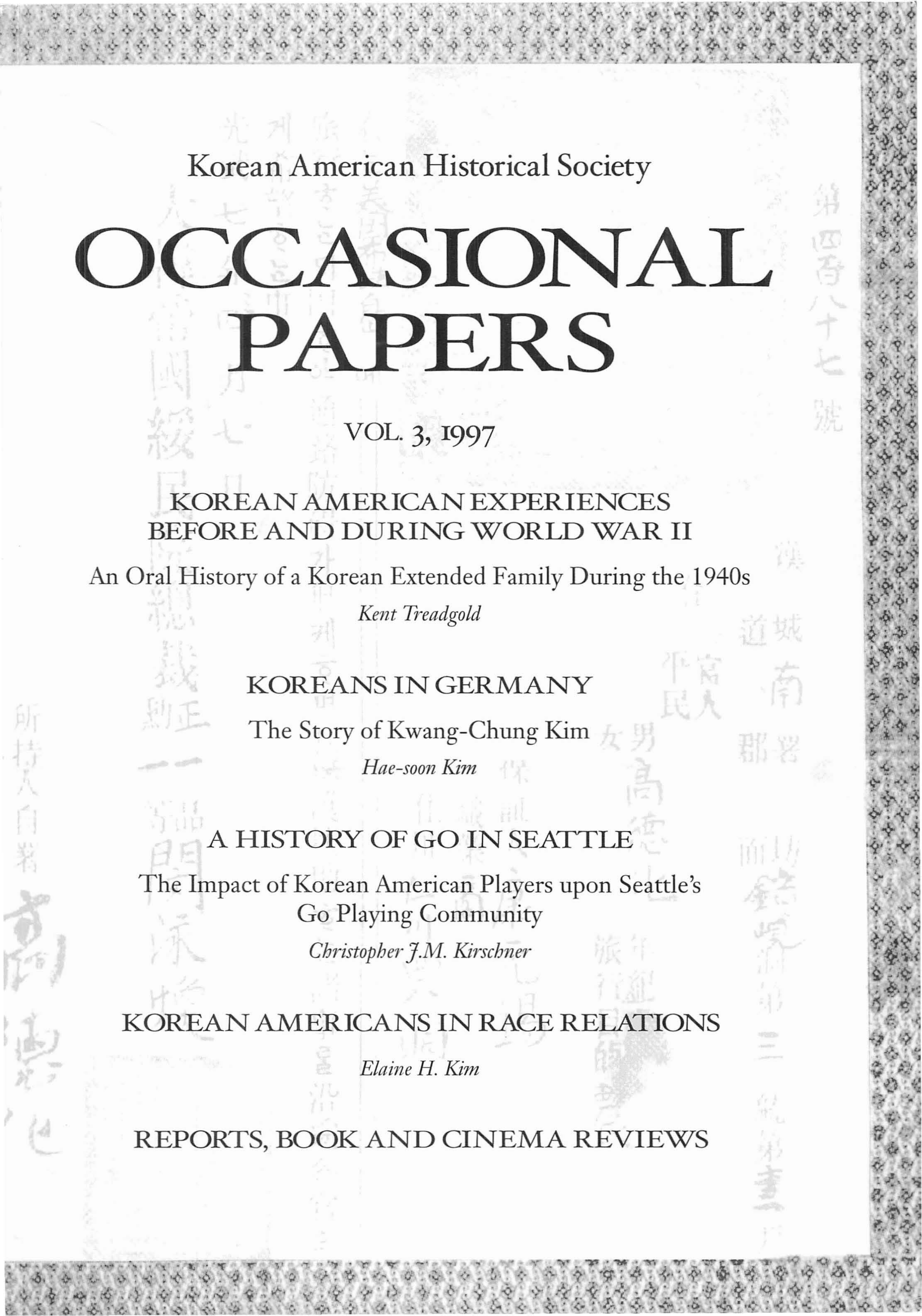

Korean American Historical Society

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

VOL. 3, 1997

KOREAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR II

An Oral History of a Korean Extended Family During the 1940s

Kent Treadgold

KOREANS IN GERMANY

The Story of Kwang-Chung Kim

Hae-soon Kim

A HISTORY OF GO IN SEATTLE

The Impact of Korean American Players upon Seattle's Go Playing Community

Christopher J.M. Kirschner

KOREAN AMERICANS IN RACE RELATIONS

Elaine H. Kim

REPORTS, BOOK AND CINEMA REVIEWS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to our third volume of the Korean American Historical Society's *Occasional Papers*. In this volume, we explore three separate but interlocking themes: racism, multicultural relations, and intergenerational relations.

As part of our intent to present the oral histories of Korean Americans, we are including in the present volume, Kent Treadgold's biographical sketches of eleven Korean Americans of an extended family, revolving around the eve of and during World War II. This begins with Sung Long Chun, who arrived in Honolulu on October 11, 1904, from P'yeongyang to work on the sugar plantations, and touches upon their experiences of racism during the period. In view of the fact that there is a paucity of information on the Korean American experience during World War II, their stories are particularly significant.

Since both the primordial and situational concepts of ethnicity should be explored, examining Korean ethnic identity in different cultural and national contexts will help to further develop our understanding of these concepts. In our last volume, Koreans in the former Soviet Union were featured. The present volume introduces a biographical portrait of a Kwang-chun Kim, a Korean miner in Germany. This is the first of a series of interviews of Koreans living in Germany by Professor Hae-soon Kim.

For those readers interested in articles regarding local histories, contributions by Chris Kirschner and Kun Hong Park are welcome additions to what little is available on Korean Americans in Seattle. We look forward to publishing more local histories of Korean Americans in other parts of the United States as well. Chris Kirschner's article is particularly exciting because of the insights it provides into multicultural relations among Go players in the Seattle area. In addition to presenting a part of Seattle's darker history, Kun Hong Park's article reminds us that racism is still alive, as well as of the difficulties individuals face in organizing to combat it—a theme addressed in Elaine Kim's essay as well.

Finally, the article by Soon Hyun is uniquely historical because he was one of the first Korean immigrants who came to Hawai'i to build the Korean community; it is also historical because it provides a snapshot of the beginning of the Korean American Christian community in Hawai'i. David Hyun, son of Soon Hyun, was very kind to give us permission to print his father's article. We would like to express our thanks to him, and we hope that we will be able to continue to publish some of his writings, which span more than six decades. Reviews of books by Edward Chang, and S.E. Solberg, followed by a film review and interview by Soyon Im of Chris Chan Lee, which touches upon relations between first and second Korean Americans, round-out our selection.

In closing, I invite our readers to send in their comments as well as recommendations to improve our journal's quality, and I would like to again encourage our readers to become contributing members of our society by submitting articles. Remember, if we do not write our own history from our own perspective, someone who is unfamiliar with, and unsympathetic to, our experience, will write that history for us and for our children.

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KAHS ORAL HISTORIES

Korean American Experiences Before and During World War II

Kent Treadgold

Introduction

In 1940, on the eve of US involvement in World War II, there were approximately 1,700 Koreans living on the mainland in the United States.[1] They naturally encountered many of the same hardships and prejudices as their fellow Asian immigrants. But they also faced unique difficulties. Unlike immigrants from China, Japan, and the Philippines, the Koreans on the mainland did not have a large enough population concentrated in one area to have their own separate ethnic economy.[2] In addition, they were faced with a disturbing paradox: most Koreans felt intense animosity towards Japan and the Japanese for occupying their ancestral homeland, and yet found non-Koreans associating them with the Japanese, sometimes even officially (the US government often classified them as being of Japanese origin because of Japan's control of the Korean peninsula).[3]

While the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II have been well documented, research into the experiences of Korean Americans has barely begun. This paper relates individual experiences of Korean Americans during the same period to illustrate the unique nature of the circumstances they faced. Where possible, I have related the stories as told directly to me by each individual. In some cases, the person is no longer living and their story is recreated from documents, photographs, and the memories of family and friends. I found as I began to collect stories from the war years that, to appreciate each individual's story, an overview of their background prior to 1941 was essential. Without detailing every experience prior to the war, I have attempted to provide enough information so that an understanding of the unique perspective of each individual is possible. I sought, whenever it was available, to provide the most detail for the period immediately before the war so that the war's impact on each person could be more fully appreciated.

Kent Treadgold holds a BA in history from Western Washington University and is an elementary school teacher. His wife, Laraine (the daughter of Marian and Larry Song in this aritcle), is a third-generation Korean American. They have two children.

Korean Americans in the Armed Forces

It is important to remember the racial policies that existed in the US armed forces during World War II. Most African Americans served in segregated units. Japanese Americans were almost exclusively restricted to serving in Europe in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.[4] Filipinos were also placed primarily in segregated regiments.[5]

Against this backdrop, the diversity and positive nature of the six Korean American servicemen's experiences presented here is rather remarkable. They served in both the European and Pacific Theaters of Operation. Three served in the Army, two in the Army Air Corps, and one in the Navy. Only one served in what could be considered a segregated unit (the primarily Chinese motor pool unit); the other five all reached ranks whereby they had Caucasians serving under them. Four of the six were in positions that required a higher degree of training than the normal soldier received, three of those being in noncombat support positions. Two chose to make the military their career, and at least two others were actively recruited to do so by their Caucasian commanding officers.

Most importantly, all six considered their treatment while in the Armed services to be fair and equitable, with no one remembering any negative incidents of any consequence occurring with their fellow servicemen. The three still living expressed this directly. The wives of two of the three who died expressed confidence in the positive nature of their husbands' service experience. The last (Raymond Lee, who died in the Korean War) presumably also had a positive experience since he chose to make the Army his career.

Korean Americans on the Home Front

The Korean Americans who stayed home—particularly those on the mainland—bore the brunt of the racist attitudes. Everyone still living could remember at least one incident 50 years later. Even the Korean Americans in uniform were not immune to this, although the only incidents of racism they remembered involved interaction with civilians while they were off-base and off-duty.

Finally, there is another striking feature shared by all the subjects interviewed. The first-generation Korean Americans arrived on United States soil with a nearly universal hatred of the Japanese for their occupation of Korea. Despite having been raised in homes where this attitude prevailed, the second-generation Korean Americans interviewed here showed an almost 180-degree shift in their attitudes towards the Japanese by the end of the war. Two of the ten second-generation individuals in this article married spouses of Japanese heritage, and by the third generation, every family documented had seen at least one marriage between a Korean American and a Japanese American, and every one of the second generationers still living can count numerous Japanese Americans among their close friends. The negative attitudes ingrained by the first-generation Korean Americans in their offspring were not strong enough to overcome the empathy towards Japanese Americans that inevitably resulted from facing many of the same prejudices.

Sung Long Chun

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Sung Long Chun, shortly before leaving Korea

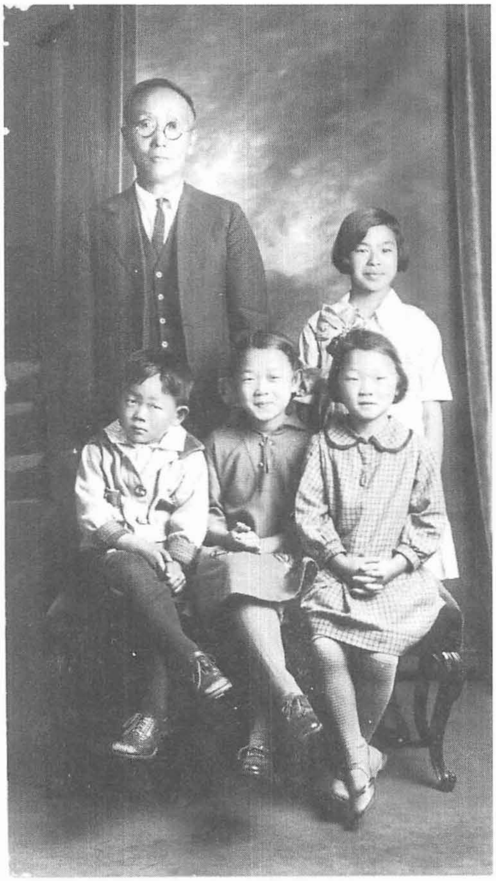
Sung Long Chun stepped off the SS *Doric* on October 17, 1904, when it docked at the United States Territory of Hawai'i.[6] Born in *P'yeongyang*, Korea, little is known about the life he left other than the fact he was the eldest son in his family and he left behind a daughter in *Chemso*. At the time of his arrival, he had just turned thirty-two years old. Although more than 300,000 Asians immigrated to Hawai'i between 1850 and 1920, less than 7,500 of these were Korean, most of whom, like Sung Long, arrived between 1903 and 1905.[7]

According to recollections by Marian Chun, his eldest child born in America, her father talked about being part of an influential family living in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. His family in particluar, because of their prominence, faced persecution from Japanese occupiers. Sung Long told his daughter Marian that he had traveled to Hawai'i with several servants, but they left him to strike out on their own soon after arriving in United States territory. Sung Long also told her that he emigrated from Hawai'i to the mainland in 1906, arriving in San Francisco either shortly before or after the famous earthquake on April 18 of that year. Approximately 1,000 Korean immigrants like Sung Long, almost all of them males, moved to the mainland from Hawai'i between 1903 and 1915.[8]

If he ever discussed the period, no one in the family remembers what Sung Long said about his whereabouts or activities from 1906 to 1917. What is certain is, at that time in California, a new upsurge of anti-Asian discrimination occurred, which Sung Long had to face without the benefit of the ethnic islands of refuge the larger Asian communities had established. Because he was one later, and also because the overwhelming majority of Koreans at this time were farm laborers, migrant farm work was presumably how he made his living.[9]

Sung Long Chun married Bo Wha Yoon on October 3, 1917. Bo Wha was one of 1,066 picture brides who arrived from Korea between 1910 and 1924, more than 800 of whom went to Hawai'i.[10] She was thirty years old and he was forty-five. The marriage license lists Sung Long's residence as Dinuba, California, a logical base for a Korean migrant farm worker as it had one of the few Korean churches in the entire San Joaquin Valley. Bo Wha was listed as a resident of "Seul, Korea." The marriage was presided over by Rev. David [Dae-wi] Lee, one of the most influential and prominent members of the mainland Korean community.[11] The Chuns had four children: Marian (Hyung-soon), Mary (Hay-soon), David (Ta-byuk), and Raymond (Korean name unknown).

Bo Wha died in 1927 at the age of forty. Marian, who was seven years old when she died, recalled that her mother was sick most of the time. She also remembered her as a very sad woman. After Bo Wha died, Sung Long felt he couldn't properly care for and raise the children on his own while employed as a migrant worker, so he placed the three eldest children in a children's home (Faith Home) in Modesto, California. They were the only children of Asian descent there. The youngest, Raymond, was adopted in infancy by a Chinese family that had no male heirs. Sung Long visited the other children four times a year. He apparently continued as a migrant worker because he would pick up his mail on his visits to the orphanage, indicating the lack of a permanent address.



MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

(*Counterclockwise*) Sung Long, David, Mary and Marian Chun, and a family friend (ca 1928)

In 1938 or '39, he was injured while working in the San Joaquin Valley. Sung Long, along with other migrant workers, were being transported to a field in the back of a flatbed truck when the truck was involved in a traffic accident. The truck flipped over and Sung Long sustained injuries serious enough that he was never able to work again. When he was well enough to travel, he moved to Los Angeles, where he was able to get a one-room apartment in a rundown section of town called Boyle Heights. The building was an old hotel that had been converted to a senior citizen center exclusively housing retired Korean men. Marian thought that it was run by a church, possibly the Korean Presbyterian Church. She was not sure how the rent was paid.

In the apartment, Sung Long had a hot plate to do his cooking; there was no refrigerator, so he would wrap food up and place it on a shelf outside the window where it was cooler. Marian remembered that her father received some type of local government assistance along the lines of a food stamp program. "He was issued these vouchers that he could use to purchase food with. I'm not sure what agency issued them, but I think it was some kind of county program."[12]

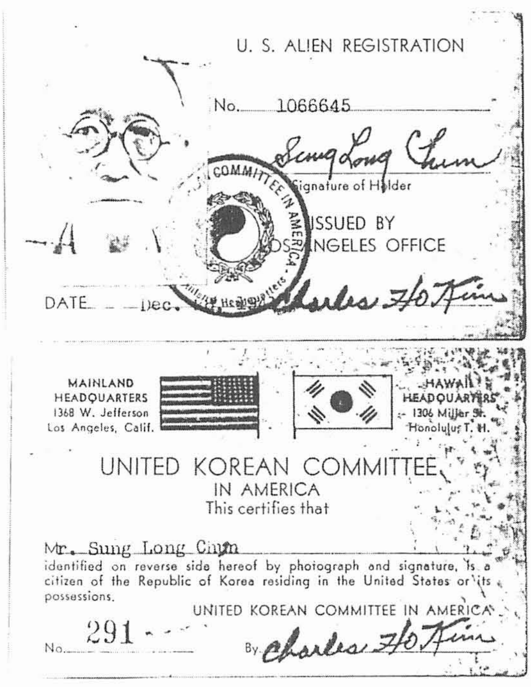
Marian recalled her father telling her that "most of the Koreans at this seniors' home played cards and gambled all day long. He didn't want to gamble, so he would just sit there and watch." Marian also remembered their Sundays during this time: "We would meet at church in the morning. Sunday was my only day off. It seemed like there were always social activities going on there in the afternoon, and then in the evening there were meetings of the Korean National Association (KNA) that my father would often attend." The church was the Korean Presbyterian Church on Jefferson Boulevard. The offices of the KNA were next door.[13]

At the end of 1941, Sung Long and his eldest daughter moved into an apartment built over a garage. Their apartment was a short streetcar ride away from the church. This was the first time that he had lived for any length of time with any of his children since his wife died fourteen years before. All three children, having been raised as the only Asians in an orphanage run by Scottish Methodists, had spoken Korean very rarely during this time and had lost their fluency in the language. Marian remembers, "Our conversations were very brief. My father would get very frustrated and angry that we couldn't talk together very much. I wish we had been able to talk more." Sung Long had survived thirty-seven years in the United States without mastering English.

Sung Long was in poor health during the time he lived with Marian. The only time he left the apartment was to take the streetcar with her down Jefferson Boulevard to the church. There, in addition to church services held in Korean, Sung Long would meet with other Korean Americans to socialize. Marian remembers he used to look forward to and enjoyed these relatively rare (once a week) opportunities to speak Korean with others.

Marian rented the apartment to share with her father shortly after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Southern California was certainly not the most tolerant place for Asians at that time. Despite that, she does not remember any incidents involving her father during his trips to and from the church, which was the only place he usually went. By this time Sung Long was an old man in poor health, an obviously poor choice to be viewed as a foreign threat. In addition, they both wore buttons on their lapels provided by the KNA that said "KOREAN AMERICAN" and showed the flags of both the United States and Korea.[14]

Despite their language problems, Sung Long had no difficulty in letting his daughter know that he hated the Japanese. Marian remembers that before the war, "He told me that if I married a Japanese, he would kill himself." While they were living together, the Japanese in Southern California were rounded up and sent inland to the internment camps. Marian remembers that her father "never expressed the slightest sympathy for what the Japanese Americans were going through." In fact, he went completely in the opposite direction, indicating that the Japanese Americans were only getting what they deserved for the actions of their mother country. Mirroring the attitude of many government officials in the United States at that time, Sung Long drew no distinction between possible foreign agents and citizens of the United States that had been born and raised here. "He made it quite clear that he was happy to see them all sent packing," Marian said.



U. S. ALIEN REGISTRATION

No. 1066645

Sung Long Chun
Signature of Holder

ISSUED BY
LOS ANGELES OFFICE

DATE Dec.

Charles Ho Kim

MAINLAND
HEADQUARTERS
1368 W. Jefferson
Los Angeles, Calif.

HAWAII
HEADQUARTERS
1306 Miller St.
Honolulu, T. H.

UNITED KOREAN COMMITTEE
IN AMERICA
This certifies that

Mr. Sung Long Chun
identified on reverse side hereof by photograph and signature, is a citizen of the Republic of Korea residing in the United States or its possessions.

UNITED KOREAN COMMITTEE IN AMERICA

No. 291

By Charles Ho Kim

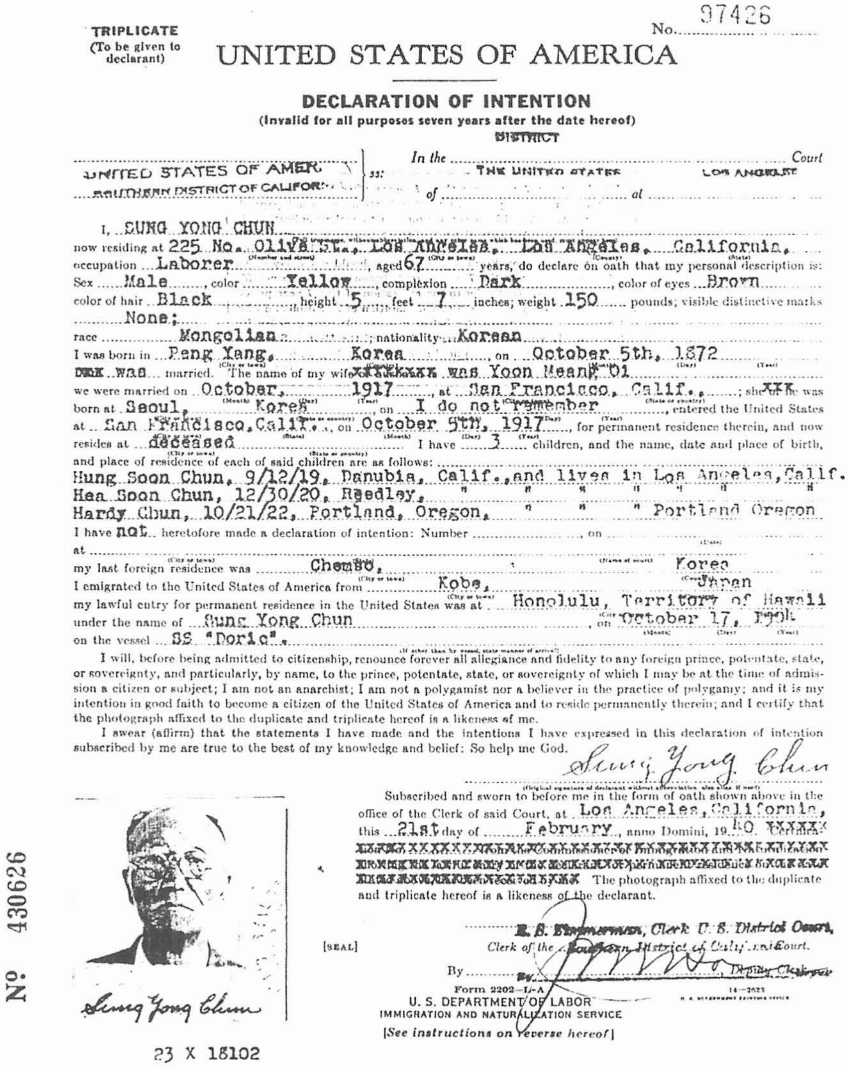
MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Sung Long Chun's Korean identification card

Sung Long's reunion with Marian was short-lived. He had three strokes in the nine months they lived together and died in October 1942. Marian kept many of the documents he had in his possession when he died. Sung Long Chun had two alien registration cards, one dating from 1921 and the other from 1940.

There is also a card dated December 18, 1941, from the United Korean Committee signed by Charles Ho Kim, the executive chairman. This organization was created in April of that year by representatives from nine different Korean social and political organizations to act as the official Korean diplomatic and political body in the United States.[15]

One of the most interesting documents is a copy of a Declaration of Intention (to become a naturalized citizen) that he filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service on February 21, 1940. Although Sung Long was not legally entitled to receive citizenship at that time, Marian remembers "that the word had gone out within the Korean community that the opportunity for citizenship was a possibility in the relatively near future and that anyone interested should begin the paperwork process," prompting her father to go down and file this form. Sung Long Chun had one other possession when he died that Marian has stored for more than five decades: a small notebook written entirely in Korean script. She has only recently learned that it is the Chun family history going back thirty-eight generations in Korea. As of this time the material has not been fully translated or verified for historical authenticity.



TRIPLICATE
(To be given to declarant)

No. 97426

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

UNITED STATES OF AMER. SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFOR. ss: In the DISTRICT Court of THE UNITED STATES at LOS ANGELES

I, SUNG YONG CHUN
now residing at 225 No. Olive St., Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California,
occupation Laborer, aged 67 years, do declare on oath that my personal description is:
Sex Male, color Yellow, complexion Dark, color of eyes Brown
color of hair Black, height 5 feet 7 inches; weight 150 pounds; visible distinctive marks None;
race Mongolian; nationality Korean
I was born in Peng Yang, Korea, on October 5th, 1872
~~DMX~~ was married. The name of my wife ~~XXXXXXX~~ was Yoon Mean 01
we were married on October, 1917, at San Francisco, Calif.; she ~~XXX~~ was born at Seoul, Korea, on I do not remember, entered the United States at San Francisco, Calif., on October 5th, 1917, for permanent residence therein, and now resides at deceased. I have 3 children, and the name, date and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children are as follows:
Hung Soon Chun, 9/12/19, Danubia, Calif., and lives in Los Angeles, Calif.
Hea Soon Chun, 12/30/20, Reedley, " " " " " " "
Hardy Chun, 10/21/22, Portland, Oregon, " " " Portland Oregon
I have not heretofore made a declaration of intention: Number ...., on .... at ....
my last foreign residence was Chemoo, Korea
I emigrated to the United States of America from Kobe, Japan
my lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States was at Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii
under the name of Sung Yong Chun, on October 17, 1904
on the vessel SS "Doric".

I will, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly, by name, to the prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of which I may be at the time of admission a citizen or subject; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to reside permanently therein; and I certify that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me.

I swear (affirm) that the statements I have made and the intentions I have expressed in this declaration of intention subscribed by me are true to the best of my knowledge and belief: So help me God.

Sung Yong Chun
(Original signature of declarant without abbreviation, also alias, if used)

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the form of oath shown above in the office of the Clerk of said Court, at Los Angeles, California, this 21st day of February, anno Domini, 1940. ~~Certification No. .... from the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization showing the lawful entry of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me.~~ The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

[SEAL]

R. S. Zimmerman, Clerk U. S. District Court,
Clerk of the Southern District of California Court.
By ...., Deputy Clerk.

Form 2202—L-A
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
[See instructions on reverse hereof]

14—2023

No. 430626

Sung Yong Chun

23 X 18102

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Sung Long Chun's Declaration of Intention to naturalize

Marian (Hyung-soon Chun) Song

Marian, the eldest daughter of Sung Long Chun, does not remember much about the life the Chuns had together as migrant farm workers before her mother died and she went to the children's home at the age of seven. What little she does remember is a testament to how harsh an existence it was: communal bunkhouses that were little more than shacks, no running water, and straw beds for the workers and their families to sleep on. She also remembers her father schooling her in the Korean language using English/Korean primers printed in Korea, several of which she still has.

During their stay at Faith Home, the Chun children were befriended by Mrs. William B. (Mary) Stewart, of Upland, California. Mrs. Stewart was famous in the Korean community as a champion and benefactress of Korean Americans and was a very amazing woman for the times. According to Bong-Youn Choy, she hired Koreans to pick oranges; one night, their camp was attacked by white farmers and workers, who sought to drive them away. In response, Mrs. Stewart, with permission of the local authorities, armed the Korean workers and told them to use deadly force if necessary to protect themselves, an action that quickly quelled the ardor of the white workers for confrontation. She also defended the Korean workers in the press, calling them "hard working, diligent and honest people who are struggling for a decent life."[16] Marian thought that Mrs. Stewart heard about the plight of the Chun children from one of her many contacts in the Korean community. She always sent each of them a card with a one dollar bill enclosed for birthdays and certain holidays. Marian also remembered how Mrs. Stewart traveled through the valley in a chauffeur-driven car, visiting Korean churches and needy families, as well as Marian, Mary, and David at Faith Home. Marian's memory of being invited to stay at Mrs. Stewart's house in Upland over a New Year's holiday and being driven by her chauffeur to the Rose Parade in Pasadena is a highlight of those early years.

Marian graduated from high school in Modesto in 1936 and moved to Los Angeles, where she attended Biola Bible College. She went there on the recommendation of the two daughters of the Scottish family that ran the Modesto orphanage, who had also attended the school. "I was young, and there was nowhere else I knew of to go. I was only seventeen years old, in a strange city, and I felt safe there." She also taught Sunday school, first at a Japanese church on Terminal Island in Los Angles Harbor, then at the Korean Presbyterian church previously mentioned in Sung Long Chun's story. Here she was warmly welcomed, even though she did not speak Korean. She became the church organist and sang in the choir. She remembers that Dr. Shugnak Luke Kim was the minister. She also remembers having to pay close attention to what was going on during the

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Marian Chun (*middle row, fourth from left*) in the Korean American Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles (ca 1940)

services because it was very difficult without knowing the language to pick up her cues as to when she should start playing and what she should play. The one area that she did not join in with most of her peers was the YKNA, the youth segment of the Korean National Association. Although the members were from her generation, the meetings were usually in Korean and the politics were focused on the situation inside Korea. "I never felt comfortable in there, and the politics didn't interest me," she remembers.

At Biola, she remembers a number of other Asians, she thinks both Chinese and Japanese, but no other Koreans. At first her father paid the costs for her, but after his accident, Sung Long was not able to provide any further assistance. During her third year she fell in arrears to the amount of fifty dollars. "The college told me to stay in the dormitory until the bill was paid. I pointed out to them that if they kept me in the dorm, the only thing that would happen would be that I would just run up a bigger bill." Marian dropped out for the year and earned money as a live-in domestic. She found the work demeaning and degrading, but the money she earned enabled her to finish her last two years of college.

After graduation in June 1941, the only job she could get was again as a live-in domestic, but accepted it until late in the year, shortly after Pearl Harbor was attacked. Then, ironically, she was able to secure a much better position at a department store, J.W. Robinson, because all the Japanese women who worked there either quit or were fired, soon to be interred at the infamous relocation centers. She still remembers her starting salary of seventy-five dollers per month. It enabled her to rent for twenty-five dollars per month the apartment that she shared with her father, for the last nine months of his life. Soon after, she was able to get a better job at another department store, I. Magnin, where she worked with several other Korean women.

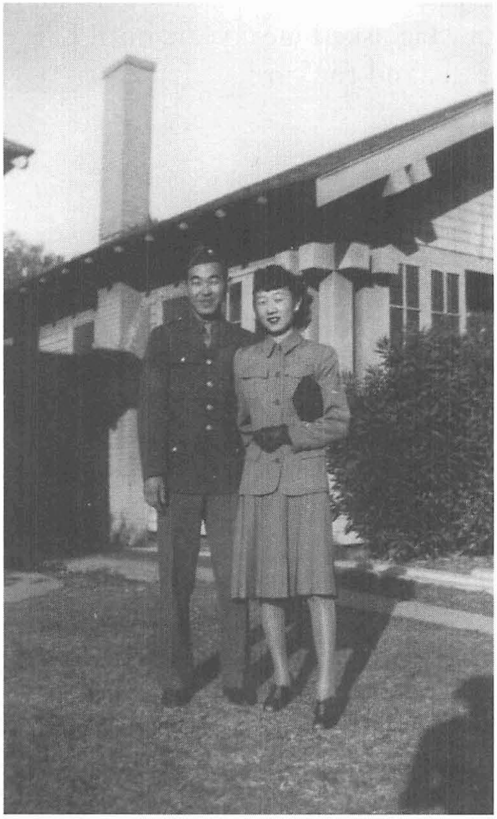
While her father expressed no regret over the treatment the Japanese were receiving, Marian felt differently. "I was very frightened. Life already hadn't been very easy. I remembered how even as a child other children were always making faces with slanty eyes or making some kind of remark to make you feel bad. People treated us differently because we weren't white, and it seemed like many whites figured that all Orientals were the same. I thought that if things went badly in the war they might decide to do the same things to us that they did to the Japanese."

During this time Marian remembers being constantly uncomfortable in public. As previously mentioned, she always wore her button that identified her as a Korean American. "Wearing the button was a measure of relief, but it was also humiliating that I had to do it," she recalls. When the war first started, there were a

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

(*Clockwise from left*) Marian, David, Mary, and Sung Long Chun in front of Faith Home, 1935~36 number of times she was asked to produce identification papers. She said she always felt like someone was watching her when she rode on the streetcars around the city. One incident in particular that she remembered involved a mother with a little girl of five or six years old: "The child kept staring and pointing at me. I was already very embarrassed when the child blurted out, 'She looks just like Tojo!' She was too young to know any better, but I'll tell you I wanted to die right there."

Later, in the summer of 1942, her brother Dave drove down for a visit from Portland, Oregon. She rode with him back up to Portland with the idea that she might like to move, but felt even more uncomfortable there and decided to return almost immediately by train. After purchasing her ticket and boarding the train, Marian was made aware of security concerns because an Asian was riding on the train. "Some officials came to check my papers and then talked with each other for what seemed like a very long time. It was very apparent to all the other passengers on the train that the departure was being held up by me. The train was finally allowed to leave, but I was still so uncomfortable that I don't remember moving from my seat or saying anything for the entire trip. I think I sat there and knitted the whole time." The distance from Portland to Los Angeles is about 1,000 miles. Marian stated that she could still vividly picture both these incidents in her mind more than fifty years later.



MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Marian and Lawrence Song (1943)

Through mutual family friends, Marian met a young Korean American late in 1942 who had been drafted into the Army Air Corps a few months before. The Korean community was small enough that Marian already knew the young man's sister through double dates earlier that year. The soldier's name was Lawrence Song. They started dating and were married on March 6, 1943. Almost immediately, Larry was sent off to war. "Those were anxious times. We were just married and then he was deployed. You never knew if your husband would make it back or not."

When Larry was sent off to war, Marian rented half a duplex with her younger sister Mary and worked in downtown Los Angeles doing clerical work in an office that specialized in providing stenographic services to other businesses. She remained there through the end of the war. When Larry departed, he left his prized Pontiac with Marian. "He asked me to look after the car . . . and the car payments. I didn't even know how to drive when he left because I was always able to take the streetcar wherever I wanted to go. Later on I got a friend to teach me while Larry was still overseas."

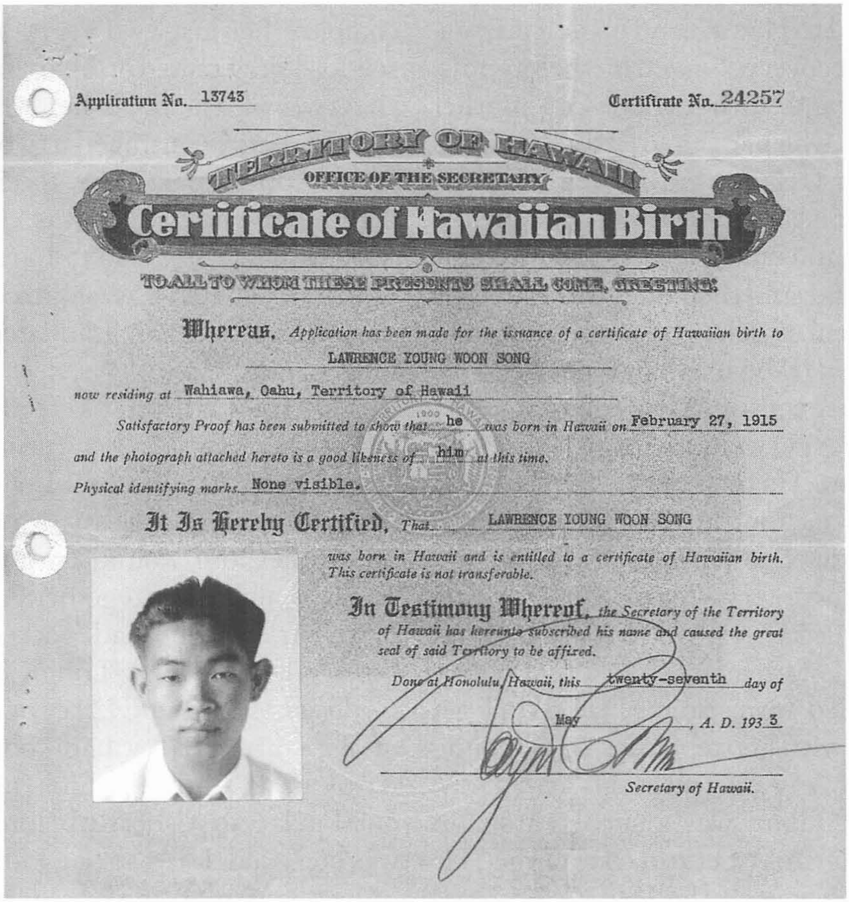
Marian Song lives in Torrance, California. She has three children and eight grandchildren. Marian and Larry were married for forty-seven years until Larry's death in 1990.

Lawrence (Young Woon) Song

Lawrence Song is the husband of Marian Chun. Larry's grandmother, Sarah Paik (Korean name unknown) was in an unhappy marriage to Duk Cho Yue, a gambler in Pusan, Korea. Desiring a fresh start, she took advantage of the brief window open between 1903 and 1905 to take her family and immigrate to Hawai'i. Traveling with her were her mother, her four sons, and her two daughters. Since approximately ninety percent of the more than 7,000 Koreans that arrived during this period were adult males recruited to work on the sugar cane plantations, the Yue family, three generations of women traveling with four young men, would have been a very rare occurrence.[17] It is quite possible that they were allowed to immigrate as a group because most of the family had converted to Christianity in Korea. Sarah's desire for a fresh start

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Lawrence Song, wearing a Korean American identification button (1943)



Application No. 13743

Certificate No. 24257

TERRITORY OF HAWAII

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Certificate of Hawaiian Birth

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

Whereas, *Application has been made for the issuance of a certificate of Hawaiian birth to* LAWRENCE YOUNG WOON SONG

now residing at Wahiawa, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii

Satisfactory Proof has been submitted to show that he *was born in Hawaii on* February 27, 1915 *and the photograph attached hereto is a good likeness of* him *at this time.*

Physical identifying marks None visible.

It Is Hereby Certified, *That* LAWRENCE YOUNG WOON SONG *was born in Hawaii and is entitled to a certificate of Hawaiian birth. This certificate is not transferable.*

In Testimony Whereof, *the Secretary of the Territory of Hawaii has hereunto subscribed his name and caused the great seal of said Territory to be affixed.*

Done at Honolulu, Hawaii, this twenty-seventh *day of* May*, A. D. 193*3

Secretary of Hawaii.

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Lawrence Song's Hawaiian Birth Certificate

didn't work, as her husband followed on the next boat.

Her youngest daughter, Anna Yue, married Ki Whang Song sometime after 1912. He had also immigrated to Hawai'i during the first two-year immigration period and was, by this time, foreman of a Korean work crew on the island of Oahu. There was a fourteen-year difference in their ages. Lawrence Song was born on February 27, 1915. His mother Anna, divorced his father when Larry was very young, and moved to California. His father subsequently remarried. Larry's early years were spent on a sugar cane plantation. He remembered that for most of his childhood he lived with, and was raised primarily by, his grandmother Sarah.

When Larry was 11 years old, his father decided to send him to Korea for schooling. Ki Whang was very unhappy that his son was not getting a traditional Korean education and was determined that Larry would get one. The trip to Korea was very brief; Larry was ill the entire time he was there. As soon as relatives could secure his father's permission, he returned to Hawai'i and made a miraculous recovery. Sometime before 1932, his grandmother died. His mother Anna, who had remarried and was living in Delano, California, returned to the islands for a visit and invited Larry to come live with her, her new husband, and their daughter Ellen. He was sent a ticket by his mother and traveled by boat to San Francisco with his first cousin Mary Yue in 1932.

Larry went to high school in Delano. There were two high schools there: one for the white population on one side of town, and one for the migrant workers—mainly Asians—on the other. Larry lived with his mother and stepfather less than a year before she died from cancer. He didn't get along with his stepfather, so he wound up moving on to the Hahn Shi-dae ranch. Hahn was a success story in the Korean American community. He was a leader in the Korean National Association and a millionaire when he sold all his businesses and returned to Korea in 1945.[18] Larry worked on the ranch for room and board and completed his senior year. After graduation, Larry moved to Los Angeles in 1935 or '36.

In Los Angeles, Larry lived with a Korean family that owned both a boarding house and a fruit and vegetable stand. He, along with several other young Korean American men, lived in the house and worked full time at the produce stand. Larry also attended Los Angeles Community College on a part-time basis. In 1939 his half-sister, Ellen, who essentially had been abandoned in Delano by her father, came to live with Larry and complete her last two years of high school. Larry rented an apartment for the two of them. When the war started, Larry continued to work and attend college part-time, receiving a deferment because he was the sole guardian for his sister. Larry was drafted in August 1942, approximately six weeks after Ellen graduated from high school.

Ellen actually met Marian Chun before Marian met her future husband Larry. Marian and Ellen both dated Korean Americans who knew each other and wound up going on several double dates together. Another family friend who had worked with both Larry and Sung Long Chun introduced Marian and Larry in the fall of 1942, after Larry had completed Army basic training. They married on March 6, 1943, shortly before Larry was deployed. It is a strong indication of just how small the Korean American community was at this time that Larry went to high school in the same agricultural community that Marian and her fellow siblings were born in, and that there would be mutual friends in Los Angeles that knew Larry and Sung Long, and others who knew both Marian and Ellen.

There was one story that Marian heard about after the fact concerning an incident that happened to Larry during the first year of the war, before he was drafted and before they met and married. "Larry's sister Ellen met a Caucasian sailor who was stationed in San Diego. Ellen talked Larry into driving her down to Union Station in Los Angeles to meet the train that the sailor was arriving on.

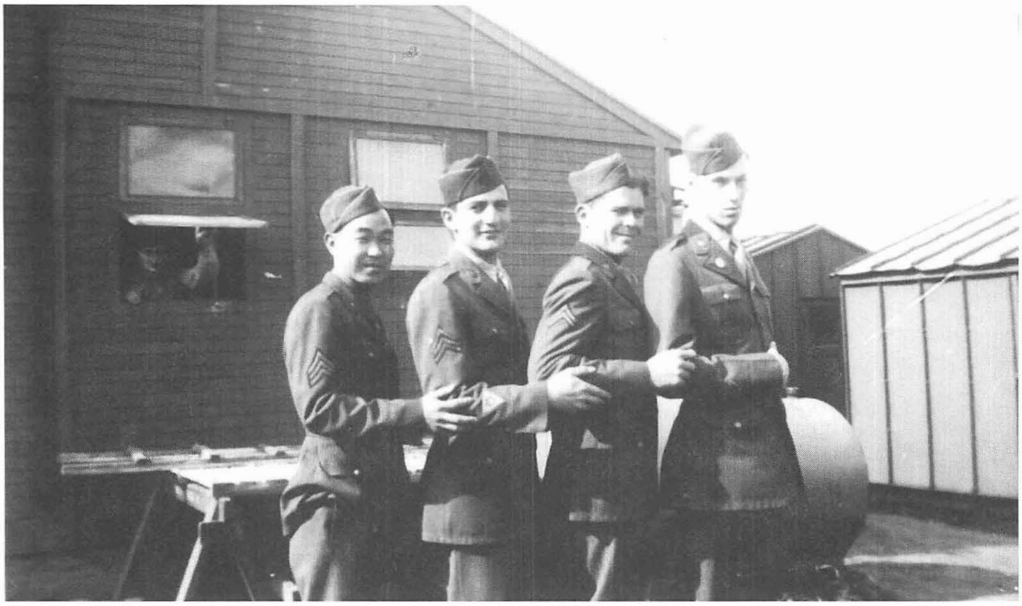
Apparently the authorities didn't care for two Asians meeting a train filled with troops. The FBI took them into custody and held them for several hours while they questioned both Larry and Ellen about who they were and why they were at the train station," she recalled.

Larry was drafted by the Army Air Corps in 1942. He was older than many of the recruits at twenty-seven years old. With his college credits, the government decided to train him as an aircraft mechanic. After completing basic training he was schooled in Santa Monica, California, for a number of months at the Air Corps Technical Training Command. Late in March 1943, Larry was sent to Bangor, Maine. Here he worked on B-24 Liberators, four engine bombers that were used for antisubmarine warfare in the North Atlantic against the German U-boat fleet. The entire command was eventually moved to Newfoundland, where they were stationed for an extended period of time.

The second half of 1943 was a period of intense warfare between the U-boats and the merchant convoys that were sending supplies to the European Theater of Operations. Late in the war, when the U-boats were no longer a credible threat, the entire command was moved again to the Azores to patrol the Eastern Atlantic from North Africa, through the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, and up into Southern Europe.

Larry was the only Asian American in his unit; everyone else was white. He never wrote home about any problems, and he didn't talk to Marian about any negative experiences in the Army. Because he was stationed on or near the East Coast for much of the war, he was able to come home to Los Angeles several times in 1943 and 1944. For much of the war Larry was a sergeant; since he was in an all-white unit, this meant that he was in charge of Caucasian personnel. Marian would remember much later that "Larry made some of his lifelong best friends during that time. After the war, some of his friends from the Air Force would come to visit us in Los Angeles." Not only was he accepted and respected among his peers, but Marian remembered that "Larry's commanding officer begged him to stay in once the war was over, but Larry was tired of being in the Army and he wanted to come home."

Larry was discharged in October 1945, and arrived home to his wife and two month-old son, Lawrence Song, Jr. When he got back, his first job was working at a produce stand on Florence Avenue near the intersection of Vermont Avenue. He and Marian continued to live, work, and raise a family in Southern California until Larry's death in 1990. When he died, his dress uniform from World War II was still in his closet, and a picture of him taken when he was in the service was hanging on the wall of their home.



MARIAN CHUN SONG COLLECTION

Sgt. Lawrence Song and friends in the Air Corps (1944)

Mary (Hay-soon) Chun

Marian's younger sister, Mary, graduated from high school three years after Marian. She also moved to Los Angeles, where Marian was able to secure work for her as a live-in domestic in a Navy chaplain's home. Mary was still working there when World War II started, but the chaplain was destined to be one of the early casualties of the war. She next got a job at a Bullocks department store, and then eventually in a cosmetics factory that had been turned into a munitions plant to supply shell casings. After her father died, she moved in with her sister.

Mary didn't remember any incidents involving overt prejudice at any of her jobs. She did, like Marian, remember feeling very uncomfortable when she was commuting to work or to shop."[19] I felt uneasy around [Caucasian] Americans during the war. I received a lot of dirty looks when I went out. I always wore my identification button, but I always felt like people were staring at me. One time a guy walked up to me and wanted to know why I wasn't in a camp. I told him I was Korean, not Japanese. He said he couldn't tell the difference. I told him I couldn't tell the difference between a Jew and a Gentile, but that I didn't think it was any of my business anyway. He didn't say anything else."

Mary Chun lives in Torrance, California.

David (Ta-byuk) Chun

DAVID CHUN COLLECTION

Sgt. David Chun (China, 1947)

David, the second youngest of the Chun family, was the last to leave the orphanage. Following the trend set by his older siblings, he also left Modesto and moved to Los Angeles. He lived briefly with his father in the one-room apartment at the retirement home, but as the only young person in a building full of old men, he soon decided to move on. Through his sister Marian, he met someone in Southern California who invited him to come to the Willamette Valley in Oregon to work on a farm. After working there for awhile, he moved farther up the valley to Portland. He next worked in a shipyard, and then as a mechanic and machinist in a radiator shop in Vancouver, Washington (directly across the Columbia River from Portland).

While still in civilian life after the war started, David did not remember wearing an identification button like the Koreans in Los Angeles. There was no Korean community in Portland, so he started carrying his birth certificate around with him. "I would get stopped and have to show them my birth certificate and have to convince them that I wasn't Japanese," he recalls.[20]

In January 1943, David was drafted into the Army Air Corps. He was initially processed at Fort Lewis in Washington, and then was sent to St. Petersburg, Florida, for basic training. At that point the Army decided that he should go to automotive school in Normwell, Texas, to take advantage of the skills he was using before he was drafted. From there he went to Jefferson Barracks Placement Center in St. Louis, Missouri. While in St. Louis, he met a young Caucasian girl named Jewel Linton at a skating rink [most likely The Arena]. She worked at a soda fountain in Union Station. This was a rather fortunate meeting because Dave and Jewel later married.

The Army kept Dave moving. From St. Louis he was sent to Oklahoma City, then to Venice, Florida, on to Springfield, Illinois, and back to Oklahoma City, then Walker, Kansas, and finally back to Venice. During this second stay in Florida, Dave and Jewel married in July 1944. They traveled to Sarasota, a nearby community. While there, Dave, dressed in his Army uniform, remembers stopping with Jewel at a roadside fruit and vegetable stand to buy some food. "The guy there refused to wait on me. I had to go back to the car and sit in it before he would agree to sell some things to my wife."

From Venice, Dave was sent back to the West Coast. In San Bernadino, California, he was placed in a motor pool unit staffed by Chinese Americans but commanded by white officers. There was one other Korean American in the unit. They were shipped out from San Pedro Harbor near Los Angeles. Dave still remembers that it took thirty-six days for them to reach Melbourne, Australia, where they disembarked. The Chinese soldiers were always speaking Chinese to each other, so the other Korean American in the unit requested and received a transfer to another unit. Dave remembers that he got along fine with his fellow soldiers, although his wife remembers that every once in a while he would express frustration with "those damned Chinese." The unit was sent on to India, arriving in Bombay before being stationed in Calcutta and New Delhi. From New Delhi, the entire unit was flown "over the hump" into Burma.[21] They spent the next year supporting infantry forces that were moving up through China. Dave left China via Shanghai and returned to Fort Lewis, Washington, after the war ended.

DAVID CHUN COLLECTION

David and Jewel Chun on their honeymoon (1947)

When he was discharged from the Army in 1946, a close friend of his (who is Caucasian) picked him up and together they drove back to Vancouver, Washington. In the three and one-half years he spent in the Army, he could not remember any overt acts of racism or any incidents with Army personnel that still stand out in his mind. Traveling home, however, was another matter. "We [Dave and his friend Joe Spady] stopped at a barber shop before we got home. Even though I was in uniform and with Joe, the barber refused to give me a haircut. I couldn't believe it."

Dave and Jewel have been married for fifty-three years. They have six children, sixteen grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. They have lived in Vancouver, Washington since Dave's discharge in 1946.

Raymond (Chun) Lee

Raymond Lee was the youngest son of Sung Long Chun adopted by a wealthy Chinese couple who had no male heirs. Raymond reentered the Chuns' lives shortly before World War II started.

Raymond was raised by his adopted family, apparently oblivious to the circumstances of his birth and adoption. When he was a teenager, an event happened at a large gathering of his extended Chinese family that revealed his background. Someone who apparently didn't like or resented Raymond blurted out that he wasn't really part of the family and he wasn't even Chinese. Soon Raymond was looking for his original family. The first person he found was Sung Long Chun, who by that time had been in the truck accident and was living in the converted hotel in downtown Los Angeles. He would visit with Sung Long, Marian, and Mary fairly frequently on Sundays for the next two years, making the trip down from San Francisco, where he lived.

MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Raymond Lee (1939~40)

Raymond was drafted into the Army and was sent to Fort Benning to became a paratrooper. Marian did not know the particulars about what unit he served in or who he served with, but she believes he was sent to the European Theater of Operations. After the war, Raymond decided to stay in and make the Army a career. He was sent to Japan as part of the occupation force and was stationed there for most of the time between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Korean War. While in Japan, he met and married a Japanese woman and they had a child.

Marian received a letter from Raymond shortly before the Korean War started. "He told me he didn't understand why the three older kids were kept together and he was given up for adoption. He said he felt rejected by his family and that we would not be hearing from him anymore. This was extremely difficult for me. I still have that letter." Marian later heard from Korean friends who were in the same battalion as Raymond as to what happened to him during the Korean War. "They said that the plane he was riding in to a parachute drop was shot down and that everyone on board was killed. I tried to get more information from the Army about what happened to him and what his wife's name and address were, but because we weren't listed on the forms he had filled out, they wouldn't release any information to me."

Raymond Lee was buried in Korea, the home of his ancestors. He left behind a young Japanese widow, their child, three siblings, and his adopted Chinese family.

Mary (Ai Kyung Yue) Kim

Mary Yue was also a granddaughter of Sarah Paik and Duk Cho Yue, and cousin to Lawrence Song. Her father, Moon Chan Yue, was Sarah's oldest son and was probably already in his early thirties when the family arrived in Hawai'i. After a brief stay on Maui, the entire family moved to Oahu. Moon Chan had worked for Christian missionaries in Korea, and soon after he arrived in Hawai'i, he started a Korean language school for the children of the immigrant Korean workers.

Mary's mother was a picture bride who came to Hawai'i in 1913. Mary remembers, "My mother's father was a mayor of Pusan in Korea. They were landowners and were very well educated. They had many servants."[22] Mary remembers that her mother "was a very independent woman" who sought to leave Korea rather than cope with the very limited opportunities that Korean society allowed women. "When my mother, Chung Hae Sun, immigrated to Hawai'i as a picture bride, that was the only way for her to come. She thought that she would arrive in Hawai'i and work until she saved enough money to repay my father for her passage fare . . . but things didn't work out that way." It had been decided by the Yue family that Hae Sun was quite a catch and would add prestige to the family, so they forced her to marry Moon Chan.

Mary was born in 1915. When she was two years old, her father decided that they would go back to Korea. While there, "My mother encouraged him to find a new wife." Moon Chan did divorce his first wife, but in the process he abducted Mary and returned with her to Hawai'i. At this time, the family ran the kitchen at a pineapple plantation, feeding fifty Korean and Filipino bachelors three meals a day. The life was extremely hard; she helped to prepare both breakfast and lunch (packed for the workers to take to the fields) before going to school, and then worked again after school to prepare dinner. Summers were spent packing pineapples into boxes.

Regarding fellow immigrants,

Mary remembers, "At the time, Koreans really disliked the Japanese because Japan annexed Korea in 1910. The older generation really hated them." There were meetings and relief work carried out by the Korean community on the island, but, "It was mostly the first-generation that was involved."

When Mary's father died in 1926, she moved in with her uncle, Chin Kan Yue, near the Schofield Army Barracks. His family ran a laundry and drycleaning business for the officers and men stationed there. In 1932, she traveled with her cousin Larry Song as far as Delano, California, and then continued on to Pittsburgh alone to join her mother, who had returned from Korea and had settled there to run a Chinese food catering business. They learned that her brother, Inchan Chung, one of the leaders of the March First Movement of 1919, "died in Korea after a long imprisonment by the Japanese secret police."

Mary and her mother returned to Korea. "I had the most miserable eight months. . . . We lived with relatives. They had fallen on hard times, very hard times. I just couldn't live on rice three meals a day. I couldn't speak Korean very well and all the schools were taught in Japanese. And so time was just wasting away for me."

Mary's mother sent her back to Hawai'i to live with the Yue family and Mary attended Leileihua High School in Wahiawa. "My classmates included Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, a few Filipinos, and a lot of white students from military families from the nearby Schofield Army Barracks. It was really good exposure, instead of just mingling amongst ourselves (Koreans). Everyone seemed to get along fairly well, and there wasn't any hostility between any of the ethnic groups." She remembered that the Japanese students "went to their own Japanese language schools after public school, and they had their own religious practices, mostly at their Buddhist temples. They had their own activities and culture, so we never really interacted with them. Some of the Japanese students spoke Japanese amongst themselves. We felt that it was very inappropriate."

Mary lived with her uncle David and his family until she finished high school, and then moved back with Chin Kan Yue and his family. There were two Korean churches there: "The Korean Christian Church; and the denomination I belonged to, the Korean Methodist Church. The two churches were called the 'up church' and the 'down church.' We attended the 'down church' because we were located in the lower part of the town. The Korean Methodist Church was our main social activity. Outside of that I had no other social life."[23] The Koreans from the church were allowed on the Schofield base Sunday nights to go to the movie theater. "We couldn't sit anywhere we wanted—we had to sit in the back. But it was a treat just to see a good movie."

Mary also remembered a very dedicated and active Korean American student leader at her school, named Donald Kang: "He wanted the Korean students to unify and get together. So he started the Korean Students' Alliance [KSA] for all the different high schools. It was very popular at the time. It was a way for the Korean students to get together and socialize. We would all meet at Leileihua High School. I still have a picture of us, all the members of the KSA together."

Mary met another young Korean American, Joe Kim, through a cousin and started dating him. Joe worked in the lumber department of Theo H. Davies, a store that carried everything from building materials to clothing and food items. According to Mary, "Every weekend, Joe would drive out and we would go to a movie, for a drive, or out to dinner with several other couples in downtown Honolulu. I was really excited by his attention, and within six months from the time that we met, we got married in June, 1940. It was a quick courtship. My life totally changed. I felt so free. I felt like it was a new life for me."

On the night of December 6, 1941, Joe and Mary, along with many of their friends and relatives, attended the annual Shriner's football game in Honolulu Stadium. "We knew that there were strained relations with Japan. Somebody actually made a remark about the Japanese dropping a bomb in the middle of the stadium." After the game, they stayed up late with her cousin and his wife, and so were sleeping late on Sunday morning. Around eight o'clock, "Joe's eldest sister called. Crying over the phone, she told us we were being attacked. We immediately turned on the radio and they said to stay at home and not to leave the house. Many people [in the neighborhood] climbed onto the roofs of their homes to get a better view of the planes that were bombing and shooting."

Mary was two months pregnant when the war started, and life changed greatly during the war. "As the war progressed, many food items were scarce and, in fact, you often had to have connections [to get certain items]. The first year of the war, our social life was limited by the blackout order. If I had to get up in the middle of the night to nurse Wayne (their firstborn), the block warden would knock on the door and say, 'Turn out the lights!' Everyone was so afraid that the Japanese would return. They had an opportunity to return and destroy everything. In fact, it was their greatest mistake [that they didn't]."

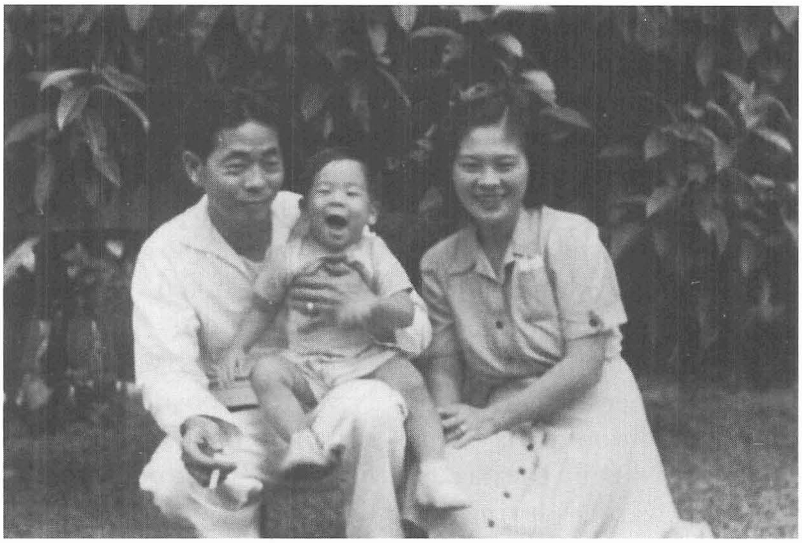
However, the war also provided opportunities for her family: "All my younger cousins who lived in Wahiawa were able to get good paying civil service jobs with the federal government. Everybody was working; they were all doing well. But since we were at war with Japan, all of the local Japanese couldn't work for the US government even though the population of Japanese was really the highest on the islands. So, the other ethnic races had the advantage and got the jobs with the military and the government, working at Pearl Harbor and other military bases. A lot of laborers from the plantations quit their jobs and found better jobs working for the defense industry."

The treatment of Japanese Americans became a concern for many in the Korean community in Hawai'i. "During the war, the ethnic Koreans in Hawai'i sympathized with the Japanese who were interned on the mainland. After all, we were Asians ourselves. We felt that if the government could round up the Japanese, what about the Germans and Italians—especially the Germans? We often talked about how unfair the government was to [mainland] Japanese Americans who lost all their property and possessions. It was a shame; the Japanese in Hawai'i were very fortunate to have been spared the same fate." She recalled that the first-generation Koreans changed their attitude as the war continued: "Our parents, the first generation, had very deep animosity towards the Japanese. But, as time went by, even the older generation of Koreans were friendly with the Japanese."

Joe joined the Navy and was sent overseas during the last year of the war. Mary was at home with a two year-old and a newborn infant. "Fortunately, one of our neighbors, a retired, black Navy man and his Portuguese wife, were very sympathetic to my situation. Their daughter would baby-sit once a week while I would go with them to the Navy commissary at Pearl Harbor. That is how I was able to get scarce food items, especially meat."

The day the war ended, Mary was in downtown Honolulu. "The bus [I was on with my children] was stuck on King Street with thousands of people spilling out into the streets. I stayed on the bus for several hours before we were able to proceed. We all cried for joy."

Joe and Mary continued to live in Hawai'i, and raised four children there. When he died in 1984, Mary moved to California to be near her children and grandchildren, where she still lives today.



JOE AND MARY KIM COLLECTION

Joe and Mary Kim with their first son, Wayne (1943)

Joe (Soo Bok Han) Kim

Joe Kim (husband of Mary Kim) was also a second-generation Korean American. His father and mother married in Korea before they immigrated to Hawai'i in 1903 as part of the first boatload of Koreans to work on the sugar cane plantations. His parents, Chee Won Kim and Elizabeth Kim (Korean name unknown), arrived with one daughter and later raised an additional three daughters, as well as four sons. Joe was born on August 8, 1910. Until the war broke out, the family eked out a meager existence as rice and taro farmers. Joe went to high school on Oahu, and, after he graduated, worked in the lumber yard at Theo H. Davies, a general merchandise company.

When the war broke out, all the lumber yards on the island were taken over by a private subcontractor, called the Byrnes Organization, which worked for the federal government in close cooperation with both the Army Corps of Engineers and the Seabees, who were the construction specialists for the Navy. Mary remembers that her husband was eventually "offered a rank of First Class Petty Officer and guaranteed that he would never have to go overseas if he volunteered to join. It sounded like a good deal, so rather than waiting for the draft, he enlisted in September of 1943." Prior to that time, in addition to his duties at the lumber yard during the day, he acted as a block warden during the night, enforcing the blackout in his neighborhood several times a week.

Initially, Joe was stationed at Pearl Harbor and was able to come home every night. However, when Mary was in the hospital in November 1944, after having just given birth to their second child, Joe was notified that he was being shipped out with a detachment of Marines. "At first they didn't tell them where they were going. It was a very long trip for them because they had to zigzag [to avoid enemy submarines]. They finally landed on Guam, a very barren island. The Seabees went in with the Marines to supply things and construct everything before the other branches arrived. They were under fire by the Japanese, so often they dug foxholes and stayed there for days. In fact, the first group of Seabees were almost completely wiped out by Japanese attacks. Joe was part of the second group that went in."

Joe was a chief petty officer by the time of the Guam invasion. Although he was the only Korean in his unit, there were Chinese, Hawaiians, and Filipinos in addition to Caucasians. Mary does not remember Joe relating any racial problems or incidents that happened while he was in the service. "The group was very close and they worked very well together," she remembers.

Joe was discharged from the Navy in October, 1945. He died in 1982 and is survived by his wife and their four children and seven grandchildren.

Cheeda Yue

Cheeda Yue's father was Chin Kan Yue (a son of Sarah Paik and Duk Cho Yue), the uncle of Mary Kim who ran the laundry business. Cheeda's mother was also a picture bride. Cheeda is a cousin of both Larry Song and Mary Kim.

Before the war started, Cheeda dropped out of high school and worked as a civilian machinist in the Naval Shipyard at Pearl Harbor. He was 16 years old and was still living at home with his seven brothers and sisters, and December 7, 1941, was his seventeenth birthday. His mother had a big party planned for that evening, but, as Cheeda remembers, "The big party never happened, and because the blackouts started that night, nobody had any parties for the next few years."[24] Cheeda heard on the radio, "They wanted everyone to report for work at the shipyards, but I didn't go until the next day. We didn't know if [the Japanese] were going to attack again. Security was very strict the next morning. It took over a hour just to get through the gates and into the shipyard. Even before the bombing, Japanese were not allowed in there." He also remembered when he finally got inside: "There was still smoke rising all over. There were wrecked ships everywhere. It was hard to look at. The number one dry-dock had been raised with three ships, and the Japanese had bombed the dry-dock too. No workers from the yard were killed because it was Sunday. Only the sailors were there [during the Japanese attack]."

Cheeda continued as a civilian machinist at the shipyard until he was drafted by the Army in February 1944. He traveled to Camp Woods in Texas for infantry training and spent six months there. He was the only Asian in a Caucasian combat unit, but didn't remember any problems on or off the base. From there, they were sent to the West Coast and then by troop ship to the Philippines. "By the time we got there, the combat [in the Philippines] was over. We were sent there to start preparing for the invasion of Japan. Our division was scheduled to be one of the first in, and they were talking about the casualty rate being as high as ninety percent. We were nervous about that. I was really happy when they dropped the [atomic] bombs [on Hiroshima and Nagasaki]."

It was in the Philippines that Cheeda encountered his only problems with prejudice. "The Filipinos thought I was Japanese; they thought all Asians were Japanese. They hated my guts," Cheeda recalled. He became so apprehensive there that he started carrying around extra ammunition when he was on guard duty. He remembered, "You were supposed to be given fifteen rounds of ammo but I asked for seventy-five. One of the guys in my unit decided he was going to scare me one night. When he tried to sneak up, I told him to freeze or I was going to blast him. The next day he went to the commanding officer of my group and said, 'Hey, don't put that guy on guard duty anymore. This kid is too nervous, and he's going to kill someone.' That's how I got out of pulling any more guard duty."

In September 1945, Cheeda was sent to Korea as part of the first troops of the US Occupation Force. While in Korea, he reenlisted. "Some of the other Koreans I knew in the Army got an early-out to go to college, but they had to sign up for the reserves. They all wound up getting called up for the Korean War, although the ones I knew got commissions as officers when they were called up," he said. He did not know how to speak Korean very well and could not read it at all: "The Army sent me to school for six months in Korea to learn how to read and write. I was assigned a Korean interpreter who went everywhere, I mean *everywhere*, with me for those six months. At the end of that time I was able to get by pretty well."

