

FROM THE FIELD



WARM
Hands,
WARM
Heart

By Edward C. Anderson



It was easy to give when there was extra, but giving away something valuable to me was much harder.

The Kuang Kuang Hao, a special express train, sped through the countryside in Taiwan, passing scenes of quiet rivers, hills dotted with Chinese burial mounds, scattered villages, and endless waves of rice fields. As I stepped off the train in Miao Li, the cold winter wind hit me in the face.

Despite the cold, missionary routine in my new area soon became settled. I enjoyed being a senior companion and had a good junior companion. I was comfortable giving the missionary lessons and interacting with the people.

In our branch I met a member named Hu Chin Hsi, who looked like a scarecrow with wild, straggly hair. His eyes were bright but sunken, and his body was thin and straight. He talked with enthusiasm but stopped often to wheeze and cough because he had a chronic lung and respiratory disease. Despite his struggles, Brother Hu was a faithful member and the branch clerk.

One cold winter night we rode our bikes

to visit Brother Hu. He lived on a hillside, where the winter wind blew. His home made of loosely nailed planks with a dirt floor was just large enough for one man to lie down and store a few things in. Brother Hu explained he was poor because the money he made as a tax assessor was spent on medicine to keep him alive, and any leftover money was spent on food.

As the rainy season became more severe, we knew Brother Hu needed more help to survive until spring. We collected two extra comforters, some clothing, and some money for food. Brother Hu was grateful for the gifts, and with tears in his eyes, he thanked us over and over.

Everything seemed fine until we noticed he had nothing to keep his hands warm. I thought we could buy him a pair of cloth gloves, but I knew these gloves didn't last long and often came apart. Brother Hu needed something dependable, long-lasting, and warm.

I had a pair of leather, fur-lined gloves that were given to me by a companion who had completed his mission the previous summer. He told me the gloves were rare and that it would be impossible to find or buy such gloves in Taiwan. The moist, cold tropical air of Miao Li proved how valuable a gift those gloves were, and I guarded them

everywhere I went. But now someone else needed them.

When Brother Hu needed blankets, clothes, and money for food, we shared. Now he needed gloves, and I was more than willing to buy him some cloth gloves but not give him mine. I rationalized that I had two more winters as a missionary on this island and needed warm gloves. I even bought a pair of cloth gloves to give Brother Hu, but I was uneasy and unhappy.

I contemplated my behavior and realized I was being selfish. If it didn't cause me any hardship or sacrifice, I was willing to give. But a rare possession like my gloves was a harder test.

Though it seemed like such a sacrifice at the time, I gave Brother Hu my leather, fur-lined gloves. I took the cloth gloves, which caught on my bike and totally unraveled two days later. What lasted, though, is my memory of Hu Chin Hsi with his cough and wheeze and what I learned from giving to him.

As I think of sacrifice and charity, I think of how trivial and insignificant a pair of gloves or any temporal possession seems. I think of the greatest sacrifice made by the Son of God. He who had little or none of the earth's possessions, no worldly titles or honors, gave up that which was most precious—His life—for each of us. **NE**