

Excerpts from the Korea Country Reader

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KOREA

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David E. Mark	1946-1949	Political Advisor, U.S. Forces, Seoul
William C. Sherman	1946-1949	Instructor to South Korean Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, Chinhae
	1948-1950	Performance Review Section, Economic Cooperation Administration, Seoul
Mary Chiavarini	1947-1948	Assistant to the Advisor to the Commanding General, Seoul
Fred Charles Thomas, Jr.	1947-1948	U.S. Army, Korea
Howell S. Teeple	1947-1949	Radio Broadcasting, Seoul
Donald S. MacDonald	1948-1950	Political Officer, Seoul
Everett Drumright	1948-1951	Political Advisor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Morton Bach	1949-1950	Economic/Financial Officer, Seoul
Philip H. Valdes	1949-1950	Consular/Economic Officer, Seoul
Harlan Cleveland	1949-1952	Director, Far Eastern Aid Program, Washington, DC

Theodore Achilles	1950	Acting Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Washington, DC
William J. Cunningham	1950	Personnel Officer, Seoul
Ray E. Jones	1950	Economic Cooperation Administration, Seoul
Philip W. Manhard	1950	Vice Consul, Tientsin, China
William G. Colman	1950-1951	ECA Mission, Seoul
Ralph N. Clough	1950-1954	Political Officer, Hong Kong
Gerald Bache	1951-1953	Economic Officer, Pusan
Samuel T. Williams	1952-1953 1953-1954	Command of 25 th Infantry Division, Korea Command of 9 th U.S. Army Corps Group, Korea
Fred Charles Thomas, Jr.	1952-1954	Political Officer, Seoul
William G. Colman	1953	Economic Mission, Seoul
Roy T. Haverkamp	1953 1953-1955	Motion Picture Officer, USIS, Pusan Political Officer, Seoul
Niles W. Bond	1953-1954	Political Officer, Seoul
George M. Barbis	1953-1956	Economic / Political Officer, Seoul
Kenneth MacCormac	1954-1956	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
Donald S. MacDonald	1955-1958	Political Officer, Seoul
Fred Charles Thomas, Jr.	1956-1958	Political Officer, Seoul
Edwin Cronk	1956-1960	Economic Counselor, Seoul
William C. Sherman	1957-1958	Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Bernard J. Lavin	1957-1966	USIS, Seoul
Erland Heginbotham	1958-1960	USAID, Seoul

Irving Sablosky	1958-1960	Publications Officer, USIS, Seoul
Howard B. Schaffer	1958-1960	Political Officer, Seoul
Thomas P. Shoesmith	1958-1960	Political Officer, Seoul
William Watts	1958-1960	Visa/Political Officer, Seoul
Marshall Green	1959-1961	Consul General, Seoul
James A. Klemstine	1959-1961	Korean Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Frank D. Correl	1959-1962	Commodity Import Program Officer, USAID, Seoul
Robert G. Rich, Jr.	1959-1962	Political Officer, Seoul
Frank N. Burnet	1959-1963	Korean Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
James T. Laney	1959-1963	Methodist Minister, Yonsei University Campus, Seoul
Lane Holdcroft	1960	Advisor to National Community Development Program, USAID
Donald S. MacDonald	1960-1962	Political Officer, Korea Desk, Washington, DC
Isabel Cumming	1960-1964	Secretary, USIS, Seoul
Daniel A. O'Donohue	1960-1964 1964-1966 1972-1974	Political Officer, Seoul Korea Desk Officer, Washington, D.C. Political Counselor, Seoul
Philip C. Habib	1962-1965	Political Counselor, Seoul
Edward Hurwitz	1962-1966	Political Officer, Seoul
Vincent W. Brown	1964-1967	Assistant Director for Program and Economic Policy, USAID, Seoul
Melvin R. Chatman	1964-1967	U.S. Army Officer, 1 st Cavalry Division, Korea
Princeton Lyman	1964-1967	Program Director, USAID, Seoul

Roger Ernst	1964-1968	Deputy Director, USAID, Seoul
Madison Broadnax	1964-1968	Office of Rural Development, USAID, Suwon
	1969-1970	Assistant Chief of Agriculture, USAID, Seoul
Richard A. Ericson, Jr.	1965-1968	Political Counselor, Seoul
Charlotte Loris	1967	Executive Officer, USIS, Seoul
Walter L. Cutler	1967-1969	Political Officer, Seoul
Russell Sveda	1967-1969	Peace Corps Volunteer, Seoul
Mark E. Mohr	1967-1969	Peace Corps Volunteer, English Language Instructor, Taegu
John Allen Cushing	1967-1970	Peace Corps Volunteer, Wonju
Cyrus R. Vance	1968	Presidential Emissary, Seoul
Morton I Abramowitz	1968-1969	Staff Member, Senior Interdepartmental Group, Washington, DC
James F. Leonard	1968-1969	Country Director, Korea Desk, Washington, DC
William Clark, Jr.	1968-1969	SEATO Desk, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
Edward W. Kloth	1968-1973	Peace Corps Volunteer, Seoul
Miles Wedeman	1968-1971	Deputy Director, USAID, Seoul
Kenneth Yates	1968-1972	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Kwangju
Nicholas Shapiro Lakas	1969-1972	Economic & Commercial Counselor, Seoul
Marcus L. Winter	1970-1972	Agricultural Economist, USAID, Seoul
Edward L. Rowny	1971	Commanding General, I CORPS, Korea
Paul E. White	1971-1972	Internship Training, USAID, Seoul

David Blakemore	1971-1974	Economic Officer, Seoul
Francis T. Underhill	1971-1974	Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Philip C. Habib	1971-1974	Ambassador, Korea
Stanley Zuckerman	1971-1973	Press Officer, Seoul
James G. Lowenstein	1972	Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC
Norman W. Getsinger	1972-1974	Commercial Counselor, Seoul
David T. Jones	1972-1974	Korea Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Daniel A. O'Donohue	1972-1974	Political Counselor, Seoul
George E. Lichtblau	1972-1975	Labor Attaché, Seoul
Robin White	1973	Economic Policy Officer, East Asia Bureau, Washington, DC
Donald P. Gregg	1973-1975	CIA Station Chief, Seoul
Richard A. Ericson, Jr.	1973-1976	Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Paul M. Cleveland	1973-1977	Political/Military Officer, Seoul
Edward Hurwitz	1974-1975	Political Officer, Seoul
Donald McConville	1974-1977	Economic Officer, Seoul
Morton I Abramowitz	1974-1978	Political Advisor to Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command
Ward Thompson	1975	Political Officer, Seoul
J.D. Bindenagel	1975-1977	Economic Officer, Seoul
Donald S. MacDonald	1975-1977	Executive Director, U.S.-Korean Joint Committee on Status of U.S. Forces, Seoul
Philip R. Mayhew	1975-1977	Korea Desk Officer, Washington, DC

Russell Sveda	1975-1977	Rotation Officer/Staff Aide to the Ambassador, Seoul
John E. Kelley	1975-1978	Political Officer, Seoul
Bilha Bryant	1976-1977	Spouse of Commercial Officer, Seoul
Edward Hurwitz	1976-1977	Korea Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Elizabeth Raspolic	1976-1978	Vice Consul, Seoul
John T. Bennett	1976	Economic Counselor, Seoul
Thomas Stern	1976-1979	Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Charles Stuart Kennedy	1976-1979	Consul General, Seoul
James A. Klemstine	1976-1980	Economic Officer, Seoul
Edward L. Lee II	1977-1979	Regional Security Officer, Seoul
Aloysius M. O'Neill	1977-1979	Consular Officer/Staff Aide to Ambassador, Seoul
David Blakemore	1977-1980	Korea Desk Officer, Washington, DC
William Clark, Jr.	1977-1980	Political Counselor, Seoul
Maurice E. Lee	1977-1981	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
Robert G. Rich, Jr.	1977-1981	Korea Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Katherine Schwering	1978-1980	Consular/Commercial Officer, Seoul
William H. Gleysteen, Jr.	1978-1981	Ambassador, Korea
Anthony Geber	1979-1980	Economic and Commercial Counselor, Seoul
Louis P. Goelz	1979-1980	Consul General, Seoul
David Blakemore	1980-1983	Political Counselor, Seoul
Thomas P. Shoesmith	1981-1983	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC

Walter A. Lundy	1981-1984	Economic Counselor, Seoul
Paul M. Cleveland	1981-1985	Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Bernard J. Lavin	1981-1985	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
Edward W. Kloth	1982-1983	Consular Officer, Seoul
David Lambertson	1982-1984	Korea Country Director, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, D.C.
Thomas P. H. Dunlop	1983-1987 1987-1989	Political Counselor, Seoul Country Director for Korea, Washington, DC
Isabel Cumming	1984-1985	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
George G.B. Griffin	1984-1986	Minister-Counselor (Commercial), Seoul
Donald McConville	1984-1987	Economic Counselor, Seoul
Andrew F. Antippas	1984-1988	Consul General, Seoul
Hugh Burleson	1985-1987	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
David Blakemore	1986-1987	Director, Office of Korean Affairs, Washington, DC
David Lambertson	1986-1987	Deputy Chief of Mission, Seoul
Edward W. Kloth	1986-1988	Korea Desk Officer, Washington, DC
William Clark, Jr.	1986-1989	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington
James R. Lilley	1986-1989	Ambassador, Korea
Gaston J. Sigur, Jr.	1986-1989	Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Washington, DC
John M. Reid	1986-1990	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Seoul
Aloysius M. O'Neill	1988-1992	Political Officer, Seoul

Edward H. Wilkinson	1988-1992	Consul General, Seoul
Theresa A. Loar	1989-1991	Consular Officer, Seoul
Donald P. Gregg	1989-1993	Ambassador, South Korea Chairman, The Korean Society
Edward W. Kloth	1990-1993	Political Officer, Seoul
John E. Kelley	1991-1993	Deputy Director, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Washington, D.C.
William Clark, Jr.	1992-1993	Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington
John Ratigan	1992-1995	Chief Consular Officer, Seoul
Edward W. Kloth	1993-1995	Principal Officer, Pusan
Walter F. Mondale	1993-1996	Ambassador, Japan
James T. Laney	1993-1996	Ambassador, Korea
David G. Brown	1995-1996	Director, Office of Korean Affairs, Washington, DC
Kenneth Yates	1995-1996	Overseas Mission, International Atomic Energy Agency, Seoul
Stephen Bosworth	1995-1997	Director, Korean Peninsula Energy Development Corporation, New York City, NY
David M. Schoonover	1995-1997	Agriculture Minister-Counselor, Seoul
Mark E. Mohr	1997-1999	North Korea Desk, (WAE), Washington, DC
Anthony C. Zinni	1997-2000	Commander-in-Chief, CENTCOM
Stephen Bosworth	1997-2000	Ambassador, South Korea
John Allen Cushing	1998	Economic Officer, Korea Desk, Washington, DC
	1998-2000	Korea Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence &

		Research, Washington, DC
Greg Thielmann	1998-2002	Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs, INR, Washington, DC
Mark E. Mohr	1999-2005	Department of Energy, Washington, DC
John Allen Cushing	2000-2001 2001-2004	Korean Language Studies, Seoul Political Officer, Seoul
Donald P. Gregg	2002	Visit to North Korea

RICHARD A. ERICSON, JR.
U.S. Army
Wome Do (1945-1946)

Ambassador Richard A. Ericson, Jr. was born in 1923. He enrolled in Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 1941, but did not graduate until 1945, due in part to being drafted in the U.S. Army in 1945. In addition to his service in Japan, Ambassador Ericson also served in England, Iceland, and Korea. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 27, 1995.

ERICSON: I got to Korea in October, 1945 and because I was a good army brat and signed the wrong agreement -- I signed the agreement to stay in 18 months after the cessation of hostilities - - which, unfortunately, they held me to. I had a good experience. I was an instructor for various kinds of weapons and IRTCs. When I got overseas, they lined everybody up on the dock and told every fifth guy to step forward and I ended up in the Corps of Engineers as adjutant of the boat battalion of the 592nd Boat and Shore Regiment, which was the outfit that ran the boats in the harbor of Inchon. So I spent all of the time in Korea living on the island of Wome Do -- "Do" means island and "Wome" means moon tail -- located in the port of Inchon.

When they broke up the battalion and transferred everybody I went to the Corps of Engineers in order to get a promotion and then they broke up that battalion and turned us all into a transportation port company. I ended up commanding the whole thing the last eight months I was there. Anybody with any points went home and we weren't getting any experienced boat people so I had a nice little fiefdom out there on Wome Do.

We were on an island and our looks were always to the sea. We operated lighters to and from the shore. We were on duty 24 hours a day and you may recall something of the tide problem in Inchon. They later built the big tidal basin of which Wome Do is actually now part. Inchon when I was there was the port with the second highest average rise and fall of tide in the world, next to the Bay of Fundy, and you had to operate strictly in accordance with the tides. You couldn't get in or out of the tidal basin unless the tide was correct. You couldn't even get up to Charlie Pier in

Inchon harbor for much of the day. You would look over the area one hour and see nothing but shining water as far as the eye could see and six hours later it was nothing but shining mud as far as the eye could see. But we operated LCMs and LCTs, which the Navy had left us. All of the supplies at that time for Korea for the 24th Corps were coming in through Inchon because the railroads were broken to Pusan. Pusan was more or less inoperative anyway and the troops were all up towards the 38th parallel.

Anyway, how did the Americans operate? Ignorantly, I would say was my impression of the American occupation of Korea. Of course, the decision to go into Korea was made at the last minute and the 38th parallel was an arbitrary and not well chosen demarcation line. We were totally unprepared. We had a plan for governing Japan. We had military government people who theoretically had done some homework on their business and we had some policies and plans in motion. We had none of that for Korea, nor did any of the distinguished civilian or military minds, in my opinion, get much applied to Korea. I think we were there primarily to keep the communists, the Russians in particular, from coming any further south at that point and threatening Japan. We were there to do what we could to stabilize that situation as quickly as we could and then get out of it, which is basically what we did. But I have often thought trying to create a democracy out of a country as Korea was then, or even as it is now, is a difficult task at best and in the face of military tensions, etc., it gets to be damn near impossible. Anyway, we were not set up to try even.

I took my Foreign Service exams while in Korea because they had advertised in the "Stars and Stripes" that they would let people who hadn't graduated but who had military experience at a certain level, become eligible to take them and they were going to be given in Tokyo. Of course, I had no idea that I would pass, but I did want to go to Tokyo. So I signed up for them. Apparently everybody in Korea with a like mind did the same because they gave them in Seoul, so I never got out of Korea for that purpose.

When I took my oral exams, one of the examiners was the former political advisor to General Hodges, the commanding general of the 24th Corps, and a Foreign Service officer, of course, was on my panel. He started asking me questions about Korea and I spouted off pretty much in the same vein saying that if we weren't any better prepared to do right by the country than we had been then we had no business going there. Well, he passed me. Maybe he thought the criticism was valid, I don't know. I didn't know who he was at that time.

I had limited contact with Koreans when I served in the boat battalion. A boat shore regiment has two elements. It has a boat battalion which runs the boats and keeps them repaired and then it had a port battalion which furnished the beach people. In our situation it did the stevedoring both on board ship and in the tidal basin. The ships would come close to the harbor. They couldn't come into the tidal basin because that couldn't take any more than a LST. A Baltic class freighter, the kind of thing the "Pueblo" was, could get in. Most of the supplies came on Liberty size ships and everything had to be lightered ashore. We ran the lighters and the port battalion provided all the stevedore troops. They, the port battalion, after the big exodus of World War II veterans, began to hire fairly large numbers of Koreans as stevedores, primarily. We used some of them for our maintenance operations. We had some wooden hull boats, some command boats, and the Koreans were very, very good shipwrights, good boat carpenters. I will never forget the

first time I saw a Korean shipwright drive a long screw through the outer planking of one of our things and into the hull member with a power driver. He had a look of beatification on his face like nothing you ever saw. It would have taken him hours to get that thing in. We also hired them for kitchen help, for barrack cleaning, the donkey work in the motor pool. We didn't hire very many skilled ones and didn't come in contact with very many educated ones.