Regarding his duties, Cheeda explained, "I was part of a small detachment that was in charge of relief supplies. Everyone was white except for me. I was the highest ranking noncom [noncommissioned officer—at this time he was a sergeant] and could get anything I wanted. Since I could speak the language, everyone was always coming to me for something." Cheeda spent more than two years there: "I turned down two field commissions to become an officer before I came home. By the time they were offered, all I wanted was to go home."

Cheeda returned to Hawai'i, thinking he would be able to return to the shipyard at Pearl Harbor, but could not. He then moved to Southern California and got a job as a machinist. There, he met his future wife, Helen Kim, and they have lived in Southern California ever since.

Helen Kim Yue

Helen (wife of Cheeda Yue) was born in Wyoming in 1924. Her father, Byung Kook Kim, was a coal miner who had immigrated from China. "He was a ginseng salesman who had taken his goods from Korea to China. When he got there, he discovered all his supplies had rotted, and rather than go home he went to America."[25] Byung Kook arranged for a picture bride, Sung Sil Yang, and together they had eight children. Helen, the first, was followed by another sister born in Utah. While mining, their father "had all the fingers on one hand smashed so that he couldn't work in the mines anymore, so he found work in a restaurant. I guess that's where our restaurant background comes from," she recalled.

The family moved to Montana to take up farming, where the last six children were born (first, one boy and three more girls). The last girl, "was adopted by another Korean couple that couldn't have any children and begged my mom and dad to let them raise her." Twin boys afterwards rounded out the family. When Helen was eight, her first brother became ill: "He went into the hospital, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong. He just got worse and worse. My father would constantly stay by his bed at the hospital. He had a very slow death, and my father was destroyed. He started drinking and became an alcoholic. I couldn't stand his driving because he was drinking all the time, so I learned to drive when I was nine."

As the oldest child, she soon assumed other responsibilities. For example, "I remember when my dad was called in by the Internal Revenue Service for some problem. I still smile when I think about this old man showing up with all his records written in Korean and a nine-year-old bookkeeper [Helen]. They looked at us and everything we brought and just dismissed the case."

Helen remembered having a very hard existence in Montana: "On our first farm, we were flooded one year, attacked by grasshoppers the next year, and had our crops destroyed by hail the third year. We moved to another farm where the people said they had never been flooded, and so naturally the very first year we were flooded out. The last farm was on high ground finally. The people that owned the land were Italian, and they were the nicest people in the world. They showed us how to do things, helped us work the farm, and were always bringing over milk and spaghetti." There were some other Korean families whom the Kims knew in Montana: "There were about sixteen or seventeen families there. Only one lived near us [a rural area sixty miles from the capital]. Most of the rest lived near Butte. In the winter time, when there wasn't much to do, one family would host a get-together and all the other Korean families would come. We were crazy. We would sleep out under a flatbed truck or spend all night cooking *mandoo*. The next week we would all go to someone else's house and do the same thing."

Helen did not remember encountering any racism in Montana. "All the local people were friendly to us. We all went to school together and there were never any problems," she recalled. When the war started, however, they lost all the hired help: "All the boys who worked on the farm left, so then I had to learn how to drive the tractor. The work became very hard. I can remember my mom and I loading fifty-pound sacks on the back of the truck to drive to market. Driving was very dangerous all winter. The roads were slippery and weren't straight. I hated every time I had to drive into Butte in the winter. It was a nightmare."

She graduated from high school in 1943, and "As soon as I graduated, I told my mom that I was going to go to California. I had been invited to stay with a friend whose parents had a nectarine farm and were very well off." While there, she looked for a way to make her family's life easier. "I saw an old, broken-down restaurant in Inglewood. I borrowed $5,000 from my friend's family and went home to get my family. It was kind of funny that we left Montana after our first good year of farming. We had earned enough money that year to buy two new trucks and a car. We loaded everything we could in one truck and the car and sold everything else."

This trip was the first time she remembered encountering overt prejudice: "We stopped to buy some things at a store in Idaho and they wouldn't let us buy anything. We had to drive two full days and nights to get to California because everywhere we stopped to try to find a motel room, the people would call us 'Japs' and refuse to let us stay." It didn't end when they reached Southern California, either. "Inglewood was lily-white then. We were the only Asian family around and no one would rent us a house. We finally bought a one-bedroom house with no running water that all nine of us stayed in. It was the worst house around there," she recalled.

The family cleaned up the restaurant and opened it serving both American and Chinese food. According to Helen, they were very quick learners in the public relations department: "We got to know the mayor, the city workers, and the police department. They always got complimentary food from us; that was our insurance. They also helped to pass the word telling everyone that the food was good. We had the only good restaurant around, so they didn't have much of a choice. The clients were almost all white. It was funny that one thing we got very famous for was my mom's pancakes. She made the best in the world, and everyone that had them once would come again and again."

She had very strong memories of her parents' feelings toward the Japanese. "My mom and dad used to tell us how cruel the Japanese were. They would talk about how the Japanese would put hot needles under peoples' fingernails to torture them. They talked about how the Japanese wouldn't let them speak Korean. We didn't know any Japanese [before the war] and because they were in the camps, there weren't any around anyway. So I got to hate the Japanese because of the way my parents talked all the time. Even later, after the war, I would make negative comments about the Japanese because I didn't know any better. I had a cousin who married a Japanese girl and she would kick me under the table because I would say terrible things right in front of her. My own brother came home from being in the Navy, and he had met this girl in Japan that he promised to marry. We were all so prejudiced that he didn't go through with it. I think we ruined his life. He never married and I think he always felt bad about leaving her," she recalled.

Away from the restaurant, however, she faced the same prejudice herself: "I would feel people staring at me all the time. Sometimes they would call me a 'Jap.' Then I would say, 'You must be a Nazi.' Nobody wanted to believe that we weren't Japanese. It was all very hateful. We kept trying to buy a better house, but for a long time we couldn't."

Five years after the war ended, Helen met Cheeda Yue. They married, raised four children, and have owned a number of restaurants together. They still live in Southern California.

Inchoon Yue

A younger brother of Cheeda Yue, Inchoon was fifteen when the war started, and was living at home and going to high school. Things changed quickly after Pearl Harbor: "I quit school and went to work in a plumbing gang at Schofield Barracks. After a while I hated the work so much I went back to school."[26] In 1943, still too young to be drafted, he enrolled in an apprenticeship program for aircraft mechanics that the Navy had for civilian workers. "This was a rush project because they didn't have enough workers. We went to school eight hours a day, six days a week. After school was over, I worked at Ford Island Naval Air Station at Pearl Harbor. We started out as Apprentice 3rd class, 2nd class, and 1st class, then Helper 3rd class, 2nd class, and 1st class, and finally Mechanic 3rd class, 2nd class, and 1st class," he recalled.

After working there until early in 1945, Inchoon decided to quit, but the US government had other plans. "I was young and didn't know what I was doing. While I was working at Ford Island, I was exempted from service, but the minute I was unemployed they drafted me." By the time he was inducted, things were more relaxed in Hawai'i: "It was supposed to be a big military secret when all the Island boys were leaving Schofield Barracks to travel to the mainland for disbursement and basic training. But as soon as we went through the gates, people of all nationalities were alongside the road waving good-bye and cheering. I think the whole island knew when we were leaving."

Inchoon had been drafted by the Army and, because of his experience as an aircraft mechanic, he was assigned to basic training at the Army Air Corps base at Shepherds Field in Wichita Falls. There the Air Corps decided that, because he was small enough to fit in the tail of a B-29 bomber, they would shift him from mechanics school to gunnery school in Denver and make him a tail-gunner. The bomber group he was assigned to was then being formed and training in Texas. "They had just finished assembling the group when the war ended. We were ready to go and suddenly they didn't need us. They dispersed us, and since they didn't need tail-gunners any more, I was sent to Wright-Patterson Air Field and trained to become a flight engineer."

After the war ended, Inchoon stayed in the Air Corps, which became the Air Force before the Korean War. According to Inchoon, in December 1945, he was scheduled to go to Alaska for high-altitude, cold-weather flight testing: "I was pulled out of duty and had to go talk to some intelligence people. They were looking for people that could speak Korean to train in language school. The white officer that interviewed me spoke perfect Korean. His parents were missionaries and he had been raised in Korea. I flunked the test, which I was happy about since even as a kid I always looked forward to a chance to fly."

Of Inchoon's twenty-six years in service, twenty-two were spent flying in virtually every part of the world. He saw action in Korea as a flight engineer on a transport plane, was stationed in Europe for an extended period, and flew during the Berlin Airlift in 1961. He also served in Vietnam as part of the Psychological Warfare Department, dropping leaflets during the day and flares at night to assist the troops. He retired with sixteen air medals, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and a Bronze Star. Inchoon recalls, "In my twenty-six-year career, I never got the chance to serve with another Korean American. I was the only one wherever I went. I never experienced any racial prejudice while I was serving. During the war, the people in Wichita Falls and Denver were great. The reception I got in Texas wasn't very good, but they resented all the servicemen because of how many were stationed there. Even the whites weren't treated well. It didn't make a difference."

Inchoon married a Japanese American woman, Millie, after World War II. They are still married and have raised six children.

Notes:

There is very little material documenting Korean American experiences during World War II. Through the gracious efforts of my wife and her extended family, I was able to collect the material presented here.

I would like to thank all the interview subjects for taking the time to share their memories and feelings. I would like to thank Eric Gillespie for providing a copy of the excellent oral history paper he produced regarding his grandmother's life. I would also like to thank Dr. Robert Hyung-chan Kim of Western Washington University for his encouragement, assistance, and gentle prodding; my wife for being an uncredited coconspirator; and Matthew Benuska of the Korean American Historical Society for both his assistance and patience.

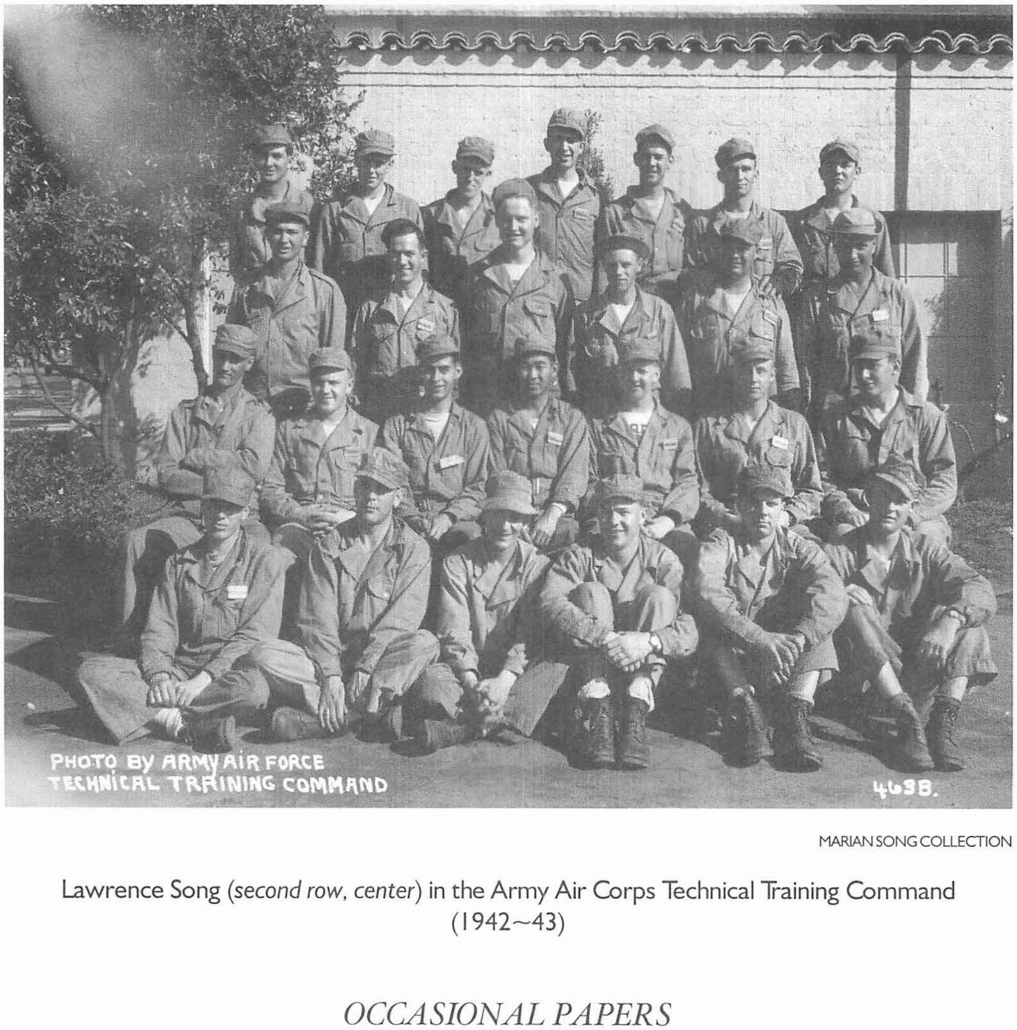
I welcome contact by Korean Americans who immigrated prior to the war, or family members familiar with a relative's experience. I am particularly interested in Korean Americans who served in the Armed Forces. I can be reached via mail at PO Box 772, Oak Harbor, WA 98277, and via email at *lktread@whidbey.net.*

Regarding Korean (and other Asian) names: Normally, the family surname is first, followed by the given name (e.g.: "last name, first name"), so that in its proper form, "Sung Long Chun" reads "Chun Sung Long." However, when transliterated into English, the western convention of placing the surname last has been used, but without regularity (such as "Kim Dae Jung" instead of "Dae Jung Kim"), tending to confuse readers unfamiliar with Asian names. For consistency, Korean names in this journal will be transliterated using the western convention of "first name, last name"—*Ed.*

1. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 270.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 271.
4. Ibid., p. 401–403.
5. Ibid., p. 361.
6. From the Declaration of Intention filed by Sung Long Chun (February 21, 1940).
7. Takaki, p. 132. Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: immigration to Hawaii 1896–1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), p. 98.
8. Patterson, p. 173.
9. Edward Taehan Chang and Janet Chunghee Kim, *Following the Footsteps of Korean Americans* (Cerritos: The Pacific Institute for Peacemaking, 1995), p. 61, 274.
10. Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America*, (Illinois: Nelson-Hall, 1979), pp. 87–88.
11. Ibid., pp. 101–103.
12. Marian Song was interviewed on six occasions between February 1996 and July 1997 regarding her father's, her husband's, and her own experiences.
13. According to Choy (p. 256), the Korean Presbyterian Church (founded on May 10,1906) was the first [officially recognized] Korean Presbyterian Church established in US territory, and was originally located in a rented house on Bunker Hill Street in LA. See also Kim, Hyung-chan, ed. *The Korean Diaspora* (California: ABC–Clio, 1977), p. 53.
14. According to Choy (p. 173), the Korean American identification badges were the brainchild of the United Korean Committee (UKC), a body that the KNA (Korean National Association) helped found. Although Marian remembered getting the buttons from the KNA office, Choy is most likely correct as to their origin, since it was the UKC that took the lead in fighting for recognition of Koreans as allies and not enemy aliens. The badges were the UKC's response to the concerns of Koreans facing "the hysterical anti-Japanese public" (ibid.). See *Their Footsteps,* p. 208 (Committee on the 90th Anniversary Celebration of Korean Immigration to Hawaii. Samuel S.O. Lee, ed. (Seoul: Ye Sun Co, 1993)) for photographs.
15. Choy, pp. 170–176.
16. Ibid., p. 109.
17. The first group to immigrate in 1903 consisted of 56 men, 21 women (listed as wives), and 25 dependent children. As such, this group was not typical of the predominantly adult male immigrants that would follow (Patterson, pp. 49–50, 105).
18. Also known as the Hanka Enterprise Company (Choy, pp. 130–131)—*Ed.*
19. Mary Chun was interviewed in March 1997.
20. David Chun was interviewed in March and April 1997. He died January 1998, after this

article was written.

21. This was a slang term used during the war to describe flying over the Himalayan mountains.
22. Most of the material on Mary Yue Kim and much of the information on Joe Kim was provided by her grandson, Eric C. Gillespie, who recorded her life story in a series of interviews between 1993 and 1997 (*Re-claiming, Re-visioning, and Re-presenting History: An Oral History of My Maternal Grandmother, a Second Generation Korean American Woman in Hawai'i*. Senior undergraduate thesis submitted to the American Studies department, University of California at Santa Cruz, June, *1997*).
23. Wahiawa Korean Methodist Church was renamed Olive United Methodist Church in 1931 (Committee on the 90th Anniversary Celebration of Korean Immigration to Hawaii, pp. 130–131)—*Ed.*
24. Cheeda Yue was interviewed in May 1997.
25. Helen Yue was interviewed in May and July 1997.
26. Inchoon Yue was interviewed in May and July 1997.



MARIAN SONG COLLECTION

Lawrence Song (*second row, center*) in the Army Air Corps Technical Training Command (1942~43)

KOREANS IN GERMANY

The Story of Kwang-Chung Kim

Hae-soon Kim

translated by Sonia Kim and Sue Sohng

Introduction

In 1962, the governments of South Korea and West Germany entered into an agreement enabling Koreans to emigrate to Germany as miners. For the next twenty-five years, a total of 7,936 Koreans arrived. This labor agreement met the needs of the two nations in a couple of ways: Korea wanted to take the pressure off its labor market, which was struggling with a high rate of unemployment (it was also a means of getting much-needed foreign currency for Korea's industrialization); for Germany, Korean miners were a source of cheap labor.

Mining contracts were normally good for three years. Upon completion, many miners married Korean nurses, who had come to Germany through a separate labor agreement. Due to the lack of job opportunities in Korea, and for the education needs of their children, many couples decided to remain. Although there is no immigration law that allows Koreans to stay as legal residents, they are nevertheless immigrants. Regardless of their citizenship status, Korean miners and nurses are there to stay.

Kwang-Chung Kim was born on July 5, 1944, the first son of eight children of Chung-Keun Kim and Kil-Soon Yu in *Yeongam*, *Cholla Namdo* (South Cholla) province in Korea. He spent his early childhood in *Yeongam,* and graduated from high school in *Kwangju*. In 1967 while he was a sophomore at Chosun University in *Kwangju*, he was drafted into the army. When he was discharged, he joined a farmer's cooperative to support his brothers' education. In 1974, he married Ock-Hee Oh (born October 12, 1952) and three months afterwards, she moved to West Germany to work as a nurse. Two years later, he followed. In 1977, their son Jin-Woo was born.

Kwang-Chung wanted to leave West Germany because of the infernal working conditions and the grievous discrimination he experienced. But at his wife's request and because of her caring support, he quit mining in 1979. He worked at an aluminum com-

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pany in Gelsendrichen, but soon tired of the monotony. Seeking sudden wealth, he sold his house in Kwangju and obtained loans to open a restaurant in Herne (a small town East of Essen). When the Korean cook quit, his wife took over the cooking and ran the restaurant until she delivered their daughter Jin-Ah. Six months after it opened, the restaurant closed.

Because of the financial loss resulting from his inexperience, and his deep disappointment with the local Koreans (who had led him to open the restaurant), Kwang-Chung became bitter and lost confidence in his ability to support his family. He moved to Essen, and became ill and bedridden. He found solace in a minister who visited him at his home, but his conversion to Christianity was short-lived, and he continued to despair. He then obtained a taxi driver's license and was able to make a satisfactory living in Berlin until he had an accident and lost his license.

Out of suffering in the dark world of the immigrant's life in a foreign country where he could not communicate and suffered emotionally, Kwang–Chung returned to Korea in 1994. With a renewed feeling of freedom, he sought new opportunities, but could not fill the gap of twenty years' absence—not only because he had difficulty readjusting, but also because his children could not speak Korean. They returned to Germany in 1996.

After deciding to be faithful to his family and to lead a quiet life, Kwang-Chung Kim learned to newly appreciate his family and value homemaking, thereby giving his life new meaning. Here is his story.

My Family and Relationship with My Parents

I was born the first son of eight children to a farmer (my parents had five sons and three daughters). Our family belonged to the wealthy class, and we had two live-in adult laborers and one farmhand boy. My parents, however, had to struggle constantly to support us and costs of our education as our income depended primarily upon our farm crops. Our bone-breaking labor only managed to provide us with the bare necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter. There is no advancement in the life of a farmer. My parents sent us to the cities to study rather than keeping us in the fields, where there was no hope for a promising career.

As soon as our long-awaited school vacation came, I would return home, where my parents' love was waiting for us. No sooner had I called "*Ohmma*" [Mommy] from outside the brushwood door, and my parents, in their stocking feet, would dash out to embrace me. Then, the corners of my eyes would get wet as dewy teardrops welled up from my suppressed longing. When my parents touched my body, I felt an acute nerve-pinching pain. The knuckles of their fingers were thick and gnarled, their hands were wrinkled with large cuts and bulging veins, and their palms and the soles of their feet bore the bruises of their hard labor.

I now wonder whether my parents lived beyond their means, overstraining their resources by pouring their devotion and efforts into the education of their children. Wouldn't you agree that in our society, being able to send your children away to school is a source of happiness and a reward, something to be proud of and to boast about? My parents were not any different in that they willingly sacrificed their lives for our education, regardless of our intellectual abilities. They did not eat what they wanted to eat; they only ate barley boiled in water along with green peppers dipped in soybean sauce. They chose to live a humble life of austerity by managing to stay away from fine clothes and other material desires in order to save money and to limit their spending and waste.

When we say "mother," the word seems to conjure up a mysterious and boundless love. In my mother's loving home we quickly grew up, sometimes laughing and crying. My two younger sisters had to stop their education as they were victims of a society that viewed women as inferior to men. I was able to continue my studies until I was drafted into the army, and then worked for a farmers' cooperative to support my younger brother's education.[1]

Why I Emigrated

I had complex reasons for coming to West Germany. If I were to organize them and write a book, it would read like a novel about an ill-fated man. Now the stories remain as dimming memories, but I will go back in time and reflect. Each thought leads to another; my memories are linked together like a chain.

It was a time of extreme poverty in Korea when I left for West Germany in 1976. We were so poor, I prayed constantly for money. I wouldn't have cared if I were crushed to pieces by a huge amount of money falling on top of me, stifling me with its weight. I wouldn't have minded the pain. Poverty was the enemy, a repulsive creature crawling through our flesh and burrowing deep within our bones. Everyone wanted to go abroad to make money, and there were long lines of people around the country waiting to leave; those who departed for foreign countries were envied by those with no power or money to leave. The situation can be compared to the many Korean families in China, who are mentioned in the newspapers these days, selling off their household furniture and family land holdings to come to Korea to make money quickly. With the hope of realizing their dreams, these people spent many sleepless nights. My own motives for coming to West Germany emerged from similar economic circumstances.

In the beginning, I didn't have much interest in going abroad as my life had been sheltered by the farmers' co-op. However, I began to have frequent conflicts with my superiors due to their exploitation of the powerless workers and their illegal discrimination against the uneducated. On behalf of those weak farmers who had no power, I naively attempted to fight for justice. Nevertheless, I felt alone and empty-handed at the end of the fight.

During the Korean War, the upheaval of June 25, those farmers who had lost educational opportunities and those who could not even write their own names had no other choice but to beg for help. Those farmers were not only poor but so docile and ignorant that they could not breathe freely as they were derided and trampled under foot. The world existed only for the strongest to dominate. The farmers, through no fault of their own, were forced to bury their sorrow at injustice in the rice paddies and the grain fields.

Farmers Victimized

I initially thought the farmers were to blame for expecting that the leaders and the heads of the village would serve them if they made frequent visits and fawned with ingratiating smiles at the public servants in the government offices. I did not believe that their flattery and sycophancy would help them accomplish their goal in obtaining aid.

The public servants who received their salaries from the people's blood tax were responsible for facilitating farm loans and providing services without unnecessary delays as long as they did not find any mistakes in the paperwork or business operations. Nevertheless, they purposely delayed their work, dispensed special favors by spending public funds, and sometimes asked the farmers to buy meals in restaurants or to provide pocket money, made flashy jokes, giggled with the waitresses at the tea house, and consequently encouraged the feeble farmers to speculate about the outcome for mistreatment.

The lowly bureaucrats acted like faithful dogs, maintaining close contact while displaying oily and sticky smiles to their superiors during the sumptuous feasts. When they would make such flattering remarks like asking whether or not they looked good, I would feel nausea well up in my throat, and my body would tremble with the suppressed anger of wanting to beat them up with my fists. Malfeasance and the abuse by the bureaucrats of their power over the farmers grew like worthless cancer cells that needed to be killed. They were just like leeches sucking the farmers' blood.

When I examined defaulting loan documents, I could not talk about them without tears for those farmers who had so many grievances. Those innocent farmers had entrusted the heads of the village with their money and asked them to keep their legal seals so that the village heads could charge the farmers' supply of fertilizers and loan funds on a credit basis whenever necessary.[2] Instead, the village heads and leaders abused their privilege. In some cases, they would falsify loan documents with collective or joint guarantors, and then run away with the money to unknown places where no one could find them. The farmers felt as if they were suddenly struck by a bolt of lightning when they found out that they were mandated to receive punishment for taking money they had never even touched. There were very many cases of farmers who suffered boundless sorrow from this accumulated harm.

When I heard about their predicament, I advocated for the rights of the victimized, arguing with the bureaucrats to not collect the loan repayment funds through mandatory withdrawals. I demanded that the government officers give the farmers new loans and to let them pay back the annual interest and only part of the principal in monthly installments. I proposed this method as one of the best ways of unburdening the farmers from their debts.

But my voice was not heard and returned as an echo from the void; they only listened to those people who had well-known faces and special privileges. I had numerous grievances with my superiors who exhibited pretentious and stubborn attitudes that masked a lack of conscience for their cruel, illegal activities. Inevitably however, in the effort to get along with the very people I despised, I found myself cowardly drinking the wine they poured for me.[3] Thus, I caught myself softening in the cheap flirtation of the witchery of sensual women, and I was ashamed to discover the layers of dishonesty and cruel slyness within my own personality. It was at this moment that I tasted the worst despair of my life. I had abandoned my ego, indulging in self-pity while covering my ears, pretending that I did not understand what I heard. During those gloomy days, I spent many hours thinking about nothing and watching the leaves fall outside the office windows. I could not continue and began to search for an exit.

Ock-Hee Oh

Meanwhile, one day I had seen a woman of rare beauty, with charming dark eyes and intense eyebrows set in a slender oval face, approaching the teller's window to make a deposit. I felt electricity and a hunger for her love when I heard a clear, yet hesitant, trembling voice, coming from her shapely body. She seemed to exude a refreshingly natural beauty. Even without touching her, I could feel her warm body in my heart. Thereafter, our fortuitous encounter was followed by a series of meetings. Love followed its natural course and both of us became so immersed in its flames that it didn't matter which one of us began liking the other first.

Perhaps our meeting was a historic moment for us; we became prisoners of our mutual love, which controlled our fate and our course of departure. Sometimes our course went in the reverse direction, turning our passion into sadness and our splendid joy into confinement. When our intense desire kept both of us imprisoned by our hearts, we experienced agony followed by jealousy and hatred after scorching lovers' quarrels. My future bride gently approached me, whispering sweetly into my ears, "For you I will make myself into the loveliest flower in the world."

"Then I will became your butterfly that falls into the intoxicating fragrance of your flower," I replied. Exchanging such sweet words, we spent three years together as if we were dreaming.

One autumn day, during those years of the ripening grapes of desire, I received a telephone call from her asking me to come up to Seoul. That night we stayed together all night long, talking about stories we had not shared for a long time, and finally I was ready to close my weary eyes and sleep.

"Let us go to West Germany."

"*Uri Dokil ga.*"

"Let us go to West Germany," my sweetheart asked with pleading eyes and an anxious voice. "If we can endure three years in West Germany, working hard, you will not have to listen to the executive officers or managing directors who make you hot with anger. We will be able to make enough money for a nice living here at home." She planted the seeds of sweet temptation into my wandering heart.

The next day, I returned to my country home and spoke to my parents and siblings about my plans, soliciting their support. My parents, who were worried about college tuition fees for the education of my younger brothers and considered that one of my responsibilities as the eldest son, would not budge an inch and discouraged my making any changes. I agonized over the decision and felt as if I were trapped at a crossroads of one road lined by foes on all sides, and of the other road where I was being pushed to the end of my rope. Her family took the opposite position, insisting that she needed to move to West Germany to make money for her brothers' tuition fees.

Not because we fell out of love (we would rather have died than to live without such love), but because she had so many responsibilities loaded with the weight of poverty on her shoulders, I decided to break up with her since she seemed to have a chance to succeed—a glimmer of hope shining indistinctly far away. A matchmaker arranged a meeting between a prospective bride and myself at Kwangju. After the meeting, I took an express bus that was heading toward Seoul, intending to tell my sweetheart about the results of the matchmaking.

My sweetheart, who did not know what had happened while we had been away from each other, jumped with joy at being together again, and I could not bring myself to tell her the cruel and harsh truth. I would rather have died than inflict her with the punishment and pain of a separation, which would be heavier than the joy of love. We went to a nearby Chinese restaurant, and there I helplessly spilled out the words that had been stuck in my throat. All of a sudden, she started to cry in a stentorian voice, and we had to rush out of the restaurant as soon as I paid for the food, where we then got into a taxi. In a quiet tea house, we sat down face to face, where she was able to cool down her unbearably intense anger in the uncomfortable surroundings and asked me, "Did you find a beautiful angel through the matchmaking? I must have misjudged you. I was way off the mark. I do not want to disgrace myself by shamelessly begging you for the old love between us that is already gone. Go and marry that charming woman you fell in love with at first sight."

So, she tormented me, sprinkling me with her poisonous jealousy and swiftly turning away. I grabbed her, pleading, "What else could I do? Your parents demand that you go to West Germany and you know I cannot go with you. You can go to that advanced country of hope, dusting off the unwanted poverty which covers you, and transform yourself into a gorgeous blue bird. You have that hope of flying in the blue sky. How can I force you to marry me for the uncertain happiness of being the wife of a poor farmer? I understand how hard it is for you to make the decision to go to West Germany alone because you have invested the time, money, and effort in planning for our trip together and you still hold the wrenching dream of our future together. But I am not in a position to wait for your decision," relying indefinitely on our unsolvable arguments.

"Please don't say any more." She hurriedly interrupted to add, "It is easy for you to believe that I should simply forget my fantasy about going to West Germany, just marry you and bear many children, one after another. But I would like to take more time to think over this question of marriage, a decision we only make once in a lifetime."

At That Time

There is a saying that a moment's decision may influence one's fate. How can we turn away from the road where we could possibly combine our strength together and make enough money in West Germany within two to three years so that we could live the rest of our lives in affluence? Why should we choose to live in a prison without bars, our self-imposed bondage? I saw that she had become enslaved by her emotions, viewing our marriage either as a prison without windows or as bondage and confinement. There was no guarantee that we could make lots of money. "Let me give you more time to think it over, and I hope you will come to a favorable decision," I said. Her circumstance was like that of a woman who had to choose between two lovers: if she chose one over the other, the one not chosen would weep.

Several days later, she gave up her trip to West Germany, and we were married on a fortuitous day that both families had selected. Although we were both paralysed with nervousness during the ceremony, the wedding finally brought repose to our restless souls in the spirit of joy and romance, and thus it seemed to clear the fog away. The day I found that there was a record of our marriage license, I got a duplicate of our family registration.[4] I felt that my wife was unfolding her caring, attentive action like a feast of love. Many joyful days we enjoyed in the deepest place of our heart. We were approaching very close to happiness itself day by day.

When I was working for the farmers' co-op prior to our marriage, I used to argue frequently with a young auditor. After the wedding, I was able to reconcile with him and we exchanged our ideas about the business operations, openly, heart to heart. My superiors lined up to bow, joking, "If we got one more of you, then ten of me would not be able to match you." After this sarcastic remark, I knew it was time to make the final decision to leave for West Germany. While I was struggling alone in the midst of conflicts and with the impossible tasks of business, my wife's suggestion to move to West Germany sounded like a lullaby. I had suffered so much, groping for a new escape from my difficult relationships with my superiors. I could not escape the temptation, which also gave me a ray of hope.

Moving to West Germany

I spent two years and six months alone in Korea after my wife left for Germany. I found my mind drifting, searching for something to anchor myself to during those dreary days when the hope of getting a job as a miner disappeared. My body, which had grown accustomed to the taste of the sweet honeymoon of our marriage, was writhing with loneliness and diving into the tears of the cavern under my comforter as if I were drinking ice-cold water in wretched solitude. My longing for my wife, her caring affection, and devoted love seemed to come alive in animated dreams while I was sleeping and dreaming.

In my dream, my feeble voice hangs in the air, and then falls helplessly to the ground. The memory of our heartbreaking love was a reminder that my wife had left me for somewhere beyond where my hands could not reach her. During those nights when my longing for her enclosed me with doom, I wished she would miraculously appear and dash in, clearing the darkness to fill the empty space in my heart. I ardently longed for her with a dire, thirsty passion beyond myself. In the bottomless hole of her absence, my body was writhing with dark sounds of lamentation, which seemed to penetrate the edge of my bones. I struggled but failed to erase the image of ominous death approaching. I was so afraid that I would burst into sobs upon hearing her voice that I stopped myself from picking up the telephone receiver and calling her.

