This is a story of a violin, — my violin. It became mine about fifty years ago when I retrieved it from a dusty corner in a shop in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and persuaded the owner to sell it to me. I had studied violin for several years and, as time passed, this fiddle and I grew to be quite constant companions. It was a pretty safe bet that wherever I might be the old violin would not be far away.

Thus it was that the attack on Pearl Harbor found us both on Corregidor in Manila Bay where I was on duty as Operations Officer. During the first major Japanese air raid on the little island one bomb made a shambles of my living quarters, blowing out all doors and windows and really wrecking the place. Fortunately, the old fiddle was unharmed, but discretion dictated that I find it a safer spot in one of our several tunnels, which I did. And there it reposed throughout the siege of Corregidor. Instead of music during those five never-to-be-forgotten months our ears were attuned to the shrill whine of the air raid sirens, the devastating detonations of enemy bombs and artillery shells, and the booming reply of our own cannon firing anti-aircraft and counter-battery. It was rugged all right; but that's another story.

After General Wainwright's surrender, on May 6, 1942, the Japanese military authorities announced that we would be moved by boat to Manila. In preparation therefor each prisoner of war (POW) had to survey the situation and decide what he'd try to carry. By that time we were half starved and weak; no one knew our ultimate destination, nor the trials that awaited us. The Philippine rainy season had arrived and
the moisture had caused the violin to become unglued at the neck and the finger board. It seemed unwise to try to take it along. However, I hated to abandon such an old friend; for thirty-seven years we'd shared our joys and sorrows and it might be a comfort in the dark days ahead. I'll always be glad I decided to carry that violin.

Enroute to Manila a Jap guard started to appropriate it but when I showed him it was in three pieces he grunted disgustedly "Damé! Damé!" (No good) and handed it back to me.

Approaching Manila harbor we were surprised to see our transport turn and head for Parañaque beach, several miles south of the city, and the scene of Admiral Dewey's sinking of the Spanish fleet back in '98. As the ship dropped anchor we POWs were herded down Jacob's ladders into landing barges which then headed shoreward. As each one hit the beach the bow was opened and we piled out into the water. With my musette bag in one hand and the violin case in the other I waded ashore through water up to my armpits, but my fiddle was high and dry above my head.

During the ensuing "March of Humiliation" many in our bedraggled column fell by the wayside. Prolonged lack of food and sleep plus the tropical heat of that sunny Sunday had completely exhausted us. Many times I was tempted to abandon everything but the clothes on my back, but managed somehow to drag myself and the violin to our destination, old Bilibid Prison, in Manila.

A month later, at our Tarlac camp in northern Luzon, with permission of Corporal Nishiyama of the Japanese guards, I begged a cake of "fish" glue from a Pilipino cobbler. Then, using a small can in a larger one for a double boiler, and my shelter tent rope in lieu of clamps, I succeeded in repairing the old fiddle satisfactorily.
It wasn't long until a real need for a musical instrument in camp developed. In the meantime our group from Bataan and Corregidor had been transferred to Karenko on the island of Formosa (Taiwan to the Japs) where we had been joined by a contingent of British and Dutch POWs from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Java. When the Japanese authorized a short religious service each Sunday morning, I tuned up the violin and led the hymns for the weekly half hour of divine worship. This custom we continued until our liberation more than three years later.

The approach of Christmas '42, our first behind barbed wire, emphasized the wretchedness of our situation, so far from family and friends and all that we held dear. Accordingly I sought and obtained permission from the Japanese to have some Christmas music. Any variation that would brighten our drab existence would be welcome. In preparation I assembled about fifteen voices and rehearsed them on "The First Noel", "Good King Wenceslas", "O Come, All Ye Faithful", and other old favorites. Then on Christmas Eve, with the violin leading on the melody, we circulated through the barracks zestfully singing the carols we had loved since childhood. At each stop many joined with the carolers, especially on "Silent Night, Holy Night", as each man's thoughts filled with tender memories of his own loved ones half way around the globe. We were praying for their safety, as we knew they were praying for ours, although their only information of us at that time was that we were "Missing in action".

Just before we started the caroling it appeared that my fiddle playing might be finished. As I took the bow out of the case the tip split in half, rendering it useless. Fortunately a roommate, Colonel Louis Bowler, had a small roll of adhesive tape. While I held the broken parts together he taped it securely and there that tape remained through-
out our captivity, for many a musical session, for carols the next Christmas, and the next.

