

Captain Alexander Lipmann-Kessel

Unit: 16th Parachute Field Ambulance attached 1st Airborne.

Army No: 227647

Awards: Member of the British Empire, Military Cross.

Captain Surgeon Alexander William Lipmann Kessel, known as Lippy, was the son of Moses Kessel (1870-1924) and Gertrude Kessel (nee Girdisky) (1882-1977) of Pretoria. He was a South African surgeon, who was awarded the Military Cross for his work at Arnhem, the Netherlands:

Captain Lipmann-Kessel commanded one of the surgical teams of 16 Parachute Field Ambulance which established a Dressing Station in the Elizabeth Hospital, ARNHEM, after the capture of the main bridge. The hospital was subsequently recaptured and came under German control. Captain Lipmann-Kessel must have saved many lives by his skill as a surgeon working under most difficult conditions. On several occasions the hospital came under both German and British fire. The windows of the operating theatre were blown in and, apart from these difficulties, the Germans often interfered and attempted to remove the personnel from the surgical teams. Later when most of the wounded had been evacuated, Captain Lipmann-Kessel was left behind with 30 seriously wounded cases. He continued to perform his duties as a surgeon with the greatest skill and, at the same time, forestalled the Germans in any attempt they made to interfere with the working of the hospital. Finally, Captain Lipmann-Kessel showed great initiative in escaping from captivity. This officer has a great reputation for his gallantry, skill and devotion to duty while carrying out his work under the most difficult and dangerous conditions on many occasions. I (Brigadier Lathbury) recommend him most strongly for the immediate award of the Military Cross.

Lipmann-Kessel escaped from German hands on the 16th October. Amongst the many people on whom he operated at Arnhem, was Brigadier John Hackett who was severely wounded. Brig. John Hackett, CO 4th Para. Brigade was disguised in the St Elizabeth Hospital at Arnhem as "Cpl Hayter".

Lipmann-Kessel helped smuggle arms out of the hospital for "mock burials" in the grounds; these were later dug up by the Dutch Resistance. He escaped from Appeldoorn Hospital with several other Airborne doctors after being given permission by the Senior MO. At a safe house he met the wounded

evader Brig. Hackett again, who was wearing a Star of David badge and operated on him for the second time on Feb 15th, 1945.

Lipmann Kessel was later made a Member of the British Empire:

Captain Lipmann-Kessel was taken prisoner when the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Arnhem, was occupied by the Germans on 18th September 1944. Following the evacuation of the lightly wounded, Captain Lipmann-Kessel was one of a small rear detachment who, whilst they were unguarded, were not asked to give their parole. In addition to his medical duties, Captain Lipmann-Kessel found time to organise a "transit camp" for evaders in the area. It was due to his efforts that a wireless and a quantity of Machine Guns and detonators stored in the hospital reached members of the Underground. On 13th October 1944 the remainder of the patients and staff were removed to Apeldoorn. As the majority of the wounded had already been sent to Germany, Captain Lipmann-Kessel received permission to escape, and two nights later he left the building unchallenged, with 3 other members of the R.A.M.C. After marching North for two nights the 4 escapers came into the hands of friends, and were hidden for a month until an evacuation of a large number of Allied personnel had been arranged. Captain Lipmann-Kessel acted as interpreter to the expedition, which unfortunately was not entirely successful. When he and two officers found themselves alone after an encounter with Germans, they returned to the Otterloo - Barneveld area. Captain Lipmann-Kessel made two more efforts to reach safety before he finally met a British Unit near Lage-Zwaluwe on 10th February 1945 after a very hazardous journey.

This officer's work in keeping lightly wounded personnel on the "danger" list, in order to give them a chance of escaping, has been warmly praised by Brigadier Hackett.

During the 1950's, Lipmann-Kessel wrote a book of his experiences, "Surgeon at Arms", under the pseudonym of Daniel Paul. This was reprinted in the 1970's under his real name. He had a successful career as a doctor in London. He died in 1986 and, at his request, was buried near Arnhem to be near his airborne friends. He is buried at Arnhem Civil cemetery, opposite Oosterbeek cemetery, with his comrades in accordance with his last wishes. General Hackett himself organised Kessel's burial at Arnhem with an Orthodox Rabbi at the local cemetery.

Sources:

1. The National Archives, Kew. Name Lippmann-Kessel, Alexander: Rank Captain; Service No. 227647; Regiment 16 Parachute Field Ambulance; Theatre of Combat or Operation North West Europe 1944 -45. Award Military Cross; Date of announcement in the London Gazette 20 September 1945; Folio 514 Date 1945. Reference WO 373/55/358 <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C9283301>
 2. The National Archives, Kew. Name Lippmann-Kessel, Alexander William: Rank Captain; Service No. 227647; Regiment Royal Army Medical Corps; Theatre of Combat or Escape and Evasion and Special Operations Operation Award Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; Date of announcement in the London Gazette 20 September 1945; Reference WO 373/64/169. Former reference in its original department: 68/Gen/6896. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7377142>
 3. https://www.pegasusarchive.org/arnhem/alexander_lipmann_kessel.htm
 4. St Elisabeth's Hospital was the main medical facility on this side of Arnhem, and medical units from 1st (Airborne) Division quickly began to use it as the battle for Arnhem began. 16th Parachute Field Ambulance established itself here on 17th September and wounded continued to be brought in while the confused battle for the ground around it raged. The hospital remained in use until the end of the battle, and many Arnhem 'personalities' were treated here.
 5. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-at-the-battle-of-arnhem>.
-