I wanted to get inside her body and wash clean the poisonous injuries, which I alone had the capacity to intimately understand were a mix of longing and desire. I dreamed of caressing her body. I was no longer able to breathe freely; how I longed to breathe normally again. We had been apart for two and a half years; the pain piercing into my bones made me into a sad corpse incapable of functioning. I wished to but could not straighten my mind in the direction that my will desired. The only pleasure I had was writing letters to her about my longing and desire to see her. I could only wait a day before I started missing her again, and then I would write all night long about my sad, shaking heart and drop the letter off at the post office the next morning. This became my daily routine.

At that time it took a month to get a letter mailed and delivered, but writing filled the empty space of my heart and prevented me from going insane. Heavily drunk with alcohol, I wrote, "I only drink to stop myself from killing myself, because I want to see you so much." Then my wife would write back telling me to take care of my precious body, which I considered much less than a dirty, used rag. How I wished to run to her and show my childish acts to her. But those letters became like security vouchers, during those gloomy and angry nights, and I would bring those three baskets full of letters out and fuss over my forlorn love. When I needed to rid myself of the pain and accumulated stress, I would look for those letters in particular that had deeply touched and moved my heart. I would burst into tears or feel embarrassed when she confronted me with my responsibility of fulfilling my old promises and plans to her, of how I wanted to make her happy. Perhaps that is why women are high-grade animals who live on rosy fantasy and love.

Just when I had lost hope and the will to live in such pain, I saw an advertisement recruiting miners for the last time. And so, I joined them in order to brush away my accumulated sorrow and boarded the road to West Germany.

Life as a Miner

When I left for Germany at last, it was my first airplane flight. After being greeted by the voice of a blond female, we were driven for two hours by bus to the miner's dormitory, which looked like a prison camp. During the two-week orientation, we learned basic safety training and few basic words necessary for working in the underground mines. Without having any prior experience or knowledge, I felt my limits mentally and physically under the helmet and canteen. I was drenched in sweat, dust, and debris so thick I could not see a few inches away. After eight hours of sweating work, my body was as stiff as a piece of wood. Under the shower, I dug out thick coats of dusts from my eyes, nose, ears, and throat. I took a shuttle bus back to the dormitory, drinking beers and cracking empty jokes.

At the dormitory, I ate some leftover cold rice and went to the store to get some cheap necessities. Bananas and pig's feet were our favorite. Some minors cried, longing for their loved ones at home, while others wrote letters to their family members. Others drank beer with pig's feet, admiring the beauty of brown-haired women. Coughing up black dust from my lungs, I felt strange at being alive. Dirty jokes, violent language, and conniving co-workers made me feel bitter and pity the harsh miner's life. I filed complaints against unfair labor practices, whereby German workers worked only seven hours while Korean miners had to work eight hours. At the hearing, the translator demanded that I had made a mistake, and the witnesses, fearing deportation, remained silent.

Through working under such conditions, I began to give up my initial dream of returning home rich and planned to go back home. I wasn't able to tell my wife, who visited me on weekends, until one day I told her that no matter what, I wanted to go back home even as a beggar. She wondered why I wasn't able to adjust to this new life like so many others. Finally I told her that her expectations of me and her unreasonable judgment committed irrevocable damage on my life. Her eyes filled with tears, piercing my weakened heart. I hated my wife. I didn't know what to do and remained in a state of confusion and indecision for some time. I always respect my wife, who, although physically weak, is mentally strong with confidence that makes her able to overcome many difficulties. In contrast, I have not found any clear purpose in life, led passively by my wife's urges and requests. With her constant support and encouragement, I managed to finish two years as a miner, and finally quit, full of dishonorable memories. I felt relieved by thinking about returning to Korea, despite my wife's agony and disappointment.

A New Job

What a trick in life! My wife happened to be acquainted with a patient who was the personnel manager in an aluminum factory. With her persistence and effort, I was able to get a job and cleared my visa status from the previous restrictive labor contract. Unlike the hellish miner's work, this new job killed time without doing much work.

Longing for home in Korea tortured me frequently, however. I dreamed of my home town as if I was a young child who fell asleep longing for his mother's caring arms. Living in an affluent country with almost unlimited access to material prosperity, I became more and more homesick, longing for warm and friendly interaction and a sense of belonging. During this monotonous work routine, I daydreamed of an attractive woman who would release my choking tension. One day I found that woman.

According to colleagues, she came to our factory as part of her ministry internship. At a sleepy three o'clock in the morning, some mean-spirited male workers, out of exhaustion, made fun of her by asking where God was. She just looked at them with her tired eyes and quietly prayed for them. I was surprised by her attitude and learned a different aspect of Christianity. She handed over to me a thick book as if she wanted to put on record an uncommunicative, strange foreigner. The gospel through that Bible began to spread out to my atheist heart and I never felt such a shock. The unchallengingly easy job at work allowed me to uselessly daydream, wasting much of my time with aimless ideas and hesitation. During one of those days, my wife asked me to run a restaurant.

Running a Restaurant

Around that time, there was a heresy that many people made big money by running a restaurant. Without further checking the information, I sold my house in Kwangju, got a bank loan and opened a restaurant. I thought at first that running a restaurant would be a white-collar, fancy, money-making venture. Instead, I realized in no time, it meant endless work. Advertisements in the newspapers often brought a big crowd. In spite of our exhausted bodies, we were delighted by the money and filled with dreams of becoming millionaires. We began to understand that to Germans, dining out was more for enjoying the taste of different foods and for atmosphere, not for filling a hungry stomach. We paid extra attention to this aspect in running our restaurant.

However, we began to notice that much of the food ordered was left to the point that we felt embarrassed at charging the customers. One day I asked one customer who was about to leave with barely touching the food why. I did not get a clear answer, so I tasted the food myself and found that it was coarse and unappetizing. I realized further that most customers were newcomers, not regular guests. Sensing that I needed to do something different, I went to another Chinese restaurant with the cook and ordered the same dishes to ascertain the taste and asked whether our cook could prepare the same. The cook felt hurt and quit even though we repeatedly asked him to stay.

The cook was from a town nearby my home, for whom I had provided room and board for three months. Taking his word that he was a professional cook and experienced restaurant manager, I trusted him for running the restaurant. However, we were left alone, feeling betrayed. He knew that we had spent 200,000 marks [DM], but didn't seem to care whether we became bankrupt.[5] Although my wife was pregnant, she took over the cooking as she had learned by observing the cook. We then received some positive responses from the customers. Finally, she went to the hospital to deliver the baby and we had to close the restaurant. I deeply experienced that through overcoming hardships man and wife truly become "one mind and one body." Who else in the world could soothe my hopeless soul? I felt a deep appreciation of my wife. Even now, I can feel the heartache of my wife's devoted love and dedication.

Rather than cooperation and mutual aid, I felt betrayal and alienation on the part of the Korean businessmen who cared only for their self–interests. The reason I bought the restaurant in the first place was that I was misled by a friend who was a "devoted" Christian clergyman, in addition to the cook. Although I had an offer from another Korean who wanted to buy my restaurant, I refused to sell it to him, who, just like me, had limited experience. I closed the deal with a German. With much despair, we moved from Herne to Essen. Through a friend, I began to attend a church.

Turning to Church

Because of our bankruptcy and betrayal, I was sick with rage and hatred. During one of these days, a priest visited me. Soothing palms comforted my sorrow, pain, despair, and hurt. I immersed myself in the Bible and experienced emotional and spiritual healing. I released my hatred of the cook and began to reflect on my own fault and foolishness in trusting him. I realized that faith came not from expert knowledge of the Bible, nor in reciting the psalms like a parrot, but from the humbleness of human limitations.

I also became aware of my illusions and empty dreams and accepted the given reality as it was. I learned from the diverse aspects of many people and tamed my thoughts and behavior. I knew this ministry was a job and found I could not respect them when I saw the emptiness of their sermons. Under the guise of love, many priests stressed the importance of loving the invisible God while ignoring their responsibility to care for neighbors and people. I sensed a thick wall of prejudice and self-righteousness among many church-goers who seemed to take advantage of others rather than supporting and loving them.

Despair and Withdrawal

I spent most of the time feeling anxious, avoiding any small risks, and hiding from people. Feeling deeply hopeless and helpless, I did nothing and almost gave up. One day, through a miner friend, I got a job in Berlin as a taxi driver. This was the first time, since arriving in Germany, I made enough money to bring a smile to my wife's face. I drove all day and all night without feeling tired. This was one rare moment where I enjoyed and was content with life, but it was short-lived.

One day in East Berlin, I hit a street car, was badly injured, and had my license suspended. Holding on to a thin chance for success because of language and cultural barriers, I had struggled though harsh adjustments and had survived. Now, reaching for hope and success, I felt that my wings had been chopped away. In the darkest hopelessness and failure, I had somehow to pull myself together to live. I had become accustomed to a meaningless life, slowly dying of despair, hopelessness, and powerlessness. Finally, I could not take it any more.

Retreat to Korea

Feeling liberated from feelings of inferiority for a long period, I visited Korea attempting to start a new life. Delicious food, blue sky, running streams and bright sunshine, and, most of all, fluent Korean language; I felt life's pleasures again. I released deeply repressed complaints of work in Germany, and I felt home and alive in the midst of familiar faces, cigarette smoke, loud laughter, and drink. Being back home in Korea seemed to me a paradise even with the numerous and widespread problems there. I felt like living in Korea was to fulfill my destiny. Even as I recall those feelings now, they comfort my soul. However, I had bitter experiences, and decrying these makes me more ashamed than pained.

I found my country dominated by evil. Power and arrogance were praised while consciousness and sincerity were unjustly despised. I was too emotionally drained to hate people and had to hide my desperate struggle for survival. Subways, pedestrian bridges, and streets were filled with people; I was devoured by thick waves, floating in the midst of their sweat and dust. People took the mass media propaganda at face value, boasting of themselves as one of the developed countries. Corruption was everywhere. Worst of all was their apathy towards widespread social evils.

My Korean got mixed up with German frequently, and I awkwardly mixed words here and there, reflecting my difficulties of adjusting to both countries. In the midst of this, I felt alienated. My desperate attempts to catch up with the last twenty years of absence were pitiful. I had little confidence that my children, with their limited bilingual ability, would be well adapted and adjusted to this country. I had to nod when my children told me that Korea was a place to visit for fun, but not to live. I was not able to force my children to go to the universities in Korea, but even if I could have, I realized that they could not have survived due to the language barrier. I decided to put my dream away and returned to Germany.

Koreans and Germany

I believe that the German political system is the best model of equality for all men. The system equally distributes individual wealth, which is one of the advantages of socialism, and it holds down the insatiable materialistic pursuit of capitalism. But in this system there is no room for human affection. In this cold societal order of Germany, I pine for the warm human affection and suffer because of the gap between reality and the dark shadows of my accumulated longing for old affections.

Nowadays, the economic slump creates unemployment and the German people target direct and indirect oppression on the minorities as if the problems of unemployment were caused by employment of the foreign laborers. The foreigners I believe have taken the ugly, unwanted jobs that the German laborers avoid and have been silently contributing to the German economy. I feel inhospitality toward the unkind and inconsiderate Germans who consider us old, useless bodies, viewing us with suspicious eyes. It is fortunate and hopeful that some of the educated people seem to have the generous understanding and open-mindedness to accept the harmonious existence of a multicultural society.

In fact, it is religion that is the root of the German culture and the pillar of the living conscience of the German people that is the invisible wealth of the Germany. Other countries have the headaches with various youth problems because the decadent businesses are run rampant to the extreme by the people who are blinded by money. The reason that Germany alone can avoid those problems, I believe, is attributed to the awakened conscience of religious beliefs. Mature German democracy was born, I believe, from the security of individual privacy and safeguarded from the infringement of human rights and freedom.

Prior to my coming to Germany, we heard about aspects of the country and understood as if they were only rice cakes pictured in textbooks. Now we have lived in this fair and open society for more than twenty years and yet we, the people of Korea, are still circumambulating in the margins of the society because we are not able to assimilate into mainstream society.

The Korean community in Germany is a miniature version of the old Korean society that remains unchanged, repeating the same old practices of machination, and the community is torn down and divided as a result. My heart aches to see the same old patterns repeated here. Organizations are born like bamboo shoots after rain, but they barely keep in existence. The reason that they become "begin with the head of a dragon but end with the tail of a snake"[6] is because of impromptu planning with no future in mind, and they are run with empty moral obligations without substance by the same types of people.

The responsibility for this lies with vain leaders who perform unfit roles, shriveling the sprouting aspirations of the second generation and blocking the breath of the community at large. More importantly, the problems are rooted with the single-minded, self-righteous leaders who have pledged to become the connecting bridges for the reunification of the Korea, as well as with the enmity and jealous eyes of the crowded and competing churches. They are more responsible for the problems than the children in our community. In this barren soil where even thriving sprouts may not be able to survive transplantation, I see the decayed old trees standing up to boast with "look at me" vanity.

We need the kinds of leaders who foster constructive and productive dialogue among the people, who perform as role models to unite our hearts and minds. When together we take the steps to achieve common goals for the community and arrive at successful results, unity and friendship among the people of our community will naturally be forged. When incapable leaders monopolize and occupy leadership positions by exerting vulgar trickery, constantly struggling with conflicting dissonance and maintaining the status quo, our community will not be able to survive the rapid world of daily changes.

Life as a Husband & Father

I have now arrived at a mature old age. Perhaps it is too late for me to feel sorry for myself and run away from my life. Yet it is too distressing for me to remain here to plant my roots. What would be a more meaningful life? Even the question itself becomes nebulous and fuzzy. I would rather not pluck the hairs from my head in frustration, nor be obsessed with feeling empty and angry. Instead, I choose to be faithful to my family as a good husband and father. When I pay attention to the insignificant and trifling tasks my wife performs, those small things that my nerves used to ignore touch me, and I learn to appreciate the hidden, beautiful troubles of my wife in a new dimension.

When I did not do the dishes after one meal, the dirty dishes and leftovers piled up in the sink. I now clean and pick up the mess: the clothes and socks strewn all over the floor; those books or newspapers lying around after they had been tossed aside after reading out of boredom; the dirty and wet bathroom floor covered with hair, which makes our feet wet, and used towels carelessly hung everywhere after a bath; combs, cosmetics, tennis shoes, and book bags. I tire after I pick up all this mess. My forehead bears drops of sweat while my body seems to sink, crawling under the earth with exhaustion.

Every day I sweep and dust, yet I cannot tell where the dust comes from, leaving a hazy film over the furniture and ornaments. It irritates me, so I beg my children to at least make their beds, without much success. My words have no effect on them, as if I were preaching to the deaf. They listen to loud pop music, which sounds like a fit of hysteria, twisting their legs while studying. It splits and tears my eardrums, and I often feel at a loss with the unbearable frustration of not knowing how to deal with them.

What makes it worse, they seem annoyed and feel intruded upon by my cleaning their rooms. My children say, "Why do you clean up things which will only get dirty again soon? Please leave my room alone. It belongs to me," their faces turning red with anger. Then I am at a loss for words, do not know how to reply, and leave. I want to convey my intense feelings to my children and will search for the words inside my brain, but the German words that have not been stored and organized do not readily emerge to express what I feel in my heart.

Unconditionally, I want to give my affection to them just as my wife used to do in the way she embraced them, carried them on her back, bathed and dressed them, and raised them. I find myself incapable of giving and realize the kindling agony of my wife's love only through the patience of this personal experience. I appreciate her love so dearly with a warm heart.

When I am touched by her hidden efforts of love, I feel restored to vitality even uncomfortably, just like how wilted leaves are transformed into lush greenness. My heart then leaps with the hope of a new departure, moving away from the beauty of my perception to the essence of affection within my heart. My wife, who also spent time alone for two years of separation from me, now realizes that I am not just an unimportant entity, but a very significant person in her life.

My son used to frown when my wife asked him to scratch her back and reluctantly would use one finger to scratch once or twice, making excuses of his need to study. She still remembers those moments with regret. Tenderly I will scratch her back, rub her with creams, and massage her body to make her feel refreshed and cool. How she jokes of women who find their husband the best among all the rooms they have sought, or men find their wife best among the houses they have considered to choose.[7]

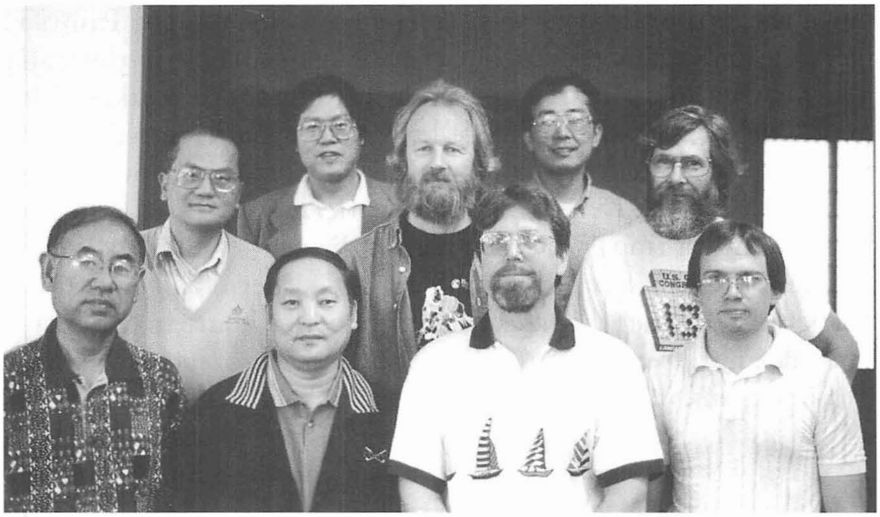
In response, I tell her, "I would rather have an evil wife than a filial son." We thus confirm the significance of our relationship to each other. I resolve to leave my vain loneliness so I can nurture the seeds of her beautiful heart until they sprout in the garden. Then I know all my family may live in peaceful repose. I will also search for the things my wife enjoys, and that daily search of mine will also become the joy of my life.

Editor's Notes:

Unless otherwise indicated, italics where they appear have been added.

1. The *Nongoep Hyopdong Johap*, or just "*Nong jyoep,*" refers to a quasi–governmental organization established at the li–level administrative unit (the basic unit of governance in each province). This agricultural cooperative distributes government fertilizer at subsidized prices, and is also involved in the procurement of rice from farmers. Under this system, farmers were allowed to take out loans in the spring and repay them in the fall with interest.
2. Signature stamps (*tojang*) are used in Korea to sign legal documents; possessing a person's stamp is equivalent to holding the power of attorney for that person.
3. The phrase "the wine they poured for me" is a loaded one, for this suggests the traditional Korean ritual of emptying and offering your cup, which is then filled and proffered back for you to drink the wine. This can be simple conviviality between equals, or a mark of deference—the junior in status or age making the first offer and sealing a relationship when he accepts the return.
4. That is, *chokbo*, a record of one's family genealogy.
5. Approximately $50,000.
6. The Korean maxim, "*Yeong du sa mi,*" which roughly translates as "beginning with the head of a dragon but ending with the tail of a snake" is similar to the maxim, "to begin with a bang but end with a whimper."
7. This pun, "*Ibang, jeobang haedo, sobang i jeiligo, ijip jeojip haedo, kyejip i jeil ida,*" revolves around the use of two groups of three words each, and speaks to the roles that husband and wife each play in marriage. The first group of words each end with "*bang,*" which means "room" in Korean, and refers to the husband: *ibang* ("this room"); *jeobang* ("that room"); *sobang* ("husband"). The second group of words each end with "*jip,*" which means "house," and refers to the wife: *ijip* ("this house"); *jeojip* ("that house"); *kyejip* ("wife"). Thus, this roughly translates as, "Of all the rooms [the wife] has searched for to sleep in, the husband is the best; of all the houses [the husband] has looked for to make a home, the wife is the best."

A HISTORY OF GO IN SEATTLE



MATTHEW BENUSKA

A Total of 200 Years' Worth of Playing Experience in Seattle
Top row (*l-r*): Charles Huh, Jin Chul. Middle row (*l-r*): Hai Chow Chen, Bill Camp, Chris Kirschner. Bottom row (*l-r*): Frank Fukuda, Edward Kim, Jeff Horn, Michael Thomas (1997)

The Impact of Korean American Players upon Seattle's Go Playing Community

Christopher J.M. Kirschner

If Russia was "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma," America twenty-five years later was a juxtaposition wrapped in a conflict within a rebellion.[I] Containment of that rebellion was somewhat questionable at this time, just as was the Russian mystery. The generation born after the war came to adulthood under the stimulus of momentous social and political events, great prosperity, and a characteristic confusion regarding the difference between adulthood, maturity, and wisdom.

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I knew almost nothing of Korea or its people, not having met them before Korean Go players appeared suddenly at The Last Exit coffeehouse.[2] Through contact with them, I slowly acquired a sense that Korea could be described as a dream wrapped in a vision within a driving ambition for success. With the '60s well under way, coffeehouses such as the Pamir House, the Eigerwan, and a gamers' hangout, the Shalom—all hole-in-the-wall places designed for tiny niche markets—were gone, but those markets, although still small, swelled with the influx of baby-boom youths into the University District. In America, such a situation is called opportunity, and Irving Ciske, the creator of The Last Exit on Brooklyn coffeehouse, seized it in a manner that created a major impact on the area for the next twenty-five years.

He found a squat, square building at the southern fringe of the University District, three times the size of any prior coffee house in the area, and to fill it, he redefined its purpose to include all the ideas of its predecessors. The menu was inexpensive to medium priced, but of solid value and included very low-cost subsistence items for people who would now be called street people. One or two nights a week, the kitchen closed, and chess and Go players were requested to mute the clacking of their Chess clocks and playing stones for formal presentations of poetry and folk music. At other times, an aged but durable phonograph provided classical background music. But there was a piano, other musicians were welcome, and a word to the manager would always rest the phonograph in favor of an impromptu jam session. Game players were welcome, but they had to supply their own equipment. Free thinkers, students, and poor hangers-on were not only accepted but encouraged in subtle ways. Freebooters and drug dealers were tolerated, provided they kept their business well off the premises. Cameras were generally prohibited, with rare exceptions for specific shots involving only people willing to be photographed (this was because of police and intelligence agencies' interest in surveillance of the "suspect" clientele).

The Last Exit was not alone in its departure from old ways. Just around the corner was the Free University, where anyone could teach anything, registration was a flat five dollars, and there were no requirements, grades, or degrees. Today, such institutions are common (e.g., the UW Experimental College and Discover U). Then, it was unique and highly suspect. Two blocks further from the business area, the Open Door Clinic was started in the fall. It, too, was a volunteer organization, dedicated to providing free medical, crisis management, and counseling services to the massive new generation of young people rebelling against the status quo. The group of disenfranchised, rebellious, and alienated youths, present to a degree in all societies, had reached critical mass and had quite suddenly begun to create new businesses and institutions to satisfy their own needs and comforts.

Bars, taverns, coffeehouses, and some restaurants normally attract a coterie of frequent customers who create a sense of community and often help define the clientele and atmosphere of the business. At The Last Exit, this phenomenon occurred to a far greater degree than usual and encompassed a much broader spectrum of interests. The unifying sense of this nascent community was that people felt unable or unwilling to accept the restrictions or sense of proprieties of a prior generation born in depression, raised in war, disappointed in the semi-peace that followed, and reluctant to admit—much less take on—the challenges of social justice inherent in the civil rights movement. Seeing it, my father compared The Exit to the alien cafe scene in the movie *Star Wars*. Into this peculiar subculture, confusing and even frightening to many if not most homegrown Americans, came the first Korean Go players.

My first contact was a memorable experience. At that time I was playing as three dan—weak, but still one of the strongest in the Caucasian community.[3] I walked in looking for a game and noticed a new face—Asian and sitting at a table with a board! (I, therefore, assumed him to be Japanese.) I immediately asked if he played Go.

"Yes."

"How strong are you?"

"Maybe one kyu."

I smiled, handed the bowl of black stones to the new player and confidently said, "OK, take three stones." Without hesitation, the Korean player accepted them and placed three. Within twenty or thirty moves I was already in a poor to hopeless position. Sensing the incorrectness of the handicap I suggested starting over, playing even. This game lasted longer, perhaps fifty or sixty moves. Then I asked what the proper handicap should be, and with a smile, Jae Ho Kim raised three fingers. *Indeed, that was correct.*[4]

In this corner of the American Go community, the curtain was raised on a new era, one in which Americans could routinely watch and even play with people who actually had a clear understanding of the game. At that time, I shared top player status (in the Caucasian community) with a professor of mathematics (Harry McAndrew) at the University of Washington who was slightly stronger, but played infrequently, having become a '60s-style political activist for civil rights and anti–Vietnam War causes. Months later and over the coming years, other Korean one kyus arrived, and local players discovered that "one kyu" covers a wide range of skill. Some were able to give five stones to those who could play Jae Ho Kim at three.

The effect on local players was dramatic. Very few had ever seen such power—much less had an opportunity to play and watch strong players frequently. Interest grew as players became accustomed to seeing strong play regularly. Within a few years, there was a considerable increase in new Caucasian players, attracted by the availability of strong players from whom to learn. Among these were teachers such as Lee Anne Bowie and Jim Walsh; professors John Westwater and Harry McAndrew; law student Phil Bleyhl;

and mathematics graduate students Jim Davies, Blaine Walgren and Dave Wick. All these, and many more, rapidly improved to dan level and thus created an active local group. Small though this group was, it represented an unprecedented explosion of activity in the Caucasian Go playing community.

JAE HO KIM COLLECTION

Bill Camp (with a six stone handicap) and Jae Ho Kim enjoying a game at The Last Exit (n.d.)

The Beginnings of Go in the Northwest

Go arrived with Asian immigration to the western US in the late 19th century, but as with other aspects of Asian culture, there was little transmission to the majority population. The first formal effort to do so in English was Arthur Smith's book, *The Game of Go, the National Game of Japan*, published in 1908.[5] I don't believe this lack of appreciation was racist or xenophobic—the United States simply was not ready. Chess was known; its roots in European culture made it part of the majority culture, but it fared only slightly better. Americans, and particularly those in the western US, were more oriented to games with an element of chance, such as poker, rummy, mah-jongg, and backgammon, for example. Pioneering life was hard, and it was pioneering. The arts did not flourish in such an environment, but nor did they die. As the century unfolded, social and cultural development were largely segregated, and Go was maintained as a pastime, mostly for older retired people.

During the prewar days and into the early '60s, the area in Seattle now called the International District (which now has many East and Southeast Asian ethnic businesses), was called Chinatown. There was a substantial Japanese presence, but it was low key. There was no discernible Korean presence, nor would there be for some time. Contrary to the practice of the earlier Asian immigrant groups, the Korean population immediately spread out, creating small pocket concentrations in relatively outlying areas. There, the Korean community was estimated at about 200 in the mid-1960s and was so dispersed that a community meeting—for whatever reason—was most likely to occur at the University of Washington (UW), where there was a Korean Student Association which could get a free meeting area on campus.

During this same seventy-year period, Go was introduced to Europe, where it was received somewhat more warmly. "You simply have no idea how new everything is. There is no history, no tradition, no culture, nothing old anywhere." It was my father speaking, comparing Seattle with the European cities of his youth and early adulthood: wealthy in Budapest, 'till he was seven, then poor in Zurich through high school, and then in Vienna for medical school. It might have been 1950, '55, '60, or later—it was said many times. Always the tone conveyed more than the words: a ragged mixture of disdain, discomfiture, and grief for absent essentials of civilized life; and...*wonder* at the freedom implied, the unfettered opportunity to shape not only the substance of one's life, but the very vessel within which one lived it. Youth felt the negative emotional swirl as an ocean with a positive chip floating not so gently on its waves, bound forever inseparably and unequally. It took much adulthood to come to understand that the significant object in a seascape, no matter how mighty the sea or puny the boat upon it, is not the ocean, but the craft, with its implicit cargo of human aspiration.

Like so many children of immigrants, I saw my integration into American life as my task in life, *not* learning and maintaining the culture of my parents. To make achievement of this goal even shakier, although neither of my parents was German, that was their language. As I was born in 1939, this was a further reason to reject all that was their heritage. The game of Go was a happy exception. Although it was associated with the other major enemy of the war years, Japan, that didn't bother me. Among other things, the war was over by the time I started playing, while the language issue was apparent from earliest childhood. At least it wasn't European, and it had one wonderful aspect: I could *win*. A handicap was needed of course, but it was forgotten in a few moves, and I could compete on an equal basis with adults. My parents were about nine kyu in strength, so it didn't take too long before I was able to compete effectively at nine stones. My mother had learned the game from an uncle, Hans Bendorff, who visited Japan as a member of an Austrian naval mission (Austria had a navy then!) to Japan in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. He became an avid advocate of the game on his return, and everyone in my mother's family played. My father got the message and learned, too; an apparent requirement for serious courtship in this case!

Go took immediate root in Europe as a result of my great uncle's, and of other European visitors' exposure to Asia. The number of players, as a proportion of the population and their strength, has always and continues to be, superior to that in the US, in spite of Europeans having far fewer direct opportunities to learn from Asian players. This is not unique to Go; it is true also of chess and bridge. It has been observed by many, in numerous contexts, that Americans prefer action over words, invention over theory, and the concrete over the abstract. It is an article of faith in American myth that an uneducated, uncultured, unmoneyed person may nevertheless ascend by application of wit, intelligence, and hard work to the pinnacles of financial and social success. Mythic America is positively anti-intellectual, in spite of the obvious and real rewards for education and intellectual pursuits. Go, therefore, came to me as an artifact of family culture rather than as an aspect of ethnic culture, which made it acceptable despite the fact that it appeared unknown outside my family. Had I been more aware of the differences between American and European attitudes toward games of skill, I probably would have rejected it. By age 17 in 1956, I was able to play my parents with only a three-stone handicap, and was hoping to come even in the foreseeable future.

One day my father announced that he had been given nine stones and soundly beaten! Not once but several times. He had discovered the Japanese Go Club by asking about Go while shopping for garden plants at Mizuki Nursery in South Seattle. The owner, Mr. William Mizuki, had invited him to come to the club. The club was composed of a few middle–aged, and many retired, Japanese men. Few appeared to speak any English at all, and far fewer were comfortable with it. The segregationist social practices of the early half of the century had encouraged such isolation, and internment in the camps during the war had reinforced the tendency. Additionally, it was composed almost entirely of first–generation immigrants. One exception was Hachiro Hashiguchi, whose father and older brother were strong and frequent players, and who still plays regularly in local and national tournaments. "I wish more of the nisei had taken up the game," he said, recalling those days.[6] But they didn't. The club that had flourished in the '30s was already dwindling in the mid-'50s when we discovered it; the annual tournament slowly shrank from more than fifty players in the late '50s to twenty or so in the early '70s. After a year and a half of occasional attendance (in the late 1950s), I was invited to become a member (my father later told me that it had required a change of bylaws of the club to permit membership by a non-Japanese). Then I was also invited to the banquet dinner between the fifth and sixth games of the annual tournament.

I was then, and remain, profoundly impressed with the graciousness of this process, which was not so easy as it appeared on the surface. A few of the players refused to play with me. Blissfully unaware of the underlying social issues, and aided by the barriers of language and culture, it took repeated refusals before I got the message clearly enough to learn whom to leave alone. No one ever spoke to me about it. The annual tournament (the only one anywhere in the region for many years) routinely drew more than fifty players in the late 1950s, but only older players; the younger generation was simply not interested.

This is a common theme in American immigrant communities: as older players died, they were not replaced. By 1970, it drew only thirty, of whom three or four were Caucasian. By about 1975, there were fewer than twenty, and then it just stopped. Soon after the club effectively ceased to exist. Although the club welcomed the membership of Caucasians as an occasional source of additional funds (very occasional and very little), and generally welcomed them as players (with the occasional exception as noted above), there was no effort to actually integrate or confederate with newly emerging groups of Caucasian players, such as The Last Exit group or the Boeing Go Club.[7] Reminiscent of this, Ick-Whan Lee recalls, "Chris invited me in 1968, I think, to play the strongest player in the Chinatown club (I forgot his name), of five dan strength. I won. The old gentleman came down to The Last Exit to have a return match, in which I won again. After that, he didn't return."[8] If the contrast between the isolation of the Japanese and the impetus for integration by the Koreans seems stark, it is no more so than that between their life experiences. The former were born in nineteenth-century Japan, moderately educated, and emigrated when isolation and segregation were taken for granted; the latter, however, were young, well educated, continued their education, and came at a time in which segregation had been redefined as an embarrassing artifact of the past.

Naturally, with such contact my game improved rapidly. In spite of frequent, long absences, I reached shodan level by the early '60s.[9] In 1961, I started a club at the UW, where I was beginning college, but it didn't last long (partly because I dropped out after a few quarters). In 1963, back in school for a quarter or two, I discovered a local coffeehouse called The Eigerwan where local chess players gathered and were allowed to play. Although I had revived the UW Go Club, it was relegated to the role of recruitment to the attractions of the coffeehouse, where one could play every day and long into the night. When I dropped out again, it again faded into oblivion. At the coffeehouse, I settled in with Go board in hand and taught anyone willing to sit down long enough.