I thought at the time that Korea was hopeless as a society. It was this curious mixture of more or less 20th century and 15th century. You could smell it forty miles at sea -- the so-called honey pits -- the only fertilizer they had was human excrement. Honey wagons were all over the place. Our places were serviced with honey wagons. The agricultural tools that they used were all out of the remote, remote past. If you went up to Seoul you saw street cars and relatively modern buildings and that kind of thing, but in the countryside between Inchon and Seoul why agricultural and other methods were ox carts and that sort of thing were way, way out of date. The people were not excessively friendly. I had a house on the side of a hill in Wome Do in what had been an old Japanese complex and summer resort. Our club had been the governor's mansion. There were four hotels out there; we managed to burn them down. Each of our companies was billeted in one of these hotels which was joined together by wooden passageways with a long passageway out over the water to join a square pavilion where they had their parties, etc. But I lived on the hillside in one of the separate cottages which they also maintained. But we let the Koreans live in all of the others. But they were very aloof and there was no fraternization, which we respected mightily. If a man was looking for a woman he had to go up to Seoul, possibly because most of Inchon was off limits. Up to the time I left, there was no inter-marriage, no real fraternization of any sort.

But, these were obviously a society totally alien to us young Americans. We had no comprehension of it. We heard mutterings of various political difficulties. There were times we were under arms against sabotage and that sort of thing. There were trouble with the communists down south and there were skirmishes, etc. But nothing ever untoward ever happened.

One lasting impression of anyone who served at that level and in that kind of work, was in terms of pilferage at which the Koreans were quite adept. They used to steal the dunnage (wooden braces, cargo separating devices, etc) -- when we were unloading the cargo we would take the dunnage off the ship and pile it on the shore, and of course that was sacrosanct as American property, even though it was probably worthless, but Koreans desperately needed housing materials. Third class lumber for which there was no use in the United States, very raw. It was on the ships to protect the cargo. We would have fairly good size piles of it and Koreans would come over at night in their boats and try to make off with dunnage, which we permitted to a certain extent. We didn't really want to be stolen blind, but we did permit them to take that kind of thing.

I might just mention one famous episode that took place in Inchon. When the army arrived in 1945 we had no winter equipment and the 1945-46 winter was a bitter cold winter. My people on the island got through that winter in tropical barracks where the screens had been sprayed with plastic. That was the winterization. Down the center of each barracks was a coal stove and they kept it red hot all winter long, and still it was freezing. Anyway, they determined they were not going to have that happen the next winter so they sent over winter uniforms, blankets and stored

them in big old Japanese warehouses off the highway at the entrance to Inchon and put guards, dogs and machine guns around them. They went to open them that fall and found that the center of the warehouses had been eaten away by people digging in from across the highway underneath the warehouses and up through the floor and into the boxes. They had just about taken everything in one warehouse. There were lots of people wandering about wearing GI blankets and coveralls that winter.

Anyway, I did not conceive any great love or liking for the Korean people at that point. I really didn't know any other than those we hired. My job didn't put me in contact with any.

DONALD S. MACDONALD
Military Government Specialist, U.S. Army
City Unspecified (1945-1946)

Donald S. MacDonald was born in Massachusetts in 1919. He received a bachelor's degree from MIT in 1938 and a Ph.D. from George Washington University in political science. Mr. MacDonald served in the US Army from 1942-1946 and joined the foreign service in 1947. His overseas posts include Korea, Istanbul and Geneva. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 25, 1990.

MACDONALD: I have a Ph.D. from George Washington University in political science. I started as a chemistry major at MIT, but moved into other areas. My contacts with Korea began with World War II. I volunteered for a tour of duty with the military government with no thought of Korea and was assigned to the Japan occupation forces. Then MacArthur decided that he didn't want a large military government and a number of us were sent to Korea. I arrived there in October, 1945 with virtually no knowledge of the country, spent the next year trying to compensate for my ignorance and since then I have spent much of my life trying to learn what I should have known when I first got there.

The occupation began on September 9, 1945 when General Hodge and his XXIV Corps landed and took over from the Japanese, who had occupied Korea since 1910. We began with elements of three divisions which were assigned to various parts of South Korea. As the military government specialists arrived, they were assigned to cities and districts of Korea, initially under the command of the three divisions and then beginning in January, 1946 they came under the direct command of the military governor of Korea, who in turn reported to General Hodge.

The military government operations in the Army had a program which consisted of an initial six week training period at the School for Military Government at the University of Virginia, followed by six months in the Civil Affairs Training School which were located in various parts of the country. They trained people in German and Japanese primarily and the training was specifically aimed at controlling occupied territory behind the fighting lines. As one of the trainees at the CAT School at Harvard, I studied Japanese intensively for six months and had a fairly good crash course in Japanese history, politics and culture. Had I gone to Japan, I would

have been moderately well equipped for a beginner, but as far as Korea was concerned, I knew absolutely nothing about it except for a fragmentary recollection of one section in a text-book that I had used at MIT. I arrived on a troop-ship in Yokohama in early October, 1945 and which was subsequently rerouted to Inchon. On the way, a few of us dug out of the ship's library a book entitled "Terry's 1905 Japanese Empire" which had a few pages on Korea. All of the cities had of course Japanese names. We copied that on the ship's typewriter and then mimeographed it. That was the total of our knowledge about Korea when we arrived in Inchon.

We didn't know much about Korea in those days. However, in the first few days, we all recognized that Korea was a friendly country and not an enemy. We realized this because 90% of the Koreans were friendly. There were a few who were committed Communists, who viewed the occupation askance. We had some problems with them, but generally speaking the atmosphere was very friendly. It is ironic, of course, that the Japanese, who were the defeated enemy, governed themselves under the general direction of MacArthur and his headquarters, whereas the Koreans who were our friends were governed directly by an American Military Government, with Americans directly in charge down to the county level in the beginning.

As I look back on it, I am not sure the issue of whether to have a military government -- as contrasted to the Japanese pre-war model -- was given much thought. I was strictly at the working level and had no policy responsibility, but we must have recognized that someone had to run the country. Once the Americans had decided not to accept the People's Republic which had been proclaimed two days before we arrived, then who else except the Americans? The process then established was that the military government would be imposed as a transitional phase. The Japanese who had governed the country were sent home. They were to be replaced at the lower levels by Korean bureaucrats who had worked for the Japanese. That was a poor decision, but at the American working level it seemed sensible at the time.

I was first assigned to Kwangju -- the capital of the South Cholla province. When we got to Kwangju, we found the Japanese provincial government rivaled by a local Korean government, manned by volunteers operating just down the street from Japanese headquarters. We didn't know at the time, but found out subsequently that the Japanese Governor General, in the last days of occupation, recognized that his life and fortune and those of his people, would be at risk once the surrender had taken place. So the Japanese Governor General invited a Korean nationalist leader of leftist persuasion to organize a security group, which within a couple of months became the self-proclaimed People's Republic, nominally created by the local committees. In Kwangju, the committee ran a security apparatus with the acquiescence of the Japanese. The Japanese didn't realize how far they would go. The Koreans were after all amateurs at government since they had been ruled by the enemy for forty years. The situation therefore in Kwangju was confused, but not personally threatening. We all arrived with Colt 45s on our belts, although I would hardly have known which end to fire, if I had to. A curfew was imposed which the Americans assisted the Korean police to enforce. Within a very short time, the Americans reconstituted the police force established by the Japanese. We used many of the same Korean personnel who had worked for the Japanese and they did maintain order in their own fashion.

The first month or two were a learning experience for all of us. We began by interviewing our

Japanese ex-opposite numbers. My most hilarious experience came when I was made the interpreter between the American provincial public safety officer and the Japanese chief. The latter quickly recognized that my Japanese was inadequate, so he brought in a high school principal to do the interpreting. But the public safety officer couldn't understand the principal's English. So the police chief would speak to the high school principal, who spoke to me and I would interpret his English to the American public safety officer.

The big unresolved question in the minds of all of the Americans in Korea, including those of us in Kwangju, was whether the People's Republic was an indigenous movement or one supported by an outside power such as the USSR. It was a burning question because the people's committees, which were the grass-roots organizations which produced the People's Republic, were in control of many parts of the province -- in fact, most of it. The only thing that was left under Japanese control when we arrived was the provincial capital itself and the immediate surrounding areas. The question of what to do with people's committees had to be faced. Should they be brought into the occupation governmental structure and if so, how? Some of the committees were allowed to operate for several months, but because of orders from Seoul or because of local decisions, they were eventually abolished, some by use of considerable force. The last one that was abolished in our province was in Mokpo in January, 1946. These "eradication" were performed by running in armored personnel carriers in a big show of force, informing the people's committees that they had been abolished and arresting some members as necessary. This decision was largely based on Seoul's appraisal that these committees were largely communist dominated. In fact, they were not. Bruce Cumings' book, "The Origin of the Korean War," for which he did a thorough research job, more or less demonstrates that although the communists were probably the best organized element within the people's committees and may have inspired such ideas as the name "People's Republic", actually the people's committees were associations of local notables in the various communities. They were not necessarily communists. As Cumings points out, the American method of dealing with them was based on a firm anti-communist position. "He who is not for us, is against us". Or since the committees had communist elements in them, they were therefore subject to communistic subversion and manipulation. They therefore were to be abolished and the military government would work with people in whom it had confidence as good anti-communists.

In retrospect, I am absolutely appalled not only by my initial lack of information about the political situation, but also by my insensitivity to it during most of the time I was there. Things were going on, but I did not really learn about them until much later. But at the time, I was almost blissfully oblivious to them.

The first step we took in establishing a government in Kwangju was to interview the Japanese. Following that, the Americans took over what the Japanese had been doing, as provincial governor and heads of the six major subdivisions and of all the police. The next step was to dismiss all the Japanese and to install Korean personnel who had worked in the Japanese-led Korean government. This resulted in a continuation of the structure established by the Japanese Governor General with Japanese-trained Koreans in positions of authority. Then we, at least in name, turned the authority over to the Koreans. The Governor of South Cholla province, who was initially named, was a moderate physician who had been associated with the People's Committee. He was soon displaced by a Korean landowner who was famous for his conservative

anti-Communist views and who spoke English very well and who was therefore attractive to the anti-Communist Americans. Under him, and a few other top people brought in from outside, continued all these ex-Japanese Government General Korean employees. What was done in effect was to continue the Japanese structure.

There were some protests from the local population which were sometime very vigorous. There was a major strike in a large coal mine near Kwangju, at Hwasun, which was something of a national cause celebre. It was believed that the Communists had fermented the strike to make trouble for the American Military government. They probably did encourage it, but that was only one factor. There were parades and counter-parades, demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. There was not any mass violence that I could see. Kwangju, although tense with big demonstrations, did not at that time have the upheavals that took place in Taegu -- the third largest city in South Korea -- in 1946, which was repeated in Kwangju in 1980.

In the first three months, while under divisional authority, we were left pretty much on our own. The commander of the 6th Division which occupied our province, did not have his mind very much on military government. He left the management of the province to the military government people. Beginning in January 1946, that changed when Hodges took over the military government function. The first thing that happened was that the police, which had been decentralized to the provincial level, was re-centralized, as the Japanese had it. We in Kwangju did not really support this change. After that, the Navy Commander who became senior political advisor to General Hodges because he spoke Korean -- he was the son of missionaries -- came to Kwangju and called a meeting of American officers to brief us on plans to hold elections for a legislative assembly throughout South Korea in 1946. Increasingly, government administration became centralized. This posed a problem because instructions would come down through Korean channels from the Korean civil administrator in Seoul to the Koreans in our province. We didn't read Korean. Other instructions would come down in English from the military governor to the senior military government officer who was by then considered an advisor to the Korean provincial governor. These sets of instructions didn't always mesh. That created a great deal of confusion in an already confused situation.

Our first priorities were to maintain order and restore public services. The situation was dreadful at the time. One of the first acts by the American military government with its blissful faith in free private enterprise had been to abolish all of the Japanese control on markets, which led to the hoarding of a bumper crop of rice by speculators which resulted in a massive rise in the cost of rice, which is the basic Korean staple. All other commodities were also in short supply. There wasn't any soap. In the first weeks of occupation, we were typing our reports to Seoul on Japanese toilet paper -- we didn't even have American supplies. Just to provide the bare essentials under these circumstances took a lot of ingenuity, which was applied generously and with some success. Incidentally, there is an almost forgotten set of articles on this period in a book published by Carl Friedrich and Associates called "American Military Government Experience in World War II". It has a couple of chapters on Korea -- one which I wrote. When our performance is measured strictly in terms of day-to-day coping, we did fairly well. But in terms of over-all policy, Americans are open to a great deal of criticism.

One of the things that happened -- I was assigned to the Public Safety Office staff along with two

other American officers -- was that the Korean police would brief me from time to time and give me a complete "snow job". I loved them. I did occasionally inspect what was being done. I never saw anything out of line. I can't personally testify to any human rights abuses, but in the light of what I learned subsequently about Korea, I have absolutely no doubt that abuses were committed every day right under my nose. Of course, what Americans and Koreans viewed as abuses were quite different.

My first tour in Korea ended on October, 1946. I stayed one year. Before we finish with that part of my life, let me mention one episode, which I find revealing. The commander of the military government in charge of Kwangju, as distinguished from the provincial team to which I was attached, was a Major Dillon who had no doubt about the superiority of Americans over all others. He was sitting in his office one day -- this comes to me from a very good second hand source -- and a delegation of Koreans came in, unannounced. They had a nominee for the Korean mayor of Kwangju. Dillon drew himself up to his full five feet, five inches height and said in a firm tone: "Mayor? You must be kidding. We came here to kill all you people!". There was a complete spectrum, of course, in the American representation. Most of our people who occupied Korea were people of basic good will and good intentions but certainly ethnocentric. I can remember very clearly that my political belief at the time was that man was by nature democratic, as we were in the U.S. All that was necessary to provide democracy to Korea was to remove the Japanese. Once they were gone, the Koreans would of course be democratic because that is the essential nature of man. It wasn't until considerably later that I realized that it wasn't quite that simple.

WILLIAM G. RIDGEWAY
U.S. Army and Civilian Armed Forces Radio, USIS
Chon Ju (1946-1958)

William G. Ridgeway was born in 1926 in Pennsylvania. He joined the Army in 1946 and served as a motion picture officer until he joined the USIS in 1953. His postings included Manila, Bangkok, and Seoul. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in February of 1989.

RIDGEWAY: I arrived in Korea in late January, 1946 as a U.S. Army PFC. Subsequently, I was assigned to our military government, and designated the Public Health and Welfare Officer in the 44th MG Company, located in the province of Chon Ju. The company was located in the town of Chung Up.

It was the first time I had ever had any experience working with foreigners, or supervising anyone. I was assigned two GIs (no more knowledgeable than me) to fight a very bad cholera epidemic. Apparently, the cholera was brought to Korea by refugees returning from China. That gave me my first taste of dealing with foreigners. In that summer and fall of 1946, we cared as best we could for nearly a half million people, afflicted, or at risk to cholera.

Our three teams of medical students, headed by a Korean doctor, inoculated everyone in the

province twice. We chlorinated wells, sprayed homes with DDT, and buried the dead. Road blocks to curtail travel, using the Korean police, were set up. In this time of great misery I expected everyone to work together. My eyes were quickly opened to the real world. To my amazement I learned the doctors were selling fake stool exams (to allow travel), and the police were easily bribed. I grew up that summer. It was quite a baptism for a very green kid from Honesdale, Pennsylvania.

