



LEGACIES OF THE KOREAN WAR

Oral History Project

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Interview with:

Reverend Duk Joong Won

First Generation

Born 1938, Jangsanri

Interviewed by:

Deann Borshay Liem and JT Takagi

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Japanese Colonial Period

My name is Duk Joong Won. I'm 76 years old. I was born in Changsan-ri, South Pyongan Province. It's North Korea. I was born in 1938, March 5th. I was born before Korea was divided; we were under Japanese ruling. Japan made us to change our names into Japanese style. Although my name is Duk Joong Won, my Japanese name was Harayama Takahiro. Japanese, during the war, they needed lot of resources. So, they took most of our rice for example. And they took bowls, our kitchen bowls. They even took - almost [but] didn't take it; they were about to take our church bell to make bullets.

It was not very easy life for us. We were not allowed to speak Korean at all, even at home. My mother did not speak Japanese, but I had to somehow communicate with her, especially at home. If someone heard I was speaking to anybody in Korean, that was reported to my home room teacher. I was punished for that. I was sent to a kindergarten from four years old to learn Japanese. And when I was seven years old, I became a first grader. I was almost fluent in Japanese.

We were kids under Japanese [rule]. We played a spin top. We had to make spin top. I have a mark here. I was making it. I cut it; the mark is still here. In wintertime, we made our own sleds and rode it from top of the hill to the down on snow.

We were farmers. My father passed away when I was four years old. And my brother, oldest brother was in Manchuria visiting our cousin, and he did not return home. We don't know what happened to him; probably he was harmed by Chinese mobs. My younger brother, the second oldest brother, was in Pyongyang. He was only 16 years old. He was in junior high school there. So, we didn't have any labor force. So we had our sharecroppers to cultivate our land. And we shared the harvest. That was our income.

I'm one of the ten siblings. I'm the youngest, and my sisters, if I can remember, only two or three sisters were not married; rest of them were all married and went to their in-laws with the husband. My house was square; four wings and a main [area]-we call it *han pong*, and two side wings and the front. And my house was pretty big, large, because we were a big family before I was born. And the main body, the *han pong*, had six rooms, and large kitchen. And front wing was for guest rooms. My father usually stayed there. And we had a helper [who] had a room there. And we had old cow.

Liberation from Japan

In 1945, August 15th, Japan surrendered; Japanese Emperor surrendered to Americans. That day, we were freed from colonialism. My brother was in junior high in Pyongyang, came up and taught me my name in Korean, Duk Joong Won. I didn't know until that time I had a Korean name. And same place, same time, he started teaching [me] Korean alphabet.

Well, you know, it [liberation] was news to me. I was too young to know all those political things. On the day where we [were liberated], the radio announced that we were freed. It was total surprise to us. Maybe higher level people knew about it. For the people like us, it was total, totally surprise. And when we heard that, we couldn't believe we were freed. When we realized

that was a reality, we were just numbed. We all came out the street and, you know, [we called out] “*mansei!*”, and we were very joyful. I call it joy, fear and excitement. Joy meaning we were freed from Japanese ruling.

Fear was Russian soldiers [could] came to our area within half a day, like twelve hours. They came by train, cargo train. And there was a fear. And they were not very refined people neither. So they walked around. If they found a chicken, they grabbed them and took them home [to] their camp. When they found anybody wearing watch, a wristwatch, they demanded it. And one day, one evening, we heard the rumor that Russian soldiers were coming to our village. We had very matured but young sisters. So my mother and four of us - two sisters and my mother and I - we were scared. We shook. We were shaken and we were knocking our teeth. But later on they didn't come to our house and we went to bed.

Pre-War Period

After those kind of things, Russians were permanent, kind of permanent fixture in our surroundings. And we heard Kim Il Sung was elected as head of the country, and they called it democracy. But it was not democracy. It was communism, communist dictatorship. About a year later, they had a land reform. We were landlords, not big, but landlord. And our lands were given to the sharecroppers who cultivated our land. So we became very small farmer. What helped us was my father planted many, many, many acres of chestnut trees. So chestnuts in the fall is very inexpensive. But chestnuts in about March and April in the spring, they were equally valuable as the rice. So that helped us to survive....

I had a brother-in-law, very bright young man then. He graduated from Seoul, at that time Kyung-sung [Keijo Imperial] University. And he studied law.... He graduated from it and Japanese government hired him as a province, government employee.... When communists came, they designated him as a collaborator with the Japanese government, so put him in jail. He served in jail for six months in Pyongyang and [then] temporarily released. As soon as he was released, he ran to South Korea and started his life there.