The Eigerwan was the first gaming coffeehouse. Eric Bjornstad, a European transplant with a mountain climbing background, created a European-style coffeehouse in Seattle's University District. The motif was alpine climbing—not yet a common activity here—and the walls were decorated with paraphernalia and pictures of Eric's climbing exploits here and in Europe. Part of that mystique was the chess game in the corner, tolerated and even encouraged coloration in a carefully designed exotic setting that created a memorable experience for the casual dropper-by, and a distinctive microculture for the habitue. By extension, there was no objection to adding Go to the scene, and I soon became a fixture in the evenings. It was most satisfying, because by default I was by far the strongest player. Here, too, I met my future wife, who also frequented the scene, attracted to the free swinging lifestyle that was emerging from the cocoon of the 1950s, but which had not yet acquired the fully flamboyant coloration that would be the signature of the 1960s.[10]

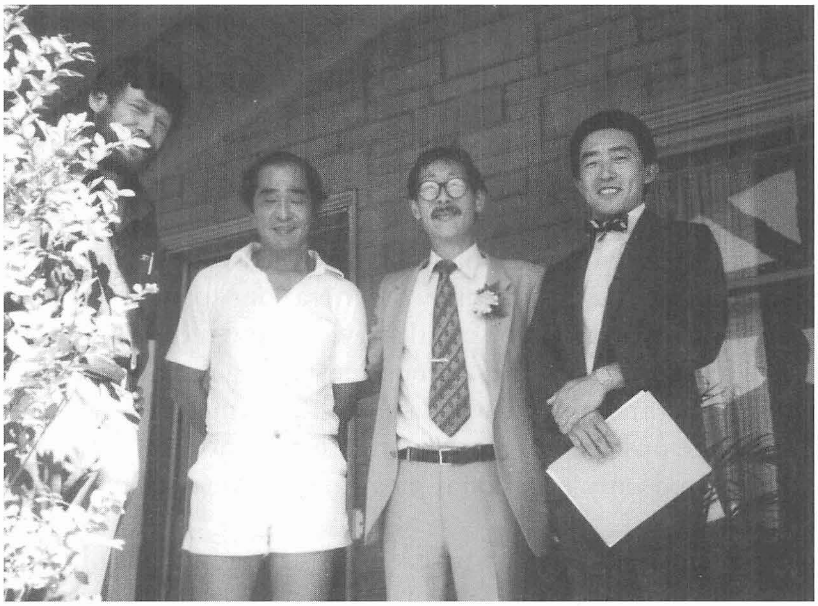
She was far more experienced in life and entrepreneurship than I, and she believed that a games-oriented, coffeehouse type of business could be a success. I was happy enough to go along with that idea, which in due course led to the opening of the Shalom.[11] This was the first place explicitly dedicated to game players. The idea was that with the strongest chess and Go players present, others would be drawn. There was a modest membership fee, no playing fee, no gambling allowed, and profit was to come from the sale of food. As a business venture, it failed, but as an opportunity to expose hundreds of people to Go, it was something of a success. The Shalom lasted less than a year, but it helped define a community of game players. Within the gamers' community, it put Go "on the map," as players of other games were able to see first-hand that it was a true master game. The Last Exit followed thereafter.

The Korean Go Players

The next few years at The Last Exit on Brooklyn brought a steady trickle of new Korean players, usually in the summer, arriving early to settle in for fall quarter at the UW. They were graciously willing to play at all handicaps and to offer suggestions to weaker players. The Last Exit was ideal for them for many reasons. A 65 cent pot of coffee or tea (four cups per pot) with two cups was a sufficient purchase to be allowed to stay for several hours. It was close to their student housing and to the university itself. And, of course, it was where all the (Caucasian) players congregated. It seemed that this venue provided the Korean students with a needed respite from the difficulties and feelings of inadequacy inherent in struggling with a new language, new culture, and advanced education. Here they were not only able to compete, but were in fact *superior*, and greatly respected for their skill.

This was, I think, particularly true of perhaps the most spectacular player of that era, a student named Dong Chan Lee. A Korean "one kyu" like his predecessors, he was, however, a profoundly different kind of player. He came to play, not talk, and played fast and loose, not slow and tight. As I arrived, I was told excitedly that there was a new player "two or three stones stronger than anyone else." A few minutes later, I saw a player, who normally took five stones from Jae Ho Kim or Ick-Whan Lee, resign his game played at seven stones, and start another at eight. In less than thirty minutes, he resigned again. The strength was somewhat an illusion—it did not hold up against really strong players (Dong Chan Lee was simply very good at playing weaker players). It turned out that he had, in fact, spent a year or two studying to become a professional player, but had dropped out because he didn't have the patience to play long, hard serious games. He remained for nearly five years before being forced to return to Korea, having completed his studies and not having a visa for permanent residency. We tried to make a case for his remaining as a teacher of Go, but couldn't identify a sufficient population willing and able to pay.

In the early 1980s, a Japanese teaching professional appeared and took up residence. Sen Suzuki's sole purpose was to teach Go. Undismayed by the obvious lack of an adequate population to support him economically, he was willing and able to stay anyway. He was essentially subsidized, both by friendly local people (he had a very few regular students who paid $100 a month or so, and he lived rent free in a house owned by a local player for many years) and by supporters in Japan, who regularly came up with financial assistance when



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(*l-r*) Chris Kirschner, Andy Teh, Sen Suzuki, and Akira Takeda (Cultural Attache at the Seattle Japanese Consulate) at Sen Suzuki's Go Dojo (around 1985) necessary. Eventually, the Nihon Kiin bought a house in which he could continue to live.

There, he created a much more Asian setting. And often—when there was no defined Korean club location—Korean players would congregate there for a long night of raucous play, with plenty of snacks, beer, and a density of smoke that would have set off an alarm, had there been one. It was clearly an attractive venue. It remained an on–again, off–again alternative for many years despite several serious problems. The playing charge was high, variable, and often not explained in advance, which led to conflicts over money. In addition, he was Japanese, and thus any relationship with Koreans carried the burden (for both sides) of a century of unhappy history. Furthermore, he simply was not a gentle or diplomatic person, particularly in the earlier years. The result was constant conflict, not only with the Korean players, but with those of all other groups as well. Nevertheless, his home was a continuing resource for those willing and able to pay. The shortcomings were overcome by values such as not closing at a certain hour, allowing unlimited smoking, having a much more familiar atmosphere, and being constantly available.[12]

As the Korean population continued to swell with new arrivals, the impetus to create Korean institutions also grew. Inevitably, perhaps, the impetus to create such institutions grew faster than the population required to actually support the services for which they were ideally and idealistically created. The result was the formation, under the leadership of Jae Ho Kim, of the Seattle Korean Baduk Association in 1975.

The Seattle Korean Baduk Association

As Korean immigration grew from drip to trickle, to river, to the flood that has reshaped the shores of its destination, the character of Korean emigres' relationships shifted inside and outside their nascent community. By the mid 1970s, the community had outgrown its student focus, and as the population continued to grow, many organizations formed to promote various Korean-style institutions, cultural activities, and recreations. Particularly for the more recent arrivals, these groups provided a retreat from the painful confusion of constant contact with the strange American culture and language. It became possible for a person to create a moderately restricted lifestyle that required only occasional meaningful interaction with the larger society.

A pattern emerged whereby people with strong inclinations for particular activities started groups to organize and perpetuate those activities before there was an adequate population to support them.[13] Time and again, the enthusiasm of a few would create a group with great energy, fanfare, and expectations. Time and again, the intent to transplant a Korean institution was frustrated—not by the lack of effort, ability, or sense of value on the part of the organizers, but by the lack of ongoing participation from others after the grand opening. This was not necessarily due to a lack of interest. There were powerful distractions, not the least of which was the overwhelming struggle to raise a family and launch children into successful careers in the new world of America. In the face of such competition, recreational activities, even those with evident cultural value, are likely to be set aside by all but the most dedicated enthusiasts. And those are always too few.

The newly formed organizations made strong demands on the attention of those Koreans more experienced and more inclined to broaden, rather than restrict, their exposure to non-Korean people, culture, and activities because they were better able to manage various aspects of organizing that required contact with Americans (who spoke no Korean and had neither understanding of, or particular sympathy for, their needs). Constant demands to provide volunteer support became overwhelming and often forced them to make hard choices about how many tasks they could take on for how many organizations. As a consequence, they were often seen as uncaring by those they chose not to support.

The Baduk Association survived as an organization despite the handicap of not having sufficient funding to maintain a venue in the community in which to play. The story was always the same. A grand tournament would be held to celebrate the opening of a new facility. The Caucasian community would also be invited, and usually about six people would show up. Attendance fees would be made fairly low to attract players, but over a few weeks, attendance would drop until the rent wasn't met, and then the fee would increase and attendance would drop even more. Shortly thereafter, the club would close. These tournaments would draw forty to sixty people, the great majority of whom we (the Caucasian players) had never seen at The Last Exit.

The repeated inability of the organization to draw enough participation to maintain a playing venue, however, was matched by the con-

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Andrew Cho, concentrating on his game (Seattle, 1997) tinuous willingness of its members to organize tournaments even when there was no regular place to play. Unfortunately, within the Korean community as a whole, this was broadly interpreted as failure. In contrast, we Caucasians, who had never dreamed of being able to support a club in that sense, were constantly amazed and impressed that the Koreans could obtain the financial sponsorship they did for their tournaments, and envied their ability to draw upon community support in a way that we could not. Although we recognized and anticipated their inability to generate enough revenue to keep a playing area continuously open, we didn't see it as failure, but as the gloriously energetic pursuit of a prize that was hopelessly out of reach.

The leadership and much of the financial energy of the Baduk Association at that time came from Andrew Cho, publisher of Seattle's *The Korea Times*, but others bore the costs and burdens of actual leadership. Although maintaining a regularly available playing facility was an on-and-off affair, there was one consistent event: the annual Seattle Korea Times tournament, which has been maintained without interruption for fifteen years. It is a record unequaled by any other Korean group, I have been told, and is, therefore, a source of considerable pride.

The American Go Association and US Go Congresses

Meanwhile, the rest of the world was not asleep, and developments around the country (and the world) were slowly incubating the formation of national organizations. The American Go Association (AGA), which had up to then been primarily an East Coast group with a national name, began making positive efforts to recruit a national membership. Under the leadership of Terry Benson, it was slowly nursed toward a truly national existence. Links remained very tenuous, however, as it was difficult for people to identify what the AGA (nearly all of whose organizers were within easy driving distance of New York), had to offer to players on the West Coast.[14]

In 1984, Dennis Wagoner, I, and a few others were sitting around a table at The Exit talking instead of playing for once. I had been directing the annual Seattle Cherry Blossom Festival Go tournament for a few years, and it had occurred a month or two previously. It was a two-day tournament and was the main event of the year. The tournament had been an exciting affair and had whetted the appetite for more. To expand our horizons, the idea of promoting a national tournament was raised—we were all sure that the local people such as Charlie Huh, Ick-Whan Lee, Thomas Chung, and Jae Ho Kim would win hands down. The Seattle group would sweep, thus establishing us as the power center of Go in the US. We had no sense that other areas might have had a similar influx of strong Korean players as well.

There was considerable enthusiasm expressed, and soon the question of how to publicize it rose. I had some contact with AGA people, and so I talked to Terry Benson, president of the AGA, about it. Terry was glad to hear from me, but plans were already under way to do such an event in Washington, DC, the following summer, so we dropped the idea for the time. The "other event" was the first Go Congress, organized by Haskell Small. The attendees were enthusiastic to make it an annual event, and Terry Benson later called me in the middle of their discussions to ask if I would be willing to do it the following year in Seattle. I and other local players were enthusiastic. Having been negatively impressed with a monochromatic pattern of pure competition common in the chess and bridge tournaments we had seen, we were determined to present a broader, more culturally oriented event. Some would argue (with good reason) that this was the dominating theme of the second Go Congress.

One element of this was ensuring the participation of all relevant cultures or ethnic groups in the organizing body. To that end, I actively pursued Korean, Japanese and Chinese players to form a representative group. There was considerable willingness to help, but less to attend meetings and be identified as responsible organizers. The other major element of creating a broader event was to schedule a brief cultural demonstration after dinner for each of the four evenings during the congress. My idea was to have one from each of the following groups: Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. We budgeted a total of $1,000 for these (very much over the objections of the AGA people), and there was considerable reluctance from every sector, but with much persuasive effort, we convinced each Asian representative to come up with a performance group. The performances were well received; indeed, the whole event was so well received that it is talked about to this day. Furthermore, Northwest Korean players, with Charles Huh at the forefront, were established as being in the top ranks nationally.

The Washington State Go Association

Formal incorporation of the US Go Congress organizing group was part of this effort, as none of us was willing to accept so much risk without protection from personal liability. In line with my other ideas, I wanted to have a specifically multicultural group. Others agreed, and vigorous recruiting commenced. At the next meeting, we had Charlie Huh and Andy Teh on board (although reluctantly); Frank Fukuda was harder to find, and didn't join us until a month or two later (an index of how completely the Japanese presence had fallen away).

One of the first orders of business was to choose a name for the new organization, and this proved to be a defining moment. The Caucasian members were in favor of a name reflecting its diverse cultural heritage, such as "Washington Go-Badook-Wei Chi Association," for example. We asked Charlie and Andy to talk with others about it. We had definite ideas of a confederation of clubs rather than a single large club, and wanted to communicate that collaborative purpose. At the next meeting both said that we should just use "Go" in the name, and drop any reference to the other names. I was quite surprised. After the meeting, I talked to Charlie about it, and he explained that he felt that the terminology was American now, even although it was obviously derived from the Japanese. So it was not experienced as imposition of Japanese terminology, but as the terminology of America, their new home and destiny. Their impetus was to adapt to established American practice, not to change its course on the basis of their heritage. Thus, the organization came to be the Washington State Go Association.

In other discussions regarding technical terminology, the same view was expressed: the dominance of the Korean players' strength and numbers in the community (particularly of the stronger players) should not be (and was not) used to induce the indigenous players to take up Korean terms. As with so much that is significant in life, these decisions and communications came quickly and quietly, without formality or fanfare. Today, it is a mark of considerable sophistication (for a Caucasian) to know that either the Korean term "*cheongseok,*" or the American (Japanese derived) term "*joseki,*" are homonyms for words not used in polite society.[15]

In many respects, however, I was deeply disappointed. I had hoped that the event would break the social barriers between the American community and that element of the Korean community which was noticeably absent at American organized tournaments. I wanted to produce a strong cross-cultural organization that would induce many new local players, presumably mostly Korean, to join us. This was to have been the result of the truly strong and honest affirmative action taken in forming the organizing group. It was to be a demonstration of what could be done when people really tried to make diversity (not at that time the buzzword it now is) work. It was not to be. Having learned more since then, I have more of a sense of how impossible a dream it may have been.

The Congress organizers had no understanding of how differently Korean organizations operated, particularly regarding the meaning of "leadership responsibility." I became aware of this only many years later when discussing with Andrew Cho the difficulties of maintaining the activities of the Korean club in the face of inadequate membership and attendance. Unlike many such groups in America, the club leadership responsibility was shared over the years, rotating every year or two—a fact that I had noted over time and envied. Andrew, obviously an eminent leader in the community, had steadfastly refused the post, and yet managed to see to it that the presidency was filled as necessary. I saw this as a model of a leader promoting the development of leadership and organizational skills in the community, and wished I could successfully emulate it. In the course of our conversation, he explained that the difficulty was that the club president was personally, financially, as well as organizationally, responsible for the club. The reluctance within the community came from the (justified) perception that there was an insufficient pool of active players willing and able to pay enough for the club to survive as a separate entity. As a person steeped in American styles of nonprofit organization, I was astounded and expressed that. Although we talked only briefly, it was clear that the principle is as deeply ingrained in Korean expectations of community organizing as the avoidance of such direct responsibility is ingrained in American expectations.

Hand-in-hand with this is the perception of the relationship between leadership and the organizing group. I expected that a meeting would present an agenda formulated by the president, there would be a variety of viewpoints expressed—perhaps with much disagreement—and eventually an effective decision would be made, taking into account the disparate interests of the different members of the group. From the Western perspective, decisionmaking is decidedly political; financial responsibility is vested in the group, not among the individuals. If there is significant risk, a corporation is formed in order to protect the individuals from financial liability, and it is the responsibility of the group to formulate goals that are achievable within the limits of the group's ability to generate revenue. Apparently, in a Korean organization, however, the leader accepts personal financial responsibility, and with it also takes control of setting goals within the limits of the leader's ability to accept the financial responsibility and risk. To the extent that help is needed, those goals must be sufficiently consistent with the feelings of helpers to ensure their help to the extent that it is required. Thus, in a meeting, the leader explains what has happened, what the group will do to solve its problems, and who will take on responsibility for different tasks within the overall project. There is little discussion beyond the technical planning to accomplish the established goals. Perhaps most importantly, people expect to be told what to do and not participate in higher level decisionmaking. Similarly, when someone agrees to take on responsibility for something, they expect and maintain total control over the entire process.

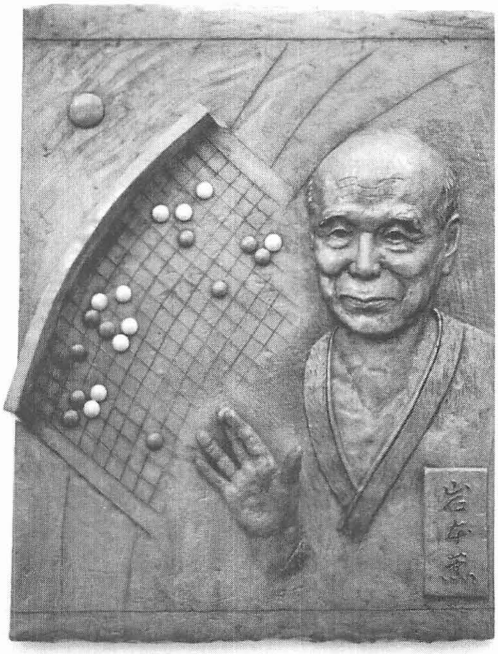
This is not a specifically Korean, but rather an Asian, trait, and by now, AGA organizers around the country have become familiar with it and (perforce) have come to accept a degree of loss of control that initially feels very dangerous. An AGA executive once made this observation at the AGA annual meeting: "When they agree to do something, you absolutely lose all control, will never know what it cost, or how it was accomplished; but have an absolute guarantee that it will be done" (not an exact quote—but close—I remember it well for the insight it provided). The reference was to Asians in general, the tone a mixture of helplessness, awe, and delight.

The Seattle Go Center

During the 1980s, the atmosphere at The Last Exit slowly changed as the original core group of American players was drawn away by the exigencies of family life, and Korean players (always strongly drawn by the exigencies of resettlement) were increasingly likely to organize and play independently. By the mid '80s, it was no longer probable that a Korean player would be found there at all times during a weekday evening.

Meanwhile, another Japanese player was taking steps that would profoundly influence all Go players of this region. The motivation deserves explanation. In Japan, the day of the second game of the Honinbo title match was played on August 6, 1945. The local police chief had suggested that the organizers play a few miles out of town, as there were fears of bombing raids by the Americans. Shortly after starting, there was a great explosion, bright light, and then a wind that blew out the windows. The shock was so great that stones fell from the board. After a few minutes with no more bombs, the players cleaned up, restored the position, and resumed play. In the afternoon, they saw refugees from the city streaming by, more horribly injured with each passing hour. The city was Hiroshima; the players, Kaoru Iwamoto and Hosai Fujisawa. Mr. Iwamoto lost that game, although he won the match. But he was profoundly affected by that experience. "After that, I came to realize that money wasn't important. Titles aren't important. Winning isn't important. *Peace* is important!"[16] Within a few years, he began devoting much of his time to promoting Go around the world in the belief (also deeply held by my grandmother) that a world of Go players would be a more peaceful one. In 1987, he sold a piece of land in Tokyo and used the proceeds to set up a fund to create Go centers in cities around the world.

In 1989, I was first approached about the possibility of Seattle being one of those sites. My main comment about its potential was that our community was so small that it must be attractive to all or it could not be successful. I reeled off the list of groups, noting that nearly all were



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Plaque of Kaoru Iwamoto at the entrance to the Seattle Go Center.

unable or unwilling to provide much ongoing financial support: American youths, students, Japanese business people, and Chinese—who remained very isolated and were all immigrants—but most particularly the Koreans, who were (and are) our greatest reservoir of both strength and numbers. I frankly thought that this litany, along with the assessment that financial independence would require the ability to generate revenue from other sources (such as rental of space) would eliminate us from consideration. But it did not. It would be six years coming, but the Seattle Go Center opened on September 20, 1995.[17]

In 1996, Mr. Iwamoto visited for two weeks, playing with all visitors almost daily (the Hiroshima narration above comes from my conversations with him at that time). He didn't say it directly, but seeing the joyful expression on his face as he played, one couldn't avoid the feeling that this man was most pleased with the outcome of this investment (about $1.35 million), and he particularly expressed his pleasure that Korean players were there regularly and represented on the board of directors. He felt the success of his underlying motivation for creating Go centers. He saw the beginning of a process in which the promotion of peaceful play among all would displace the universal tendency to tamely travel roads too rutted by the wheels of history. Bill Camp, manager of the center, recalls Mr. Iwamoto saying that this is the only center in the world where people of all nationalities regularly play together.[18]

The Limits to Interaction

In later years, noting that *The Korea Times* carried a daily Badook column, I came to ask how many Korean people play and was amazed to be told that about a quarter (perhaps 10,000 people) of the Korean population in the Greater Seattle area play Go—seemingly an immense pool. My first thought was of how sparse the integration appears to have been. Particularly in the later years, when the Korean population had increased in size, there had not been a concomitant increase in exchange. Indeed, if anything, it had *decreased*. Presumably, the establishment of Korean institutions of all sorts has inhibited the desire to mix. Similarly, the strength of such institutions tends to inhibit participation by non-Koreans. Thus, the apparently fertile friendly contact in the early 1970s appears to have produced few (although beautiful) actual cross-cultural blossoms. It is worth noting that the strongest impact on individuals was apparently made in the late '60s and '70s. Dennis Waggoner, Jim Davies, Harry McAndrew, Blaine Walgren, and Bill Nicolai shifted their lives into "Asia/Go mode" during this period. Jim Walsh was the last to go in the early '80s. Since that time, there have been no such dramatic effects. Is this an accident of history, or are there reasons we can discern? I believe there are.

First, for most people, there was very little cultural exchange outside of the game itself. The marked tendency within gaming subcultures to focus strongly on the game and the competition over extended discussions of real life issues was perhaps enhanced by the added barriers of language and culture; we Caucasian players had a limited perception of the substantial wave of immigration that was creating a local Korean American community and an even more limited interest in learning about it. When we eventually learned that there were many other Koreans, even six dans, who never came to The Last Exit, we were surprised. "Where do they play?" and "Why don't they come here?" we asked, and were told that they visited each other's homes and didn't feel comfortable enough with English. And with rare exceptions, there was little or no effort beyond that to establish stronger relationships.

Notable exceptions were Bill Nicolai and Ick-Whan Lee, who met over the game, and went on to establish a strong business relationship for many years. In the late '70s, Bill built a major mountaineering supply company known as Early Winters (the prototype for the Omnipotent was sewn in Jim Walsh's basement). Much of its success was due to a combination of innovative use of new technology and materials and access to Korean textile factories, which came through his association with Mr. Lee. Common now, this practice was a leading-edge business development then. Bill remembers: "Ick-Whan was so patient and willing to play with me, even when I was a mid-kyu level player and needed nine stones." As Early Winters' requirements for materials grew and Ick-Whan got into the import business, their business interests coincided. "There was no way I could have made the connection in Korea without Mr. Lee."[19] Neither Bill nor Ick-Whan are active players now, but they still see each other frequently, although their business interests have diverged. Perhaps in retirement, not so far distant by now, we will see them return to the ranks of active players.

Another experience is reported by Jim Walsh, another exception:

> I returned to Seattle (from the North Kitsap area) late in the 1960s and started law school in 1969. For the three-year period when I attended law school, I went to the LEB nearly everyday. I met Jae Ho Kim at The Last Exit, but it seems to me now that I knew him from earlier (say 1966-67, when I attended the U of W to get my teaching certificate). I can't be sure.[20]
>
> Anyway, Jae and I made an unspoken commitment to each other: he would teach me Go, and I would teach him English. For several years, this commitment deepened into a friendship that went beyond Go or English. For example, when Jo {Jim's wife} came home from the hospital with our first-born son, Jae was one of the first to come by (for dinner as I recall). I remember long conversations about culture, politics, society, and so on and so forth. All of this surrounded and enriched our relationship, whereby I was his pupil in Go and he was my pupil in English.

> Somewhere in there, I met Ick–Whan Lee (I am sure that I knew Jae first, maybe Jae introduced me to Ick–Whan). I quickly made a similar (unspoken) commitment with Ick-Whan (although it seems to me that his English at the beginning was much better than Jae's was). They were my primary instructors. Under their efforts I went from (whatever) to shodan—my fondest ambition. I have a clear memory of playing and losing at a nine stone handicap. I also have a clear memory of a game with Ick–Whan at eight stones where he played at the center stone. I don't remember who made the suggestion (it might have been you, or I might have come up with by myself), but I attached my stone to his, cross cut and then ran like hell with the cutting stones. Ick–Whan never played in the center again (although it was some months before I was good enough to play him at seven stones).[21]

Jae Ho Kim and Frank Fukuda also met over the Go board and then established a long-term relationship in the import/export business.

Second, good will and intentions aside, neither group was entirely comfortable in the venue of the other. At The Last Exit, the language was American English and the culture hippie-American; at the Korean club, the lingua franca and culture were both Korean. With its constant availability, low cost, and allowance for storage of sets, The Exit made it too easy to simply affiliate to satisfy short-term desires. And even when a Korean tournament was directed by a Caucasian, attendance was unaffected (this was often done for AGA tournaments that seed top players into national invitational tournaments, so that Korean organizers could be sure of meeting specific reporting requirements). There was a pool of about one dozen players in each community who were consistently willing to play in the others' tournaments, and usually about half showed up. This, of course, is the Caucasian perspective. Clearly, there were other considerations for the Koreans.

Korean players' wish for a Korean Go playing club has always been strong; not only to have a place to play, but also to have a place that feels Korean, and thus comfortable. Yet, the lack of an adequate population to support it induced decisions to invite the players in the American community to come, too: first to tournaments, then for regular play. As in the case of my youthful experience with the Japanese club, these decisions were not easily made. The issue created (or more likely only revealed) divisions within the group. The common split within an immigrant community is between those who wish to create an island of the mother-culture in the foreign land and let the children, or (better yet) the grandchildren, manage integration, and those who wish to immerse themselves as rapidly and completely as possible. This pattern of development of an immigrant community in America is well known and considered by many to be inevitable: when an immigrant group achieves sufficient size to create a small zone of residence that is dominated by the group, people can speak their mother tongue, obtain news, food, and literature, and feel culturally comfortable without having to leave that zone. This was well known to us as an academic fact. But most people made no serious efforts to enhance contact, and believed that there were no strong wishes for such enhanced contact from the other side. On those occasions, when I did think of it, I felt a substantial barrier, and that my efforts were clumsy—perhaps insulting—and not comfortable to those with whom I tried to make stronger contact.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the local Korean population had grown to the point at which it was an identifiable community. It was no longer surprising to see Korean business signs here and there, or even to drive for a block or two and suddenly realize that half the business signs were written in Korean. There was a daily Korean newspaper; *The Korea Times* Seattle office opened in 1982, and one saw occasional articles in the mainstream newspapers about the Korean community that had seemingly sprung into existence full grown. Simultaneously, the attendance of Korean players at The Last Exit dwindled. The original wave—Jae Ho Kim, Ick-Whan Lee, Thomas Chung, and Charlie Huh—were still in town and seen occasionally, but their student days were over; work and family life begun, and they now concentrated their energies in those areas. There were fewer Korean students coming to the UW, and those who attended didn't spend so much time at The Last Exit. It is easy to surmise that with a local Korean community available, its institutions would be much more familiar and helpful in many ways to a student struggling with learning a new language, culture, and the academic demands of graduate school. Thus, the same influences that drove the early students into the arms of The Last Exit community now drove them into the Korean institutions.

At the same time, The Last Exit Go community had changed significantly. There was a small but active coterie of relatively strong Caucasian players and a consistent attendance of others such that it was not so easily or comfortably penetrated by a new person regardless of background. It was not that a new player was unwelcome—they were. But the existing community was no longer in awe of an ordinarily strong player. Deprived of that automatic key into the social club, the new player faced the usual difficulties of breaking into a small, tightly-knit social group. It is also true that none of the more recent students could compete with the immense skills possessed by Charlie Huh and Dong Chan Lee. In that sense, we were spoiled. With the added difficulties of language and culture, it is little wonder that the Korean presence at The Last Exit waned.

While institutions such as The Last Exit and the Korean Baduk Association likely inhibited interaction, it is also true that without the institutions, there would have been even *less* contact. It is also clear to me that stronger relationships were forged when the individuals moved their contact beyond the context of the institutions. Jim Walsh's, Bill Nicolai's and Frank Fukuda's experiences illustrate this. That the Caucasian players were power-fully influenced by their extensive exposure to Go and to Korean players is easily seen from noting how they have moved through life in the intervening twenty-five years or so. My occasional involvement with Go organizations and organizing activity has become constant and has led me to travel to both Japan and Korea and to organize two US Go congresses. It now leads me to write this review of events. Jim Walsh now lives in Taiwan. Lee Anne Bowie regularly teaches Go to her students in the Seattle public school district, and one of her former students became a major organizer with me for the 1995 US Go Congress. Blaine Walgren developed a strong interest in Asian philosophy and eventually married a Tibetan woman (but they live in the US). Dennis Wagoner studied Japanese extensively and visited there for nearly a year before returning, and in the late '70s published a quarterly journal of Go activity in the West, entitled *The West Coast Go Newsletter*. Jim Davies' experience in particular is worth mentioning, as he has now become an author of a number of books on Go. Around 1968, Jim's strength was such that Ick-Whan could give him an eight stone handicap, but he improved to dan level within a couple of years—the fastest improvement of anyone Ick-Whan had played. Jim Davies later gave up mathematics and moved to Japan, where he has been a major contributor to the publication of Go material in English.[22] All players in this community have a far greater appreciation of and respect for Asian culture in general, and Korean culture in particular, than they would have had without this contact. And the influence is in that direction.

The lack of reference to Korea in this litany is deceptive. It is important to realize that although Caucasians thought of Go as a Japanese game, the influence of Japanese involvement was limited to publications and the occasional visit for a few days by Japanese professionals. Both profoundly affected our beliefs about the wellsprings of Go in America, and until the arrival of the Koreans, there was no other influence. However, the seminal influences that led many to radically alter the primary course of their lives came not from books, but from direct contact with *people*. Overwhelmingly, that contact was primarily with Korean people first. The fact that they then actualized their ambitions in Japan and Taiwan reflects the economic opportunities of the time, not the original stimulus of interest in Asia.

Here and Now

This is history in the making, so we have no way of avoiding a sudden ending that leaves us without the satisfaction of a conclusion. The current approach of Korean American players is to maintain the existence of a Korean club as an organization, but not to try to maintain a separate facility. Clearly, one function of the club is to influence policies of the Seattle Go Center to make it more inviting to Koreans. This influence has been felt in smoking policies and in tournament organization. The most constant issue is smoking (most Korean players smoke heavily, and most nonsmokers would prefer it banned in the club). But the sharpest disagreement arises from the usual requirement for AGA membership in order to play in tournaments. The cost is $10—not a serious expense for most, but many people have no feeling that the ratings and publications of the AGA are of sufficient value (this is not a particularly Korean trait—it has been a constant with all groups). This is particularly true for those who don't read English in comfort and are far more interested in reading Korean Go publications about famous world-class Korean players than American publications that focus mainly on American events and players who don't have the same presence on the international stage.

Thus, it is a substantial inhibition for players who participate only occasionally. Korean leaders feel (rightly I believe) that this group of occasional players is the greatest potential resource for more active players. Yet, organizers of the Seattle Go Center (myself included) have an interest in promoting Go cooperatively with the AGA, which requires membership for tournaments for which it provides rating services. The Caucasian population, composed of weaker, younger players who are more interested in their ratings in the American system (not much, but more than the Koreans), is interested in AGA-rated events. Complicating the politics, the very strongest Korean players need AGA events to qualify for invitations to national and international tournaments with substantial prizes, such as the Fujitsu and Ing tournaments. The president of the club, therefore, has been working actively with the Go Center manager to find effective compromise solutions. Other prominent Korean players have told me that they have been discouraging efforts to create a separate playing venue. Again, inevitably, the community is split between the desire of some for an independent Korean club, and others who feel that the Go Center is the place to be, even with its inconveniences such as smoking limits, tournaments requiring AGA membership, and closing hours. Thus, we appear to be seeing an integration process in progress, with all the difficulties for individuals and institutions being exposed more vividly than in more stable times and homogenous societies.

And even as I write, time weaves. The above was written less than three months ago. Now as this article goes to press, there are new developments to report. The Seattle Korean language school has added a Go class to its curriculum, the teacher being none other than that most steadfast lover of the game, Jae Ho Kim.[23] Upon interviewing the principal of the school, I was told that the parents had requested this addition; she felt that the class was better attended than expected.[24] In April, the Korean consulate general sponsored a major Korean tournament at the Go Center for the first time. With a first prize of round-trip airfare to Seoul, it drew a strong top contingent. Charlie Huh, who usually sticks to play on the Internet now, was happy to compete for this, and although strongly challenged, won.