In my off time I developed photographs for the men in the company and repaired their radios. Parts were hard to come by, and scrounging was a way of life. I needed a certain type of radio tube, so on one of my official trips to Group Headquarters in Chon Ju I went to the Armed Forces Radio Station to scrounge. (That trip, as it turned out, was the beginning of my Foreign Service career.)

When I went there -- this was late in the fall of 1946 -- I discovered their transmitter was off the air. The Army radio engineer had rotated back to the States, leaving them in dire straits. The civilian program director asked me to see what I could do. Fortunately, I was able to repair the transmitter and get the radio station back on the air. The "boss" was quite happy with my work; he told me that there was a spot open for a civilian engineer. I had never really thought of staying in Korea or taking on a civilian job there. I filed the offer away in my memory and went back home with my radio tube. A month or so later I was shipped to Seoul for return to the States. There the radio job offer became more attractive. I was assigned to the replacement depot located in Inchon. It was a terrible place -- a former Japanese army barracks without windows, without hot water, heat or anything. Food and coffee were frozen on the mess hall floor. And, worst of all, no sign of a ship! After living under these circumstances for about six weeks, I went into Seoul to see the major in charge of Armed Forces Radio. They were quite happy to see me, and said they had been expecting me -- I don't know why, as I had never indicated any interest. They immediately signed me up to take on the radio job (and made glowing promises about the rapid promotions I should expect). They gave me the appropriate papers to have signed, necessary for discharge in Korea. I returned to Inchon and went around and obtained all of the signatures and clearances necessary for discharge. I was probably one of the first few GIs to be discharged in Korea. I received my discharge, to be effective that night at midnight. I hitchhiked a ride into Seoul on a Korean truck with all my worldly belongings in an Army duffel bag. I checked into the civilian billet -- it was the first time I had seen a bed with sheets and had hot water in a very long time. Three days later I was on a train back to the radio station in Chung Up. I stayed there for eight or nine months, and then the station was closed and I was moved to Seoul as assistant engineer. My duties, more or less, were to take care of the equipment, and now and then to assist with some of the control board work. The next important turn in my life was when I met the young Korean girl I eventually married. I met Tongsuk during a remote broadcast we were doing in Ewha Women's University during Christmas week. We began to see each other, which, needless to say, was quite difficult for her in those times. The impending move of the radio transmitter I was responsible for to the boondocks would have doomed the romance. But I was able to have myself transferred from AFRS to the motion picture section of the Army's Information and Education division. I am not sure what it was called at the time. It was under the Department of the Army, that I do remember. Again I was involved in the technical aspects of taking care of all of the equipment used by Motion Picture Distribution. In January 1949 my organization was taken over by the Department of State from the U.S. Army. At that time my

own personal problem of trying to obtain permission to marry improved. Under the Department of State, unlike the Army, it was possible to apply for permission, which I did -- and, incidentally, including a copy of my resignation. If I was turned down, they would accept the resignation and I would be shipped out. Four months later we received permission to marry. (The letter of permission included the warning that I could not expect advancement in the Service, being married to a foreigner. Fortunately, things changed.) We were married on June 8, 1949. A year later I was still doing the same sort of work, assistant to the motion picture officer, Chuck Tanner. (Still no promotion.) We left on June 10, 1950 for the U.S. -- my first home leave and my wife's first visit there. We were in New York City two weeks later, when on June 25, 1950, the North Koreans invaded the south. We lost everything we owned, which had been left in our small government-supplied house. I think it was located east of the Capital building in a compound called MG-II. There had been rumors for some time of an impending invasion. Tongasuk had been asked by the director (PAO) to monitor the North Korean radio. In the last broadcast she listened to, the communists boasted they would celebrate Liberation Day (August 14, 1950) on the steps of the Capital building -- in Seoul. They did! So we became refugees in the States. My pay had been stopped because my pay card had been lost during the invasion. Eventually, we received a small temporary allowance to tide us over. I went to work in our New York City office and worked there until October, when I was given the assignment to return to Seoul as motion picture officer. Chuck Tanner apparently refused to return to Seoul because he couldn't bring his wife. No dependents were allowed at the time. So I went back. The city, needless to say, was quite different from the one I had left. My wife could not accompany me, although later that policy was changed. At the time I returned it was in October 1950 and the city was quite a mess. The PAO -- Jim Stewart -- was quite busy, so I went to see him and asked him, "What am I supposed to do?" So he said, "Well, try to get what you can together, and get the movie thing going." My original staff and the motion picture production staff were able to find out where the North Korean communists had stashed our raw film stock and pre-print material. We literally went around and picked up all of the staff that they hadn't taken north. Fortunately, we were using 16 mm. film exclusively with our mobile units, not 35 mm. They had left the 16 mm. and taken the 35 mm. stock and prints. So fortunately they only used 35 mm. raw stock. They left great quantities of our 16 mm. raw stock, and had not taken too much of our pre-print material. The equipment, which really was nothing to brag about, was recovered. So we got the operation going. Our first production was a three reel, or thirty- minute, film on the progress of the war. Then the roof fell in. The Chinese communists got into the act and started the next round of the invasion. By this time it was in the dead of the winter -- mid December. We were faced with the problem of finishing what film prints we were making and at the same time starting to evacuate. I used seven bottles of whiskey to obtain seven boxcars from the U.S. Army sergeant in charge of boxcar assignment. At the railhead we loaded the boxcars with all of our equipment, the employees and their dependents -- a total of 350 people. One by one they were shipped off to Pusan -- final destination was Chinhae. I shuttled back and forth between Seoul and Chinhae, hitchhiking on military aircraft. When everything was on track, I left on the final trip out of Seoul sometime after Christmas. The city fell to the second invasion in a few days. We went to Chinhae because we had a small Information point (Center) that was to serve as our new studio! The building was the former Japanese naval officers' club of Chinhae -- typical Japanese construction with sliding paper doors -- a real fire trap! We put all of our stuff in the building and tried to place our people around town, wherever they could find room for their families. By this time headquarters had evacuated from Seoul to Pusan. I went to see the PAO to report that we

were down, etc. He asked me what did I need? I said we needed to fix the place up and make some rooms light-tight, and bring in water and electricity. I already had made some preliminary estimates of what it would cost. The plan was to do the work ourselves. All of the Korean staff members had other skills, because in those days almost all of the people in motion picture production started off as floor sweepers in commercial theaters. There they were able to work their way up through the ranks, so to speak. Most of them had little or no formal training in any of the arts. To have been a bricklayer earlier and a scriptwriter today was quite normal. Consequently, we had a large reservoir of talent in the organization. I had a staff of about eighty-five people at that time. I told the PAO I would need about \$7,000 or \$8,000 -- something in that neighborhood. He said okay and gave me a chit for the Budget and Fiscal office. I was given a duffel bag of Korean currency and a carbine with a magazine of ammunition and was told, "Here you are." I put the money in a bank in Chinhai and we started to fix the place up. It took about six or seven weeks and we were back in business again. It worked out quite well for about a year. We were producing a weekly newsreel, and I think by that time we had even started to produce Korean adaptations of American films.

The Chinese and the North Koreans came very close to Pusan. Our studio in Chinhai and later Sangnam was just on the other side of Masan, looping north to just the other side of Pusan. The Pusan perimeter was the closest point that the Chinese and the North Korean forces came. It was quite close. One of our mobile unit drivers was shot in the butt when he and a USIS American, being happily waved on by South Korean forces, went past the front lines. Pretty soon they discovered where they were. As they went around a bend they were fired upon, the Korean driver being wounded. The newsreels that we turned out were designed to support the efforts of the Korean government and the U.S. in fighting the war. It was clearly propaganda. We called the communists just about every vile name you could think of, and used all kinds of statistics and facts that would bolster morale. It was the Korean government's policy to foster hatred of the communists. I questioned some of this myself at the time, because the most dangerous communists, outside of someone coming at you with a tank or a gun, were the ones you could not identify. The most dangerous ones were the ones working under cover, and there were a number of them. The Korean government totally ignored that concept, at least as far as their own propaganda went. My attempt for a different approach in anticommunist propaganda, began with a script written in collaboration with our Korean writer. We produced a full-length black-and-white anticommunist feature film called "Boxes of Death." It was a story showing how the communists used an agent in the guise of a young wounded veteran. He came to the village carrying the ashes of a young man who was from the village. He had been allegedly killed in combat -- actually it was a cover. The audience was able to understand this -- that was how it was scripted -- to see how the communist undercover operative was able to turn one faction of the village against another. The agent's purpose was to disrupt the Korean government's operation behind the front lines. To use the ashes of a dead hero for cover was considered by our audience quite vile of the communists (this was the reason I used it). That was the first time, as far as I know, that this particular approach was used in trying to point out that a communist could look just like you or anyone else. The Korean government posters would show the communist as a bloodthirsty monster, with a knife clenched between his teeth and a knife in each hand.

As I said, the "studio" was a fire trap. We insulated it against sound the best we could. We built a soundproof booth using rice hulls for insulating material between double walls. For the glass in

the window of the soundproof booth we used jeep windshields. It was all improvised. We also scrounged a lot of stuff from the air base that we were able to use. I worked out a deal with the U.S. Air Force at the Chinhae air base, a few miles away (which used to raise havoc with our recording sessions) to borrow a 16 mm. automatic film processing machine. None of the equipment we were using at the time was automatic. The machine was very helpful to us because we could produce our 16 mm. prints faster. We also used it to process their gun camera film. Normally they were shipping their gun camera film back to Japan and not getting the film back until the following day. By processing the film the same day, the pilots could see the effectiveness of their strikes, before the next mission. The base had the equipment but not the know-how. They had no one who could run it or whatever. So we scratched their back and they scratched ours. It gave them almost immediate access to their gun camera films after a strike in the north. The pilots were well served, as were our own needs. You may wonder why a film processing machine was such a prize. All of our film was developed in two hundred foot lengths on curtain stretchers dunked in wooden tanks by hand, with no temperature control of any sort. In the winter, the soup (developing chemicals) literally was put in large GI aluminum pots and heated over a GI gas stove. It was then dumped back in and stirred around to bring the temperature up to the approximate degree it should be. In the summer it was the same thing -- the pot was floated in cut-off fifty-five gallon drums of ice and water to cool it off. We ran three eight-hour shifts and worked seven days a week. As I said, we had no modern equipment. It was all done by hand. The film came out of this mess coated with a very thick scum. We hired young girls who did nothing more than scrub every inch of film with a mixture of ammonia and alcohol. Every inch of film was scrubbed that way. Since the film was broken down into two hundred foot lengths for developing, it had to be spliced together for the next step. When your sound is on one piece of film and your picture on another, little bits and pieces were always missing. To correct this, we went through the horrendous mess of sound matching which would take a week or more to do. All of that to complete a ten-minute reel of film! The actors were local, both amateurs and professionals. What we would usually do would be to go into a village and talk to the head man and explain what we were doing -- sit and drink some sake, tea or something, and discuss the film and point out how it was helping the war effort. This would take quite a bit of time. We would get his cooperation and the cooperation of the villagers. We would usually pay a little bit, not too much -- pay them as laborers, but really for the services of using their house and their village or whatever. I spoke enough Korean to carry on such conversations -- not having had any training at all. I had only two people on the entire staff who spoke English moderately well. The next phase of our development began due north, over the mountain from Chinhae. There I found this fantastic empty building, 150 foot by 50 foot wide, two stories of solid reinforced concrete. Prior to the Korean war it had been looted by the local people for all the stuff they could recover from it -- wooden frames from the windows, wiring, pipe, whatever. But it was very well built. I saw this shell as a potential fireproof studio. In those days such a building was an extreme rarity, especially un-occupied. The war was still going on. This was, I guess, in late 1951 or early 1952. On my next trip to Pusan I extolled the virtues of this new site to the powers that be. Everyone thought it was a great idea, but really a dream. It was assumed we would win the war and move back to Seoul. The idea to have film production located permanently, so far from headquarters, was not looked upon favorably. I took 22 visiting officials from Washington through, including Herb Edwards, who was head of IMV at the time. He saw the potential for the building. To my surprise, at the end of the fiscal year I received a hurried call from Pusan saying, "You now have \$25,000 to fix the place, and all the contracts

have to be let within ten days!" Needless to say, we did it and we moved in. The facility was a thousand percent better, and this time, besides much better security, we were off by ourselves. We had a country locale where we literally could build sets right on our own property, with our own rice paddies and everything. We did a lot of shooting in the studio -- now we had a real sound stage for the first time. It was well soundproofed. All the pieces began to fall together. We began receiving the modern automatic development and printing equipment that I had ordered from the U.S. For the first time we were properly equipped. My serenity was soon shattered. All of the lab chiefs went on strike when the new processing machine arrived. They thought they would lose face in not knowing how to operate it, so consequently they quit. I don't know what they really expected us to do, but anyhow I was able to train their assistants in on the new machine. That was the end of the old lab chiefs and their strike. They all had their own special formulas which were closely guarded, even from each other. It was assumed we would be helpless without their know-how. The film that we processed by the old system was terrible. A particular scene would go from white highlights and pure black shadows to absolutely flat gray because of the difference in processing the film at different times. So, finally, for the first time we were now able to turn out reasonably good quality, consistent photographic material -- and, best of all, at the same time, at a much greater pace.

The new equipment included sound recording equipment that used magnetic film. We no longer had the problem of matching two hundred foot lengths of film together -- everything was done on one big one-thousand foot roll, what an improvement! The staff absorbed the new techniques. We literally hired young girls from the rice paddy and trained them in how to run the film printers. They were much better than the men. First of all, they followed instructions and didn't have to unlearn anything like some of the older movie people. A good two-thirds of the staff were originally contract employees. I had placed them all in Foreign Service Local positions when I took over, as the contracting was a dodge, and a convenience for graft. Their former boss, the contractor, was now chief local. He did not like it at all, because he no longer was making a lot of money. He was a constant problem, but necessary, as his age and former position insured staff loyalty. Korean society respected age and position -- both went hand-in-hand. I was twenty-seven at the time, my authority a conundrum to the Koreans -- and resented. (We Americans often ignore the cultural traditions of the host country, a legacy we pay for later.) The new people we hired and trained followed "clean room" rules carefully and were much better employees.

I returned to the U.S. for home leave in December 1952 to pick up my wife and daughter Janet, who was born in the U.S. I was given permission to bring them both back. Tongsuk was the only other dependent besides the ambassador's wife -- Mrs. Briggs -- to return to Korea at that time. We returned in early 1953, while the war was still on.

One day, the Ambassador came over to visit the operation. (Now it is a humorous story; it wasn't then.) He came over with his wife and, I think, his daughter. They were coming over to visit the studio, and then were driving over to Chinhai to look at the cherry blossoms. You may remember that Chinhai during cherry blossom time was a sea of pink and white. It was quite beautiful.

I knew the Ambassador liked very dry martinis and insisted on mixing them himself. Fortunately, in the things we had brought from the States we had included the usual Foreign

Service necessities -- glassware, silverware and other stuff for fine dining, of course. We had just arrived at the studio in Sangnam only a week or two before and everything hadn't been unpacked. So while the Ambassador was on the way (I had not been notified he was coming until he was on the way), I was busily unwrapping martini glasses we had in a cabinet.

Then I put them out -- I don't think my wife had even noticed that. So after the Ambassador arrived, the first thing he wanted was all the mixing. I brought the glasses out and my wife was making funny waving motions at me. I didn't realize what it was, but apparently the glasses were very, very dusty. You know, I had too many things on my mind, and the last thing I would notice was the condition of the glasses, I suppose. So I put them out for the Ambassador -- if he noticed it, he ignored it. A real diplomat!

