

1945 "Look, there he is"

Throngs break through police lines

By OLIVE WILLIAMSON

The Regina Rifle Regiment came home New Year's eve. After a little more than four years' absence fighting in the war, they marched smartly into the Grain Show building at the exhibition grounds to be greeted by cheers from thousands of throats.

Cries of "There he is!" and "Look, he hasn't changed much!" and "I can't see him anywhere. Didn't he come back with them?" filled the building as the Rifles eagerly scanned the crowds to see their loved ones while they listened to welcoming speeches.

So many people jammed the building that hundreds, caught in the press, did not get a glimpse of the Rifles until they had mixed with the crowd.

When the clock heralded the new year, a few minutes after the second and last group of the Rifles marched in from their train, the crowd took things in its own hands. Breaking through the barriers they swarmed in on the Rifles, kissing them welcome. Official speeches from the platform were drowned in the hubbub, and the troops never did get their instructions.

Military police struggling to keep order were overrun. They had managed to keep the crowds at bay until midnight by holding a cordon of ropes around the space the troops occupied.

"Look at him! Look at him, boys! Isn't he as fine a boy as you'd want to see anywhere?" one officer cried excitedly to his men as he spied

his son, held up by his wife for him to see. It was the first time he had seen the lad.

Col. F. Matheson, who led the Rifles through Normandy, but who returned in another unit, was on hand to see the welcome. He had a bit of welcoming of his own when he met his two sons and daughters, and didn't recognize them because they had grown so tall.

There was another happy couple, though they were not re-united that night. Maj. Vern Jansen and his son, Capt. W. Jansen, both of the Rifles and previously discharged, were on hand to meet their comrades. Maj. Jansen beamed proudly as he walked about with his son and shook the hands of his buddies. He had double reason to be happy, as his boy was walking again—with two artificial legs.

"My stars!" gasped a private, struggling through the mass of people. "I thought I finished fighting when I left Europe!"

"Who said Regina was cold?" another returning "Reginian" wanted to know. "I've never been so hot in my life, trying to get through this crowd!"

Just before the second contingent of Reginans arrived, a W.D. worked her way up to the platform. She explained that she had flown in from Toronto to meet her brother, returning with the Rifles. He didn't know she would be there, and she was frightened she would miss him in the crush.

So when the contingent came in, her message was broadcast over the loudspeakers. The brother heard it, and moved, startled. The

girl caught the move and discipline or not, dashed to him.

"I never expected this New Year's would be like this," exclaim one happy woman, with her husband. She had been waiting since 8 o'clock for the troops to arrive. Many others had waited with her.

A turkey dinner was held at the armory for the men, staged by the ladies auxiliary to the first battalion. The women's committee consisted of Mrs. J. G. Baird, convener, and of Mrs. H. Pearce, Mrs. V. Jansen, Mrs. F. Dickson, Mrs. C. Stephens and Mrs. E. Roberts.

The dinner was held in the north section of the armory, while a dance of the United Services Institute was being held in the south section. Hearing the good music, the Rifles started a dance of their own. They were soon spotted by officers of the institute, who insisted they join the dance. So the Rifles held their dance in the armory, instead of in the grain show building as had been planned by the reception committee.

Even so, there was enough people left over to hold a lively dance in the grain show building.

At three o'clock in the morning things were still going strong.

The relatives of the men who did not return were not forgotten in the excitement. A tea was held for them at the armory, where the bereaved relatives met the regiment padre, Maj. Jamieson. Other chaplains were there also. The ladies auxiliary was responsible for this also. Mrs. C. Stephens convened it, and was assisted by Mrs. J. J. McGurran, Mrs. D. S. Calder, Mrs. T. H. Hewitt.