.... And during that time we were oppressed by communists. We were very rare Christians there. So they did not like us. My brother tried to stay in North Korea because he was the only man then, but he couldn't stay because communists were bothering him. So one day he carried a little pack on his back, and went away. But I was seven, eight years old and then my mother did not trust me knowing that fact. I asked my mother where is my brother going? “He's going Pyongyang.” But actually he was coming to South Korea.

When I was young, very young, like elementary school years in North Korea, we were treated by the government, by the power authority as outliers for four reasons. Number one, we were Christians. They didn't like Christians. We were elites. They didn't like elites. That's why my brother and brother-in-law escaped them. So I never considered North Korea as my country. North Korea was just there. I had to live there. I always wanted to come to South Korea. I missed my mother and other siblings who were in north, but never missed North Korea because of those hardships we had.

Korean War Memories

When the Korean war broke up [out], I was sixth grader - June 25th, 1950. I heard the news when I was in school. And our principal announced that Korean, South Koreans, invaded in North Korea. So, strong North Korean army, according to him, pushed them down. They were going down every day from there on. They say [on] our bulletin board... where North Korean soldiers came down to. But in my mind, I thought South Korea was very strong country, backed up by Americans, you know.... We had been cheated by our government, North communist government so many times, so I did not believe it.

Then started coming the - I didn't know then but I think it was American or a United Nations fighter planes. They came and dropped the bombs.... When they passed by, I was happy to see them, you know, the planes, because oh, they are on our side. But second thought was, "Well, they wouldn't know what I am, so they can drop a bomb on me, too." You know, I was kind of scared. A little bit later, about a month or so after that, our school asked us to bring hoes and shovels and so forth to dig a shelter, bomb shelter. And the bombing was increased frequency. So we practically stayed there in our bomb shelter all day long and came home.

Then we got into summer vacation. That was end of schooling in North Korea. Later on, I heard that MacArthur was the commander of the United Nations forces. And he brought his forces to Incheon and Seoul was freed; then came up to North Korea.

Even that, we did not know the U.N. soldiers were coming to North Korea. They told us to evacuate our village because their forces [North Korean], they needed to use our homes as their overnight stay. So we all went to our second oldest sister's home. And then we heard that South Koreans came up and I saw *taegukgi* [South Korean flag] in our town. I was very emotional. That touched me, my soul. So I shed my tears of joy. I came home. Nothing was touched in my house. So then it was our free world. The communists were gone. I thought the communists were gone forever. South Korean soldiers, as part of U.N. forces, came all the way up [and] beyond us, but we didn't see them. They just went, passed by. We are small village.

Refugee Life

Family Separation

Five years after that when U.N. forces and South Koreans came to the North, we became part of South Korea and our land was returned back to us. We were rich then. [When United Nations and South Korea forces crossed into North Korea in the fall of 1950, parts of northern territory were declared to be under southern control.] They came about early October of 1950, South Korean, U.N. forces. We were busy harvesting....

And then about end of October, no, about end of November, 29th of November, 1950, our village, it's a free village. Defense chief was my cousin; [he] came to my mother and whispered to her ear something. And my mother just rushed in and made a little package for me to carry on my back. It was November 29th about 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon. She came out and said to me and my sister, who was married, was visiting us – and another nephew, her son and another nephew, four of us. My mother told us, "Go to your third oldest sister's home." We went there. It's about a couple miles away. We walked there. I asked my mother, "Aren't you coming with

us?" "No, I'll come there tomorrow morning, early in the morning." And, "Why are we going there?" I asked. She said, "I will tell you tomorrow when I get there." But that's end of my interface with my mother. I did not see her after that. She was supposed to come to my third sister's home; she was supposed to be [there] before dawn. She didn't come.

After the dawn she didn't come; 8:00, she didn't come; 10:00, 11:00, she didn't come. We heard the bombing, the artillery fight, noises from not far. So we had to leave that village. So my third oldest sister, her family, her husband, four of us, [and] all 36 people, their immediate neighbors, left our village. The message from... a U.N. forces commander's office, told us was, "You will be able to come back to your home. Don't worry about things in your house. Just go and we'll let you know to come back in three days."