They had lunch with us. The kitchen stove had blown up just before he arrived and we had black soot slowly filtering down all over everything. These things would only happen when you have a VIP like that. It was quite funny, but not at the time. Briggs was a very fine man. I drove him over a terrible mountain road in one of the original mobile units to the cherry blossom festival. It rode like a tank. The women and my baby daughter Janet rode in his staff car. The Ambassador asked me many questions about my operation, and actually briefed me on the political situation. He seemed very pleased with what we were doing. I was the only American there and everything was running well. The studio site was a great bargain. I had arranged to lease it from the Korean navy for ten years without charge -- a free lease hold arrangement. We paid no rent or anything, so it was a very good deal -- and we were able to extend the lease indefinitely. Ambassador Briggs had that wonderful ability to make one feel they were part of the team and important. It was a day I shall never forget.

The original mobile unit was a jeep that some contractor in the States had built a body on. They were extremely heavy and very cumbersome. The whole thing was not terribly well done, but it was better than nothing. The built-in generator gave us power to show our movies throughout the country.

I finally left Korea in 1958. For all practical purposes during my whole tour, I decided what went into the reel and its contents. The finished prints would go up to Seoul each week. It wasn't practical to review a weekly reel. Communications were very poor, and certainly not secure for classified discussion. We only had one of our newsreels held up by the Korean government -- censor. We were telling the exact unpleasant truth, and the government did not want to have it shown. It was about a political rally by the opposing party, and the government had said in the media they controlled -- the press and radio -- that only a few thousand people showed up. In our film you could see people as far as the eye could see. Obviously there were far, far more than five thousand people. They just held it up. They just held it up. They held it up for a week or two and then they allowed it to go out. The National Assembly voted to lift the ban.

Outside of that one time we had no real problems. I would receive program direction, so to speak, every month or so when I would go to Seoul. It was no big problem. We developed a slogan after the war -- after the truce started -- "We will work together as we fought together."

It wasn't until the last two years, I think, that we were in Sangnam that we finally were able to

obtain a single side band radio. We were able to link up with the other field posts and Seoul. But of course, you couldn't discuss anything classified. We did not have a classified courier service, either. Also, it was just plain common sense what we were saying and doing.

I believe that Sangnam validated the viability of the concept and the need for facilities to produce on-site informational film material, and to do adaptations of films about America. It provides the immediacy and the current local language being spoken at the time. Most of the films we received from Washington, voiced in New York, were with the wrong accents, and described things with words that were long out of date. It also was far cheaper. American films contained concepts that were complicated or difficult to get across; so I started an introductory series for use with such films. We used an actor to play the role of "a grandfather" -- you know, the chap in the black horsehair hat and with the long bamboo pipe. The character was called --"Halibaji" -- grandfather, an authority figure that would command respect and would be listened to. This character would introduce a film live, in a setting appropriate to the subject, and explain something about the content that was not apparent in the original. We used his live sound along with the Korean soundtrack of the original film. His explanation would put it in a context that the people could understand. That was much easier for us to do than to re-edit. That was impractical to do anyhow as we wouldn't have access to the pre-print material. This was cheaper and easier to do and much more effective.

We would have a little -- maybe a three-minute introduction, and then at the end of the film he would come back on again, with about a minute or two. He would reiterate, "This is what you should have understood or learned from what you have seen." An example would be, explaining something as complex as the United Nations, or a film about the United States.

We made several hundred of those. In fact, the actor who played the part became quite famous in Korea for his role as "Halibaji," the grandfather. There were a number of things we did that were not normally done in the film business, but we had a war going on and then we had the reconstruction period after the war. The important thing was to get the material out in a form that could be assimilated by the people.

To insure that our films were communicating the intended message, we would have an interlocked screening for a typical audience. (An interlock is when you run edited picture on a projector and the matching sound is on a different machine. The effect is similar to the finished product.) We would invite people from the nearby village. They would come and look at it, and when the showing was over we would question them to see if they understood the points we were trying to get across. If they didn't, we would change the script, and/or change the cut. Sometimes we would do that two or three times. It allowed us to produce a product suitable for our target -- the villager. This way, we were able to come up with a product that communicated the ideas we were trying to get across, about reconstruction, health, sanitation, or whatever.

In the reconstruction period, our films tried to tell the story of what the government was doing, particularly at local levels, and to make sure that the peasants would maintain loyalty to the government, and, of course, support for the U.S.

The documentaries that we made, or the American-produced films that we made adaptations of,

would cover a wide range of things on government, education, agriculture methods, the United States -- not necessarily always appropriate for Korea, but at the same time they would convey the idea that the government could help the farmer. We were trying to point out that the government was the people's friend -- "the Korean government is your friend" -- because, after all, there was a tremendous amount of very bad press that existed before the war. And, of course, the communists left no stone unturned to paint the government in the worst light possible. The Syngman Rhee government had a pretty poor, well-deserved reputation from the beginning, making it easy for the communists.

We had the big POW breakout when the Koreans let the North Koreans who were in south Korean POW camps go. It was that sort of stuff, and then the prisoner exchange. Those were the main points of friction at the time between us and Syngman Rhee. They just went into the woodwork throughout the countryside. Allegedly the reason they all were released was because they turned anticommunist and all wanted to stay in the glorious south. That was the reason the Korean government gave for releasing them, rather than to "force them to go back," against their will. (The U.S. position was displeasure, unofficially ...).

Finally, I should say that it is very interesting to look at the progress the country has made. We are talking about a major industrial power that has gone from an ox cart economy to supertanker construction -- in a few short years. During the time we were building our studio the ingenuity of the staff became quite apparent. We could make almost anything, and often we literally did. We constructed a film printer for an example. We obtained scrap aluminum from the air base and melted it down to make castings. They were machined in our own machine shop, where we made the parts and created a piece of machinery that would cost \$10,000 to \$15,000. We did it in our spare time for a few thousand dollars -- most of that spent in the U.S. to buy the parts we couldn't make. We could keep almost anything running. There was always something going wrong with our Delahaye truck. We modified it with cannibalized parts from U.S. trucks -- it eventually ended up half or more an Army three-quarter ton truck.

The Koreans, I suppose, because of necessity were great improvisers. They seemed to be able to understand how things work quite well, so I am not at all surprised to see how they went literally from an ox cart society to four lane superhighways. Almost anything you buy there is made in Korea.

I want to get back to a film that we were working on. We wanted some visual examples showing people working together. We did a lot of research and the only thing that we could come up with in Korean society, traditionally, historically, that people collaborated on was only one thing -- the distribution of irrigation water for the rice crops.

In those years, weight-lifting, tennis or any of the individualistic sports were common. Sports that depended on teamwork were quite rare. Apparently this has changed. They have instilled the same group work ethic they have had in Japan.

DAVID E. MARK

**Political Advisor, U.S. Forces
Seoul (1946-1949)**

Ambassador David E. Mark graduated from Columbia University in 1943. Shortly after completing a year of their law school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Ambassador Mark has also served in Korea, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, Burundi, and various other post at the State Department in Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Henry Precht on July 28, 1989.

MARK: There was a day, probably around November, maybe late October, in 1946 when we were all notified where we were going, and I was told that I was going to Seoul, Korea. And I said, "Oh, my God. I'll never learn that language."

And someone, who, I guess, had looked into it, said to me, "Don't worry. They have an alphabet." Well, it's true. The Korean language does have an alphabet, which now is used much more than it ever was in those days. But basically it is an East Asian language, structurally, syntactically very close to Japanese but with a totally different vocabulary.

I was in a little two-man Office of the Political Advisor to the Commanding General of U.S. forces in Korea; I was to be the second man. I didn't know it at the time I left. There was a third man, a captain in the Army who had been loaned to the Office because he had been a Foreign Service auxiliary at an earlier point and who later on became a Foreign Service officer himself -- I think ending up as our consul in Perth, Australia many years later.

But in any case, my chief was William Langdon, who was one of the real old-time heroes of the Japanese language service; he had served at various posts in Japan and even in China during the war at one point. I think he was, until the Japanese came in, Consul General at Mukden. But, in any case, at this point he was in Korea and trying to influence the course of Korean politics, which was difficult because our military was in control and it was not particularly interested in the subtleties of Korean politics. They were much more concerned about the fact that the Soviet Union had occupied the northern half of the country.

We were installed in what had been the Consul General's house. Seoul had been one of the consulates general under Tokyo before the war, and we had a nice compound in the center of the city with a lovely old-style house that I believe is still used by the American ambassador, plus a little office down near the gate to the compound. That is not used as an office now. There is now a big embassy building up on the main boulevard. But in 1946 we were the only diplomatic establishment -- just the two of us. The head of the Office did high politics and told me about them. I began to learn. I was engaged in everything else, which included a little bit of administration, such as it was. We had one very faithful, loyal Korean employee, who had held out even during the war under a lot of pressure by the Japanese. There was a good bit of consular work from people trying to emigrate to the United States -- in those days under the Oriental Exclusion Act. No Koreans could hope to go as immigrants, but there were a lot of white Russians and others in Korea at the time.

Indeed, that got me into a most traumatic personal incident. One white Russian lady, maybe in

her late twenties at the time, wanted to emigrate to the States and was trying to get on the quota which existed for non-Orientals who were born in Korea. That quota was substantially open, and she brought me some documents indicating her birth in Korea. But, evidently, a female rival of hers said, "Well, that's not true. Like the rest of us, she was born in China."

I didn't know what to do about this since the documents were inconclusive, and I thought, as an ex-lawyer, that the best thing to do was to bring both of them together in my office and have them confront each other, which I did. The shouting deteriorated to the point where one of them fainted dead away on the floor, so I decided that was not a proper tactic to use.

I also began to get into a little bit of what is now USIA work, but all of this was peripheral, as I say, to learning about what seemed to be the most interesting, namely the politics of the occupation and how the State Department and my boss, Bill Langdon, were really trying to prevent a right-wing victory among the Korean groups as we moved toward independence which occurred in August 1948.

The military's first interest, as I said, was the Soviet Union and their forces, and second was our efforts to create a unified government for Korea, North and South. I think it was the December 1945 meeting of the British, French, American, and Soviet foreign ministers that had laid down a plan for a joint commission on Korea. The joint commission, American and Soviet, was to meet either in Seoul or Pusan, or both, to try to work out a unified government for the country under some form of very tenuous, unspecified trusteeship that was to be operated by the two super powers. The trusteeship was to cover the whole country, because it was to be a unified regime. The problems of convening the joint commission were fairly serious, but that actually happened in 1946 at some point.

In any event, the problem was that, in order to form a united Korean regime, we had to consult with various Korean groups. The Soviets immediately laid down a condition that consultation should only take place with those Korean groups which supported the Allied plan, including the indefinite trusteeship of Korea. There was a very small Soviet liaison office in Seoul, because that was to be the headquarters for the joint commission. Well, in any case, the thing broke down essentially, because all of the South Korean groups -- virtually all of the South Korean groups, particularly those on the right, and therefore favored by the Americans -- were against trusteeship. They said, "We want to become an independent country, and we don't want to have the United States and the Soviet Union telling us what to do after we become independent." And the Soviets, as I said, indicated that you couldn't deal with such people because they weren't accepting the plan laid out by the Allies. So the thing broke down.

Nevertheless, the American-Soviet negotiations continued to try to get the thing started again. And, I think early in 1947, they agreed on a new formula that was going to get around this difficulty. The formula had some words that did not allow the rightist groups in the South to express what they felt about trusteeship, but did say that they were adhering to an understanding reached by the Soviet and American governments, thereby leaving unclear just how they felt about trusteeship, even though everyone knew that they were against it.

The next meeting of the Soviets and the Americans in the joint commission, which took place in

the spring of 1947, these groups began testifying before the joint commission as to what their aspirations were for Korea and how they hoped a government would be set up. But the Soviets immediately began challenging them again saying, "Well, deep down in your hearts you are still against the trusteeship agreement." And, although we tried to work out modifications of the formula, the thing definitively broke down at that point.

Of course, the Soviets had been developing the North along their lines very assiduously from the beginning, and they even set up a provisional government there in February 1946. When we arrived in Korea in September 1945, the Japanese were still there and had been there for three or four weeks after the surrender of Japan. The Koreans, in the meantime, or some Koreans, had begun to form groups of one sort or another to fill the political vacuum.

The most prominent group was, as it turned out, a sort of center-left grouping that had formed something called People's Committees, and the People's Committees in different places added up to some sort of central authority. It was very amorphous, tenuous, but, nevertheless, when our military came in, it immediately disliked the name People's Committees because that was what the Soviets were implanting in Eastern Europe, and it sounded suspiciously as if these were communist entities.

Now, the People's Committees existed in the North, too. The Soviets found them when they got there. What the Soviets did was to keep the People's Committees, but purge them of all of the non-communist elements. What we did in the South was to argue against the legitimacy of these groups, and we gradually forced them to dissolve or forced them to transform themselves into a political party of some name, while we set up a government which essentially used the sort of structure that the Japanese had had. We, in contrast to the Soviets did not purge these groups of anti-Western elements because we made the political groups become a party, rather than keep them on as a semblance of a government or authorities. As I said we set up authorities along the structure that the Japanese had left behind.

There were communist or left-wing groups in South Korea until the Communist Party itself was outlawed sometime in late 1946 or 1947 because they engaged in a lot of trade union activity and incited a large number of strikes, including even a general strike in the country. So we -- the military government -- just outlawed the Communist Party. In the meantime, our forces had set up a full fledged military government along the lines of the Japanese structure, as I have mentioned. That made even our right-wing friends in the government, in effect, only political parties. But since our military government had to rely on Koreans to staff the basic functions of the government all over the country, we tended to turn to these right-wing groups, and many of them were people who had flirted with the Japanese in one way or the other, or at least sympathized with them.

We didn't actually employ at that time people who had been Japanese police officers, although they were Korean ethnic groups. But, nevertheless, we got further and further off to the right side, and, of course, we brought back from China -- I guess he had been in China, I think, at the time, although he'd been in the States for a long time, as well -- Syngman Rhee, who became the first president of South Korea later on. But he was a man who had an impeccable anti-Japanese record from about 1919 when he had a little revolt against them and then he had had to flee, but

his leanings were all on the right side. When he came back to the country, he was welcomed literally with a red carpet at the airport by the American generals. That gave a signal very clearly that this was a guy we wanted to support.

The State Department was rather disturbed at the US military's partiality toward the rightist side, although I suspect that the American military in its own mind probably didn't consider itself partial to anybody. They just wanted to keep the place orderly initially until they got a united Korean government, and after that until we got some sort of independent government for South Korea. They supported the groups that would make the least trouble for the U.S. Army. They didn't want any communists there for sure. The State Department, and particularly my boss, was trying to promote a middle-of-the-road group. I remember a luncheon we had at his house not too long after I came there -- it must have been in the spring of 1947 -- to which was invited a man who was center-left, but not a communist. He had been extremely prominent in the people's councils -- the People's Committees -- earlier on, and he was there to lunch to be persuaded that he ought to be an activist -- the political activist of the center.

I remember that we served cornbread muffins for lunch, which was very important because Korea was short of food at that time, and instead of handing out rice, which is what they wanted, we handed out corn. The left accused us of feeding animal fodder to the Korean people; we wanted to show them that, indeed, we ate it ourselves, so we had cornmeal muffins very prominently on the menu.

We also got hold of some of the State Department's confidential funds to send this man, and a couple of other centrist people, to the first meeting of representatives of Asian countries -- countries that were independent or had just become independent or were about to be independent, which was held in New Delhi. We got the money to send this group of Koreans so that people would know Korea was indeed a country and was participating in Asian politics.

There was no sense of regional identity at the time. There's precious little of it right now, in spite of the Japanese kind of economic hegemony, but there's still no kind of political identity to the region, and there certainly was not even an awareness of who the players were back then when we promoted these people into the group.

