

Won-pil Kim Remembers the Early Days of the Unification Church - Part 2

Won-pil Kim

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On November 26, communist China joined forces with the North Koreans. Chinese troops poured across the Yalu River (the northern border of what is now North Korea) and headed south toward Pyongyang. Government officials and policemen were given instructions to try to evacuate the entire population. Most people left by December 3.

People fled for their lives, leaving relatives behind. As soon as they heard the official announcement, they headed south, many without even returning home to pack their things. Men especially were taking refuge, often leaving the women and old people at home, thinking that they would have a better chance for survival. Everyone assumed that the UN forces could easily win the war and that their evacuation was only temporary.

Mr. Pak's relatives left that day, leaving him behind, because they thought that with his broken leg he would be unable to manage the trip. His sister's family left him an old second-hand bicycle to help him get around. Abandoned on that terrible and confused day, Mr. Pak [Chung Hwa Pak] wondered what had happened to Father. He told me how sad he felt at being left behind, since he supposed that Father also must have already left. However, Father sent me to get him, and I brought him to our place.

The last visit

One person still remained to be contacted, an old grandmother about 80 years old. She had first met Father when she was around 76. In age, Father could have been her son or grandson, but she was so filled with love for him that her biggest desire was just to touch his clothing. She believed without a doubt that he was the Messiah.

It was difficult to locate her, but finally I did. She was ill and close to death. Since she was a little senile, as well as hard of hearing, I had to yell at her in order to make her understand that Father had returned. Hearing that, she was satisfied. Then I returned to Father with the word that she knew of his return.

Father stood up and said this concluded his business in Pyongyang, and it was time for us to start south. From that very moment, we prepared to leave. It was the evening of December 4, and most of the people heading south had already left the city.



Left to right with True Father Ok Se-hyun (Grandmother Oak), Kim-won-pil and Ji Seung-do in Pyongyang (1947)

A journey rooted in the heart to save humankind

Father placed Mr. Pak on the bicycle and tied some little packages to the back of the bicycle. Because Mr. Pak had a broken leg, he could not pedal, so Father pushed from the back and Mr. Pak steered. Bicycles 33 years ago were nothing like they are today; this one had only a simple, flimsy frame. A heavy knapsack on my back contained the rest of our supplies.

As we left Pyongyang that night, the city seemed to be totally on fire, because of the many secret, confidential documents being burned. As Father looked around, he wept to see the condition of Pyongyang. The Chinese and North Korean armies were advancing rapidly from the north, and the journey was very uncertain and frightening.

The main highway south was completely occupied by military troops and vehicles. Our course took us through the mountains, rivers and valleys. There were some national roads made of concrete, but the others were just rough earth.

Since the main roads were closed to civilian traffic, we had to take to the hills and countryside, where there were no roads, looking for mountain paths and animal tracks to guide us along our way. Other people were able to move rapidly, as they were taking practically nothing with them, but we had started almost too late, and besides, we were pushing a person with a broken leg on a bicycle. There was always the possibility of being captured, or hit by a stray artillery shell.

Taking along a person with a broken leg, Father was risking his life. But to Father, Mr. Pak was more than an individual; he was a representative of all humankind. From God's point of view, all of humankind is crippled.

Even in the very cold winter weather, Father was sweating as he pushed the bicycle. At the foot of a hill, we stopped to rest, even though the sun was still shining. The guns of the Chinese army could be heard in the distance. When the time came to begin climbing the hill, Mr. Pak told Father that the safety of the others would be jeopardized by his disability, and he begged Father to leave him behind. He worried that Father might die in trying to take care of him, and he was concerned that because of him, God's will might not be fulfilled.

Father replied very sternly, saying that he and Mr. Pak were not together by personal choice, but centered on the heavenly dispensation. "Once we know God's Will, we can do it together. If we die, we die together; if we live, we live together." Father told him never to think he should be left behind, because they could not separate of their own accord. Unless instructed by God, Father would never part from Mr. Pak.

Mr. Pak never spoke about that again. Encouraged by Father's words, he got on the bicycle and we started out again.

In this manner, we crossed hills and mountains, making our escape. You simply cannot imagine that journey south, through the winter rain, sleet and ice, over the steepest mountains without food, pushing a man with a broken leg on a dodderly old bicycle.



People fleeing from war

Our schedule was to wake up with the rising sun. Each day we walked as far as we could, until the sun set, averaging 28 kilometers (18 miles) per day. At night, when we could no longer walk, we would look for a place to stay. It was often impossible to walk at night, even if we wanted to, because of the mountainous terrain. In the countryside, houses were scattered far apart. Once we had to walk almost the whole night before we found a small village and an adequate house for us to stay in.

We would look for a house with a light inside and ask the people for permission to spend the night. Usually, the young people had already fled south, leaving the grandparents alone. Some homes were too poor to accommodate us and others were already filled with refugees who had arrived before us. If people

welcomed us into their home, we were usually offered something to eat. If we stayed in an abandoned house, we had only our rice powder for dinner.

The back roads that the refugees could take were filled with people escaping from the North. Small lines of people converged, making one big stream of people. Little branches joined to form a main current, like a big river of people. The farther south we went, the more people joined the stream. Some were leading their cows; many carried big packages on their shoulders, or little children -- or even their grandmothers. All were heading south.

Most of you have probably never experienced fleeing from a war. Can you imagine the tension everyone felt? It was as if a fire had broken out and everyone was fleeing in panic.