From the era of The Last Exit to the Seattle Go Center, we have now covered a period of about thirty years. During that time, local players have grown greatly in skill, such that they are a substantial factor in national competition. This is partly due to the presence of very strong Korean players transplanted at full strength from Korea. But it is far more true in the Caucasian community, where both the number of players and average strength have improved dramatically. There is little question that the improvement within the Caucasian community was due to the presence of strong players from whom to learn. "Presence" is perhaps too mild a word. The critical element was the Korean players' willingness to mix directly with the existing Caucasian community. Initially, the absence of a cohesive, preexisting, Korean community and the concentration in the vicinity of the UW encouraged this contact, but it continued even after the arrival of many thousands of immigrants in the succeeding years.

MATTHEW BENUSKA

Jae Ho Kim playing at the Seattle Go Center's Second Anniversary Tournament (1997)

Notes:

Although this article is presented as a recording of a bit of history, it is not just a recitation of facts. From the beginning, I have seen it as being as much sociology as history, and as much about Americans as Koreans. As an actor in the story, I can, of course, not be truly objective, as a true historian should. Indeed, the fact that I, as a Caucasian American, write this is a part of the history itself. I am writing as though readers are familiar with the game.

Go is almost certainly the oldest board game in the world, having been invented about 4,000 years ago in China. It is based on a simple principle of capture; the winner is the one who captures the most space on the board. The stones are all of equal value, and there is almost no restriction on how they may be played. A beginner may start after five minutes of instruction, but a lifetime of study, even by those with great talent, is not enough to achieve true mastery. In ancient China, reasonable skill in playing Go was considered a necessary part of an educated person's social graces at court. The military considered it a training medium for officers.

Around the Eastern world, those familiar with the game attribute sophistication and intelligence to the skilled player. In this respect it has a cultural role similar to that of chess in the Western world. As with so much of the Asian culture that originated in China, it first migrated to Korea and later to Japan about 1,500 years ago. Recorded games demonstrate that even then, talented people were devoting the energies of a lifetime to learning the intricacies of its strategy and tactics.

Part of my preparation for this project was interviewing about twenty-five players to learn more at firsthand about their experience here with respect to playing Go. The insights gained by these interviews permeates this work even when not specifically noted. It would be much poorer without their forthcoming willingness to share often painful personal history. A complete discussion of these was too long to be included here, but is available upon request.

Unless indicated otherwise, italics where they appear have been added—*Ed.*

1. Winston Churchill, BBC radio broadcast, October 1, 1939 (Sir Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Finest Hour, 1939-1940*, vol. 6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), p. 50).
2. The Last Exit on Brooklyn coffeehouse, popularly referred to as "The Last Exit," "LEB," or just "The Exit".
3. "Dan" refers to the "degrees" of black belt awarded in the martial arts, while "kyu" ranks are the equivalent of the colored belts, with one kyu being the strongest (kyu ranks are counted down from nine, followed by dan ranks, which are counted up from one). As with the martial arts, the graduation from kyu to dan rank is considered a major accomplishment signifying substantial skill.
4. When players of unequal rank play against each other, it is standard practice to award a set number of stones (called a "handicap") to the weaker player to position on the board prior to the start of the game. Up to the rank of six dan, one degree of rank is equivalent to a one-stone difference in skill. Thus a one dan ("shodan") player would receive three stones (a three-stone handicap) when playing against a four dan. In this instance, since I was three dan and Jae Ho Kim told me he was one kyu, I assumed that he was the weaker player, where in fact, he was the equivalent of six dan (which is one *gup* (kyu) in the Korean system). As ranks above six dan are not normally awarded to amateurs, there is a wide range of actual ability in that rank.
5. Arthur Smith, *The Game of Go, the National Game of Japan* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1908). Prior to this, there was a German work published in the 1880s entitled, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft fur Natur—und Volkerkunde Ostasians*, by Oscar Korschelt (see Emanuel Lasker, *Brettspiele der Volker: Ratse;-und Mathematiche Spiele* (Berlin: Verlag Scherl, 1931); also Samuel P. King and George G. Leckie (trans.) *The Theory and Practice of Go*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1965)).
6. Hachiro Hashiguchi, personal communication, March 1997.
7. Language, culture, and generational issues are sufficient reasons; but in addition, their

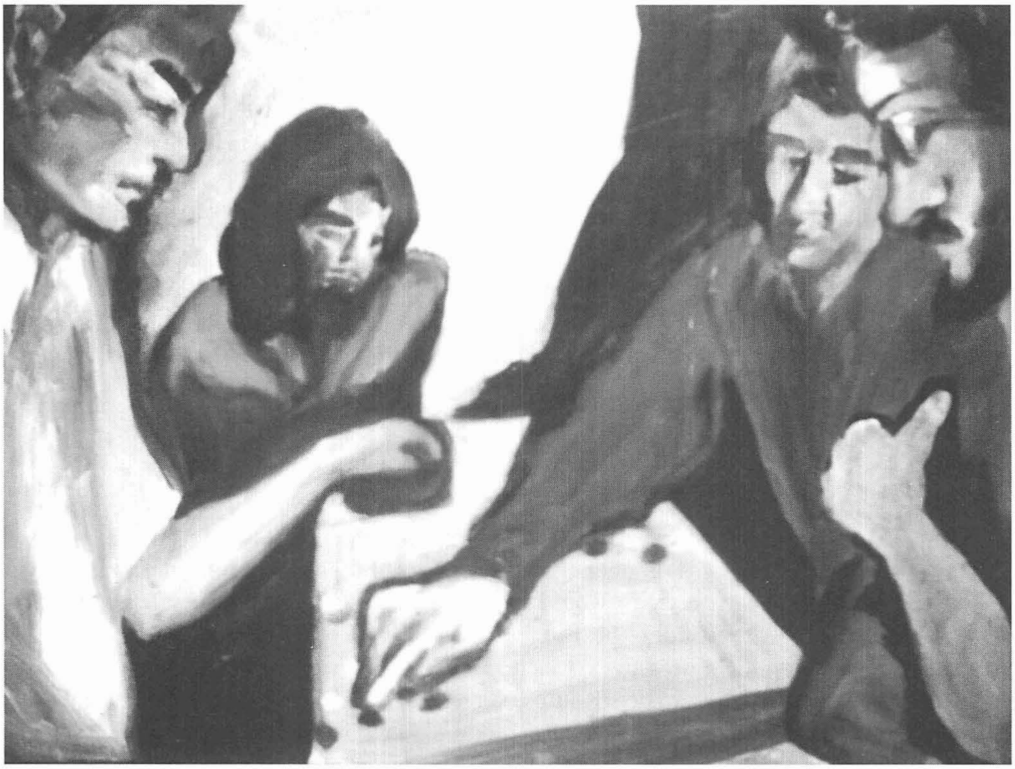
club was a chapter of the Nihon Kiin, the largest national Go organization in Japan. The Kiin had decided in the early 1960s that they would discourage formation of foreign chapters and cease providing support for existing ones in favor of encouraging the formation of independent national organizations by local populations. With the coming of war, and the subsequent internment of Japanese, what little contact there was to that time withered to nothing. After the war, there was a considerable period of painful reintegration. I never became comfortable enough with the Japanese players to ask them about these difficult issues (more a comment on myself than on them I believe). The main evidence I have of the conflict was the observations above, indicating both a powerful desire to establish relations and to withdraw from contact.

8. Ick–Whan Lee, personal communication, October, 1997.
9. One-dan rank (see notes 3 and 4).
10. Within a few months, that era would squirm from infancy to toddlerhood. The civil rights movement was well on its way in the South, but this was North; Kennedy was dead, King was not. A church in the South had been bombed, killing four black children. This event reached out and touched in a way that the other events had not.
11. The name is a Hebrew word, meaning literally "peace," but used as the common word of greeting (and parting) in Israel. In the context of the times, this was (and was intended to be) a mild political statement, but it was dedicated to games, not politics.
12. After decades of play, Sen Suzuki died from cancer in May 1997. To honor his work and encourage more people to learn to play Go, the Seattle Go Center established a memorial fund for beginning players in his name.
13. Koreans have a maxim for this, "*Yeong du sa mi,*" which roughly translates as "beginning with the head of a dragon but ending with the tail of a snake", and is similar to the English maxim, "to begin with a bang but end with a whimper"—*Ed.*
14. Indeed, in the period when Dennis Waggoner was publishing the *West Coast Go Newsletter*, we had a substantial belief that the AGA would probably fold in a year or two, and that we on the West Coast would be able to step in to pick up the pieces and carry on to great glory. It was not to be. But it is an indication of the effect of the presence of strong players on local organizers. Such ideas simply didn't—and as a matter of practice—don't occur without the stimulus created by wanting to see a local champion in the larger national spotlight. Dennis wouldn't have had the nerve to publish without the assistance of really strong players to ensure accuracy, and there wouldn't have been a large enough community locally to make it interesting. (One could easily argue that this was true even in the actual case, but Dennis was truly dedicated.)
15. Either word roughly translates as "son of a bitch."
16. Kaoru Iwamoto, personal communication, September 1996.
17. Peyton Whitely, "Fans hope Seattleites will 'Go' for their game: first U.S. Go center for pastime will be located here." *The Seattle Times*, 17 September 1995, B2.
18. Bill Camp, personal communication, October 1997.
19. Bill Nicolai, personal communication, May 1997.
20. Actually Ick-Whan Lee arrived before Jae Ho Kim.
21. Jim Walsh, personal communication, November 1996.
22. Ick-Whan Lee remembers, "He was such a conscientious and quiet person that he wouldn't dare to ask me for a game. He would simply sit by me and quietly watch my

game with others. One weekend day, I asked him whether he didn't have a girl friend to date. His answer was, 'I like math more than girls, and I like Go more than math" (Ick–Whan Lee, personal communication, October 1997).

23. United Seattle Korean School, founded in the fall of 1996—*Ed.*

24. Kyung Sook Baik, personal communication, May 1997.



WILLIAM NICOLAI COLLECTION

Bill Nicolai (*wearing glasses, far right*) playing Go with Jae Ho Kim (*left*) at The Last Exit
(Painted by Wilma Nicolai, ca 1970)

ESSAY

Korean Americans In US Race Relations: Some Considerations About Korean American Work in Coalition With Other People of Color in the 1990s

Elaine H. Kim

Korean Americans Today

Much has been said about Korean Americans being positioned on the in-between—on the cusp, at the interstice, in the buffer zone—of Korea and America, between black and white, between mainstreamed and marginalized. But the in-between is a precarious and dangerous position to occupy if we are not fully aware of where we are and what our position means in the larger picture. Armed with that awareness, we have the potential to participate creatively and courageously in shaping this society.

There was a time within recent memory when Korean and other Asian Americans were excluded by law or simply by everyday practice from many walks of life in this country. Today's Korean and other Asian Americans are beginning to have more opportunities than ever before to contribute to the shaping of American ideas, attitudes, and identities. Korean American arts are flourishing. New writers like Leonard Chang, Heinz Fenkl, Nora Okja Keller, Helen Kim, Myung Mi Kim, Chang Rae Lee, Helie Lee, and Marie G. Lee are making history with their novels, poetry, and short fiction. There are new and talented film and video artists like Christine Chang, Michael Cho, Chris Chan Lee, Helen Lee, and Hye Jung Park, as well as animation artist Peter Chung and publicist Laura Kim, and visual artists such as Sung Ho Choi, Y. David Chung, Michael Joo, Jin Soo Kim, and Yong Soon Min, art historians Kumja Kim and Miwon Kwon, and performance artist Suzette Min making their mark in American art. The faces of new Korean American actors like Margaret Cho, Tim Lounibos, Sandra Oh, and Steve Park are lighting up the silver screen. We are beginning to see more and more Korean

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American bylines at many daily newspapers across the country—not just in Honolulu and Los Angeles, but also in New York and Philadelphia. We can find Korean names when the credits roll after the television news and on publishing companies' editorial staff lists. If present trends continue, the 21st century should be a century when Korean Americans will speak and write as well as listen and read, when they could be taken seriously as thinkers and doers as well as viewers and voters.

The Bad Old Days

Today's Korean American life is not marked by the blatantly discriminatory practices of the past. But phobic attitudes and discriminatory policies persist. Many Americans are still unaccustomed to thinking of Asians as part of the national landscape of humanity. For them, the idea of America as a nation of immigrants does not include Asians or Latinos, and the torch-bearing arm of the Statue of Liberty should be raised only towards Europe. They view Asians and Latinos as all foreign, all alike, and all undesirable, which is why the two Tustin youths who beat the Vietnamese American college student to death last year could brag that they had "killed a Jap." In 1997 Asian Americans were catching hell over the John Huang campaign contributions controversy, which spotlights again how we are viewed collectively and with race-based suspicion as undesirable foreigners conspiring to take over the US and its government for ourselves or for some Asian country or corporation.

I am old enough to have experienced various kinds of racial bigotry. When I was growing up in Maryland in the 1950s, people used to call me and my family members "Chinks" or "Japs." Sometimes they tried to spit on us. If we traveled into the Smoky Mountains by car, we had to start early to find a motel or tourist lodging that would rent us a room. If children invited me into their homes, their mothers sometimes scolded them and told me to leave. People told my parents, my brother, or me to go back to our country. Things got better by the early 1960s, when I was a college student in Pennsylvania. But classmates still asked me about Chinese art or Japanese cherry blossoms, because they couldn't imagine that I could be born and educated in this country as they were.

The Model Minority as Anti-Black

Sometimes, white people said to me, "At least you are not black," or "You should be grateful that you are not black." These statements, I think, convey the particular kind of racism Korean and other Asian Americans should recognize and resist. Beware of those who compliment us on how clean, hardworking, and self-reliant we are. Beware of those who tempt us with compliments about our old and venerable culture. Beware of those who speak sympathetically about how Korean and other Asian Americans are losing ground because of affirmative action for African Americans and Latinos.

What seems to infuriate some people the most is the thought of an ungrateful Asian American siding with other people of color, presumably against whites. They want very badly to hold onto their notion of Asian Americans as docile honorary whites whose very existence proves that Latinos and African Americans are lazy and stupid and that racism does not exist in American society. If you love African Americans so much, why don't you go back to Korea? According to this logic, Korean American affinities with African Americans and acknowledgment of the history of enslavement, segregation, and discrimination equal negation of "America," which can only be coded as "white."

The mainstream media have a stake in discouraging links among marginalized individuals and groups. Instead, they are invested in the maintenance of certain kinds of white supremacy. Earlier this month, the Ethnic Studies Department at Berkeley cosponsored a conference on whiteness called "The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness." *20/20* was eager to cover the event until they learned that it would not focus on white backlash or the KKK [Ku Klux Klan] but on the racialization of whiteness.

We all recall how during the Los Angeles uprisings, the news media were fond of emphasizing the hostilities between Korea and African Americans and how few wanted to highlight various goodwill efforts between these communities. All around us are examples of the mainstream media's investment in preserving the centrality of whiteness. Films about romance between Asian women and white men, such as *Come See the Paradise*, *Year of the Dragon*, and *Heaven and Earth*, like the stories of African American caretakers of color in the films *Grand Canyon*, *Ghost*, and *Driving Miss Daisy*, can be read as attempts to grapple with the fear of increasing immigration and racial diversity, fear of growth of the US feminist movement, and fear of the decline of US social, political, and economic global influence, which is invariably cast as white and male. Those with the power to tell and sell the stories can only trivialize the experiences of the people of color in them, since their main concern is with re-asserting the centrality of whites, especially white males, who can go everywhere—to Chinatown, to Japanese American internment camps, back and forth to Vietnam—while people of color, especially females, are reduced to subordinate manageability.

Buried Legacies

Asian Americans share with African Americans and other Americans of color a long, complex, and little-discussed relationship. This reminds me a little of the relationships between Korean provinces and villages, linked by roads built by the Japanese colonizers—not to each other, but to the sea, from which Korean natural resources were taken and into which Japanese manufactured goods were pumped. The political, economic, and cultural histories of Mexico and the Philippines have much to share, but the discussion, instead of being direct, is siphoned through the US and Spain. Likewise, there are many parallels between Asian Indian and Korean American histories rendered invisible by British, Japanese, and American narratives.

Indeed, Afro-Asian friendship has hidden roots in our society. No one talks much about how people of the African American community stood, practically alone and certainly at no direct gain to themselves, against the abrogation of Japanese Americans' civil rights during World War II. Or how three-quarters of a century ago the mostly black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters issued a public statement of solidarity with Filipino workers, who, they said, "have been used against the unionization of Pullman porters just as Negroes have been used against the unionization of white workers".[1]

To forge our links in the face of these forces, we need to unearth the buried history of coalition work and activism in the past. Korean Americans can link ourselves with the proud, if subterranean, Asian American legacy of fighting economic and social injustice. Since the nineteenth century, Chinese Americans fought every piece of discriminatory legislation, sometimes all the way to the Supreme Court. Indeed, Chinese and African court cases against segregation inspired and propelled each other forward over the decades. The spectacular pan-ethnic labor organizing activities between Japanese and Filipinos in Hawaii at the turn of the century and the cross-racial labor organizing between Japanese and Mexicans in California in the first decades of this century, and then between Filipinos and Mexicans from the 1960s, have provided a legacy for Asian American labor organizing taking place in various parts of the country today, such as the multiracial San Francisco hotel maids' strike in the early 1980s and the recent pan-Asian American Jessica McClintock boycott that included many Korean American participants and was strongly supported by Latino garment workers. The movement beyond narrow nationalism was clearly seen several years ago here in Los Angeles, when KIWA (Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates) organizers fought against the South Korea-based corporation that acquired [the Radisson Wilshire Plaza] hotel and planned to replace unionized Latino workers with cheaper, non-unionized immigrant workers.

We have to reach far beyond simpleminded celebrations of identity and resist the seductive claims of victimhood. We have to face the difficult task of building strategic alliances rooted in our understanding of the relationships between our well-being and that of the collectivity.

Contexts of Difficulties in Coalition Building

Many people say that at the top of the agenda for Korean Americans right now is building concrete coalitions with other communities of color. This crucially important work is made difficult by a number of factors.

First, US immigration policies historically favored middle-class Korean immigrants: merchants and foreign students, not laborers (before 1965), and urban professionals (until the 1980s). Proportionally, the middle class is better represented among Korean and other East Asian Americans than other groups of color, which reinforces the primacy of middle-class concerns that always predominate anyway because poor and working class people have less access to power. Moreover, US immigration policies favor those who oppose socialism and communism, and many immigrants and refugees from Korean and other parts of Asia have been staunchly anti-Communist—and thus both lacking in sympathy for the poor and ripe for alignment with conservative Republicans, who have traditionally opposed many of the programs supported by other people of color in the US.

A second and related point is that many recent Asian immigrants, including Korean immigrants, are from countries colonized by the US and other Western nations. Although anti-US sentiment is growing all over Asia, the so-called "colonial mentality" is a frequent outcome of colonization. Many immigrants are held back from questioning injustices by ingrained old notions about the predominance and superiority of everything "American," which, for many of them, means only "white." Today, burgeoning Korean nationalism and anti-US sentiments notwithstanding, Western cultural influences can be seen everywhere. A good friend tells me how the newspapers and TV talk shows in South Korea recently carried programs on "postmodernism." When she went to a small village video store to find a video to rent, the owner advised her to rent *Terminator II* because it was very "postmodern."

On the other hand, Korean American dissident and subversive tendencies have often found expression in Korean cultural nationalism. In the earliest days of the Asian American movement, the people I knew clamored to study the history and literature of her or his country of origin. But Asian American interests and issues were most often cast aside as they were squeezed between US racism and homeland politics. Any Japanese Americans who hoped that Japan would help them when they were interned during World War II were bound to be disappointed; Japan was interested in using them as pawns in a propaganda campaign against the US or as bargaining chips for Japanese prisoners of war. Chinese Americans were used by Taiwan in its effort to discredit China to the US. During almost two decades of military dictatorships, the Korean CIA routinely spied on Korean Americans and tried to enlist them in their effort to influence the US Congress. Nor were Filipino

Americans exempt from the long arm of the Marcos government and its blacklist. Today, a huge amount of Vietnamese American attention has been focused on the dream of "taking back" Vietnam from the Communists. During the last fifteen years, many Vietnamese Americans have been murdered in cold blood for making what were regarded as leftist statements. LeLy Hayslip, writer of the book on which *Heaven and Earth* was based, is hounded everywhere she goes by Vietnamese Americans for sending medical supplies to unified Vietnam. For the most part, historically, Korean and other Asian American involvement in homeland politics, for whatever its effects on the fate of the homeland, distracted Asian American attention to US issues, including coalition work with other people of color against racism and social injustice in this country.

Perhaps too the focus on homeland politics helped perpetuate traditional homeland class and gender hierarchies, making it difficult for working-class Korean Americans, and Korean American women, to participate fully in community politics.

Another thing that has dramatically separated Korean Americans from other people of color has been in terms of attitudes towards what we call "America." For many Native Americans, America means stolen land. For many Chicanos, it means occupied territory conquered and taken from Mexico 150 years ago. For many African Americans, it means the country built on slave labor brought here by force. For a large number of Korean Americans, especially of the recent immigrant generation that escaped from war, political upheaval, colonization, and barriers to social and economic mobility in the homeland, America has meant "promised land" or "dream country."

At times, issues that unite Korean Americans separate us from other people of color, and even from other Asians. That Los Angeles' Black-Korean Alliance folded after the uprisings can be understood in light of the fact that Korean shop owners needed it much more than people from the African American community did. It is often said that most Korean and other Asian American concerns have just not been particularly high on a long list of urgent priorities for black and brown people working on economic survival or human rights issues.

The Need for Common Ground

Coalition work with other communities of color requires common issues of concern, whether these be issues of workers' rights, equality before the law, or educational opportunity, rather than too general an issue like "oppression." Of course, work around a narrow problem must emerge from a collective vision and ideological basis. Even so, specific issues can be key sites of conflict for different groups at different points in time; as a result, coalition work among people of color is made even more difficult because alliances built around very specific issues are necessarily shifting and temporary.

In a society held together by hierarchical arrangements of power and the privileging of competitive individualism, it is difficult for groups of color to deal with each other on an equal basis without falling into competition, ranking, and scrambling around hierarchies of oppression. People of color in the US wear, at different moments, and often at the same time, the face of both victim and victimizer.

Even among Asian Americans, hierarchies operate. When Asian Americans came to fuller voice with the civil rights movements of the 1960s, that voice, which has been the loudest ever since, was male, English-speaking, Chinese or Japanese, and heterosexual. Given this picture, for Asian Americans to work together across nationalities, languages, generations, genders, and sometimes social classes is in itself almost a miracle. A few years ago, when the question arose of whether we were experiencing cultural diversity or racial "Balkanization" at Berkeley, I remember thinking that experiences of cultural diversity were being defined exclusively from a dominant culture standpoint. For many students of color who come from communities where their group is very much in the minority and who have been overwhelmed with growing up brown, yellow, red, or black in a culture defined by whiteness, being with other students of color is experiencing cultural diversity. And even though all Asians may look alike to others, it is quite a step for some Korean Americans to make friends with Filipino Americans or for some Vietnamese Americans to take classes with Bangladeshi American students. Perhaps we need to redefine what we mean by "coalition."

Making Our Way Though the Minefield

Racial meaning extends into social relations and social practices. What indeed is a person of color? I remember hearing that on some West Coast college campuses, Asian Americans are sometimes regarded as "inauthentic people of color." But different people of color experience racism and racialization differently. Racism against Asian Americans takes other unique forms, such as resentment and fear of "yellow peril" takeover by unassailable foreigners who excel at copying but cannot originate or as robotics automatons and nerdy buffoons with no human or animal feelings. Asian American men have often pointed to the feminization of Asian Americans, who whether male or female, gay or straight, are only good for the "bottom" position.

Since their information sources are primarily from the dominant culture, people of color are almost as susceptible to racist stereotyping as anyone else. Thus it should not be surprising that what Cornel West has called xenophobia is so prevalent among African Americans and that many Asian Americans stereotype African Americans as unreliable or crime-prone, that many Latinos can routinely call an Asian of whatever background "Chino," or that many Korean immigrants still refer to all Latinos as "Mexican."

Some Asian American activists feel that other people of color do not respect and trust Asians in coalition work and that other people of color have a hard time accepting the idea of Asian American leadership. Korean American members of the Oakland East Bay African Asian Roundtable have conjectured that this may be because they accept the "Fu Manchu" notion of Asians as untrustworthy aliens. I recall the National Conference poll, according to which more than four blacks and Latinos in ten and twenty-seven percent of whites agreed with the stereotype of Asian Americans as "unscrupulous, crafty and devious in business."[2]

It has been suggested that other people of color have good reason not to trust Asian Americans, who have not been widely known in this country for risking their own hides or sticking out their own necks for someone else. After African American skulls were cracked in protests over employment discrimination, Asian Americans stepped in to take up the consent decree jobs. Recently, Ling-Chi Wang was feted by the National Association for Bilingual Education for his role in *Lau vs. Nichols*, which had far-reaching effects on the language and education rights of both Asians and Latinos. But while the organization boasts a membership of 10,000 Latinos and Chicanos, very few Asians participate. Looking further into the matter, we can better understand why. Asians are fewer and far less politically and linguistically powerful than Latinos, especially because there are so many different Asian languages, including multiple Chinese and Filipino languages. While El Paso and Miami are virtually bilingual cities, there is nowhere in this country where a Chinese or Korean can thrive without any English.

Perhaps it is difficult for most people to imagine Asian American leadership in coalitions with other people of color because, except for a few spectacular examples, mostly in agricultural labor organizing during the first half of this century, there has been little history of Asian Americans working in such coalitions. They may not realize that the majority of Asian Americans, and especially Korean Americans, are pretty much newcomers who have been in this country fewer than twenty-five years.

Coalition work is not easy for anyone. And coalition is not right for everything we do. Perhaps it might help for us to view coalition not as a site of comfort and refuge but as a site of struggle. The fact is that the ever-increasing visibility of Korean and other Asian Americans means that we can no longer be dismissed as honorary whites, honorary blacks, or a wedge between the two. We need to end "biracial theorizing" and "zero-sum" thinking.

A third space is needed. Tiger Woods has said, "I don't consider myself a 'great black hope'. I'm just a golfer who happens to be black and Asian." Why can't a person be both black and Asian? Or will we just let Nike decide what Tiger Woods "is"?

Challenges Facing Korean Americans

It seems clear that these days we are hurdling toward the bifurcation of US society into two major economic classes: the very rich and the poor. Most Korean immigrant parents, having struggled so hard to make a new life in an adopted country, want economic security and social success for their children at almost any price. And their children do not want to fail their parents. In many ways, it would be a luxury for parents or children to stop to think about the so-called bigger picture. In commodity capitalism, both in the US and in South Korea, we are strongly discouraged from recalling that the well-being of every American, every Korean—indeed of everyone on the planet—depends on the well-being of the collective. No matter what, in the end there is no real turning away from other people's misery, poverty, or lack of freedom. But the combination of pressures from within the Korean family and community, and from the often competitively cutthroat world outside the family, could poison the atmosphere, making it even more difficult for us to keep our eyes on the prize of peace and justice built on compassion, which are necessary for beauty and creativity to come into being.

If we don't watch out, we may find ourselves one day schooled, credentialed, and trapped in the old "buffer zone" or "middleman" position, attempting an ultimately impossible mediation between those mostly white people who have the power to make the rules and those mostly black and brown people who are oppressed by them. Whether as professors, newscasters, attorneys, or middle managers, we could be positioned to serve as apologists for and explicators, upholders, and functionaries of the status quo.

We are now facing the enormous challenge of the direct and indirect impact of a shameful assault on the poor, immigrants, and people of color in this country. How will Korean Americans face this challenge? With whom will we join forces and what values will we espouse? In my view, one of the challenges for Korean Americans in the twenty-first century will be resisting the "gatekeeper function" with strong and focused commitment to place first priority, in whatever arenas we occupy, on the needs and well-being of the disenfranchised.

This work can be done quite creatively, I think, from an interstitial location, with one foot in the margins and the other in the mainstream much of the time. An interstitial location is different from a buffer zone. It is "both/and" rather than "either/or." It bears more resemblance to a Trojan horse than to a mascot.

If we remember the traditional Korean belief that the social health of the individual cannot be separated from the health of the collective, then we will be able to see clearly that we might play a pivotal part in this country's progress by helping to envision and participate in the emergence of a multiracial democracy. For the health of a larger community, can we declare our support for policies that might benefit us only indirectly and in the long term, just like those justice-loving African Americans who declared their support for the politically isolated Japanese Americans during World War II?

Korean Americans can set an example of commitment to a fairness that rejects narrow self-interest in favor of a community of justice. From our own very specific sites of contradiction, perhaps we can reach across our pain and differences to build bridges to one another.

Notes:

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1. Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1994).
2. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 March 1994.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

"Go Back To Your Country!" Korean Workers Were Resented at Seattle Shipyards

Kun Hong Park

One evening in early October 1979, Mr. Ki Man Song, a four-year welder at Todd Shipyard Corp., called me to ask for my help with some "ominous situation" that was threatening the Korean workers in the shipyard. Mr. Song was the president of Korean Technicians Association (KTA), an organization created by Korean Americans, many of whom held jobs in metalworking companies, shipyards, and manufacturing plants as skilled workers. Most of them were employed with two major shipbuilding companies in Seattle: Todd and Lockheed Shipyard Corporations. Mr. Song asked me if I could come to the Korea House Restaurant, at the south end of downtown Seattle near Union Station. I rushed to drive to the restaurant from my apartment in the University District.

During those years, I worked as free-lancer, volunteer interpreter, and translator for the rapidly growing Korean American community in the Puget Sound. During the mid-1970s, a big wave of Korean immigrants reached this region, and literally more than 300 Koreans arrived at Sea-Tac airport on a daily basis. From the very moment they landed in this country, they started experiencing language difficulties and cultural shocks. Among other exigencies, they needed someone who was able to facilitate their communications with the people around them. The need was tremendous. I already served the Seattle School District as a bilingual tutor, assisting many newly arrived students in catching up with their school classes conducted in English. I was also working for *Koreatown*, a weekly English language newspaper published in Los Angeles, as a correspondent covering the Pacific Northwest.[1]

Upon my arrival, I found Mr. Song with several members of the Korean Technicians Association, including Mr. Ki Young Kim, who served as chairman of its board of directors. They were talking about some weird thing

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that was happening in the Todd Shipyard. Recently, Korean workers at one of the main plants on Harbor Island had begun to notice some graffiti about Koreans on the walls of restrooms. At first, they did not know what the scribbles on the walls meant as they did not understand the English words fully, except for such words as "Koreans" and "go home." However, their instincts told them that these were swear words aimed at the Koreans in the shipyard.

I took a seat with them at the table and joined their conversation. Mr. Song gave me a brief orientation on the subject of their discussion, saying that he had a strong feeling that the ugly graffiti and pictures indicated that a sort of "anti-Korean mood" was being fermented in the shipyard. He observed that the "anti-Korean graffiti" was taking up more and more wall space every day. "It is outrageous," he said. "We must do something about it. We need to talk about the issue and to think about what we are going to do about it." I asked him if he had done anything to anyone to address this problem. "Out of anger, one day, I took a bucketful of white paint to our restroom to erase all those dirty graffiti," Mr. Song spewed out. "I brushed off all of them. But, alas, a few days later I found the goddamn walls redecorated with more filthy words and nasty pictures. They looked even clearer this time." He shrugged his shoulders in impotent fury: "There is no use trying to erase them. These guys hate us. They hate *kimchi* and everything Korean."

Mr. Dong Han Bae, another welder with two years' service at Todd, had felt the same humiliation of racial bigotry. "The walls of every toilet in our company are full of obscene words directed against Koreans." He continued, "I don't understand all those crooked American slang. But I can recognize words like "kimchee," "kill," "Gooks," and you know the four-letter words. There are too many to scratch off."

Mr. Dong Han Bae, whose English was better than others at the table, told us the words he read from the walls: "Go back to your country, you Gooks," "Kill all Gooks," "F... Koreans," "I hate Koreans," "Kimchee sucks," etc. Others confirmed that they saw these words on the walls inside the restroom in their quarters. At these accounts, they all became indignant. As if spewing out their anger, they took long pulls on their cigarettes and puffed out the smoke. On the table there were *sul* and *anju* (drinks and appetizers) they were sharing. Mr. Tae Won Kang and his wife, the owner of the restaurant, were serving them attentively. This restaurant was one of a few places in the Seattle and Tacoma area that served authentic Korean dishes and had become a hangout for this technicians' group and others missing their "soul" food and comfort from their compassionate compatriots.

These accounts by the angry, but helpless immigrants were all too common whenever Korean shipbuilding workers got together. They reflected the anguish and agony of immigrant workers who labored in the sprawling, smoky dockyards along Seattle's downtown waterfronts. They were hardworking and uncomplaining, but voiceless and fragmented Korean American shipyard workers who found themselves running into job discrimination on one side and outright racial hostility on the other. In 1979-80, there were about 700 such Korean American dockyard workers in the Seattle area alone.

Discerning observers said these workers found themselves as scapegoats as they had become the single largest ethnic group whose presence was increasingly visible, especially in the shipyards. Less than a decade before, the 1970 census counted only 475 Koreans in Seattle. But the recent waves of immigration from Korea had boosted the number to an estimated 12,000 in the Seattle area alone by 1980. The repugnant racist development within the shipyards, where the American-born white workers made up the bulk of workforce, came to the attention of the Korean community in the summer of 1979.

