

CARL J. Milynneck Glendale, AZ. I AM telling a story. It is A CHRISTMAS story that did not occur in the CHRISTMAS season OR EVEN IN A NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN COUNTRY. The place was Mukden, MANCHURIA, and the season was the season of WAR.

CARL knows the story is true because he was there and a participant.

CARL and other American prisoners of war survivors of the Batan Death March, had found themselves in a Japanese prison camp in Mukden. They were marched every morning about 5 miles to forced labor and then in the late afternoon marched back to camp. They were a column of SCARECROWS. Those who had lived long enough to reach, Mukden were down to 50 OR 85 pounds. Their bony frames were covered with RAGS. On the trips back they ached from malnutrition and virtually non-existent medical care. The prisoner is always in combat, and the war he fights is survival. It is fought

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every day with no respite or furlough or rest behind the lines, It always, has been so — for Americans in POW Camps, for Jews in death camps, for freedom-wanting people in the Soviet gulags. To Live just one more day requires heroic struggle and often hinges, on a stolen scrap of food, some treasured scrap — a crust of bread, a bit of money, some useful piece of cloth. One afternoon as they trudged back to camp they reached the crest of a hill. There in a ditch, was an old Chinese begger and a boy. The child as desperate as the men, approached with an out-stretched hand. A guard viciously pushed him back into the ditch. Then one prisoner stepped out and, reaching into his ragged shirt, brought out a small piece of bread which he gave to the little boy. Then one of those miracles humans are capable of performing occurred, Spontaneously all of the prisoners stepped forward and showered the child and the old man with everything

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they had. The Japanese guards were struck dumb. Then the prisoners again as if all moved by some power beyond themselves, reformed themselves in a column, squared their shoulders and marched back to the camp, hardly a word had been spoken. Why did they do it? Carl doesn't know, many of them died before regaining their freedom. It's unlikely even the child survived for after the winds of that war died down a new civil war swept his wounded land. But I think whatever happened later, the child never forgot that moment. I think he kept it like a treasure in his heart, a message from somewhere that even when the world is harsh and brutal, the human heart can love and one human being can care for another. Giving toys to American children isn't practical, either. The toys will break or wear out. No changes will be made in the course of great events. We'll never know the children, nor they us. And, yet, we will have created something

Indestructible, a moment of Joy  
wrought not by the thing itself but by  
its testimony that someone cares - A  
moment that can be carried in the heart  
forever in a world such as ours, such  
moments are truly the only safe investments  
None of us is rich enough to give what  
those men in Mukden gave on that  
windswept hill so long ago. They  
were men with souls of giants. But  
neither can ~~we~~<sup>we</sup> afford to do nothing.  
Never ever can we afford to do nothing

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Manchuria