

'Twas the week before Christmas

by Lawrence Savell

Seeking some extra money to carry me through the long winter months, I decided to seek employment during my Christmas vacation. I chose to work in a large department store since it was nearby, well-known, and the only paying job I had been offered.

My first day of work was an unforgettable experience. After punching in my time card upside down, I was assigned to the men's department. I was thrilled to be in an atmosphere with which I was obviously acquainted. My enthusiasm was quickly dampened, however, when I met my new manager. Looking at my rather large hands, he asked me if I had had any experience in men's shorts. My look of confusion caused him to realize the *double entendre* of his question. He then sent me to a table covered with the remains of what were once several dozen shirts. "Fold," he ordered.

Woe is me

To my surprise, I was truly a fast worker. In less than an hour I had folded four dozen shirts, cleared the table of gum wrappers, and scrutinized the four girls working in the department. Then, tragedy struck. First, a rather large woman decided to lean on my pyramid of clothing causing a tremendous avalanche. Secondly, an elderly gentleman chose to buy the peach-colored shirt which just

happened to be at the base of the mountain.

On my second day of work, I was assigned to the toy department. I somehow figured that that area would be less crowded. Unfortunately, the hoards of customers I had met earlier thought so too.

Since the majority of toys do not have to be folded, I was told to be a "wrapper". This title meant that I chopped off a portion of the price ticket and then wrapped the purchases. I quickly revealed my ineptitude in this area. The cashier I worked with, however, was eager to show me where I was going wrong. Had she not offered her kind assistance, I would still be performing finger amputations in ticket choppers.

Silent night?

I somehow managed to survive subsequent predicaments until the last night of my employment. I have always believed that Christmas Eve was a time when people sat with their families around the fireplace and sang carols. I now know that they spend that time in de-

partment stores taking part in the so-called "deadline dash".

At about 9:30 P.M. the front doors were thrown open by a wave of people who had waited until the last minute to do their holiday shopping. Faced with the realization that time was running out, these wide-eyed people were buying anything they could lay their hands on. The moving mass engulfed table after table enveloping and removing their contents.

Free at last

At 9:45 that night, the sound of the three bells over the PA system told me that my ordeal was over. I gave a final salute to what was left of the department and clocked out for the final time. I left the building feeling as if a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. It was only after I had walked halfway home that I realized I had forgotten to do my own Christmas shopping.