We left and came to Pyongyang; two days it took. We walked to Pyongyang across the Daedong River in winter. It's in November, December now, frozen. But ice was not thick enough, so we had to cross a [partially] frozen river, a very cold river, and came to south side of Daedong. We saw [a] South Korean soldier first time there, was standing there guarding. And he looked at us, big group, 36 people. Apparently, he had some sympathy for us and told us to follow him. We followed him to a hill. On top of the hill he took us to Chinese ethnic people living there and told them, "You treat them tonight, you know, and they are here because of your people," meaning North Korean soldiers. We were treated very well, and came down next day toward the south.

But we didn't have any radio, no newspapers. We didn't know what time it was, what day it was; we just walked, walked, walked, walked. Took about 50 some days, yeah, 50 days. We walked about five hours a day. We had to cook our meal and ate, washed, and packed. And it's about 9:00. We don't know. We didn't have watch. Then we carried everything on our back, on our head, and came down. About 2:30, 2:00 in the afternoon, our group had to find overnight shelter so we, our leaders, looked around, found if there was any vacant home. [If] vacant home, we just went in. Those people who left the house didn't take anything, like we didn't take anything. So, we went in there, used whatever we found there, and cooked our meal and slept there, and the next morning we pack again and came down.

That was every day routine. And we came to Hwangju. Hwangju is part of North Hwanghae Province. It's not far from 38th parallel. We found apple[s] there, apple country. So I had an apple. It was first time since we left so first fruit since we left our home. It was delicious. I think I had a little more than I should have, one or two more. I was 12 years old.

Then we all slept on the floor; no bed, no pads, no covers, just wear whatever we wear and slept. And in the middle of the night, I woke up and found that I wet, okay, my pants. I worried, "What do I do now?" You know, this is the only set of clothes I have; what do I do now? I couldn't figure out any idea, so well, I have to go back to sleep. I'll have to dry what I made a mess by my body heat. Then next thought was, "What about if I wet my immediate neighbors, you know?" I saw that they were dry. So, I woke up in the morning. I was all dried up. Nobody knew what I did.

The following day was quite a memorable day to me. It was a winter day; snows were covered on the hills. And the road was packed by refugees. I was carrying the package that my mother put on my back. I didn't know what's in there. I never opened it.... My sisters opened it. I was

told that we had some silk in there. Those days, silk farming was pretty good cash business, so my parents raised silkworms and all that. Then they made cloth.

[Another one is] Japanese money, one yen. While World War II was going on, apparently my mother had two of these. It was valuable in her mind. So, she got three of these and put that in my package. And later on, many years later, my sister, oldest sister, brought this [one] to me, one to my brother; the other one, she kept it. So this is all [that] I have from my mother. I think she was putting this most precious one into my pack [when] we moved away from the house we had been living.... This is the only one I have received from my mother; one yen, my mother gave me the last day [I saw her], November 29th, 1950. This is what's left, what she left to me. I feel that this is my mother - part of my mother.

.... And then I had a conversation with me [myself]. And one side of me asked me, "Why do you cry?" Every night until then, every night I cried because I missed my mother. Twelve years old, boy, last boy; I always slept right next to my mother because my father had passed away. And I said, "Oh, I miss my mom." But I didn't have anybody to say [it to]. So I cried, and tears came down, made a well water here. That happened every night. I asked myself, "Myself, why do you cry every night?" And I answered, "Because I miss my mother." Then, the other side asked, "If you cry, your mother's going to show up?" "No, but I still miss her." (gets teary) And I said, "I don't know when I'll see my mother again." Then the other side said, "Wake up. Are you going to be a wimp when you grow up?" I said, "No, I don't want to be a wimp." "Then wake up. You have a long future." (teary)

That was the day I made a determination I want to be somebody, respectable. [From] that time on, I did not have a tear in my eyes. A lot of things, a lot of things happened. I came to this country, and uh, I passed my PhD defense. That night [after his Ph.D. defense] I came home with my two little kids and wife. I cried.

We came down to southern part of Hwanghae do, Hwanghae Province, not far from 38th parallel. There is a river called Imjin River. It's a pretty big size then. We need to cross that. It was a pretty warm, early spring day. We had to take our clothes off and cross the river. And there were a lot of people crossing. And some people were carrying things and even people on the cart pulled by cows. And a lot of older people were there. We, our group, crossed there on south side of bank. And I was putting my clothes on, looking down the river. And I heard a jet noise from northeast corner of sky. Jets were coming down, four fighter jets came down [with] American flag and American air force mark. They were shooting down on the people crossing the river. I couldn't believe my eyes. They're on our party [side]. Why are they killing us? Then I got angry in my mind. Where do we go? We are coming to [be] under their umbrella; they are killing us. And a lot of people died there. They were shot and you know, we didn't have any voice there. Nothing we could do. Some people were crying, and the river was pink, you know; blood was there. And some carts were floating down.