When the second round of the US-USSR joint commission failed in the summer of 1947, it was clear that Washington wanted to get some indigenous authority established in our part of Korea. So we then began moving toward legitimizing elections that could be held in the South to create a South Korean government. Indeed, we even got a U.N. resolution passed. The idea of going to a separate government in South Korea had a little independent evolutionary history as the alternative left over when the idea of creating a joint government for the North and South collapsed.

Of course, all through this period we were debating in Washington about whether we should maintain a long-term interest in Korea. This was argued out in what was the predecessor of the National Security Council, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, and the decision was made not to include Korea in our security periphery. And I believe it was later in 1947 that Dean Acheson made a speech in which he clearly indicated that the mainland, including Korea -- all

parts of it -- was not going to be in effect defended within our security perimeters. But, of course, Korea soon came to be part of our general strategic of our interest zones in the Far East. The idea of not including Korea within our security perimeter made it all the more urgent that we at least leave South Korea with some kind of independent government, independent regime.

We had already had so many disappointments in Europe that were much more prominent in the minds of policy makers in Washington that the idea of a third round in Korea seemed most unpromising. Besides, the Berlin Airlift started. In other words, the blockade of Berlin started in the summer of 1947, and therefore the idea of collaborating with the Soviets became even more remote.

We, to jump ahead a little bit, by 1948, when this new government came into being on August 15, 1948, we had made the decision to pull out of Korea altogether by the end of 1948. Indeed we had reduced our forces to what they called "the reinforced regimental combat team", which was sort of like a brigade, but with different structural elements and different equipment elements. We were going to be out of the mainland militarily by December 31, 1948, but events postponed that.

The Department considered Syngman Rhee a stubborn older man living in the glory of his 1919 revolutionary attempt, who showed no flexibility, who was inherently authoritarian, who was pretty ruthless with any opposition groups or people who wouldn't cooperate with him, who behaved like a politician to be sure, which he had to be, but, nevertheless, one not in the democratic mold. His years of living in the West, despite acquiring an Austrian wife, had not imbued him with the ideas that we would liked to have seen implanted in South Korea, although we were probably unrealistic.

After all, South Korea had been formally a part of Japan since 1910; it had really come under Japanese influence in 1905 when they defeated the Russians. The Koreans had been citizens -- maybe somewhat second-class -- of Japan. They had lived in an empire that was only nominally democratic even in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s. Japan became increasingly a militaristic dictatorship. To expect them or the Koreans to suddenly understand what democracy was all about and to embrace it was probably very unrealistic.

Syngman Rhee, at least having been exposed to the West and to democracy, might have been about the best that you could realistically hope for, although the State Department kept trying, and it also was the policy of the military government for a while, to promote centrist options.

Elections did take place; Syngman Rhee was elected. He had outmaneuvered some rivals on the right, and he was inaugurated as president on August 15, 1948, which was Independence Day. I'm not sure it was Inauguration Day. The democratic center-left groups that the State Department favored faded from the scene. There was no way in which they could actively participate. The Syngman Rhee government was very tough on anyone suspected of communist leanings, and while our centrist people were clearly not in that category, they had no base, no resources and no sort of enthusiasm on which to build. Moreover, it should be remembered that less than a year after the inauguration of the government, the North invaded the South. I believe that the center and center-left groups ran candidates in the election, because an assembly was

also elected at the same time; there may have been a small number of centrists members in the National Assembly. A few of them disappeared during the war. I mean, they never showed up again. Whether they were killed is still not very clear. Syngman Rhee did not have substantial American help in winning the election; I don't think he really needed it. He had gotten the signs of American approval when he was allowed to land in his own DC-4 at the airport and a red carpet was rolled out, with representatives of the American command there. He had many visits with General Hodge, who was our commander, and with the military government. I think people who were drawing conclusions saw that the Americans were friendly.

In October 1948 -- two months after the inauguration of the government -- there was a communist military rebellion fomented by people who had infiltrated down the central mountain spine of Korea. They also had infiltrated in Sung constabulary unit of the South. It was a communist-inspired rebellion that broke out. When the revolt broke out, the infiltrators really seized control of some areas in the South. I happened to be traveling at the time by embassy jeep. We had begun to form a Korean constabulary back in 1946, but the Soviets had begun to form a Korean army -- a North Korean people's army -- which was far larger, better equipped and trained than our constabulary. We recruited untrained people to be the troops. But we used some officers who had been Japanese army officers; that is, they had been military trained by the Japanese. That was a source of some complaint but they were the only people with skills.

The constabulary was deliberately kept under-equipped. When I left Korea, which was April 1949, I remember some Korean officials, who were friends, pleading with me to speak in Washington about getting a supply of artillery shells for them. And I said, "But you have a six month's supply." And they said, "No, that's only for training purposes. You know, it would be used up in a couple of days if we ever had to fight, and here the North is building up a very sizable army."

On August 15, 1948, we established an Embassy. I became the acting political counselor, even though I was only a third secretary, because I had been there the longest. We had an Ambassador, who was John Muccio; we had a DCM, who was the senior Chinese speaker, Edward Drumwright, who later on became ambassador himself.

Let me just return briefly to that jeep I was using when the Communist rebellion broke out. Back in 1947, we wanted a jeep for our little advisory office and the military said, "We don't have any extra equipment. We can't give you a jeep." We finally got it cleared in Washington and they sent a telegram back saying, "Purchase of jeep for military is authorized for X dollars." Of course, it was signed, as all cables are, with the name of the Secretary of State, who had that time was General George Marshall. So when we took that cable around to the military, the military said, "Good God. If General Marshall wants you to have a jeep, you will get a jeep."

But anyway, I was traveling around in early October 1948, on the east coast and in the south -- these were very, distant, isolated, cutoff places. We didn't even have troops there. We did have small stations of military counterintelligence corps around; they lived in old Japanese houses that we also used. I had just moved to the south just about the time the rebellion broke out. It was really a guerilla operation that had taken over large areas of the country near the spine of the mountains that run down the whole peninsula. They had not gotten into Pusan, the number two

city down in the South, but they had been close by. I stayed in the south for a couple of days and then went into one of the first towns that the South Koreans had been able to recapture from the communist rebels. It was a pretty gruesome sight in this area -- this main combat area -- because the rebels had taken 200-250 people who were prominent in the South Korean government or in the community whom they had marched out of town, along a road. Then they tied their hands behind their backs and just mowed them down. I saw about 200-250 prominent dead people along the road. When our people, that is either the South Koreans or the Americans, but this was mainly a South Korean recovery operation, got hold of some of the communist rebels, they were not dealt with kindly, either. It was pretty rough on both sides after what had happened.

When I got back to Seoul about four or five days later, I went to see the Ambassador and said, "You know, the communist strength, their military strength, is obviously a lot stronger than we had thought, and if we pull out all our forces, which is now scheduled for December 31, we are soon going to lose this place." I was urging that we stay on and change our policy about pulling out. I mean, from my point of view, even though Japan, of course, was included in our security perimeter, it would have been much difficult to retain Japan if we had lost South Korea, and it would have been demoralizing to the Japanese really to find Soviet back forces right along the Korea Straits of which separates Korea from Japan.

So the Ambassador said, "Well, draft a telegram and we will send it in." I did that. It was tinkered with as usual, but essentially those were the recommendations that went in. By this time our military was essentially not involved any longer in policy formulation; so they were never consulted on our telegram. We had already cut down two regimental combat teams, you know, and the total number of forces was somewhere probably 5,000 to 10,000 at that point.

The response from Washington was that they weren't going to change our policy, but since, obviously, conditions weren't settled and the South Koreans needed sort of more support, at least in a morale sense, Washington would agree to let the regimental combat teams stay until July 1, 1949 -- six months longer. I left in April. During my last days in Korea, I wrote a paper that tried to outline what had happened in a political sense in the development of the South Korean government and how U.S. policy had changed. I ending with my views that I thought we were endangering our position in Japan by pulling out of Korea and that that our Korean policy should be reviewed in this broader context. The Embassy sent the thing in from the Ambassador saying, "Here is an interesting paper from our departing acting political counselor. The Embassy takes no position one way or the other." I don't have a copy of that paper, although a professor who is a revisionist historian at the University of Washington in Seattle, has gotten it out of the archives. He told me that he has used it to some extent in a book that he has written about the history of those years in Korea.

In early 1949, we in the Embassy had no sense that an invasion from the North was a real danger. We had had this one episode in October 1948, but nobody could know that this was part, or maybe a feeler, for a larger effort. In retrospect it's easy to see why. The Cold War was heating up all over. The Berlin Airlift was going on. The Soviets were facing the problem of how to deal with our airlift. In Europe they clearly did not want to start a war over it, and ultimately passed messages in March or April 1949 indicating they wanted a face-saving way out, which came in the summer of 1949. They had lost face by it. But clearly they were thinking of other

places in which they could show that they were able to conduct a cold war and indeed gain successes.

Korea must have been a great temptation, particularly after we had announced our intention to pull out and had excluded it from our security perimeter, without even voicing any words of conditionality or contingency in that regard. They had built up a force in the North -- an indigenous force that was much better than the one in the South and had active Soviet Red Army backing. The North is about half the population size of the South, but that wasn't very important because it had mobilized a large part of the population and had equipped it well. We had not done that in the South. The South was not a totalitarian state. The government was authoritarian to be sure, but there were still dissident elements in the South. The North probably felt that it had latent support among groups that had originally been pro-trade union, pro-general strike, pro-communist, and therefore they may have expected a major Southern uprising. Objectively, the North could not have had basis to fear that it would be invaded from the South. But rhetorically, yes. The Syngman Rhee government was totally hostile to the North. Kim Il Sung, the venerable leader who is still there, had already made his appearance. The talk in the South was, of course, that this was a usurping communist government and in the North that the ambitions of the South were very clear. But objectively speaking, the South forces were not ready and the United States was still present.

I should say that the Soviet army pulled out of North Korea, I believe, in 1948, but it had, in its several years there, built up this very strong force which was a lot stronger than the South. I don't remember what the Soviets may have said about their security backing for the North Korean regime. We were well aware of Soviet supplying military advisors, if not de facto commanders, down even to the company level in the North Korean forces. There was not a Chinese role at the time, because the Chinese had just concluded their own civil war in 1949, but the Soviets and Chinese were cooperating at the time. The frontier in the North was a friendly frontier for the Chinese, but they had their hands full with their own problems.

The State Department office in Seoul was reporting directly to Washington, even before an embassy was established. General Hodge, when dealing with political and military government questions, reported directly to Washington, with a copy of every telegram sent to General MacArthur's headquarters. When dealing with any troop matters, he reported through General MacArthur in Tokyo. The distinction was not always easy, and I'm sure given the nature of MacArthur's command that Lieutenant General Hodge, only three stars, was duly deferential to his boss in Tokyo.

When the invasion actually happened in June 1950, the American response was totally unanticipated. It shows that Harry Truman had a gut reaction that made a lot more sense than the sophisticated deliberations of the cabinet departments in the previous years. He instinctively knew that a challenge from a Soviet-backed state could undermine our entire position in the Far East and, more specifically, our position in Japan. It was becoming clear even then that Japan was going to regain its status as a very major voice in the Pacific.

WILLIAM C. SHERMAN
Instructor to South Korean Coast Guard, U.S. Navy
Chinhae (1946-1949)

Performance Review Section, Economic Cooperation Administration
Seoul (1948-1950)

William C. Sherman was born in Kentucky in 1923 and raised in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He attended the University of Louisville until he joined the U.S. Navy in 1943. His career included positions in Korea, Japan, Italy, as well as other State Department positions in the States. He was interviewed by Thomas Stern on October 27, 1993.

SHERMAN: So I went to Korea. When we reached Korea, we found that the program to which we had been assigned had never been started. The idea had been to send Japanese language officers to Korea as staff aides to military government officials who worked in the various Korean ministries. It was a U.S. Army run program. The concept called for a rotation of these junior staff people going from Ministry to Ministry, learning about military government. Thereafter, we would be ready for some senior position in that military government. As I said, the program never came to fruition. When we arrived in Korea -- there were about fifteen of us -- we had no jobs and were left to our own devices to find a job. I found that Dick Petree, who was a classmate from the language school, was in Chinhae working for a U.S. Coast Guard detachment which was training the Korean Coast Guard. When we occupied Korea, in accordance with an agreement with the Russians we did not allow the formation of an Army or a Navy; we permitted only a Coast Guard and a constabulary to maintain order and tranquility. We were still negotiating with the Soviets in an effort to establish a unified Korea, which of course never came to pass.

So I ended up at the Korean Coast Guard Academy. I was the advisor to the Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy. I was supposed to be an alter-ego to him, but in fact I established an English course to teach the cadets our language. Many of those students are by now retired senior military officers; there were a couple who became company Presidents. I have seen some of them during trips I have taken to Korea during the course of last forty-five years. At the Academy, I used Japanese; in those days, most of the students spoke better Japanese than Korean. They had been raised during the Japanese occupation of Korea and learned Japanese in their educational system. It was the official language and although many spoke Korean at home, that was not true for all of them. Although Koreans had bitter feelings about Japan and its people, they had no trouble using Japanese with me when I told them that I didn't speak Korean. They had no problem in using our mutual language, so communication was not an issue. The Korean Commandant spoke excellent English which he had learned in missionary schools in Manchuria where he had been raised. I also helped the Academy develop a curriculum. There was another American assigned to the Academy -- Bill Shaw -- who had been at language school with me. He belonged to a missionary family which had connections with Korea as long as those of the Underwoods.

We lived in housing which had been part of an old Japanese Naval base in Chinhae. The houses

are still there. It is close to the Naval Academy. Of course, in those days, the twenty miles of paved road between Inchon and Seoul were just about all that existed in Korea. It used to take five or six hours to travel by jeep over the mountainous dirt road between Pusan and Chinhae.

As I mentioned before, the U.S. Coast Guard was training Koreans so that they could establish their own Coast Guard. The U.S. Army was training the constabulary. The U.S. Coast Guard detachment consisted of approximately ten officers, twenty Chief Petty Officers and four or five civilians (Bill Shaw, Dick Petree and myself and a couple of others). We were actually U.S. Army civilians, assigned to the Coast Guard detachment. There was a Coast Guard Captain in Seoul who was the overall commander. There was a training group in Chinhae, headed by an officer who had headed the seamanship department at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. In addition to the Academy, there was a shipyard in Chinhae also run by the Coast Guard.

Q: What was Korea like in 1946?

SHERMAN: It is hard to imagine for anyone who knows Korea today. We landed in Inchon and were bussed into Seoul, where we arrived late in the afternoon. We came in through the South Gate plaza. It was a big city even then by standards of that time -- about 1 million people. It had no electricity because the North Koreans had cut off the supply -- the North had all the power generation capability. My first lasting impression was the smell of the acetylene gas coming from the lamps that had been placed on the tables that filled the South Gate area. These tables were made of 2x4's on trestles. The lamps' flames illuminated only about a circle of two feet and also filled the air with the odor of the gas. We would see these spots of light all around the plaza where people were selling cigarettes and bars of soap, called Luck, which were packaged similarly to Lux soap bars. Of course, Lux was in much greater demand, but also much scarcer. People were clothed in old Japanese army uniforms. Nobody wore anything that was not tattered, torn and patched. That was true of shirts and ties, if anyone had them. This was true even of the upper middle class; they too were shabbily dressed. Rice was rationed and scarce. Creature comforts were not in existence. The few cars that did run were old, Japanese made Datsuns and Mitsubishi's (nothing like those of today) and were often out of commission. The Koreans have a great knack for making things out of nothing. If something could be held together with bailing wire, they would make it work. Taxis had open hibachis in the back seat for heat. Streetcars and busses were always over-crowded.

