

The Sands of Christmas

For some this Christmas, the holiday has a somewhat hollow feel, for family members are away in Iraq, fighting for their country. We should offer prayers for their safety, and for a peace that will enable their soon return.

Shane Pledge, senior accountant in Life Care's facility financial services, shared the following moving story with me. It is written by Michael Marks. Pledge said his cousin, Captain James Thomas Cobb Jr., sent it to him from Iraq, where he is serving. Captain Cobb was recently involved in the Fallujah attacks and, thankfully, emerged without injury. Cobb's father, who is also in Iraq, gave this to him.

I had no Christmas spirit when I breathed a weary sigh ... And looked across the table where the bills were piled too high ... The laundry wasn't finished and the car I had to fix ... My stocks were down another point, the Dolphins lost by six ... And so with only minutes 'til my son got home from school ... I gave up on the drudgery and grabbed a wooden stool.

The burdens that I carried were about all I could take ... And so I flipped the TV on to catch a little break ... I came upon a desert scene in shades of tan and rust ... No snowflakes hung upon the wind, just clouds of swirling dust ... And where the reindeer should have stood before a laden sleigh ... Eight Hummers ran a column right behind an M1A.

A group of boys walked past the tank, not one was past his teens ... Their eyes were hard as polished flint, their faces drawn and lean ... They walked the street in armor with their rifles shouldered tight ... Their dearest wish for Christmas, just to have a silent night ... Other soldiers gathered, hunkered down against the wind ... To share a scrap of mail and dreams of going home again.

There wasn't much at all to put their lonely hearts at ease ... They had no Christmas turkey, just a pack of MRE's ... They didn't have a garland or a stocking I could see ... They didn't need an ornament -- they lacked a Christmas tree ... They didn't have a present, even though it was tradition ... The only boxes I could see were labeled "ammunition."

I felt a little tug and found my son now by my side ... He asked me what it was I feared, and why it was I cried ... I swept him up into my arms and held him oh so near ... And kissed him on the forehead as I whispered in his ear ... There's nothing wrong, my little son, for safe we sleep tonight ... Our heroes stand on foreign land to give us all the right ... To worry on the things in life that mean nothing at all ... Instead of wondering if we will be the next to fall.

He looked at me as children do and said it's always right ... To thank the ones who help us and perhaps that we should write ...

(more)

And so we pushed aside the bills and sat to draft a note ... To thank the many far from home, and this is what we wrote:

"God bless you all and keep you safe, and speed your way back home ... Remember that we love you so, and that you're not alone ... The gift you give, you share with all, a present every day ... You give the gift of liberty, and that we can't repay."

And so, as we bask in the warmth of hearth, family and friends this Christmastime, be grateful that America's sons and daughters are engaged in attempting to bring to pass the admonition of the angels 2,000 years ago of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

--Beecher Hunter