One Asian American who identified himself as a local labor movement activist and a former Todd Shipyard employee had reported that racial slogans such as "A Bullet for Every Gook," "Kill All Gooks," and "Send Them Back to Their Country," were posted inside one of the company's many workshops. This man, who wanted his name to be kept anonymous, told me that he was very much concerned with the Korean workers in the shipyards because he knew that "whenever the Orientals came to this country in large numbers, they always suffered a great deal from the racial prejudices of the mainstream American society."[2]

Coincidentally, a few weeks after I had met him, a labor union election campaign leaflet containing overt anti-Korean slogans was widely circulated among Seattle shipyard workers. I saw several flyers he brought to me. One leaflet warned Koreans, "Our people have blood on this land and on other lands, for this land. You [Koreans] take your cotton pickin' chances along with the rest of us . . .." The leaflet asserted that Koreans were asking for "special treatment" from the companies and federal government, referring to Korean workers' requests for the company to provide them with translation services for important notices and documents.[3] On the other hand, a self-styled Marxist-Leninist group was circulating a leaflet attacking Todd and "labor bosses:" ". . . Todd and the labor hacks use the fact that the Korean immigrants don't speak English to isolate them and run a slander campaign against them."[4] The leaflet continued:

> The Korean workers are often threatened in an atmosphere in which they don't understand what's being said. At other times, the Korean workers, whether in groups or individually, are given orders separate from other workers so that they are isolated and the rest of the workers don't know what they are being told. Their democratic demand for work-related and union information to be translated into their language has been scoffed at by both the company and the union bigwigs . . .. While the black workers

> are being told that the Koreans are taking jobs from other black people, the level of employment of black workers is basically the same as it was before the Korean immigrants started to work at Todd.[5]

As far as I knew, there were no Korean workers who were formally linked with this Marxist-Leninist group, and its analysis of the situation involving the Korean workers in the shipyards seemed objective and correct.

I called Lockheed Shipyard to inquire about the situation. No Lockheed officials could be reached for comment. I did get hold of a Todd spokesman, however, he denied that there was any anti-Korean campaign going on in the company's dockyards. He said that he was aware of the racial graffiti problem in the past, but he had someone erase them. He added that he had not checked into the situation lately. The official said that no race factor had been involved in promotion practices, which, he insisted, were based on skills, productive capability, and leadership quality.

During the winter months of 1979–80, the members of the Korean Technicians Association had many meetings to discuss the ways to cope with the situation. KTA leaders received reports from members of the incidents in which Korean workers had been unfairly laid off, suspended, or fired by the companies. I attended many of these meetings and heard various complaints presented by the aggrieved persons. These Korean workers stood alone, left to their own survival devices and ignored by civil rights groups and affirmative action agencies. The Koreans did not count for much.

KTA members felt that many shipyard workers hated their fellow Korean workers because they were jealous of them. Mr. Ki Young Kim, chairman of KTA's board of directors observed, "They are alarmed by the sudden presence of large number of Koreans in their plants. They became aware that the new Korean immigrant workers are working very hard, perhaps twice as fast and effective as they were. Koreans don't understand English well and talk very little. They only mind their jobs and care [about] what they are told to do. Many of those lazy and easy-going workers must have felt that they are being threatened as the newcomers are doing better than they are."[6] KTA figured there were more than 700 Korean blue-collar workers in the greater Seattle area, most of whom were concentrated in Todd and Lockheed Shipyards.

At Todd alone, about 450 Koreans, including forty women welders, were working in early 1980, representing fifteen to seventeen percent of its estimated 4,000 hardhats. Although only 130 to 150 Koreans labored at Lockheed Shipbuilding and Construction Co., they made up about fifteen percent of the entire manual workforce. Other Koreans blue-collar laborers, between 100 and 200, worked in smaller construction and metalwork firms around Seattle, such as Pacific Car and Foundry and Alaskan Copper Works. The proportion of the Korean employees was surprisingly high in view of the fact that the blacks—formerly second in number to whites—represented less than ten percent of the labor force in these major shipyards. Filipinos numbered far fewer than blacks, while the number of Chinese and Japanese workers was negligible, according to KTA estimates.

"There were only thirty to forty Korean workers six years ago," recalled Chul Shik Chung, former president of the Korean workers group, who was running the C.E. Welding Trade School to train Koreans in welding skills in West Seattle. According to him, up until 1973, the number of Korean dockyard workers had never reached beyond the 100 mark and they were mostly welders. Since 1976, however, the number had increased by the hundreds each year because of the influx of Korean immigrants.[7]

In addition to welding jobs, an increasing number of new arrivals found their way into ship construction-related fields. Many were pipefitters, painters, sheetmetal workers, and so forth. "In response to this trend," Mr. Chung recalled, "we renamed our group the Korean Technicians Association in 1976."[8] His school was located in the southwestern part of Seattle where new immigrants were concentrated, and at the time, it was training fifteen Koreans who sought welding or pipefitting jobs. The classes were taught in Korean. Mr. Chung said that his school had produced 124 technicians who were employed at the shipyards. The job market was not as good as it once had been, but the demand was steady.

But the overall job situation for the Korean blue-collar workers was not so rosy at the time. If Lockheed could not obtain new major contracts, it would have to cut its manpower drastically, seriously affecting Korean workers there, according to those familiar with the recent development. At Todd, they projected, the job situation would hold until 1985, if there were no drastic changes.

Korean workers complained that they were hopelessly underrepresented in the company hierarchy, although they made up a significant portion of the workforce. Mr. Ki Young Kim said,

> As far as I know, there are only five or six Korean leadsmen in Todd and Lockheed. A leadsman is the lowest in the rank of field supervisors who usually takes care of a crew of five to twenty workers, depending upon the size of assignments. A leadsman wields considerable influence over his men. He can give warning tickets to anyone whose performance he considers unsatisfactory. He can transfer a worker from one to another job. He can even fire any of his men with the approval and signature of his immediate supervisor, the quarterman. Above the quarterman is the foreman, the highest rank among field workers.

There was only one Korean foreman and one quarterman out of all those 700-odd Korean technicians throughout all shipyards, according to the KTA president.[9]

According to the KTA officers, language was the primary factor that counted for one's upward mobility. Unless a Korean worker was able to communicate with the "Americans," he could not expect to become a leadsman even if he had worked there for ten years with lots of commendations from the company, they said. Korean Technicians Association estimated that more than thirty percent of the Korean shipyard workers there had college backgrounds in Korea. But few of these elite among the Korean American workers had shown their ability, nor had they been assertive enough to fight for their own protection or for the welfare of other fellow Koreans. KTA officers were pessimistic about their future. They said that if the existing trend continued, they saw only darkness ahead.

I reported the story of the Seattle Korean dock workers' strife in *Koreatown*. Its publisher and editor, K.W. Lee, a thirty-year veteran journalist and prominent former senior investigate reporter of the *Sacramento Union*, gave a special treatment to this issue. No local newspaper in the Seattle area seemed to pay any attention to this potentially significant situation. During the winter months of 1979 to 1980, *Koreatown* carried several front-page reports the development of the problem in detail.[10] Prompted by *Koreatown's* December 24, 1979, report on the plight of the Korean shipyard workers, Seattle City Councilwoman Dolores Sibonga invited KTA leaders to a meeting at her office. Ms. Sibonga was a Filipino American and the only Asian American council member. She was a lawyer and activist for minority issues.

During an hour-long meeting held in February 1980, I served as interpreter for the leaders of Korean Technicians Association, including Mr. Ki Man Song, president; Mr. Ki Young Kim, board chairman; and Chong Se Kim, organizational coordinator of the association. Alan Oki, an aide to Ms. Sibonga, was also present. KTA leaders poured out instance after instance of outright racial hostility from fellow workers and discrimination from their supervisors. "Above all," said Ki Young Kim, "language is the most serious problem. Even if the Korean workers are physically and intelligently competent in their jobs, their lack of language ability freezes their social and occupational life. They work just like an ant and endure pain like a bear." The KTA leaders noted the only language program available to them was the ESL (English as Second Language) program offered at community colleges under CETA funding, but that access to the program was very limited. "We badly need a sort of survival language program," Mr. Song told Ms. Sibonga,

> Most recent immigrant workers want a very basic type of English training. Such programs will have to include learning of survival techniques as to how to deal with unfair treatment and how to address problems through formal channels. Also lessons in how to read application forms and tell the content of a yellow slip from that of a pink slip given by the company.

Mr. Song explained to Councilwoman Sibonga that most of the Korean employees held higher educational backgrounds and quickly learned the required job skills. Physically, he said, these Koreans were well-suited to ship construction work because they had healthy and small bodies.

"Korean workers can reach every nook of ship structure where those with bulky physiques sometimes cannot fit into or would not stand working," said Mr. Ki Young Kim. He added, "These workers work harder and finish their assigned works faster. Probably this has often caused reactions from other non-Korean groups." Mr. Ki Man Song mentioned that many Korean workers got warning tickets and termination notices from their white supervisors without understanding the reasons for them.[11]

Mr. Chong Se Kim related:

> I know some bad cases. One of my friends got a warning ticket from his leadsman weeks ago for not having kept his place for ten minutes. He was not goofing around. He was in the tool room to get a tool he needed that he could not find at his workshop. The leadsman didn't seem to feel he needed to hear about the reason. He jut wrote off a ticket right away when he found the guy was not in his position. It was outrageous. The ticket means you are a bad worker, and it gives the company an excuse for firing you. The only thing my friend failed to report was that the doctor extended his rest period to one more day. The morning he returned to work after that one more day's rest, a dismissal notice was waiting for him,

Mr. Chong Se Kim added, "In some instances, the company people don't accept a Korean American doctor's prescription. They would tell you to go see an American doctor."[12]

Councilwoman Sibonga also wanted to know if these and other cases of racial bigotry had been filed with city or state human rights commissions. Mr. Song said he knew of only two cases, both successful. "The sad thing is that with a few exceptions, Koran workers don't want to get their complaints processed through formal channels. They hold back and confide their troubles only to their close friends. They don't speak up. Why? They are afraid of possible reprisals. Besides, they don't know how to deal with their troubles." Councilwoman Sibonga urged the delegates to "let me know if there is any concrete case for which you need my help." As the KTA leaders left her office, they told her in unison, "We want to help you, too, when you need us."

There were literally innumerable cases in which the Korean shipyard workers were victims of racial bigotry and discrimination, and which could be built up successfully for some legal actions against their employers. But such actions would require a tremendous amount of work on the part of the aggrieved. To have a "concrete case," as the councilwoman suggested, they needed to have someone who could take a close look into each individual case and conduct a thorough investigation. They needed some professionally trained expert who could handle their cases and some advocates who could work very closely with them. KTA had no such expert or advocates willing to represent them. The Korean American community was in the formative stage and was not so well organized as to provide any significant aid to the situation in the shipyard. More than ninety percent of the members of the Korean American community at the time were new arrivals who were lacking cultural and language skills. KTA, a self-help organization created by the blue-color workers, was not equipped with the ability to tackle the unfolding events they had never experienced in their life "in the American way."

Koreatown called this disturbing situation in the Seattle shipyards "the Seattle syndrome," as the case of classic scapegoating. It commented that Koreans in the Seattle area did not count for much because they were minority's minority. Being voiceless and powerless, these non-English-speaking workers were stoically taking the blunt of racial hostility from fellow workers and job bias from their employer.[13] The "Seattle syndrome" was not unique in the experiences of Asian Americans in the West Coast states. For decades, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos invariably have suffered a harsher fate of lynching, persecution, and harassment.

For the Koreans in the Seattle area, however, there seemed to be one additional factor that rendered the shipyard workers even more impotent: the lack of unity among themselves. "We have to unite our strength to protect ourselves," said Mr. Ki Man Song,

> At present our efforts are fragmented. Few come forward to work for the general interest of all of us. We are often too subservient to our supervisors. Sometimes our fellow Koreans fight one another for petty private interest or to win a competition for currying favors from our bosses. Even when someone gets into serious troubles, nobody calls for help, like an intervention or assistance from an organization like ours.[14]

This kind of self-criticism was quite pervasive among the conscientious leaders of the community. The comment was echoed by Mr. Chul S. Chung, who was elected president of the Seattle–Washington State Korean Association for 1980:

> Too often, some of us get involved in troubles of our own making and get kicked out of the company. This only disgraces our own face in this country. We are digging our own grave. We need a broad-based community effort to improve our living conditions in this country. As a member of blue-collar workers and a servant for the Korean community, I will first seek to obtain cooperation of the so-called intellectual group here. There are old-timers here who have achieved a high level of education in this country and a secure base of socioeconomic status. They know many things. Particularly, they know how this society works. All of us need their help. The sad thing is, however, that they have tended to alienate themselves from the newcomers. They sometimes pretend that they are a different race. They don't seem to be aware of the problems being faced by our new immigrants. But I hope that they will understand us because we are the same kind of people and because we have to follow the same path whether we want or not.[15]

This appeal had little echo in the Korean American community at large, however. The Seattle–Washington State Korean Association, the only voluntary organization representing the Korean American community in Puget Sound at the time, was not solid enough to articulate and present the problems facing the shipyard workers to their employers. During the early 1980s, the association was led mostly by KTA members, without active participation of the more intellectual segment of the community. Those who were capable of digging up the issue and advocating the fate of the Korean workers more effectively seemed to be either apathetic or unaware of the situation. In addition, the mainstream news media were beyond the reach of the Korean community and no reporter paid any attention to these grievances. Even the locally published Korean-language newspaper showed little concern with the issue.

The outcry of the aggrieved Korean workers in the shipyards remained within the Korean community. The once hotly debated issue of shipyard bigotry against Koreans gradually faded away as time went by. By 1986, when Lockheed closed its shipyards in Seattle and Todd curtailed operations, drastically reducing the number of Korean workers, the issue was dead. In the late 1980s, many Korean shipyard workers who lost their jobs left Seattle—leaving their homes and cars in West Seattle behind because they were unable to make their mortgage payments. The story of the anti-Korean graffiti in the Seattle shipyards has become a footnote in the history of Korean immigrants in Washington state.

Notes:

The original conversations and material that are the basis for this report occurred fall 1979, through winter 1980, and almost exclusively (except for notes 2 and 3, and the meeting with City Councilwoman Sibonga) transpired in Korean (my translation).

1. Published and edited by veteran journalist K.W. Lee from October 1979 through 1982, *Koreatown* was the first known English language newspaper representing a voice of the Korean American community in the US.
2. Personal communication. I cannot recall this person's name. He was a Caucasian in his thirties who seemed to have many Korean friends and sounded very articulate in his understanding of the situation (1979).
3. The leaflets and other materials were given to me by the man in the preceding note (1979).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Informal meeting, Ki Young Kim (end of 1979).
7. Informal meeting, Chul Shik Chung (end of 1979).
8. The loosely organized group of Korean blue-collar workers, which mainly consisted of

welders, had existed since 1973. In 1976, the group formalized its organization with a new name and expanded membership including pipefitters, painters, and sheetmetal workers. Personal communication, Chul Shik Chung (end of 1979).

9. The only Korean quarterman was Mr. Yun S. Oh at Todd. There were several leadmen, including Seung Ki Kim and Kae I. Park at Todd as well. Personal communication, Ki Young Kim (1979).
10. Kun Hong Park, "Koreans Resented at Seattle Shipyards," *Koreatown*, 21 December 1979 (vol. 1, no. 1); "Dockworkers Air Problems with Councilwoman: Action Taken in Seattle Strife, " *Koreatown*, 31 March 1980 (vol. 1, no. 24).
11. Meeting with Councilwoman Dolores Sibonga, Ki Man Song, February, 1980.
12. Meeting with Councilwoman Dolores Sibonga, Chong Se Kim, February, 1980.
13. K.W. Lee, (Editorial), *Koreatown*, 7 January 1980 (vol. 1, no. 11).
14. Informal meeting, Ki Man Song (1980).
15. Informal meeting, Chul S. Chung (1980).

The Korean Methodist Work on Kauai, by Soon Hyun

Introduction

Soon Hyun (Sun Hyeon) was a remarkable man of many a great achievement. During his life, which spanned almost nine decades, he worked towards the goals of bringing to reality Korea's independence from Japan, and democracy to Korea's Confucian polity. He also worked very hard to Christianize his people. Born on March 21, 1879, as son of Chae-ch'ang Hyun, a magistrate of *Jiksan* whose ancestors served as *Yeokgwan* (translator-diplomats) in the Yi dynasty, he grew up studying the Chinese classics according to the family tradition. When he was twenty years old, however, he was sent to *Yukyeong Kongwon*, or the Royal English Language School, where he learned the English language, among others. In 1899, before his graduation, he and two of his friends, Eung-chin Chang and Kyeong-min Kim, went to Japan, where he continued his studies in mathematics and science at *Junden Kimko-sa*, located in *Kanda-ku*, Tokyo.

Upon graduation from the school in April 1902, he came back to Korea and was employed as an English interpreter by the East-West Development Company (*Tongseo Kaebal Hoesa*) established by David W. Deshler, an agent for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association to recruit Korean workers to come to Hawai'i. In early February 1903, Soon Hyun and his wife boarded the SS *Coptic* for Hawai'i. The ship reached its destination on February 20. He and his wife stayed in Honolulu until 1905, when he was sent to Lihue, Kauai, as a roving preacher by John W. Wadman, superintendent of the Hawaiian Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. During their sojourn in Hawai'i, three children were born to them: Alice (May 8, 1903) and Elizabeth (March 19, 1905) in Honolulu, and Peter (August 15, 1907), in Lihue.

In May 1907, the Hyuns returned to Korea to see their country increasingly under Japanese pressure to accommodate their terms for modernization of her old institutions. Soon Hyun began to work at *Paejae Haktang* (Paejae Hall of Learning), which was under the leadership of D.A. Bunker, serving as the school's principal. Hyun taught English, mathematics, geography, general science, and world history, while also preaching at the Young Men's Christian Association every Sunday afternoon. He also conducted revival meetings at *Cheongdong* Methodist Church. He later resigned from *Paejae Haktang* and worked with the pastor of *Cheongdong* Methodist Church as an assistant.

While assistant minister, he enrolled in the Union Methodist Theological Seminary of Seoul to study theology, and graduated in 1911. He spent a few months in *P'yeongyang*, preaching and establishing churches, before he was brought back to Seoul to work as interpreter for Bishop M.C. Harris, who had come from Japan to Korea to assume the Methodist church's leadership. Soon Hyun served as pastor of *Cheongdong* Methodist Church from 1913 to 1915, before he was succeeded by Rev. Cheong-to Son, a famous patriot who served as chairperson of the Provisional Assembly of the Korean Provisional

Government in Shanghai.

In January 1919, Soon Hyun was invited to conduct two weeks of revival meetings at a Korean Presbyterian church in *Euiju*, located at the bank of the Yalu river. Following the end, he led a big parade with a group of Sunday School children, calling for Korea's independence. In February, he returned to Seoul, where he was asked to join a group of seven Korean Christian patriots to plan for a nationwide independence movement to be staged with a mass demonstration. Soon Hyun was chosen to carry the message of this movement to Shanghai, where a group of patriotic Korean leaders gathered to launch Korea's independence movement. Soon Hyun left Korea on February 24 and reached Shanghai on the eve of March 1, when Koreans declared their independence from Japan by staging a nationwide mass demonstration.

Soon Hyun was chosen as general secretary by a group of Korean leaders in Shanghai, who opened an office to coordinate independence movements now launched by Koreans in Japan, China, and Korea. He was a key member of the group that organized and elected the members of the Provisional Assembly and of the Korean Provisional Government. The Declaration of Independence written by Nam-soon Choe in Korean was translated into English by Soon Hyun and Kwang-su Yi, a copy of which was sent to the local newspapers. Cables were sent to the British, American, French, Italian, Dutch, and Chinese delegations at the Peace conference in Paris. Telegrams, with Soon Hyun's signature, were dispatched to the Korean National Association in San Francisco and Honolulu to inform them of the March First Independence Movement. The telegram reached Ch'ang-ho Ahn on March 9, when he was in San Francisco presiding over the regular annual meeting of the Central Congress of the Korean National Association (*Kuk Min Hoe*).

Soon Hyun served as vice-minister of foreign affairs in the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Shanghai under Kyu-sik Kim, minister of foreign affairs, and a graduate of Roanoke College. Soon Hyun was later appointed by Syngman Rhee, president of the Provisional Government, as ambassador plenipotentiary to the United States on October 6, 1920. As ambassador plenipotentiary, Hyun founded an embassy, conducted diplomatic relations, and submitted to the US Secretary of State, Charles E. Hughes, a request for recognition of the Republic of Korea on May 11, 1921. A friendly letter, acknowledging receipt of Hyun's request was made by the office of vice president, assuring that the request would receive his attention. However, Hyun was forced out of office on April 26 and his request for recognition was withdrawn with allegations that Hyun had used false credentials.[1]

After Hyun was relieved of his office, he returned to Shanghai by way of Honolulu and Manila to continue his involvement in the independence movement. Upon his arrival in Shanghai, he was joined by his family, who had escaped from Korea. He traveled to Moscow, where he met Lenin and Trotsky for consultation on the movement, and returned to Shanghai before he was asked to return to Hawai'i by William Fry, Wadman's successor at the Hawaiian Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Hyun returned to Honolulu with his first daughter Alice, and was later joined by Elizabeth, Peter, David, and

Mary in Honolulu on May 25, 1924, followed by his wife, Maria, with Paul and Joshua one year later.

Soon Hyun continued to work for Korea's independence while serving as pastor of many Korean Methodist churches in such places as Hanamaulu, Kapaa, Kealia, Kilauea, Huleia, Puhi, Koloa, Lawai, Eleele, Makaweli, Kekaha, and Mana of the island of Kauai. He was responsible for establishing a number of political organizations, including the Hawaiian Branch of the Korean National Revolutionary Party (of which he was chairperson), and the Korean National Information Bureau in Honolulu. He worked closely with Kyu-sik Kim and Ku Kim, president of the Korean Provisional Government in Chungking, China in 1940.

In February 1946, after Korea was liberated from Japan and was placed under the American Military Government, he wrote a letter to the commanding general of the US Army Forces, Middle Pacific, asking permission to visit his native country. His purpose for the visit was to make immediate contact with Kyu-sik Kim and Won-bong Kim, who later had to flee to North Korea. Soon Hyun made this request as chairperson of the Hawaiian Branch of the Korean National Revolutionary Party (*Choseon Minjok Hyeongmyeongtang*) without being aware that the party and its members had been placed under surveillance by the FBI and the INS. His request was denied probably because of this affiliation and his ties with Won-bom Kim. He was not allowed to return to Korea even for a short visit, while Syngman Rhee was serving as President between 1948 and 1959.

Soon Hyun retired from active life and moved to Los Angeles in 1947, where he died on August 11, 1968, and was buried. The Republic of Korea government, in recognition of Soon Hyun's contributions to Korea's independence, requested that his body be exhumed for reburial in the national cemetery, and he is now resting in peace in his own native land. Here is the following letter, written by Soon Hyun on February 14, 1936.

The Korean Methodist Work on Kauai

The Koreans began to come to Hawai'i as immigrants in the last part of December 1902. The first shipment was composed of mostly the members of the *Ryong Dong* Methodist Church, *Chemulpo*, Korea. The late Dr. George Herber Jones, then pastor of said church, encouraged his members and some ambitious young men to go to Hawai'i for economic and educational exploration. About 120 people by the first shipment came to the Waialua sugar plantation and were placed in the Mokuleia Camp, where they started to have Christian worship led by Brother Y.C. Kim and many others. The writer came to Hawai'i in March 1903 as an interpreter with the second shipment of about seventy people. We went right down to Kahuku after landing. At Kahuku Sunday services and prayer meetings were conducted by a Presbyterian brother known as Chi Pong Yun. In August 1903, Dr. George Pearson, then pastor of the First Methodist Church in Honolulu, came to visit the Koreans at Kahuku and Waialua with P.K. Yoon, his interpreter, and organized two churches according to the Methodist rule. Later in November of the same year, the First Korean Methodist Church was organized with Brother Sung Ha Hong as first minister. Thus many Methodist churches were organized among 8,000 Koreans on four islands: Oahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kauai.

In 1904, Dr. John Wadman succeeded Dr. George Pearson as superintendent of the Hawai'i Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church. While Dr. Wadman was picking up many useful and intelligent young leaders out of the Koreans here and there as Christian workers, I was also picked up by him in January 1905, and used as an evangelist for Waialua and Kahuku for several months. Later in the same year I was sent over to Kauai. Before leaving for Kauai, I started a night school in Honolulu, teaching English to the Korean youths, which became a large compound school in later years.

There were about 3,000 Koreans on the island of Kauai when I first came, and already a few hundred Christians were forming many groups. On the east side of the island the groups were in Lihue, Kapaa, Kealia, and Kilauea. On the west side the groups were in Koloa, Lawai, Eleele, Makaweli, and Kekaha. Sunday services and prayer meetings were conducted by some outstanding Christians such as Chong Chul Lee, of Lihue; Chun Tai Yang, of Kealia; Earng Tak Oh, of Koloa; Ho Young Chung, of Eleele; and In Sang Choo, of Makaweli. They were worthy for Christian leadership at that time.

Brother K.J. Lee, now living in North Manchuria, was stationed at Eleele and took charge of the work all over from Koloa to Kekaha. I was stationed at Lihue and took charge of the work from Lihue to Kilauea. Then Brother Lee built a large church at Makaweli, holding 200 people at every Sunday service. Over in Lihue, through the kind assistance of the late Rev. Hans Isenberg, a beautiful church was built. I enjoyed immensely the early experience of traveling, preaching, and lecturing until May 1907. Then I was called back to Korea by Dr. Jones, who offered me to teach in the Pai Chai Mission school in Seoul, Korea. In 1906 I was received on trial to the California Conference with four others—C.W. Kim, C.P. Hong, K.C. Lee, and Y.S. Kim by Bishop Hamilton. All four Brothers are now out of the church work.

After I left Kauai, the work had been more prosperous—many churches were built, a beautiful dormitory was built at Lihue, which became the parsonage, and Koloa once [again] became the center of the Christian work in Kauai. Koreans on Kauai produced many leaders old and young along businesses, education, politics, and religion. The work had been maintained and developed by the following Brothers: K.C. Lee, C.I. Ahn, C.H. Lim, C.S. Kim, S.H. Ahn, W.T. Pack, and H.S. Hong. They were all under the supervision of the late Dr. John W. Wadman and Dr. W.H. Fry, the present superintendent. During the world war many Koreans on Kauai joined the US Army and some of them obtained the positions of post-tailor and post-laundry at Schofield Barracks on Oahu, which was the main cause of the moving of Koreans from Kauai to Honolulu and Wahiawa.

While I was engaged in the work of God in a great field in Korea, Kauai was entirely out of my memory. But to the mystery of God's providence, I was sent back to Kauai from Honolulu by Bishop Herbert Welch in March 1926, just ten years ago. I came back with the delightful feeling of the old memory of the fertile land, the beautiful scenery, and all the kind-hearted people. But to tell the truth, it was some discouragement to me when I found only about 350 Koreans remaining, scattered all over the island in about twenty different places from Hanalei to Mana.

However, I began to carry on the work with the same spirit and the same faith and zeal as I ever have had. Thanks to God, I have been traveling 1,200 miles every month, visiting camps, individual homes, holding preaching services, and conducting Sunday schools. Two new churches have been built. One is at Kapaa built by the generous contributions of the late Mr. G.N. Wilcox, Mrs. Dora R. Isenberg, and the Hawaiian Cannery Company. The other is at Kekana built soley at the expense of the Kekaha Sugar Company. The old church at Kapaa has been renewed, and the parsonage also has been repaired to a large amount though the kind assistance of Miss Elsie H. Wilcox. The membership has been increased from eighty to 220 in 1936. Three Sunday schools with an enrollment of 120 children, two Young People's Clubs with forty members are now existing. Among the smallest population of Koreans on Kauai, it has greater privileges and interests to me for I have a close cooperation with all the Hawaiian Board ministers in the activities of Sunday schools and young people's work, and through the courtesy of Mr. F. Frizzelle, the principal of the Kauai High School, I have had the privilege to speak to the student body on the current topics from time to time. The nature of the work is shown in the following map, diagram, and pictures.[2]

Notes:

This letter was given to Robert Hyung-chan Kim by David Hyun. Printed by permission. In certain places, misspellings have been corrected, and punctuation added. Italics, where they appear, have been added.

1. Accounts of Hyun Soon's activities in Shanghai are quite controversial; according to some accounts, Hyun Soon appointed himself as ambassador, and was removed due to personal conflict between himself, and Philip Jaisohn and Henry Chung (see Chong-sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965), pp. 141-142, 169-171).
2. These illustrations Soon Hyun refers to were not available.

REVIEWS

Chasing After the Elusive "American Dream"

Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots
Nancy Abelmann and John Lie
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995

Edward Taehan Chang

The Los Angeles riots of 1992 is often called a "turning point," "wake-up call," or "defining moment" for Korean Americans. The riot deeply affected the development of Korean American identity, survival, and ethnicity. Initially, Korean Americans were invisible as media focused on black rage against white communities. However, it became clear that America's first multiethnic civil unrest involved not only whites and blacks but also Korean Americans, Latinos, other Asian Americans and ethnicities as victims and assailants. Korean Americans played a major role in that a disproportionately high number of Korean American businesses suffered partial and/or total damages during the riots.

Invisibility was soon replaced by a "gun-toting vigilante" image as television stations repeatedly aired snapshots of Korean American merchants armed with rifles defending their stores on rooftops. These images sent shockwaves throughout the country. As a result, Korean Americans have become the most visible—yet misunderstood—segment of the Asian American community ever since. Mainstream Americans know very little of who Korean Americans really are.

In this context, Abelmann and Lie in *Blue Dreams* articulate a more realistic picture of Korean American experiences and, in doing so, question the American myth. In their preface, the authors state, "We narrate the Korean American story in the context of the Los Angeles riots of 1992 and simultaneously place American ideologies on trial."[1] Through their narration of interviews with Korean Americans from various facets of LA life, Abelmann and Lie wonderfully give a human face to Korean Americans who have been depicted as objects of curiosity by mainstream media. The authors point out that the Korean American community is not as homogeneous a

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community as it is often framed. The heterogeneity of Korean Americans is richly documented in *Blue Dreams* through the voices of victims: rich and poor, young and old, professionals and merchants.

Also demythologized are the popular notions of Korean Americans as the successful, "model minority." Instead, the authors provide vivid pictures of immigrant families struggling to make a living in a new society, arguing that the "model minority" image is a political and ideological construct to pit Korean (Asian) Americans against the black underclass. *Blue Dreams* documents that Korean Americans have paid a heavy price for chasing after the elusive "American dream" before, during, and after the Los Angeles riots.

The authors define the Korean American experience as being transnational in nature, that "an attempt to understand Korean American responses to the riots and the 'black-Korean conflict' requires us to consider their transnational context and their heterogeneity."[2] Indeed, Korean Americans are often known as "new urban immigrants" because the majority arrived in America after 1965 and, since they were highly educated, began their own businesses in central urban districts once they found they could not gain regular mainstream employment. In addition, most immigrants are much more concerned with the vagraties of politics in their homeland than in the US—a deficiency that became clear during, and in the aftermath of, the riots. In exploring the linkages between Korean immigrant experiences and their obsession with homeland politics the authors observe that Koreatown in Los Angeles is commonly known as an extension of Korea. However, the riots gave new birth to the meaning of Korean ethnicity and identity: What does it mean to be a Korean American? Korean Americans are now searching for their rightful place in America because they feel they were abandoned by the US government and betrayed by their homeland government as well.

The riots profoundly changed the course of the Korean diaspora in America. *Blue Dreams* provides a historical and structural analysis of how the riots altered the life of Korean immigrants, which is valuable because a historical perspective of Korea is helpful to understanding why and how many highly educated Koreans immigrated to the US during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite its name, Koreatown is not solely populated by Koreans, but by Latinos and African Americans as well. The authors point out that the emergence of a multiethnic Koreatown in Los Angeles functions as not only the symbolic center but also the focal point of economic, social, cultural, and political activities. They also discuss many of the issues that confront the Korean American community in Los Angeles in the aftermath of the riots such as ethnic entrepreneurship, class divisions, Korean-African American relations, and the transformation of racial ideology.

The book is not without shortcomings, however. The authors rely heavily on English language sources and individual accounts without placing them in their proper context, resulting in a lack of in-depth analysis and understanding of the post-riot Korean American community power structure. Furthermore, it fails to address issues of what future directions to take for the Korean American community, which has awakened in the aftermath of the riot. What are the future prospects for the Korean American community? The question must be discussed because the survival of the Korean American community may depend upon how to map out its future.

Despite these weaknesses, I strongly recommend *Blue Dreams* to every American. It is concise and well written; the writing styles of the authors make it easy reading for academics as well as laypeople. More importantly, it tells a story that is part of the American experience and, as such, should be mandatory reading for every college student as they prepare to lead our nation into the 21st century.