.... Almost looks like everybody was on the road. The road was totally packed. We did not quite bump into each other, but we had to walk straight. Primary danger in those situations is the families separate; especially children pay attention to something else, then get lost. These were intense moments. Everybody [who] had children was always paying attention. Once they didn't

find their child, they screech and scream, and calling for their child. And children cry here, cry there. But the grownups, once we started walking for over a month, they didn't have energy to talk. They don't have subject to talk about. They didn't have nothing to share. So, they just walked, walked, looking down on the road, you know, walked. I just, young boy's mind, "What is this? Where are we going? Whom do we talk to? Where is anybody who can listen to our voices?" Nobody.

.... Apparently [someone] called our leaders and said, "You know, all the bridges are broken, destroyed." So, in order to cross the river, you have to climb up about 20 feet to the top of the bridge and then walk over the bridge. So young children and women shouldn't go there... So my sister, she became my de facto mother, pulled me to one corner in the morning. "You are going with young man." I said, "I'm 12 years old. I cannot do that." My sister said, "My brother-in-law is going to help you. He will do everything to bring you there." So, we came in the morning, we came to the river. Then strange thing happened. People walking on the river. The river was frozen, not very thick, but river was frozen overnight. So, my brother-in-law, he was the commander, said, "Run as fast as you can. Get your whole family, tell them not to bring anything, just come." They all came and we all crossed; 36 people crossed. [Then] we found an empty house. The empty house didn't have any rice to cook. They had unpolished rice, so we had to mortar it and unpolish it and ate dinner. We had to fill our stomach. Then [we] continued our journey to south; came to Seoul. It was about 40 days, but I don't know how many days. We didn't count.

But Seoul was blocked in. We were not allowed to come inside of Seoul. They turned us to Han River and put us on a little boat; cross the river to Yeongdeungpo. And [at] Yeongdeungpo, we all walked down, but there were whole lot of people standing on the sides of the road. We didn't know what they were doing. But later I learned that they were standing there just in case their relatives come down, and they want to catch them.

.... We stayed there nine days, but the older people, older boys, 16, 17, 18 years old boys, looked for job. They found a job in American army camps. And they earned so many dollars.... One day three of them went there, three of them came with *gochujang* [Korean spicy bean paste] - looked like *gochujang* - in a jar. And they were excited. We hadn't had our *gochujang* for probably over a month. So, they were breathing hot *gochujang* in and out their mouth. But couldn't open it. It took skill to open it. They finally opened it and one of them tasted it. It was not hot, spicy hot. It was sweet and sour. So they threw the bottle away, "The damn thing; this is not *gochujang*." That was ketchup.

.... Then we were told to go, that we have to go down. Chinese [coming] again.... The North Korean soldiers were coming down again, so we continued our journey to... a little town called Daedeok, a suburb of Daejeon.... Daejeon was all flattened. Daejeon had many battles there. So my sister and her husband went out to find my brother-in-law, just by name, that's all; no clue where. They left us near the Daejeon City Hall, three-story building. It was so tall because everything was all flat; three-story building. So, we were staying there and in the mid-afternoon, my sister and her husband came. They were happy. I said, "Why are you so happy?" "We found my sister, our sister's house. So we went to the house. The house was fully occupied by other refugees. So that was end of our journey.

I lived in Daejeon for five years. We all have to go out and earn some money. And only source of survival was the grains [that] came for refugees from mostly United States. We had to make money to buy some *banchan* [side dishes]. I saw that the older guys who came with me were selling newspapers so I followed them. They purchased like 20 copies of newspapers. I purchased five, you know, and sold them along the streets. Did that for about a little over a year. I earned pretty good money, too. Then, my body was not strong enough to do that kind of thing...starting from 4:00 a.m. to sometimes 8:00, 9:00 in the [evening]. So, I got very weak. I got sick and I layed down. I couldn't get up. I was on bed for probably ten days or so.