The military government was making valiant efforts to cope with the situation. It kept the country going by importing food stuffs and other basics. It brought in fertilizer and fuel. It brought in two huge power barges loaded with generators which eventually became the basis of a power grid for South Korea. But for most Koreans it was a very marginal existence. People lived in old-style Korean houses which were essentially mud walls holding up a thatched roof. There were some who had to live in caves in the hills around Chinhae. These were left over fortifications that the Japanese had constructed as coastal artillery sites during their occupation. Families and groups of Koreans lived in these caves. Trucks were sent out each morning to provide food and sometimes to pick up the dead.

Q: In retrospect, how successful was the U.S. Military Government in Korea during the period you were there?

SHERMAN: I don't think the Military Government was terribly successful. It was thrown together on the spur of the moment. No plans had been made for Korea. It didn't know what its goals were. I don't believe it had a coordinated, thought out plan. It certainly did not have the same caliber of personnel, either military or civilian, that were assigned to the military government in Japan. There we had a central guiding thesis; MacArthur was directly and personally involved in the management of the country's affairs. Korea, both from the policy maker's point of view and that of the logistician, was the end of the line. There were no language or area specialists. We did not have adequate supplies. The American personnel, in the main, were either people that couldn't be used in Japan or second raters. So the Korea Military Government was not a very successful operation. Moreover, the Koreans had no desire to have a military government. They considered themselves liberated and they were very anxious to have us go home so that they could begin the self-government process.

Once an Embassy was established and once a Economic Cooperation Administration Mission was started, we had much better feel for what we should be doing and that certainly improved our inter-action with the Koreans, despite the fact that the Korean government was fairly chaotic. Almost all of the Korean independence leaders, were living in exile during the Japanese occupation of the Peninsula. Syngman Rhee was probably the loudest voice among them; he was the most hyped of the refugees. He had lobbied for the Korean cause in Geneva and in New York. He had a substantial group of Americans, led by John Staggers, who supported him and his cause financially and morally. He was Elaine Lady's father. Korea. Elaine and her husband Harold (who died some years ago) came back to Korea when Rhee was elected the first President of the new Republic and served as advisers on his personal staff. The Ladys and Robert T. Oliver, a publicist, and some other Americans were part of the Rhee machine sometimes called the "kitchen cabinet". In addition to Rhee there were other exiles who returned to attempt to play roles in the new Korea. Kim Ku, who threw the bomb in Shanghai that maimed Japanese Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, and, who had lived in China and Manchuria was an active contender. Dr. Philip J. Sohn -- Sohn Jai-pil -- was persuaded to come back from his medical practice in Hawaii to participate in Korean politics. US military government officials were not persuaded that Rhee was the right person to lead Korea and they wanted to have a few other potential candidates in order to make the eventual elections more credible. Not all of the returnees were pro-Rhee; some had their own political constituencies. Various members of the Korean government, which had been established under our Military Government, were attaching themselves to one political candidate or another. The Coast Guard, for example, supported Kim Ku, although in the end Syngman Rhee won all of the political power.

The proliferation of candidates made for a lively political scene, although somewhat dicey at times. People were really fighting with each other. Kim Ku, for example, was assassinated in the Fall of 1948, right after the elections, and that was quite a day. The alleged killer was identified, although there were many stories that the suspect was taking the blame for one of Rhee's henchmen. We did not get very much involved in this internal political struggle. There was a section of the Military Government that was responsible for liaison with the various political factions. Captain Leonard Bertsch was very much involved in the political maneuvering. I was down in Chinhae for much of this period, pretty much isolated from the activities in Seoul, but we would hear some of the stories.

Q: In 1948, you left the Coast Guard and went to work for ECA in Seoul. How did assignment come about?

SHERMAN: Bill Shaw and I were the only two American civilians left at the Coast Guard Academy in Chinhae. The Military Government was in its last days; the American Coast Guard detachment was being transferred back to the States as was the 6th Artillery Division, which provided us with logistic support. There was no reason for any American presence any longer.

At that point, Bob Kinney, who was then the special assistant to Dr. Arthur Bunce, came to Chinhae. He had known the Shaw family from missionary days. He picked up Bill and myself and said that he would find spots for both of us with the ECA Mission in Seoul. So we moved to Seoul and became members of the Performance Review section of the Mission which was then run by J. Franklin Ray, who had been a professor at Harvard. An advance group of FSO's had come to Seoul earlier in 1948, augmenting the staff of the U.S. Consulate General which had been the State Department presence operating throughout the occupation. Mr. Landon was the Consul General; David Mark was the Vice-Consul. It also had a few American support staff personnel. They lived in the old Consulate General residence and worked in a nearby building.

Gradually, the civilian American presence began to beefed up. Donald Macdonald, Gregory Henderson and Curt Pendergast all of whom had been given some Korean language training in the United States joined the staff when an Embassy was established on August 15, 1948. Each of them then headed up a section of the CG. John Rozier (another FSO) did the administrative work, Pendergast did the consular work and McDonald started an economic section. Then ECA arrived and that greatly expanded State Department's presence. Some of the ECA people, like me and Bill Shaw, were recruited from the Military Government. A Joint Administrative Services Section was established, headed by Lewis Benjamin, a real administrative wheeler-dealer. He unfortunately was killed later in an automobile accident in Spain. Harold Noble, Greg Henderson and others started a Political Section. We had no USIA this being the days before that organization was founded. The ECA group was amalgamated with the Economic Section.

Q: What was ECA's main objective?

SHERMAN: ECA's main objective was to put Korea back on its economic feet. The plan was a phased operation. The immediate goal was to re-establish the power grid by constructing hydro-electric power facilities, bringing in two power barges, and attempting to construct or rehabilitate thermal powered plants. Korean coal was mined to fuel these plants, but it was of such poor quality that it didn't help very much. Once the power grid had been restored, the next step was to reconstruct of the industrial base. We also imported large quantities of fertilizer to boost farm production, particularly rice. That rice was supposed to be of such high grade that it would serve as an export commodity to other nations in East Asia -- Japan and Southeast Asia. where it was said to be in great demand -- and provide foreign exchange to the infant republic. This was before the days of the green revolution.

The earnings of the rice exports were intended to enable Korea to earn sufficient foreign exchange to buy foreign manufacturing equipment and thereafter theoretically become a self-

sustaining economic entity in the modern world. Unfortunately, ECA and Syngman Rhee did not see eye-to-eye on economic policy. Rhee had spent many years in Hawaii where land was treasured square inch by square inch. He therefore focused on reclaiming land around the Han River. He had grandiose ideas of what could be done; he had grandiose idea of how much the foreign market would pay for Korean rice. There was constant tension between ECA Mission and the economists in the Rhee government. The central problem therefore became how to talk a very stubborn old man into doing things he didn't want to do.

In addition, the Embassy was faced with the political problem of dealing with North Korea. Rhee wanted to immediately enhance Korea's offensive and defensive capabilities because of the threat from the North. He demanded our assistance to provide him with those capabilities. There was a lot of enthusiasm among some Korean military for a push North, but Rhee managed to keep those impulses in check. No one has ever seriously accused Rhee of desiring an invasion of the North. We had an 700 man American military advisory group under Brigadier General Roberts. Those personnel were stationed alongside their Korean counterparts, practically down to the company level. They kept an eye on the Korean military. They were essentially there as trainers, but they also monitored what was going on.

Q: Can you describe the coterie which surrounded Rhee at this time?

SHERMAN: I'll try, but you have to remember that I was a very junior officer at the time -- 24 or 25 years old. I was certainly not an experienced political analyst, but I watched the game with fascination. Rhee maintained his contacts with those he knew before and during the war. He was still close to John Staggars, who was represented in Seoul, as I mentioned earlier, by his daughter Elaine and her husband Harold, who were cast as international lawyers. They served as advisors to Rhee and served as important intermediaries between Rhee and the Mission and the Embassy. The Ambassador could see Rhee any time he wished, but the rest of the staff often used Elaine and Harold Lady as transmission belts. They often served as the actual Korean action officers on a number of issues. Harold particularly was often involved in working out certain deals.

Robert T. Oliver came out and founded a newspaper -- *The Korea Herald* -- in English that was published in Seoul. That paper was published regularly and contained adulatory editorials about Rhee and his activities. Oliver had written a book "*Syngman Rhee: Prophet and Saint*". So you can well imagine what he had to say about Rhee in his editorial columns.

There were a number of American educated Koreans who served in Rhee's governments. Lincoln Kim headed up the Korean Office of Planning. The Foreign Minister was Ben Limb -- Yim P'yun-jik -- Lousie Yim was the Minister of Commerce and Industry, which was a rather unusual job in Korea at that time. Ho Chung , then the Minister of Transportation later became a prominent figure in Korean politics. All of these people were old friends and associates of Rhee's. The Cabinet could hardly be described as balanced. There were no other factions represented; the Ministers were all Rhee allies.

I started at the ECA Mission as a special assistant to the Director, Professor Ray. There wasn't enough work for all of the special assistants, so I moved to the Statistics Section, which was part of the Program Review Office. we published a monthly publication on Korean economic

statistics -- foreign trade, production, etc. Each member of the staff compiled data for one economic sector or another. That statistical base was absolutely essential to the development of an economic program. The Koreans were not keeping any statistics at all or at least were not making them available to anyone. So our monthly publication as the basis for all economic projections.

I worked on oil imports and distribution. I got the raw material from the American and British oil companies -- KOSCO (The Korean Oil Storage Company). That was the consortium that handled all oil imports, basically formed by CALTEX, STANVAC and SHELL with some minor Korean participation. In addition, there were a number of Americans that worked in Korean power plants; they had been in the Military Government as members of its Department of Commerce. They had stayed on. They provided us data on power production. We had advisors at the Korean Exchange Bank and the Bank of Korea, who would supply data. Our Mission had a Commerce and Heavy industry Section, who had liaison responsibilities with Korean firms and the government and they provided some information. Obviously, it was not very systematic way to capture statistics, but it was the best that could be done under the circumstances. We did not at the time have advisors attached to any Ministries, but we had sections in the Mission responsible for following the activities of each economic Ministry.

Bill Shaw was working on foreign trade. He and another guy kept track of the port records kept by the Ministry of Commerce and Trade. I had my doubts about the statistics that we generated, but they were better than the Korean records. After doing this compilation task for six months, I developed on my own a handbook on the organization of the Korean Government. I tried to standardize the names of the Ministries and the various independent organizations, like the Board of Audit and the Office of Planning. I found the original decrees that set up these various institutions and translated them into English. The product of all this effort provided the best picture of how the Korean Government was supposed to look. The names of the governmental leaders were written in Korean, Chinese letters and English. I summarized the responsibilities of each Office in each Bureau of each Ministry. It took almost a year to complete this effort. When it was finished, it was the only manual in existence on the Korean government, and used widely both in Seoul and in Washington. It was a labor of love. I never believed that every section of the government did what the law said they were supposed to do, but at least it was an attempt to put the organization down on paper.

Q: I gather that we did not provide "advisors" in such areas as public administration, for example.

SHERMAN: We did not. The only American "advisors" were attached to the KMAG who provided advice to the police. they trained Korean military policemen and worked as liaison with Korean officials responsible for internal security.

Q: Tell me a little about your living conditions.

SHERMAN: The Mission's policy was not to take over Korean housing. So we occupied abandoned Japanese housing. We purchased what is now known as Embassy Compound 2, which consisted of old Japanese houses. We rehabilitated them and used them. Some, like the so-

called *Finance House* were rather large. That was run by Al Loren, who headed the Finance Section of the ECA Mission. It was sort of a bachelor officers' quarters. People were invited to live in the *Finance House*. It had many rooms because it had been an old mansion. The house also contained a fancy mess hall. The other houses were assigned to families in the usual basis -- size of family, rank, etc. In addition, there were several hundred Japanese railway houses westward out Ulchi Ro near the so-called *Old Queen's Palace*. That area of town was known as *The Gold Coast*. These houses, even by modern Japanese standards, were good sized and in fair condition, since they had been occupied by Japanese railroad workers. Mary Jane and I lived there.

When we first arrived in Seoul, there was no electricity. That lasted for the first few months we were there. We ate and read by Coleman lanterns or candles. We cooked on wood-coal ranges. In their zeal to modernize the housing, the Americans put in modern plumbing in lieu of the old fashioned baths which had fires under them to heat the water. We had running water coming out of taps; unfortunately, it was all cold. So to take a bath, we had to heat the water on the stove for about a day. The large bathtubs were made of terrazzo, which meant that when the hot water was poured into the tubs, only about two inches would be in the tub and that would turn cold very rapidly because the walls of the tub would absorb the heat of the water very rapidly. It was very primitive.

I used to watch carefully for visitors who came to Seoul to see whether it included any friends who might be staying at the Chosun Hotel. We would invite the friend to dinner and when he accepted, I would volunteer to pick him up and sneak in a shower in his hotel room first. Finding a location which had hot water became a major achievement. The Chosun was functioning and had become the center of social life in Seoul. The other major hotel, and perhaps the only other hotel in town, was the Bando (known as the "Peninsula" during the occupation). When we opened the Embassy, the Bando was deeded to the U.S. government in perpetuity by the Korean government in gratitude for the assistance we had provided in freeing Korea from Japanese occupation. The Embassy occupied the first five floors; the remaining three floors were made into small efficiency apartments for staff and single officers. On the top floor, the Bando had a dining room.

Q: What were our objectives in Korea when you were serving there?

SHERMAN: We had hoped to achieve unification. There was a U.N. mission in Seoul, which had been opened even before our Embassy began operation. It was trying to negotiate with the Soviets and the North Koreans, but neither of those parties were interested in any negotiations. A Joint Committee consisting of US and Soviet representatives met more or less regularly in Seoul at the Duk Soo Palace during 1945 - 47 but spent its time arguing over detail, exchanging recriminations and achieving nothing -- the usual stalling tactics that the Russians used in those days. The U.N. and we made various attempts to open serious negotiations to arrange country wide elections, but there was no response at all from the other side. The 38th parallel became a firm and fixed dividing line. It was a ridiculous arbitrary line which even left parts of South Korea accessible only by sea because the land entrances were in North Korea. The border was heavily fortified with heavy military concentrations on both sides, particularly along the mountain passages which permitted access on a north-south route.

Beyond the unification goal, we were very interested in stabilizing the country economically. Once the Rhee government was elected, we then were anxious for a democratic constitution to be written and approved. We had a lot to do with the drafting of that constitution. An American -- a German refugee -- Dr. Ernst Frankel was a constitutional legal scholar and a wonderful man. He had been employed by the military government, but stayed on after Korean independence as part of the legal section of the ECA Mission. He worked almost exclusively on drafting that constitution working closely with the Korean provisional government.

I think we must have had about 200-300 in the Embassy itself, including a large administrative support staff. That number included also probably 30-40 political and economic officers. The ECA Mission had another 150-200 people. The Military Advisory Group must have had 600-700 officers and staff. So there was a large American presence in Seoul by the end of the 1940s.

Seoul had a "frontier" atmosphere about it by 1949. People dressed well, but there were no passenger cars on the streets for example. There were jeeps which were the common mode of transportation. There may have been one or two private sedans, but they couldn't be driven outside of Seoul because there were no paved roads in the countryside, no repair facility and probably no gas stations either. The trains were not entirely reliable. When I first arrived in Korea, those trains had to stop frequently to clean out coal clinkers from the engine boilers; the coal was that bad. The windows were all broken out of the coaches. There was supposed to be a daily Seoul-Pusan run; it wasn't necessarily so and if the train did run, it may have taken 24 hours. For me, it was then another six hour Jeep trip from Pusan to Chinhae. It was "frontier days" in Korea in the late '40s.

We operated our own commissary so that we could get adequate food supplies without having to rely on the Korean market which could barely supply enough food for its own people. There was nothing available on the market -- no goods, no souvenirs, no artifacts, no available art. We supported that country for many years, not only in economic terms, but also culturally by assisting in the rehabilitation of museums. We helped to get Seoul working again. Progress was very slow. I would not consider that economic development of Korea was successful while I was stationed there. There was visible improvement, but there was a long way to go.