The civilian interpreter at Karenko was a Mr. Koga (Koga-san) or "Mortimer" to POWs. (We had nicknames for all the Japanese staff.) His English had been acquired while attending a Baptist Mission in Tokyo. To my surprise he displayed some knowledge of music. As "Hancho" or Squad Chief of my group of about thirty American Colonels I was the intermediary between them and the Japanese. One evening "Mortimer" and Lieut. Wakasugi ("Baggy Pants" to us.) appeared semi-officially at the door of the room four of us were occupying at that time. In accordance with standing orders I yelled "Kiotsuke!" (Attention!) "Kei Rei!" (Salute!) as we all stood and bowed to the Japanese army. Baggy was apparently tired. He laid his Samurai sword on the table and he and Mortimer sat down. "Maybe you play for us?" said he, looking at me. I got out the violin, tuned it up and started a number. "Humoresque" said he, and he was right. A roommate called for "Love's Old Sweet Song". Before I could start Mortimer began humming the chorus and as I played I could see his lips forming the words, "Just a Song at Twilight." He was probably thinking of a little family somewhere in Japan, and for the moment, his habitual enemy harshness was absent.

And then there was Lieut. "Boots" Nakashima, probably the most cruel officer we encountered. He was even merciless to his own men. Among the periodic restrictions on POWs issued by the Japanese had been one which said, "No music, except on Sundays." Imagine my astonishment to have "Boots" stop me on three different occasions to say something like, "Why you not play more? O.K. to play any evening."

The first time this happened I could hardly believe it. What an amaz-

"See Readers Digest for January 1958 "Baggy Pants."
ing revelation of human nature! Here was a representative of the dominant military clique of Japan, whose treatment of us had been such that half the camp would gladly have throttled him with their own hands, yet the music from a violin had reached him, and found a response.

From time to time other contingents were brought into our camp and occasionally someone showed up with a musical instrument. As a result we were able eventually to put together an orchestra consisting of violins, mandolins, guitars, piano accordion, and trumpet, plus a string bass, believe it or not made in prison camp by Captain Neville Grow. I was asked to take over as leader. This group, with various additions and subtractions as we were subsequently transferred from Formosa to Japan and later to Manchuria, constituted the nucleus around which I built a monthly program of entertainment.

For such affairs special permission was always necessary but it was usually forthcoming and occasionally even the Jap Camp Commander would attend. The effect of these musical sessions on POW morale was wonderful to behold. The men were so hungry for music that the room would be crowded even for rehearsals. And while the Japanese authorities were punishing prisoners daily for supposed infractions of camp regulations, one of their number came up with a supply of strings from Tokyo for our instruments. A typical program would consist of orchestra selections and group singing of old favorites, interspersed with special numbers such as a vocal double quartet, instrumental solos, or vocal solos for which I usually contributed a violin obligato.

After V-J Day, (AND WHAT A DAY!), when it appeared we would actually be heading homeward soon, I decided that a final "concert" would be in order. We were in Mukden, Manchuria, by that time, with about 1500 POWs in camp. Since patriotic airs had been prohibited throughout our more than three years of captivity, it seemed wonderfully
appropriate to start the program with the three National Anthems. Our British friends led off with "God Save The King", followed by our Dutch fellow-sufferers with "Het Wilhelmus", after which every American, from the depths of his grateful heart, sang "The Star Spangled Banner". Anticipation is a wonderful tonic. That crowd was "slap-happy". They were goin' home and wanted to sing about it. And so, with Colonel Ted Lilly's tenor and the violin leading, the group sang "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag", "Show Me the Way to Go Home", "Long, Long Trail", "Smiles", "Happy Days are Here Again", "California Here I Come", and many more. It was a grand finale to our musical interludes. Although a sizable crack had opened in the back of the violin and only about half the hairs remained in the bow, they had functioned faithfully to the end. When it was over I lovingly packed fiddle and bow for the long trek homeward.

It took us an interminable month to get down to the seaport of Dairen and back under the American flag aboard a Navy hospital ship which took us to Okinawa. From there we flew to Manila and eventually home. As I walked down the gangway to my waiting family my violin case was safely tucked under one arm. An expert repairman in San Francisco, to whom I paid an early visit, shook his head sadly when he saw my beloved instrument and bow, but he soon had them back in fine shape.

When men share tremendous hardships, starvation, and impending danger over a prolonged period of time they come to know a common bond that is closer than blood ties. Realizing this our great leader and friend, General "Skinny" Wainwright, initiated the idea of an annual reunion of our group. I have attended several and, knowing the old violin would be called for, you can bet it was always present. Our next meeting will be in Seattle in July and, you guessed it, God willing, "Fiddle and I" will be there.