[When I] was able to walk, my fourth oldest sister and third sister called me. [Duk Joong] come here. I went there. They sewed my outfit; not quite you know, presentable, but it was okay. "Try this on. Oh, you look okay," they said. And they made little cloth to carry books around. We call it *chaekbo*. They said, "Tomorrow morning, you are going to go elementary school - to study." And I did. Most of the students were local people. It was October 3rd of 1951. My knowledge of anything was very shallow, you know. North Korea did not - country school did not teach me very much. And their teaching was different from South Korea, too. Only the thing similar was math and Korean readings. But I was not very good student. We had 51 kids in the class, all boys, ...[and] I was like 48th, 49th ranking. So, I was just hopeless. But I looked behind me; there were a couple of guys behind me. That was my comfort.

In April the following year, we had to take exam, junior high school entrance exam. And to do that you have to apply the application. The home room teacher have to sign it. One by one, he called into his office and did that... It was an open secret that he wouldn't sign application to Daejeong middle school if you don't make within top 15. "[Duk Joong], what school do you think you are going?" "Daejeong Middle School," so I said. He looked up and said,... "What? How can you dare to go?" Daejeong Middle School was very hard to enter, very competitive. Then I said, "Well, I will try it as a middle school. If I fail it, I'll do business." He knows how poor we were. Then he said, "That may be a good idea, too." So, he signed, so I applied. Then miracle happened. It's a miracle, just a miracle. I was within top in my class, 12th, 13th, so I was safe range; so I submitted it. I was okay. Then we had to have money to pay.... Tomorrow is the last day. If we don't pay my admission fee by that day, then my admission is nullified. And that day, some voices came and walked into our house. There was a couple who used to come to our house in North Korea from Pyongyang. He was a seminary student in Pyongyang. My sister told them you know, all these problems. He said, "I have that money. You can use it. Pay me later." And - I was able to come to school, that middle school. If that, those kind of things didn't happen, I may be in totally different route of my life.

[At school} no one picked on me. They were very friendly. But I was not one of them. They don't think I was one of their group. Their accents were different, but we understood each other very well. So I don't have any complaints about that.... But the only thing was my academic ability was not same level as theirs. I want to be one of the local children, speaking same accent, speaking you know, naming same things. But it was not very difficult. Then I entered the junior high. Then I became on equal footing with them. I enjoyed it, made good friends.

Post War Period

Yeah, armistice; armistice was 1953, wasn't it? July, 1953. So, I was in junior high then. You know, armistice was something happening far away from me. We didn't have any special ceremonies or special gatherings, or demonstrations in our area, Daejeon. Maybe I was away, I don't know. I don't remember that. But I heard that armistice was signed July 13th, I think. Change in my life was my siblings, my sisters, their families. They all moved up to Seoul. Then after that, I was senior high or late junior high [when] the armistice was signed.

Emigration from Korea

When I was a senior in college, I looked around Korea. It was 1963, '64, '65. [South] Korea was going through a very difficult time economically. So, there were not many jobs. And actually I didn't see much future for me in Korea. So I decided to go overseas. So I chose America naturally. I came here as a student in 1965. But I didn't have any scholarship. I had only \$50.00 in my pocket.... I came here to major business administration, to be rich and famous. PhD was my goal. I changed my direction to agricultural economics because agriculture was primary industry in Korea. I earned a master's, and PhD; took seven years all together.

Family Reunion

.... When I went to North Korea, it was 1988.... We didn't know why our mother couldn't come to my sister's where I was. By then, I established my life pretty well, not rich, but rich enough to support my family and sending our kids, two of them, into colleges. I had some reservation in my mind [but] how can we communicate with North Korea, sisters in North Korea? And why didn't my mom come? And also, picture of my hometown, it's a strange thing. The picture just showed up in Technicolor, full color, beautiful hometown, my hometown, North Korea. In my mind, the pictures of my hometown came to my mind in full color, beautiful color. So I was dreaming about it. It's daydream. And I know it's very hard to get an entry visa to North Korea. But my college friend went there. He was like me, came down south during the war. I talked to him, "How did you go?" He said, "You write a letter to them. If they are willing, they will. But don't think it's a sure thing. It's a possible thing."

I started writing, January 1, 1989. And they did not answer. I wrote every couple of weeks. I complained to him [my friend], these guys are not answering. "Yeah, what do you think? Did you think they would answer right [away], jump on writing a letter to you?" I said, "But not right, I've been writing for three months." He said, "Don't send the original, send a copy." So, I started sending copy. It was easy. Then I almost forget about it, you know. I almost give up.