The Koreans worked very hard and were very creative. Their ability to make something out of nothing was a daily revelation. They put things together with bailing wire, string and faith. It was remarkable. Strangely enough, all of this misery was not depressing. The Americans were enthused about the challenges. We worked and played together very well; there were a lot of community activities. We staged some theater productions -- Mary Jane and I were intimately engaged in those. We put on the old standards like "George Washington Slept Here" and "You Can't Take It With You". We used Citizens' Hall for the performances. The President and Mrs. Rhee came to opening night.

I spoke both English and Japanese to my Korean contacts. They did not resent the use of Japanese once it was established that I couldn't speak Korean. It was the easiest way to communicate. I could speak a few words of Korean, enough to introduce myself and indicate that I couldn't really speak the language. I used to ask whether it would be alright to speak Japanese;

no one ever refused to speak Japanese with me, even though all Koreans were unrelentingly hostile to Japan and its people. They were also upset by their perception that the Japanese were getting more assistance from us than they were. Rhee was particularly bitter because he felt that we were coddling the Japanese and not giving enough assistance to his country.

In the fall of 1949, after we had moved to Seoul, Mary Jane and I, accompanied by our good friends, the Sloanes, went back to Chinhae for a week's vacation. We had arranged to stay with some American friends who were still there as civilian advisors to what had become the Korean Navy. We arrived and moved in with our friends. On the first night of our visit, we were visited by a delegation of Korean officers. We overheard our host trying to explain to the Koreans that he had guests in the house and couldn't possibly move. The Koreans had come to ask that our host make room for a few days to accommodate President and Mrs. Rhee who were arriving at Chinhae the next day for an important and secret meeting with Chiang Kai-shek. (That meeting was supposed to conclude a Korea/Taiwan anti-communist pact). The Koreans explained that they did not have an adequate house for their President and therefore had to ask for our host to put up the Rhees. When we learned what was going on, we volunteered to move next door to the Navy BOQ so that there would be room for the President and his wife. So indeed that is what happened. Chinhae was completely sealed off. No one could enter or leave the town both for security and secrecy reasons.

The meeting almost coincided with the issuance of the US White Paper on China, which to say the least, did not give very strong support to Chiang Kai-shek. That event delayed the Chinese delegation's arrival and the Rhees were therefore in Chinhae with nothing much to do. I called the Embassy and was told by Everett Drumright, the DCM, that I shouldn't be in Chinhae at all, but as long as I was there, he wanted me to keep my ears and eyes open (the Embassy had not been aware in advance that a meeting was to take place). Those were the instructions that I followed. Madame Rhee noted at one stage that there were no photographers around to record the event. I became the official photographer for the meeting and I still have some shots of that historic event. I took the pictures of the Chinese delegation as it arrived on a C-47 and deplaned. They landed on a small landing strip that probably never had anything as large as a C-47 land on it.

Madame Rhee was very gracious. She recognized that we had been displaced and so, every evening, she would invite us over for drinks at the house they were using. I got a chance to explain to President Rhee the work I was doing on the organization manual of the Korean government. I think he was impressed that something was being done and urged me to finish it. I had an opportunity to listen to Rhee reminisce about his past. He became a very human figure during those moments, and I realized just what an important leader in exile he had been and how passionately he was committed to the rebuilding of his country. The House that the Rhee used in Chinhae also became the site for the bilateral meetings with Chiang Kai-shek.

The Chinese delegation included Chiang Kai-shek, K.C. Woo, who had been the Mayor of Shanghai, the Chinese Ambassador and some Taiwan government Cabinet members. It was quite a group, and very heady stuff for a twenty-five year old junior member of an American mission to be on the fringes of

I sent Mrs. Rhee copies of all the pictures. She graciously then invited us to the Presidential Palace. The Rhees came to see a performance of "George Washington Slept Here" and invited the cast for tea. I saw the President and Mrs. Rhee on several occasions after the Chinhae episode. That chance meeting at the Academy became very useful from my point of view. I called on Madame Rhee much later in 1985, when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary in Far East Bureau. Dixie Walker was then our ambassador in Korea. At that time, Mrs. Rhee was close to 95 years old. I don't know whether she remembered the events of approximately 35 years earlier, but if she didn't, she pretended that she did. On that same trip to Korea, I returned to Chinhae to see my old stamping grounds. I drove down the Peninsula, through Taejon and Kyongju to Pusan and Chinhae. The same two houses -- the house that the Rhees stayed in and the BOQ -- that were important part of my story about the Rhee-Kai-shek meeting were still standing. Rhee had never been to Chinhae before and was charmed by the place. The navy compound is on a sugar-loaf peninsula that juts out into the harbor. The American government had a house in Chinhae which was occupied in the late '40s by Major Granrud. He had lived there when the military government was running Korea and had stayed on after independence. Rhee saw the house and said that he would like to have it a summer house. So it was cleared out and spruced up and the Rhees used it for their vacations. It became the Korean equivalent of Camp David and remained that way at least through the Park Chung Hee's regime.

When I visited Chinhae in 1985, I went to that house, which was being treated as a holy shrine. The guide told me that that was where Syngman Rhee and Chiang Kai-shek had held their famous meeting in 1950. He said that the Speaker of the Korean Assembly, Shin Ik Hee and General Hodge were in on the meeting which was held to discuss the future of the Pacific. There were several other new myths included by the young Korean CPO who led the tour. He, of course, had not even been born when the events he was attempting to describe happened. I knew the truth: the meeting had not been held in that house, General Hodge had long left Korea, Shin Ik Hee was not at the meeting, etc. It was the first time I had ever been in a position to contradict what had become history. I didn't do it there because I didn't want to embarrass the guide. But when I got back to Seoul I made my views known about the revision of history to which I had been a personal witness. I told Madame Rhee what I heard and she was mystified since there wasn't any rational explanation. She knew the truth, but obviously no one had ever asked her about what had happened in Chinhae in 1949.

That 1949 episode is one of the reasons I decided to take the Foreign Service exam. In those days, you had to take the orals in Washington. The written portion I took in Seoul along with three others. The written then was a two and half day exam which included questions that required long essay answers. It was quite different from today's exam. I passed both the written and the oral, but in those days there was an interminable period between passing the exam and being offered a job. I was going to spend that time at the Yale Graduate School where I had been accepted. We left Korea in April, 1950 staying a couple of days in Japan and a couple of days in Hawaii on the way home.

MARY CHIAVARINI
Assistant to the Advisor to the Commanding General

Seoul (1947-1948)

Ms. Chiavarini was born and raised in Massachusetts. After Secretarial training, she worked with the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington DC before joining the Foreign Service in 1944. During her career with the State Department, Ms. Chiavarini served as secretary to the ambassador and other officers in Naples, Tirana, Manila, Seoul, Prague, Rome, Singapore and Warsaw. After her appointment in 1957 as Consul and Secretary in the Diplomatic Service she served in Palermo, Monrovia and Paris. She also served as special “trouble shooter” in Nicosia, Dublin and Riyadh. Ms. Chiavarini was interviewed by David T. Jones in 2007.

Q: But this was only for one year and then you moved.

CHIAVARINI: Well, I was called to go to my ambassador in Korea. He asked for me. And they sent me.

Q: That was certainly a pleasant experience. Showed how appreciated you were. I can tell.

So, the record has you going to Seoul in June, 1947. Can you describe how the embassy was operating?

CHIAVARINI: It was like nothing I had ever seen. But I know the ambassador was appreciated by the Koreans. The Koreans were very nice to me. I had no bad experiences there. But then, I was the ambassador’s “pet” you might say. They were very good to me and I always liked them. I don’t remember their names.

Q: This is the Korean staff?

CHIAVARINI: Yes.

Q: How was the embassy working?

CHIAVARINI: It worked fine as far as I could see and as far as I knew. The ambassador wasn’t complaining about anything.

Q: Were there any problems that you could see at that time developing in the North?

CHIAVARINI: Well, yes. We all saw that. It was no surprise that they blew the place apart with their new bomb in Pyongyang. I never got to Pyongyang myself.

Q: Did you travel into the North at all while you were there?

CHIAVARINI: No, I didn’t. I had a boyfriend – he was a genera’s aide - who had a jeep, and we went outside Seoul on the weekends. We’d go to one place that was on the water. It was charming. I don’t remember the name of it.

Q: Did you travel further into the South? I served in Korea in 1965-66.

CHIAVARINI: You probably did a lot more traveling than I did.

Q: I doubt it. Young lieutenants didn't have a lot of time off.

Did you get to Pusan?

CHIAVARINI: Yes I did. Another girl and I took a trip to Japan. We had to go to Pusan to transportation to Japan. We went there for our vacation.

...

Q: Did you take a boat then to Japan?

CHIAVARINI: We took a boat. Unfortunately, my traveling companion is dead now.

Q: Do you remember her name?

CHIAVARINI: Oh yes! She was Bessie Miller. I knew her quite well because we lived in the same house in Korea. She lived in Florida although she worked with us.

Q: What was Ambassador Jacobs doing with the Korean government?

CHIAVARINI: Well, he was very close to them and worked with them closely. He was always satisfied with what they were doing. As far as I could see it was what he wanted. And, he was always trying to get the State Department to recognize the Korean government.

Q: Do you remember any other members of the embassy? The political counselor or the deputy chief of mission?

CHIAVARINI: No, I don't.

Q: Was there a sense that it was a very professional staff?

CHIAVARINI: I think it was professional because my boss was professional. He demanded that. And they gave it to him.

Q: You were in Seoul until the end of the year in 1948, and then you went to Prague.

CHIAVARINI: Yes. And Ambassador Jacobs went to Prague. He was ambassador there.

FRED CHARLES THOMAS, JR.
U.S. Army
Korea (1947-1948)

Fred Charles Thomas, Jr. was born in Arizona in 1927. He graduated from Bucknell University in 1951 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He served in the U.S. Army from 1946-1948. He joined the Department of State in 1948. His overseas posts include Korea, Pakistan, China and Germany. Mr. Thomas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

THOMAS: It turned out that ship was going to Korea. We landed in Inchon, Korea sometime in January of 1947. And it was colder than hell; I nearly froze to death. Anyway, I was due to be sent to an engineering construction group headquarters, at a place called Yung Dung Po, Korea. It was pretty bleak. The present ambassador to Korea, Jim Laney, and I were bunk-mates. He was a native of Arkansas and a Yale graduate. He later became a missionary out there and more recently was President of Emory University. The present administration appointed him Ambassador to Korea. But then we bunked next to each other and became very close friends.

I had only been there a month or two when a call came from 24th Corps headquarters in Seoul for me to report to the sergeant major of the Corps. Verbal orders. I went up there and I said, "Well, what's this all about?" He said, "Your name came out with two other names when we ran the computer..." They had these punch cards. "With a very high AGC score." He said, "We need somebody like you to be attached to the United States-Soviet Joint Commission, which is reopening. He ordered me to report to Brigadier General Weckerling at the Duksu Palace. The Duksu Palace was just across and down the street from the Bando Hotel, and inside a big compound.

I reported to General Weckerling, who was a brigadier general directly assigned from G-2, Washington, intelligence. He took my stripes off and put U.S. on my collar and said, "From now on, you are Mr. Thomas, and you will eat and be housed with the special troops for the 24th Corps; they will give you a room out there. I will send a car for you every morning." It was the damndest thing. My company commander had a Jeep to run around in, and I was being picked up by a fancy sedan. Anyway, that was my introduction to political work.

Korea was so backward in 1948; it reminded me of China of the 1930s, when my father and I visited China. Beggars everywhere, filth. You would come to work and go through that gate, and here you would be people dead in the gateway, in the wintertime -- corpses. The smell of feces everywhere. The dust. It was just backward Orient at that time. It was the worst of the worst.

As a matter of fact, during the interim between when I was assigned this job, when I was sitting out there at Yongdungpo, this fellow Laney and I dreamed up a scheme to get out of Korea by enlisting in the paratroops. Neither one of us was very big, about my height (5'10"); I was pretty skinny and so was he. There were no paratroopers in Korea. The closest units were in Japan. We went to this recruiting sergeant where they were looking for paratroopers, at 24th Corps headquarters in Seoul. Well, this paratrooper looked at the two of us and told us, "You don't belong in the paratroopers. You guys are much too little." So that ended that.

I did not immediately have contact with Koreans, but did so later on in that job. I started out with Weckerling, and I was doing sort of "gofer" work with the command, but intelligence command

work, digging up information.

The Draper Report -- I remember that was a big report at the time. The Draper Commission Report. It was all top secret. Draper was Under Secretary, or an Assistant Secretary of Defense, who was visiting various places around the Far East. The Defense Department's instructions indicated that the report concerning the situation in Korea was to include many multi-colored charts to make quick reading and comprehension possible.

So I was given the job of arranging the publishing of these many multi-colored charts and getting the job done in a hurry. It was done by a topographical unit located on the outskirts of Seoul. I went out there and introduced myself. General Weckerling called ahead and said I would be coming, "Mr. Thomas." When I arrived, they said, "What do you want? We will do anything you want." So I had this group of young people there working about 24-hours a day, with shifts going, putting out these top-secret charts, in color, of everything that you could think of, economic data, etc., to get it done in time for this Draper Report. I can sort of remember falling asleep in the big, fancy room, trying to get it all put together, because I would be working long hours through the whole three-week period.

Once it was together, General Weckerling gave me some money to buy a few cases of beer and some snack food to give these guys a party. As I was leaving this beer party, they handed me an envelope, and they said, "Don't open this until you get back to your room." When I got home, I learned the great advantage of first-class documentation. It turned out this unit not only made maps and charts, but also made all the documentation for everything we did in Korea. In this envelope was a mess pass for every mess in the command, with my name on it, including a pass for the general officers' mess, and every other officers' mess. Several extra PX ration cards were included so I could get extra cigarettes, everything you needed. It was a real education on the value of good documentation.

Out of this, I began to notice these guys when I would go to the PX. There they were with duffel bags, repeatedly going through the cigarette line and filling the duffel bags. They could buy a carton of cigarettes for 90 cents, and they could sell it for maybe \$5 to \$10 dollars in military scrip. They were all making a quick profit. But you couldn't move this money out of the country because you couldn't account for it; it was that funny money. They would take this money and buy the fanciest things in the PX, like fancy cameras. They all had lockers full of fancy stuff.

By then, Jim Laney, who had been with me at the engineering unit had become an agent in Army CIC. As an agent they make you a "Mister." CIC agents worked for us. They came in and we gave them their orders of what we wanted collected, and they collected it. Jim and I were sitting in my office, which was in a vault in the basement of the museum building there. It was an actual vault. It was a weekend evening, when suddenly the fire engines alarms went off. You could hear it all over town. The fire was out at the edge of town. We were fire chasers and we wanted to find out what was going on, so we jumped in Jim's Jeep and rushed out there. This same topographical unit was burning to the ground. All these guys lost all their loot. They never profited from it all.

As I said, later on I had contact with Korean military. Then I was moved to another job because

Weckerling went on to something else. I became the Boy Friday to a man named Dr. Ernst Frankel(PhD). Ernst Frankel was later among those who founded the Free Berlin University. He was a noted scholar on constitutional law, and he helped write the Korean Constitution. He was a GS-18 or equivalent in those days. But he was a typical nice man who didn't know how to handle the military. He didn't know how to use his rank. He and his wife had no children. They treated me as a son, in a way. I was invited for Sunday dinners. I worked for him for a couple of months, and then he was off to something.