Notes:

1. Lie and Abelman, p. viii.
2. Ibid., p. 180.

Christian Emigrants and the Immigrant Church

The Golden Mountain: the Autobiography of a Korean Immigrant, 1895–1960
Easurk Emsen Charr
Edited and with an introduction by Wayne Patterson
Reprinted as a volume in *The Asian American Experience* series
Roger Daniels, editor
Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996

Women Struggling for a New Life: The Role of Religion in the Cultural Passage from Korea to America
Ai Ra Kim
Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996

S.E. Solberg

These are two separate accounts from two very different worlds and times of the emigrant/immigrant story: the transition from Korean to American, from the old, as exemplified by the vigorous missionary Church of turn-of-the-century northwest Korea, to the problems and weaknesses of that same modern Christian church in its dealings with the current generation of immigrant women. The authors are very different: a Korean man born in the nineteenth century whose faith was spurred by the identification of the missionary church with western—that is modern—technology; the other a modern woman, a pastor and scholar of her faith. For Easurk Emsen Charr the church is an impelling and enabling force in his emigration; for Pastor Ai Ra Kim the church is seen as failing its enabling function in the transition of immigrant women into American society.

The conditions of emigration were, of course, very different between the first decade of this waning century and the last thirty years. At the turn of the century the plantations of Hawai'i, that newly acquired American territory, seemed to require an endless supply of labor. For a variety of reasons the flow from China first, and Japan later, had been cut off and the planters were desperate to negotiate with the Korean government the emigration of workers to Hawai'i; much of the weight of those negotiations was carried by American missionaries or their associates in Korea (particularly by Horace Allen, the missionary doctor turned American envoy).

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Immigrant recruitment was largely carried on from the pulpits of the burgeoning Christian congregations in northwest Korea. It was that message that brought a ten-year-old Easurk Emsen Charr to Hawai'i in 1905 to work the sugarcane fields. He had, of course, misstated his age, and the acute memory of childhood events that marks the early pages of this book creates an unforgettable picture of the Protestant mission in northwest Korea. From Hawai'i, he quickly progressed to California, where he was again trapped into menial labor, being helped along the way most importantly by Ahn Chang-Ho, that icon of the Korean independence movement who devoted a large part of his considerable talents as a moral obligation to the care of the fledgling Korean American community as an important part of the overseas independence movement. Charr managed the rudiments of an education as he made his way from California to Park College in Parkville, Missouri, a school that was to be his American intellectual and spiritual alma mater. (It is worth noting that one of his classmates was George Paik, author of the authoritative *History of the Protestant Missions in Korea* and, later, longtime president of Yonsei University.)

He graduated from Park College after a short stint in the US Army during World War I, a stint which he, along with others, felt should give them as much right to be a US citizen as it did European aliens. A good part of the book is devoted to his pursuit of justice and citizenship as he works his way though several jobs (including a stint in a cousin's barbershop in San Francisco during the depression years of the early '30s) into the United States Civil Service, where he is finally stationed in Portland, Oregon, until his retirement.

This narrative, his life's story, was clearly very important to him. As luck would have it, he found a publisher in Boston's Meador Press (also publisher of the enigmatic Park No-yong, author of *Chinaman's Chance* and *Retreat of the West* among others), where the ubiquitous editor, who so often (consciously or not) filters narratives such as this though a set of preconceptions that distort or conceal what the author originally intended, was not so intrusive. There is an ebullience in his autobiography that informs the past with the same clarity of purpose and joy in living that he clearly maintained throughout his life. His picture of the turn-of-the-century Christianizing of his family is clear and unapologetic, as is his account of the role of the church in encouraging emigration; these certainly confound the expectations and assumptions of this more judgmental age.

To cross boundaries of time, place, or race requires an imaginative leap with concomitant intellectual and emotional risks that often press us beyond the limits of what we are willing, or able, to accommodate. We tend, self–consciously or not, to judge the lives of those from times and places other than the here and now against contemporary standards and, as a result, force them out of focus and thereby create a distortion of their own understandings and insights, their personal perceptions of their lives and their times. We have no right to do that; at the same time we must retain our right to analyze and comment on what has been said, written, or found in our own terms if we are to create any meaning relevant to our experience and knowledge of our world.

When Sonia Sunoo interviewed Charr in 1975 as part of an oral history project, she noted that, "He reluctantly discusses racial discrimination because of his patriotic feeling toward America. The dream he held of America at age 12 remains unchanged after 70 years [sic]. He steadfastly clings to his dream of America, *The Golden Mountain*, of opportunities flowing with the milk of wisdom and honey, of freedom" (Note the natural lapse into biblical imagery—Exodus 3:8 for anyone interested in contexts). Both the series editor, Roger Daniels, and the text editor, Wayne Patterson, also note this reluctance to leave a record of day-to-day discrimination, suggesting, to me at least, that had they been working at Meador, they would have pressed for more material of this sort with the strong possibility of a concomitant distortion of the perceptions of the author—something that historians are no less prone to than any of us despite professional training to avoid it.

To suggest that we should accept Charr's version of his remembered past is in no way to cast doubt upon the real daily discrimination any Asian American had of necessity to experience in those years (or these for that matter); it is to say that some chose their battlefields differently. Charr went through decades fighting for the citizenship he (and others) felt he had earned by his military service. His final victory in this attempt (and just in time to save his student visa-ed wife from deportation) and the support of a protective group both from his alma mater, Park College, and his "big brother," the American Legion, no doubt cast a concealing shadow across many of those troubling yet lesser problems.

The form of the immigrant narrative, be it fictional or autobiographical, is and (as Daniels notes in his editorial preface), tends to be the same, yet, the book editor, Patterson, argues that this narrative (and by implication, any other as well), draws its meaning and strength from the fact that on the face of it, each narrative must be different and offer its own version of the realities. This, of course, is the literary way of looking at the narrative: very specifically and anchored in detail. It is focused upon the individual rather than upon the events—what is peculiar to this particular man, time, and place. The historian, on the other hand, more concerned with explaining how things work on the larger scale, is apt to generalize from the narrative, fit it in a category, and, insofar as this distances us from the detail, direct our concern away from what one Korean emigrant suffered, achieved, and remembered, towards how his narrative supports this more generalized picture of the workings of immigration in general: a different aim (a series sort of aim) for a different purpose.

Romanization is the transcription of non-Roman alphabets, syllabaries, and logographs into Roman script. Romanizing and maintaining consistency is a persistent problem any time one deals with Asian texts. This leads directly to another problem that presents more difficulty in this text—the Romanization of Korean names. The author used a random system, writing the names in a way that seemed to him the closest representation of their phonetic values in English, which means that his northern dialect often strays very far from the McCune-Reischauer or Seoul/Kyeongsando-based Romanization system that is standard in scholarly works and, more importantly, in library catalogs and indexes. The result is that the uninitiated reader trying to track down a reference could be easily left in limbo. While the costs of resetting the book probably made that avenue impossible, the compiling of a glossary giving both the Charr and the standard Romanization would not have been that great a task and would, in the process, have made the materials all that more available to Asian American scholarship as well as the common reader who is interested in what the Korean American experience is all about (but lacks the knowledge of Korean that is occasionally necessary to make a meaningful way though these pages).

But quibbles aside, to close with the author's own words as he expresses his joy upon receiving his American citizenship:

> When I received the certificate of my citizenship that day, I was reminded of one of the most soul-inspiring passages in a book of the Old Testament—the story of Ruth, the Moabitess, following Naomi, her mother-in-law into the land of Judah. Ruth has said to Naomi: "Whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me!"
>
> What loyalty! What devotion! I admired Ruth. Oh, how so eloquently had she expressed my thoughts! And, I said to Uncle Sam, "I love thee with all my heart. I pledge my allegiance to thee and I will cherish thee always in peace and in war. Thy flag shall be my flag; thy country, my country; thy God, my God; thy people, my people; till the end of my life will I dwell with thee in this sweet land of 'Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Humanity' and so will my children and my children's children after me!"[2]

There is no faltering, no wavering of his Christian faith, and those of us who would understand something of the Korean immigration, first wave or present, need most of all to come to an understanding of this profound faith that informs the lives of so many. As Walter Kaufman has put it, "Even when it does not lure man into church or visible fellowship with others, religion offers man a language which makes real loneness impossible."[3]

The Presbyterian church that Eusurk Emsen Charr knew differed in more than theology from Flanders United Methodist Church in New Jersey, where Ai Ra Kim, a former president of the United Methodist Asian American Clergywomen's Association and an adjunct professor at New York Theological Seminary, is pastor. It is a church where she can bring to bear upon her ministry and her theology all the sophistication of contemporary social science.

In this study, she investigates patterns of adjustment and maladjustment to immigrant life among Korean *ilse* (first or immigrant generation) women. She carries out this sociological study within a historical–sociological framework focusing upon the heritage of the Confucian-dominated Yi dynasty (1392–1910) as it manifests itself in the Korean (Protestant) Church. She finds many elements of Yi dynasty Korea, including the central, old Confucian hierarchy, especially in regards to the status of women, replicated in the church—particularly the immigrant church.

It is interesting that she sees shamanism, another element of the Korean past—quite differently than many modern social scientists who argue, in its homeland context at least, that the profession of shaman is one where women can be independent—as simply another case of pushing women into a caregiver role. (She apparently also created something of a stir at a recent World Methodist Conference in Australia by suggesting there might be something in shamanism that could be utilized by the Christian ministry—one can only imagine Easurk Charr's horrified response to such a suggestion.) After all, once stripped of her exotic baggage, a shaman is restricted to the same roles of nurse, teacher, and the like. No matter what powers she may presume, she does not have the power to break out of that imposed hierarchy. Pastor Kim summarizes:

> In short, the religious practices in the Yi dynasty reinforced the dichotomy between gender role and status. Both Confucianism and Korean Shamanism served to legitimate and perpetuate the role of women as caretakers, servants, and healers. Confucianism commanded and Shamanism reinforced women's view of themselves as other-oriented and selfless beings, who lived vicariously. However, Shamanism offered women outlets through which to exercise their power within the home and guaranteed them legitimate authority to protect the household. Through Shamanistic rituals and observances, the average woman's self became identified with that of divinity, of the spirits. This kind of other-oriented "self-empowerment" molded the common woman into a "woman warrior," one who would by any and all means available stake out, defend, assert, and promote the well-being of her family. We will later see how such attitudes and behavior influenced the thinking and behavior of ilse Christian women in the United States.[4]

The book's historical and sociological backgrounds are integral to Ai Ra Kim's discussion of women and the immigrant church, supplying framework by which she extrapolates from her limited sample to the immigrant church in general. She supplies the academic essentials: the questionnaire upon which her interviews were patterned as well as a listing, including names, time and place interviewed, church membership, and demographics for the twenty-two interviews, averaging just under two hours each, which constitute the core of this study. Again we are looking at the personal narrative, in this case, the controlled narratives of the interviewees, for our understanding of a particular aspect of immigration and the condition of the Korean immigrant church and its women—narratives which are selectively formed by Pastor Kim as she weaves them into her larger purpose: a statement of the role of the church in our time.

Given her sense of the Confucian, male-dominated hierarchy of the immigrant church, it is clear that the author does not find the church fulfilling one of its proper roles as an empowering agency for its members by serving as a transitional mechanism. She observes, as have many others, that the immigrant church is a place where Korean Americans gather under a familiar language, savoring old-country social hierarchies as a kind of extended family locked into the patterns of the homeland, fending against the loneliness of the immigrant—hardly, one would think, a setting in which to prepare and support parishioners for life in the new land. There is an irony in her findings that immigrant women in many cases have an easier time than their husbands in meeting the challenges of the new land, particularly in language acquisition and socialization, while still under the yoke of tradition.

Two quotations will help put this in perspective. The first, which Pastor Kim says "express[es] ideas characteristic of most devout Christian Korean homemakers," is that of the wife of an elder in the church:

> I believe men are superior to women. If men and women are equal, there is always collision. Therefore, God made women inferior to men so that He prevents collision. Frankly speaking, my experience also proves it. I was the only girl among my three brothers. I was raised with my parents' special attention and love, so I was in a way spoiled and developed a bad temper. Gee, I had such a hard life after getting married. My husband and I fought so much during our twenty-five year marriage, but I could never win. Oh, I was miserable. Now, I've given up. I realized that to win against a husband is not possible because God made men superior to women. You know, I was actually wrong to try to reverse God's order of creation. Men should rule over women; I decided to obey [my husband] as I have to obey God. I am much more content since I gave up trying to become equal with him. You know, it also looks very bad otherwise to [Koreans] if husband and wife are equal.[5]

On the other hand, Pastor Kim sees the empowerment of Korean women who develop a "warrior-like" self-image by exercising "their very real psychic/spiritual power and energy." Her warrior-housewife relates:

> My husband was such an unlucky man after immigrating. He was a constant loser and a failure at everything he tried. He totally lost his confi-

> dence and faith as a man. He wanted to go back to Korea. You know, even though God made men stronger than and superior to women, in times of hardship, they become so weak. Can you imagine going back to Korea? First, we didn't have money to go back. But above all, how could we face our people and friends back there?[6]

She decides she has to do something to get them out of this dilemma, even though at the time she was suffering from a painful nerve problem in her arm and was not able to work.

> But I had to do something for my husband and our family. In this impasse, I couldn't even cry. Finally, I decided to challenge the omnipotent God. I knew if God is willing, there is nothing that is impossible. The first thing that I had to do was to please Him, so I fasted for forty days as Jesus had done and did nothing but read the Bible day and night. On the fortieth day, I placed a bet with God. I promised God that I would donate $100,000 to our church-building project. . . . [Despite the hardships] I worked like an insane person to make money even with my disabled arm. I sometimes encouraged and sometimes chastised my husband with my utmost effort. Anyhow, we fulfilled my bet. In ten years, we paid off our whole offering, yet we were still able to buy this beautiful house and become loaded. Thank God![7]

There are more examples, of the confusion and conflict between generations: a difference of role models that harks back to Easurk Charr:

> Ruth is my role model. When Naomi, her mother-in-law, was about to return to her hometown, she advised her two widow-daughters-in-law to go back to their own homes because they were pagans. However, Ruth insisted on following her mother-in-law and taking care of her. Because of her loyalty and obedience to Naomi, Ruth was very blessed later and became the great-great-grandmother of Jesus.[8]

She had recently been called upon to give a new "American" name to her daughter, who was a fourth-grader. She wanted her daughter to be "Ruth,"

> because I want her to be an obedient woman as Ruth was. . . . But my daughter wanted to be called 'Rebecca' and said, 'Mommy, I don't want to be an obedient woman like you or Ruth. You have no freedom at all. You don't even wear the clothes that you want to wear. You are always concerned about what the church people think about our clothes or your behavior. You obey Daddy and other people too much. I want freedom. I want to be Rebecca because she is the mother of Jacob, the Israelites [sic]. I want to be a mother of the people in this world.' So, we granted it, and her new name is Rebecca. You know, the children today are very different from us.[9]

The future seems to be for the Rebeccas rather than for the Ruths: the immigrant church fading into the church of the American–born having done less, certainly, than it should for the immigrant woman. After one of her interviews Pastor Kim was asked what she hoped to accomplish by all this. She responded that she was looking for the ways in which the church had been helpful to immigrant women. The interviewee responded, "The church is not helpful at all."[10]

Neither the women she interviewed, nor those of her acquaintance, seem to be what she calls "wholistic persons," or "healthy social beings." "Radically speaking," she says, "most of them seem to be pathological, not innately, but sociologically. From my feminist theological point of view . . . men and women should equally reveal the healthy and wholistic image of God because they were created in the likeness of God, who is understood perfection."[11]

In conclusion, she calls up a prophetic vision, the New Jerusalem of the ideal state (not the puritan Zion on the New England hills):

> When we truly establish a just society where all people, black and white, yellow and red, men and women, old and young, rich and poor, gays/lesbians and straights, and non-Christians, respect one another and live in cooperation and sharing, the wholistic self may emerge. Human fulfillment may be attained.[12]

Like Easurk Charr, Ai Ra Kim, too, has a utopian vision of an America still, potentially, the Golden Mountain of dreams. The dream goes on.

Notes:

Portions of this review (regarding Ai Ra Kim's work) first appeared in the *International Examiner's* literary supplement, *Pacific Reader* (Spring/Summer 1997, p. 16). Unless otherwise indicated, italics, where they appear, have been added—*Ed.*

1. Sonia Shinn Sunoo. *Korea Kaleidoscope, Oral Histories, volume 1: Early Korean Pioneers in USA: 1903–1905* (Davis, Calif.: Korean Oral History Project, Sierra Mission Area, United Presbyterian Church USA, 1982), p. 184.
2. Charr, p. 286.
3. Walter Kaufman. *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 350.
4. Ai Ra Kim, pp. 23–24.
5. Ibid., p. 90.
6. Ibid., p. 92.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., pp. 138–139.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 183.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 185.

The Second Generation's Payback

Yellow
Produced and Directed by Chris Chan Lee
(1997)

Soyon Im

Chris Chan Lee, the director of *Yellow*, a feature film about second-generation Korean Americans, told the organizers of the 1997 Hawaii International Film Festival that he would do everyone's dry-cleaning if they sprung for his flight to the Big Island. At the time of this writing (mid-November), Lee is sitting in a bathing suit in an Oahu hotel, getting calls from people asking when he will pick up their dirty clothes. The joke is losing its punch for him.

Like the director himself, *Yellow* is a mix of self-effacing humor and sobering drama, following a group of eight high school students in Los Angeles who try to have a graduation party despite the obstacles of familial obligations, generation gaps, a robbery, and their adolescent idiocies. Accompanied by an original soundtrack of poppy rock tunes, the film tells various coming-of-age stories of typically Generation-X teenagers dealing with the challenges of being second-generation Korean American.

Yellow also gives a rare view of a first-generation immigrant, a Korean grocer, that goes beyond the crude stereotypes inflamed by the social rifts between inner-city African Americans and Korean shopkeepers that were pointedly illustrated by the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Lee's film continues the line of Korean American cinematic narratives as told by Elaine Kim, a professor of Asian American Studies at University of California, Berkeley, whose 1993 documentary *Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives* exposed how misleading the media had been of Koreans during the riots, and by Michael Cho's *Another America*, a 1995 documentary where the director, prompted by the murder of his uncle at his clothing store, explores his family's history as small business owners in inner-city Detroit and Los Angeles.[1] But because *Yellow* is a feature-length, fictional comedy-drama, the same issues that were brought about previously by Kim and Cho are being presented in a work with more mainstream appeal. If the film is released widely, it may very well be the first movie that would dramatically educate our society about the struggles of Korean American small-business owners.

The script draws much from the twenty-nine-year-old director's life. Lee's

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SOYON IM, poet and journalist, is Assistant Editor for the *Seattle Weekly*. She writes about visual arts and pop culture, but reserves her best powers for writing about sex.

parents have been running a small shop in Los Angeles and previously in San Francisco for more than twenty years, and the director had helped them during his weekends and school breaks during childhood. Lee's mix of autobiography, drama, and comedy is obviously working very well. Having screened *Yellow* at various North American film festivals this year, the director is winning fans during every showing. In San Francisco's International Asian American Film Festival earlier this past spring, it sold out a 400-seat theater for two nights in a row. In Seattle, where the movie showed as the closing night feature at October's Seattle Asian American Film Festival, it won the top prize for best film. And most recently, *Yellow* won the favors of film critic Roger Ebert, who managed to see it at the Hawaii International Film Festival. Ebert wrote in his *Chicago Sun-Times* column on November 19 that the film "is fascinating in the way it manages to be both about Korean-American society and about young Gen Xers who could be of any race."[2]

Veteran Korean American actor Soon Teck Oh (*The Man with the Golden Gun*, *Hawaii Five-O*) plays Mr. Lee, the grocer who presses his son, named "Sin," to work at the shop after school and during weekends. On the surface, *Yellow* shows the Korean grocer as slanted media would—being rude to his customers, hiking up prices, and pulling a gun at the slightest suspicion. Mr. Lee assumes an authority over his business and son that is often extreme. In one scene, he points a gun at a mouse scurrying in the store's back room. At other times, he berates Sin for hanging out with "no-good" friends and for being "irresponsible" in business by giving an extra paper bag to a customer.

However, director Lee does an excellent job of widening the scope. In one scene, the shopkeeper lectures Sin's girlfriend, Teri (played by Mia Suh), using a handful of rice to represent his responsibility to his family. His message: Let go of the rice for even a moment, and you let down your family. Perhaps the message is a bit hyperbolic, but the scene is one of the most poignant, and is the clearest window into the grocer's character, showing that his life as an immigrant is one in which survival feels constantly threatened:

> This is your hand, right? This is your food. Nothing, right? This just rice. Over there, somebody wants to shake your hand. "Miss Teri, shake my hand!" But here, this is food to feed your family for a whole summer. But go ahead, shake their hand, say "hello." Over there, somebody ask you to come away, go fishing with them. Here, this is your food, this belongs to everyone in your family. Your spouse, your children . . . You ever see a baby cry because there is no food? You ever see starving children with no parents, no clothes? It's alright . . . go fishing, go shake hand. This just rice. This not important.[3]

Sin (played by Michael Chung) despises working at the store and wants out by way of a scholarship to college. But cutting loose isn't easy: Not only has he flubbed his chance at the scholarship, but the knowledge of his father's hardships in running the shop riddles Sin with guilt. Throughout the film, we see Sin wavering like a lost kid, not wanting to follow his father's path but unable to fully stand up to him. Lee chose Sin's name deliberately for its English transliteration, suggesting that in order for the immigrant's son to live a different life, he must do so at the expense of his father. This tension complicates the widely held notion of an immigrant coming to America to better his life and those of his children. In *Yellow*, we see that the rise of the immigrant doesn't go so smoothly. Nor do his children turn out exactly to be the successes he wishes them to be.

Is turning away from the immigrant dream—intentional or not—the fate of being second generation? Anyone who is second generation can relate to the conflicts of living in a culture vastly different from one's parents. Cultural clashes are the source of many misunderstandings amongst generations, as illustrated by several characters in the film. However, *Yellow* goes even deeper, to suggest that by living a life that's been made possible by the sacrifices of the first, the "sin" of the child is inherent. This is made most obvious by the plot's surprise ending: Throughout the film, Sin's friends, family, as well as the audience, are led to believe that the store is robbed at gunpoint during one of Sin's closing shifts. At the end, however, Sin reveals that it was he—and not a couple of black men that the audience had been left to stereotypically assume—who had stolen from the store's safe, in order to run away and start a new life. With this admission, Sin realizes and comes to accept that a new beginning for him can only mean confronting his father.

—

When I asked Lee how much of the film's story was true, he replied, "I never stole from my father, but I felt like I took a lot from him. He sacrificed so much." Is Lee guilt-ridden? Yes. Is that stopping him from being an independent filmmaker? No, and good thing for us. With *Yellow*, Lee is telling a story that has never been projected onto the American screens. While Lee dedicated *Yellow* to his father, he's leading the rest of his audiences to meaningful reflections of being second generation.

Surprisingly, Lee isn't as brooding as one might expect him to be. When I interviewed him, he was full of wit and good-natured mockery.

Q: Did you grow up like Sin, working in a family-owned business? Did you encounter the same kind of conflict—wanting to do other things with your life, and yet feeling as if you could only do them at the expense of your immigrant parents?

Lee: My parents have had a store, and still do, for over twenty years. They've always wanted me to have a better life, [but] even so, I had to work at my dad's store every summer and many weekends while I was growing up.

After a while, when you're wearing aprons, serving cranky customers, and rotating dairy products, you start to feel like you're never gonna break out of your awful lot in life. Not to mention working for my father was not unlike that bootcamp in *Full Metal Jacket*. The only outlet for frustration was when you got to flatten cardboard boxes in the basement. Me and my dad's employee, this Filipino guy named Jaime, used to pretend we were Bruce Lee as we kicked out the corners of Budweiser and Coca Cola boxes. It was pretty pathetic.

Q: What did your parents think about you going to film school? Were they supportive?

Lee: Until the last year or so, they kept telling me to get a real job. But my parents are more supportive than most. But my dad won't think I'm successful until I make a movie with Chuck Norris in it.

Q: What kind of movies do you want to make in the future? Will you tell more stories involving Korean Americans? What's your next project about?

Lee: I want to work in every genre. I like writing scripts with Korean Americans just because I feel like I can identify with their characters more directly. I have two projects I'm working on: a romantic comedy called "Charm" written by a Korean American female writer, and an untitled supernatural romantic thriller that I'm currently writing about two of my favorite subjects—sex and death.

Q: Any specific genre that you want to work with?

Lee: I want to write a musical about the L.A. riots. My dream cast would be Billy Dee Williams and Mandy Pantinkin.

Q: Are you into donuts? Do you think donut shops are a vital aspect of Los Angeles culture? (There is one comic scene in Yellow *where Sin's friends enter a Funky Donuts shop at night and down donuts by the dozen.)*

Lee: Donut shops are the new religion of Los Angeles. If you open your eyes and really look, you'll notice they're everywhere. The problem is—nobody goes. Beyond their intrinsic spiritual value, donuts are very sexual. Next time you look in the display, note how every variety of donut looks like flour-based representations of male and female genitalia. This is by no means an accident. Winchell's is basically a friendly little twenty-four-hour red-light district right in your neighborhood, filled with ready and willing miniature warm bodies for a lonely Monday night. That's why those loners who exit Donut World at three a.m. always light up a smoke when they're through.

Q: How would you feel about making a movie that has nothing or little to do with Korean American/Asian American issues?

Lee: I'm really interested in portraying Asian American characters within the context of contemporary society. I don't really want to make overtly political films at every turn, because in the end if everyone did this, it would ultimately limit the perception of the Asian American experience. I think as artists, Asian American filmmakers should be allowed and encouraged to make any film they were passionate about. Kudos to the imports Ang Lee and John Woo. Besides, non-Asian American writers and directors have been creating Asian-themed stories for years, so why should we have to limit ourselves? This is definitely controversial for some among the Asian American community, but if we really look at the long term of the big picture, it's pretty easy to see how empowering it is to have the ability to make any movie we damn well please.

Notes:

1. See *Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives* (produced by Christine Choy, Elaine H. Kim, and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson; directed by Dai Sil Kim-Gibson and Christine Choy (1993)), and *Another America*, produced and directed by Michael Cho (1996). Both films are available via the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA)—*Ed.*
2. Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 19 November 1997.
3. Chris Chan Lee, *Yellow* (1997).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Korean American Historical Society
Occasional Papers, vol. 5, 1999

Korean American Historical Society invites and encourages submissions pertaining to overseas Koreans which reflect the diversity of the Korean emigrant experience, as well as new approaches to this subject in the humanities and social sciences, including (but not limited to) anthropology, economics, ethnic studies, history, immigrant studies, literature, political science, psychology, and sociology.

Manuscripts should be original, and not draw significantly from any previously published works. They also should not be submitted simultaneously to any other publication. All articles will be refereed to at least one outside scholar in the appropriate field.

The standard length for articles is 3,000 words for community reports, essays, and reviews; research studies are 8,000 words or more. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double spaced, with margins of at least one inch, and must be fully documented to facilitate fact-checking, with endnotes and a bibliography (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*).

Submissions should be accompanied by a separate title page indicating the author's full name, mailing address, telephone (and fascimilie) number, and affiliation. Please include a brief vitae as well. Electronic submissions (Word compatible) via email or 3.5" floppy disk are acceptable, and required if the work is accepted. Contributors should keep copies of works submitted.

Manuscripts received by **June 30, 1998** will be considered for volume 4; those received by **December 31, 1998** will be considered for volume 5. Korean American Historical Society will consider all manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for returning submissions unless accompanied by appropriate postage. Korean American Historical Society reserves the right to edit for space.

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Founded in 1985, Korean American Historical Society (KAHS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the collective memory of Korean Americans through collecting, maintaining, and transmitting the heritage and achievements of Koreans living in the United States and abroad. Goals of KAHS include:

1. Annually publish *Occasional Papers*, a scholarly journal of oral histories, community research, book reviews, critical essays, and reports. This journal is intended to present information and material for primary researchers as well as laypeople.
2. Conduct and archive oral history interviews on the history of Korean expatriates in general, and Korean Americans in particular.
3. Maintain a library of books, photographs, and materials pertinent to the mission of KAHS.
4. Organize and conduct seminars, symposia, and other necessary activities.
5. Encourage the development of Korean American studies as an academic discipline.
6. Coordinate activities with other Korean community organizations for historical purposes.

Community educational efforts and heritage events supported by KAHS have included sponsoring Yoojin Chung's P'ansori Concert commemorating the centennial anniversary of Korean immigration to the US in 1993, cosponsoring the 1997 Seattle Asian American Film Festival, co-publishing *Tosan Ahn Ch'ang-Ho: A Profile of a Prophetic Patriot* (Seoul: Korean American Historical Society, 1996), and assistance in publishing *The Deepest Love of My People: Writings and Memories of Chang-Hei Lee*(Seattle: Cascade Graphics,1997). KAHS is a Patron supporter of The Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle.

Volume 1 was first published in 1985 under the title, *The Journal of Korean American Historical Society*(LCCN 86658565, 70pp), and was a bilingual issue that featured the oral history of Joseph Hong (one of the first Korean American Alaskans), a panel discussion on teaching Korean to children growing up in the United States, and a critical essay regarding how the media portrays Asian Americans as the "model minority." Following the departure of the editor to an overseas teaching position, publication lapsed.

Volume 2 (ISSN 1088-1964, 120pp) was published in 1996 and marks the reemergence of Korean American Historical Society. This volume includes a five-interview oral history of the Sung-Hark Kang family (one of the oldest Korean American families in Washington state), a University of Washington study of students of Korean heritage, papers from the William Carlson Smith and Songmoo Kho collections, and a report on the third annual Korean American Leadership Conference, in addition to other articles.

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by Hyung-chan Kim, 1996

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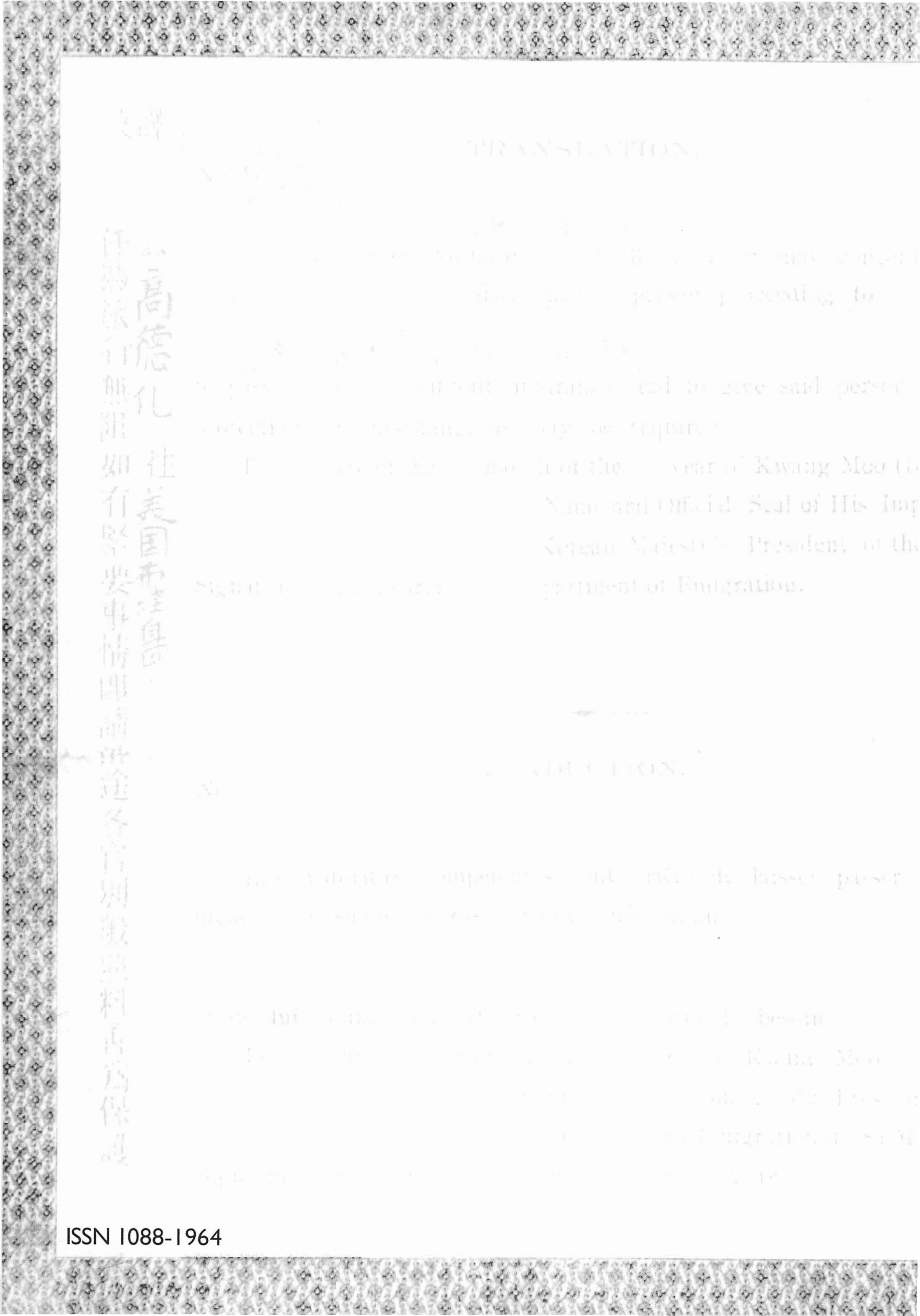

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