

A Christmas Story... the Leaper and the Gestapo

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Every prisoner who could walk was assembled that Christmas day in the yard when The Leaper was marched out through the gates, with a makeshift pole, and ordered to jump back into prison or be shot on the spot.

Still without shoes and weak from his escape attempt plus five days of bread and water, The Leaper

faced a terrifying vault attempt under the worst kind of pressure. To live, he had to vault back into prison. One slip and he was dead.

The Gestapo major, firing squad alongside, barked an order and The Leaper began his run. "You'd swear," recalls Rooney, "that the kid actually delighted in his performance." He went up and over both those fences and never nicked his clothes on the wire.

"You could hardly call it cheering, what followed. It was more like bedlam in the yard.

"The Gestapo unit? That was the best part of all. That Gestapo major stiffened to attention and tossed the kid a real smart salute. Then the major marched away his firing squad, and the kid never knew another day of solitary."

... The Other Side

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guage was running through, my head as I stepped into McCurdy's toyland at 10 last Saturday morning.

But I had a plan. I would help customers, show them merchandise and when it came to making a financial settlement I would send them off to a cash register manned by a competent clerk.

That worked for about a half-hour, until the breakfast with Santa crowd thronged into the toy department to look over their dream presents. After that I took my turn at the cash register, calling out for help from swamped fellow clerks, like a drowning person going down for the third time making havoc of McCurdy's bookkeeping as I went.

My first customer, a big man with a big package full of the land adventurer, GI Joe, asked to look at a motorized erector set.

We opened it together and I was amazed at how complex and sophisticated it was. I asked his son's age. Ten, he replied explaining, "Any 10-year-old boy who can't work this isn't worth much."

Well, this woman mechanical wizard must have struck that man as one step below an idiot. He kindly helped me with the cash register and went away, shaking his head, sympathizing that I was starting as a clerk so close to Christmas.

The best-selling toys in the department were all new to me. Craft kits — candle-making, pottery complete with wheel, needlepoint, woodworking, and styrocraft are the hits this season, along with ecology lab kits.

Second in line are the old favorites, "plush toys," as stuffed animals are called by John Irish, merchandise manager of the department. "Of 400 pandas not even 60 are left," he explained.

I saw no war toys during my stint. GI Joe, yes, but he has been changed into an adventurer since Hasbro introduced

him as a soldier doll a few years back.

I came upon such popular items as Iggys, a snow-block maker, a must for sound igloo construction. I also was introduced to talking footballs.

Pointing to a pile of large, brightly colored boxes holding such contemporary "toys" as Smash-up Derby, Air Devils and U-Fly-It, Irish said, "Television merchandise is more durable and of higher quality this year, with the exception of TV dolls, which aren't selling well."

"Doll sales are high," he continued, "but people want quality for their money. They'll pay for a doll that's good quality."

This year people are spending freely all across the board, according to buyers in five departments talked to during a break from clerking.

Connie Mikulski, merchandise manager of children's wear, another busy department located on the third floor said, "The whole mood is happier than last year. It's more relaxed. Right after Thanksgiving people began spending."

Upon my return to the toy department I showed some train sets to a young man and woman for their sons of two and four.

Train sets are on an up trend, Irish later informed me. "Road racers replaced them in popularity for a few years but trains are on their way back. They haven't begun to come up to where they are headed in popularity," Irish feels.

I noticed few couples shopping together. For the most part there were excited children with either a mom or a dad in tow with the parent secretly stacking packages in bags with their freed hand.

After five hours I left the store aching and drained of any energy or curiosity about a clerk's day in the Christmas rush, but I was satisfied that Christmas season 1972 is a happy one for a lot of people.



Vows Taken

Sister Mary Robert Anthony of the Holy Angels, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Didas of Hornell, was among 35 Carmelite Sisters for Aged and Infirm who recently pronounced their perpetual vows at St. Theresa's Motherhouse, Avila on the Hudson, Germantown, Albany's Bishop Edwin B. Broderick was principal celebrant of the Mass and vows ceremony.

Problem Pregnancy?

For free confidential help Call Birthright: 716-328-8700. Office Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., weekdays; 24 hour record-a-phone to receive messages.

Peace Walk Set In Rochester

A candlelight procession "for a lasting peace" in Vietnam will be held Saturday, Dec. 23 in Rochester's Washington Park, corner of Clinton Ave. and Court St. at 3:30 p.m.

The procession, sponsored in part by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Bishop Robert R. Spears, head of the Rochester Episcopal diocese, will circle the downtown shopping area.

POLISH SERVICES

Elmira — St. Casimir's Church offers a Mass in Polish accompanied by a Polish Choir every Sunday at 11 a.m. Father Henry F. Adamski, pastor of the church, also announced that Confessions are heard in Polish each Saturday 4-5 and 7-8 p.m.

CONCERNED ABOUT TEEN-AGERS?

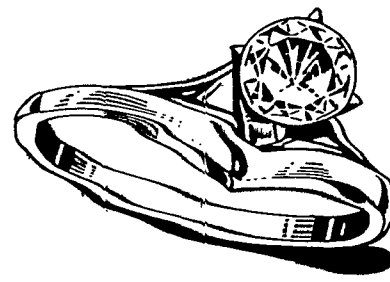
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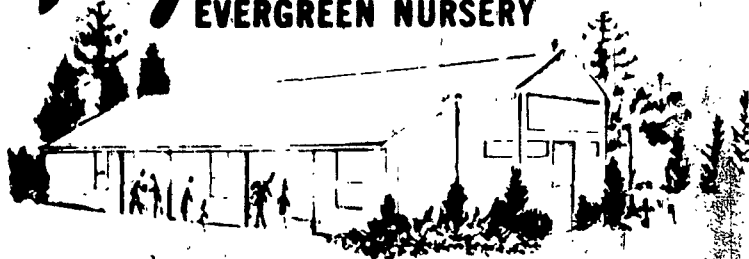
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