There was a group there that was doing the legwork for the POLAD. It was called Political Advisory Group. It was made up of ex-State and -Foreign Service types who had been in the military when they joined the group. Some of them had been with OSS, who had left State during the Second World War. The head of group had been a State officer, had his doctorate in Chinese studies and was the son of missionaries to China, named Clyde Sergeant. He got to know me there on the Joint Commission because we were all working in one area. He asked me to join his group as the biographic officer. I was to set up the biographic files for Korea (they didn't have anything like that), with the idea that these would end up being the embassy's biographic files.

When I started doing this, I quickly realized that if you tried to do this the normal government way, with a lot of liberal people around, especially in many of these government departments, you would get nowhere. This was "spying." So I was not above a bit of prevarication, if I had to, to get my job done. I remember going into the Ministry of Health, in this military government, and I would deal with, let's say, the advisor to the deputy minister. The Deputy Minister was a Korean, but the advisor was the guy you talked to, because we were running the place. And so I would say, "The Ford Foundation is planning to give medical scholarships here; however, we want to know the level of medical education of all the doctors in the country." I wanted help to make up a proper form, both in English and in Korean, that would give me that data. Then I asked that it be sent all over the country, filled out, and returned. With the police force, it was a similar approach. With the military, it was a different form; everyone was given a different story.

The only person who ever questioned me, who ever said, "Hey, is there any truth in what you are telling me?", was the colonel who was the advisor to the military -- the Korean Constabulary, they called it. He wanted to know who the hell I really was. So I gave him Mr. Sergeant's number, and he called Sergeant up. And after he got it straightened out with Sergeant, he agreed to go along with what I was doing.

I collected, in every profession, in every area, masses of files. I was then in the process of getting them translated and put into some organized fashion, because everything was Dewey Decimal System. I had clerks working for me.

I was still a sergeant, but with a "Mister," status; then my enlistment was up. My boss said "We want you to continue here; the State Department wants you to continue. State is willing to put up a P-1 slot," (which was the lowest professional grade) "for you to become a professional here." So I took a discharge. But I had to get my parents' permission, because I still wasn't 21. I became a P-1 in the State Department and continued to do just what I had done.

I then began to work with a man named Leonard Bertsch. He was sort of the senior political officer for the command. I would go to meetings with him with Koreans, and we would meet with people such as Kim Kyu-sik, Kim Ku and other leaders of the Korean Independence movement. I would listen. We had interpreters, because neither one of us spoke any Korean, to speak of. Bertsch was a Holy Cross/Harvard Law graduate, who had arrived in Korea in either late 1945 or early 1946 and had been with the Commission from the beginning. He was the action officer for the State Department on what had then been the policy of supporting the coalition effort for a coalition government. This effort was very anti-Rhee. Rhee was considered a right-wing extremist, and the State Department looked on him that way. Now General Hodge didn't. Hodge was a very right-wing guy.

"Hodgie, Bertschie, Lurchie" -- they used to say. Hodge was the commanding general of XXIV Corps, a lieutenant general; Lurch was the military governor of Korea, a major general; and Birtsch was a first lieutenant. He was later a P-5; he took a discharge there. He was the guy who was managing this whole coalition effort. I got to meet many Koreans, moving around with him, during my last six months there; that is after I became a civilian and worked with him.

But the whole thing blew up. After that article by George Kennan in Foreign Affairs under the pseudonym, Mr. X, Sources of Soviet Conduct, you could just feel it in the Commission; you could feel there was this complete change in attitude about this whole effort of ours to work with the left and to try to get the left and the right to work together for a unified Korea. We had been trying to do this.

Somebody had to be the scapegoat for this change in policy. Bertsch was very bright, but also irritated the hell out of some of these older officers, who couldn't keep up with him. He had a photographic memory. He would read something and he would remember it. Anyway, he ended up having to take the fall for this coalition effort. By then, they had closed the US-Soviet Commission down. And they had pulled those of us who were over at the Soviet Commission, who had been with Political Advisory Group, the few of us who were left. Sergeant had left by then. Most of them had gone back to the States, gotten out of the military, that type of thing. I was given a desk in the G-2 bullpen, along with all these lieutenant colonels. Bertsch was made my assistant. They were really going to knock him down, until they could ship him out of there. So, for about three weeks, he ended up working for me. It was very degrading, because I felt he was a first-class man and what they were doing to him was unfair. He was being accused of mollycoddling Communists and all of this.

There was an awful lot of corruption going on among some of the officers there -- stories that you heard within the intelligence community. There was a fellow named Goodfellow, who had gotten in trouble. Even the CIC was selling stuff on the black market to obtain extra-operational funds. This spilled over and had a detrimental effect on intelligence operations that were going on at that time. They tried to implicate him in currency exchange corruption.

But it was years later that some Koreans talked to me about Bertsch and those meetings. I was asked to do some research about this period. The grant, which had come from Koro University, suddenly was canceled because a new dean had been appointed. I just didn't have the money to go running around without some support. Bertsch's widow offered to let me see all of the

personal letters that he had written about that period to her, which nobody had ever seen. They concerned the first year of the Joint Commission and all his efforts working with the Korean political leaders who were on the Coalition Committee. Maybe later, when there are fewer financial demands on family resources, I will be able to do this on my own.

I felt that the Joint Commission was a very frustrating thing. The Soviets were not about to compromise. That was very obvious. This was all an exercise in futility. I felt we were dealing with people, as a country, that were much more sophisticated, in terms of double dealing and all these things that were going on, than we were. Compared to both the Soviets and the Koreans, who had lived through the Korean provisional government, where they were killing each other and fighting the Japanese through assassination and all that, we were sort of babes in the woods. I felt this, in terms of most of the things we attempted. And a lot of the information we were obtaining was colored by our own perceptions of what Asia was.

I can still remember the night of the Korean election to elect the National Assembly of Korea. It was to be overseen by the U.N. All American troops were under curfew; they weren't allowed out. I was put on detail to UNTCOK to observe that election. There was this group of people including UNTCOK delegates and staff that was allowed to act as observers; I was one of the observers. There was an awful lot of shootings and fighting at the polls. But the election went off. And it was a very adventurous day for me.

That evening, I went to an early-evening movie. Because Jeeps were stolen, we had a parking lot that was guarded; my Jeep was parked in a parking lot. As I was going to get it, the lights of a car flashed on a man whose face was bloody and he was staggering. His coat flew open, and here was an American .45 hanging on a lanyard underneath his coat. I knew civilian Koreans (he wasn't in the military) weren't supposed to be armed. I wasn't armed, but I started to follow him. We went down one of these little back alleys, where it was blacker than hell. I could hear the click of this thing. When it stopped clicking, I would stop. Every time I did, I backed against the wall. One time, I backed into somebody. It was a policeman back in there.

By the time we got things straightened out (he spoke some English -- I spoke practically no Korean), we went to a police station outside of there. There was somebody there who spoke good English, and I explained what I had seen. So we all went back together.

I can still remember being back in there. They gave me a pistol. On the ground, they found this guy hidden behind a log with his pistol. In the end, they talked him into backing out. He came out with his hands up, and they hit him. I never saw somebody beaten up so badly in my life. I felt sick about it. They took him to the police station.

The next morning, I can still remember, Colonel Watlington, who was the G-2, called me in and said, "Well, we got somebody out there doing his own arresting. You shouldn't be doing this type thing. You will get yourself hurt."

But I can still remember that was the election day, that first election. There were a lot of problems on both sides. I couldn't say it was a completely fair election.

A lot of the people I was working with were what you would call "bright guys." The enlisted men in a headquarters engineering battalion had to be somewhat educated even to be there except for the truck drivers. The professional people at the Commission were all very bright. Among the troops I was living with, you had the band living out there, but I didn't get to know them. You had one or two other people who had come for the same reason I had come, with high AGC scores.

One fellow, Charles (Chuck) Allen, was out of Swarthmore. His father was a medical doctor in Swarthmore, Pa. He was assigned to write the nightly intelligence newsletter for the top officials -- the general officers -- that came out early every morning. He had access to all the intelligence going on in Korea -- everything. He was a liberal guy, and he saw an awful lot of this as being crap, as being unfair. You know, right-wing extremism. He felt that some of these people we would throw in jail were being falsely accused, and he didn't like it; so he started writing letters to these people in these jails down in the southern part of Korea. Suddenly, when the authorities realized this guy, Allen, who was responsible for writing and had access to all the top secret stuff, was the author of these letters, they canned him. Allen was not happy with the Osu Rebellion and all those things that went on at the time and how it was handled.

I got to know people who were working in the information and the education end of the command, they were soldiers who worked for STARS & STRIPES. Someone in the U of Maryland program there asked me to teach a course in analytical geometry which I did for one semester. Fellows such as these were in the educational program. Therefore they were much more liberal in their outlook. They didn't think too much of Hodge and the whole approach to how we were handling Korea or the Koreans.

Hodge did go to Koreans who spoke some English; he went to the extreme right-wing landlords who had participated and worked along with the Japanese. He looked on them as being Western educated and they could do the most good. Out of my experience there (and not just out of this first tour there, but I was there a good many years over the period, off and on until 1959), I came to the conclusion that the Japanese, as imperialists, were really probably better in some ways than the Brits, the French, or the Dutch, for this fundamental reason: they took all the good jobs for themselves -- the president of this, the president of that, the head of the bank, but they also felt that if Korea and Taiwan were to be properly exploited, you had to have an educated work force. So they pushed basic education. That, along with the Confucian value system that pushed education, made it so that the Koreans, when we went in there, had a 90-percent literacy rate. This was true also, I understand, in Taiwan. With that as a background, even though these people didn't have experience as head of the bank, you could create leaders more quickly in that situation. Whereas, in India, where I later served, you had a few top people and then the rest; the few at the top became the new domestic imperialists which creates a wholly different situation.

The people who had fought for Korean independence and who had been in all types of troubles were such as a man named Cho Pong-am, with whom I later got very much involved; he had been in prison and been tortured by the Japanese; he became the first Minister of Agriculture in the first Rhee government in 1948 and later ran against Rhee; I was the American who had the closest relationship with him. They were not asked for anything or talked to -- to any extent.

The only time we were involved with those types of people was this Coalition-Committee effort on the part of Bertsch, where I got to know Kim Ku. If you know the history of Korea, Kim Ku was a revolutionary who planned the assassination of one of the Japanese princes -- by his assassination squads in Shanghai. Kim Yu Sik was a gentleman-scholar type who was sort of the scholarly Confucian who headed the Coalition Committee. And then you had Yo Ung-hyong, who was another one of the leaders who was somewhat left and a scholar anti-Japanese type. They were all in this thing called the Coalition Committee. Kim Ku and Yo Ung-hyong were both assassinated with Rhee's sponsorship.

When the Coalition Committee was ended, when Bertsch and that whole effort was shot down, that effort, (which the State Department had been pushing up until then) went out the window, with Bertsch taking the fall.

I was just young enough and junior enough that I didn't get hurt in all this. But I could see people above me who were getting hurt, and very unfairly hurt. And this went on for years. I was the head of a group assembling biographic data. Sergeant ran the whole political intelligence effort of which this project was just one part.

It was my impression that we were at the most basic level of trying to understand Korea and the Koreans. That is why I was involved in the more bureaucratic aspect of assembling this basic form of data. It took some doing, and it took a lot of organization, a lot of forms and a lot of time getting them printed. I knew I didn't know the right questions to ask for a doctor's form, but I knew where to go to get it. So I was managing this thing.

Along with this (because that got to be dull at times), I was going with Bertsch to these meetings and listening to all this stuff. I would be reading all the latest minutes from what was happening, and the fights over the political parties and whom we were going to recognize as a political party, and the registration of political parties.

You can say the whole period there, in terms of what I was doing, was a mixture of things, with biographic form collection as my base. But people would come to me and say, "Can you find out..." I remember a lieutenant colonel of military intelligence (MI) coming to me and saying, "I hear you have a connection into Khabarovsk, Siberia. Can you find out so and so." Well, my connection there was a connection with a Korean, whom I knew, had some connections there. So I went and threw the question at him. I don't know how he got his answer, but he got me an answer. It was that type thing. So, in time, you got to know people, and people got to know you.

After this many years, I don't remember the names of some of these people. I can remember some of the people who were on the Commission, like Monegan and Paul Sturm, who was a Foreign Service officer. Some of them were economists, some of them political types. Some of them had been with OSS, but they had previously been with the Foreign Service or State. So you had a real mixture, a mixed bag.

We had an operation running above the 38th Parallel -- a big operation, being run by a Korean Colonel Ko. He was running this for G-2 XXIV Corps, in terms of order of battle. He had a whole slew of agents, and this thing developed over the years. But it was going back then, and I

knew about it. And it was probably the most effective low-level-order of battle intelligence operation going.

The highest-level thing going that I got wind of -- and I didn't get wind of this in terms of North Korea. Some of this -- it is hard for me, in telling stories, to keep it all exactly chronological. But this happened in a period that I wasn't there. You see, I left right before the government was formed. After the election, I was offered a job in our embassy, but I had gone back to school. But after the government was formed and the first cabinet appointed (and this has to do with North Korea), Rhee was looking around for people who had the capability to be cabinet ministers. He had a limited number of educated people to call on. One of the people he had heard about was a captain in the British Royal Navy (Reserve), Captain Shin Song-mo, who had commanded merchant ships, but under military control, during World War II. Of course, how many Koreans get to be a captain in the British Navy, even as a reserve? So the word got back, somehow, I think, through the British Embassy, that they had this captain who was an educated man. And then they had another man who was educated, named Yi Kuk-no, who had been to school in England -- I think to the London School of Economics. They thought that they might be helpful to the Korean government in forming a new government.

In my research on what was happening, after I got back there in 1952, I started noticing that Shin Song-mo was no longer in the cabinet, but he had been the second Minister of Defense, just as the war was breaking out. There were all sorts of stuff in the files, and from people I talked to, about the fact that he had been accused of corruption in smuggling between North and South Korea.

When I started looking a little deeper, I found out that he had been on a ship coming out and had bragged he was working for MI6, British intelligence. Here he was no longer anything, but he was still around there. While reading these older files that we had in the Embassy, most of which we had gotten from US CIC, and trying to fit pieces together in terms of what had happened while I was away, in terms of cabinet personalities, the files indicated that this friend of his, Yi Kuk-no, who had been mentioned by the British, instead of coming south to help in the government, had gone north. And he became Minister without Portfolio in the North Korean government.

It also was strange to me to find that the two ends of this smuggling route, one had Yi Kuk-no on it, and the other had Shin Song-mo, the Defense Minister. So I started thinking double-think. I thought there might be more to this than just smuggling, especially since MI6 is maybe involved here. There were some files that indicated that Shin Song-mo had been warning the command and everybody else that there was a war coming with North Korea.

After I retired, I went to the Archives and pulled some files on Shin Song-mo because some of that stuff had been declassified. These files clearly indicated that Shin was predicting the coming of the war constantly during the spring of 1950. Embassy reporting indicated this fact. However, much of it was discounted as scare tactics to obtain more military aid. My guess is that if we were to just try to find out where we had the hardest information that said a war was coming we should look at what we were obtaining from the British from their clandestine sources via CIA liaison with them.

Because, as I have learned since, the Armed Forces Security Agency failed to predict the Korean War. I was the first one at the Archives after they opened these files, and they showed them to me. They said, "We just opened this stuff up, so you can see it." And they gave me these documents that showed that NSA was created because of the failure of AFSA. And the failure of AFSA was that nobody was allowed to put any requirements on them but the military. We, in the State Department, had been saying, "Look, Korea is a problem." But they weren't listening. If they had been listening to their radios out there, they would have known this thing was coming.

But you can tell a war is coming if you are told to do it and you are doing it in any depth, because you get tactical stuff. They knew what was wrong, and that was why, according to these documents, NSA was set up. They said, "You boys failed, and the State Department wanted you to do this." When they set NSA up, State became one of the organizations which could place requirements on NSA. This change came out of the Korean War.