, post marked St. Catharines on October 1, 1945. This cover was awaiting Dowling when he arrived in Vancouver.

In Fig. 65, Signalman Larry Dowling shows his parents a war souvenir, a Japanese sword.

The telegram in Fig. 66 has the hand stamp "RECEIVED AT PARLIAMENT BLDG., / RECU A HOTEL DU GOUVERNEMENT" in blue. This indicates that telegrams were sent to Ottawa for docketing prior to being sent to the recipient.



Caption Figure 66. [Show telegram] Telegram bearing a blue hand stamp "RECEIVED AT PARLIAMENT BLDG., / RECU A HOTEL DU GOUVERNEMENT", which indicates that telegrams were sent to Ottawa for docketing.

LIST OF REPATRIATION SHIPS WHICH CARRIED "C" FORCE MEMBERS FROM MANILA TO CANADA

| Repatriation ship sailings from Manila | | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Name of ship | Nationality | Departure Date | Arrival Port | Arrival Date |
| To Canada | | | | |
| USAT General Langfitt Transported 10 Canadians and 286 British | United States | Sept. 15, 1945 | Esquimalt, BC | Oct. 3, 1945 |
| USS Admiral Hugh Rodman | United States | Sept. 18, 1945 | Vancouver, BC | Oct. 7, 1945 |
| USS Gosper Transported American, 1,936 British and Canadian LPOWs | United States | Sept. 21, 1945 | Victoria, BC | Oct. 12, 1945 |
| USS Admiral C. F. Hughes Transported 3,881 passengers including 1,951 U.S. Army enlisted men, POWs made up of 465 American, 1,263 British, 141 Canadian 18 British Indians, Civilians 13 U.S., 12 British and 18 U.S. Army nurses all of whom were confined to Japanese prison camps. | United States | Sept. 24, 1945 | Victoria, BC | Oct. 9, 1945 |
| HMS Implacable Transported 2,127 British of which 5 were Canadian members of the RCAF attached to the RAF | British | Sept. 25, 1945 | Esquimalt, BC | Oct. 11, 1945 |
| HMCS Prince Robert Transported 27 Canadians and 15 Missionaries | Canadian | Oct. 2, 1945 | Esquimalt, BC | Oct. 20, 1945 |
| HMS Glory Transported 1,460 (including 37 Canadian sick and 119 fit) | British | Oct. 9, 1945 | Esquimalt, BC | Oct. 27, 1945 |
| HMCHS Letitia To Tacoma Washington, transported 721 Americans, arriving on December 5, 1945 To Vancouver, transported the the last Canadian LPOW from the far east, 31 members of the Canadian Repatriation Liaison Group, the British Repatriation Team, 8 French and Irish priests, one Dutch civilian and one Norwegian Merchant Marine and 23 British LPOWs | Canadian | Nov. 12, 1945 | Vancouver, BC | Dec. 6, 1945 |
| To the United States* | | | | |
| USS Catron Transported 58 Canadians and 950 British | United States | Sept. , 1945 | San Francisco, Calif. | Oct. 19, 1945 |
| USS General Howze Transported 585 British and Canadians | United States | Sept. , 1945 | San Francisco, Calif. | Oct. 15, 1945 |
| USS Joseph T. Dickman Transported 2,800 American, 44 Canadians and British | United States | Sept. 25, 1945 | San Francisco, Calif. | Oct. 16, 1945 |
| USS Ozark Transported 950 British and Canadians | United States | Sept. , 1945 | San Francisco, Calif. | Oct. 2, 1945 |
| USS General Brewster Transported 551 British and 19 Canadians | United States | Oct. 19, 1945 | San Francisco, Calif. | Nov. 3, 1945 |
| *Those who were taken to San Francisco were then transported by train to Vancouver or by train to Seattle and then ferry to Victoria. | | | | |

Table 1.

The final installment of Gene's article will appear in Journal #175