On Friday after Thanksgiving of the same year, I received a letter, strange one, and opened it. There was a little slip of paper there. "If you want to come," in Korean - "If you want to come, go to Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC; get a visa to Beijing. Then when you come to Beijing, go to Korean, Democratic [People's] Republic of Korea [Korea] embassy in Beijing. Then they will give you visa." That was great news! But then what happened was Kim Il Sung's 90th birthday. I didn't want to go to Pyongyang then. And then I waited. Then, Tiananmen Square [incident] was crowding in [on] Beijing, so I didn't go into the mess there.

So the following year, 1990, I went there. I was invited to a seminar to deliver my presentation. Through that, I went to North Korea. Before I landed, let me tell you. I got onto Koryo Airlines. As soon as I sat, the music came out. It was old revolutionary music, which I sang when I was [there], "Kim Il Sung janggun" and stuff. That [made] my hair stand up. Then they delivered snack, one boiled egg, and candy.

I didn't have much emotion there because I was so long waited. But they treated me very well in North Korea. The third day, they said, "Oh, we have set up your visit with your sisters." We went there, took about a couple of hours driving from Pyongyang to my fifth oldest sister. I was just enjoying the nature and all of a sudden the car stopped. "Mr. Won, your sisters are here." And they were strangers. I couldn't recognize them. They didn't recognize me. Then the guide said, "They're your sisters." And I bowed [to] them, since they're older. And fifth sister, older sister, grabbed me and brushed here [touches his forehead hair] with her palm. I didn't know what she was doing. Then the other sister, two sisters were standing [there]. They did the same thing. I have a cowlick. Two. I have one here and one here. So, that's why [they're] doing this. Apparently, they remembered that I had it, and they were checking whether I was the real Duk Joong or not.

So we gathered together that night. You know, it was so long, so long desired. I was happy, of course, but I was - there was a fear, too. We don't know what's coming next. But nothing came next. I stayed there for three nights. We visited our father's tomb together, my mother's tomb first time. Last day, Friday, I packed and left. My sisters prepared handkerchiefs, white handkerchiefs. That was hard. [emotional] We all knew we wouldn't see each other again on this world. [I think] they give handkerchief to wipe your tears with handkerchief. I think that's the meaning. It was one week. It was long enough. I had a company to run in Washington, DC.

It was very meaningful. They told me why my mother couldn't come the morning she promised me. She was on her way to my third old sister's place, where I was staying. But apparently, the soldiers, enemy soldiers blocked the road, so there was no other way she could come. So she turned around to fourth oldest sister's home, and stayed there. When I was there, the sister we stayed [with in] their home, they were rather close to communist system authorities. So they did not have any bad treatment. But three other sisters were badly treated with my mother. The fourth oldest sister's husband was pretty well known in the community. He ran away as North Koreans were coming back to their village. So, they grabbed my sister, fourth oldest sister, and tortured her to get him back. But he was already gone. My mother was cared by my second oldest sister. They lived right next to each other and she died naturally.

[My sister told me,] "She disappeared every dawn, every morning. Where would she [go], I don't know. Rain or snow, cold or heat, she always disappeared." And I said, in my mind, it's a pre-dawn prayer, Korean Christian's way of praying. So she went there and [then] she came home, cooked breakfast for herself and put the rice in the bowl [to the] top. [When] the water dripped on the side, that is sign that-according to her-I was alive.

.... I could not say everything I wanted. I didn't want to hear everything they wanted me to hear. But they had lots of stories to tell me, a lot of stories. But we didn't have time.

.... I went to my mother's tomb, kneeled in front of her tomb. I told everybody to go away. I chatted with my mother, first time in 40 years. I said, number one thing I said, "Why didn't you leave home with us?" Then you'd have come to South Korea with us, with other children of yours." There was no hard feelings, so nothing to reconcile. But I was freed from question I had. I knew, I learned why she couldn't come. It was not her not keeping her promise with me. It was necessary decision for her to go in another direction.

The ultimate point is when you are in emergency, don't separate from your family. Your family members have to be together when there is a danger around you. She wanted, of course, to do the best for our family. But she did a lot of harm to everybody's souls and mind because she stayed. What's so important to put away your valuables? What is valuable to begin with? Your valuable thing is your relationship and your togetherness with your family. But she did not realize that then. So we had a forever separation. That relationship will never have closure. [cries] I live freely and happily. But I could have been happier if she was not left behind.