

Bittersweet Reunion

Father's cousin visits their hometown in the North



Elders and leaders walk between the rice fields for the short distance from Father's birthplace to his parents' grave site

*Moon Yong-hyun
Seoul, Korea*

IWENT to Pyongyang in 1999. During the fifty years since the Korean War, I had missed my hometown. How much had it changed? Who was living there? I'd stayed awake many nights thinking about and missing my hometown. I'd thought about my mother, whom I missed the most, my elder sister and nephews. Thinking back on all the heartbreaking hours I'd spent missing all the people in my hometown, I felt like my heart would burst. My heart was already in my hometown.

I first visited Chongju with such a my heart jumping; but I wasn't able to meet anyone I knew there. I visited my parents' graves and my old house.

That visit actually left me more brokenhearted; I wasn't able to meet anyone from my past. All I could do was to recall pieces of childhood memories. Then, three years after my first visit to my hometown, I was given another chance. Tears came to my eyes and my heart was once again filled with irresistible yearning for Chongju.

I heard that we would leave on March 5th to attend a celebration of the completion of the Pyonghwa Motors assembly plant. Expecting that this time, certainly, I would meet my elder sister [he is referring to Moon Hyo-sun, Father's younger sister, using the term "older sister" in the broader sense; in fact, like Father, she is his cousin] and other relatives, I could hardly sleep at night; my heart beat faster just thinking about it. I prepared myself and waited.

Then I learned there would be a delay. I had waited for fifty years. Twenty days more felt like nothing.

I waited and waited until March 29th; I waited with a grateful, excited heart.

Arrival in Pyongyang

Everything was ready. I could not control my emotions. I felt as if my heart was bursting with the expectation of seeing my elder sister and my nephew. On the morning of March 29th, I was the first person to arrive at the airport. After completing all the procedures, I got on the airplane, my heart already in Pyongyang and in my hometown. I pictured the moment I would meet my sister and nephew.

The plane arrived in Shenyang, China. After a three-hour wait, we boarded the plane for Pyongyang. It was too foggy to see anything. Why is this such a difficult land to come to? As I walked down the steps from the plane, I thanked God and True Parents and prayed with all my heart, "Please protect and guide all of us. Please do not abandon this people; help us to unify again as quickly as possible. Please open the ears and eyes of the people of this country."

From the moment we landed, we absolutely had to follow directions. We were invited into a special guestroom and offered tea. When we walked outside, it was raining. Our luggage had already been loaded into cars. As I watched people walking by, I felt choked with emotion; Some were hastily riding through the rain on bikes.

Others were running on foot. Tears came suddenly; I prayed, "Father, they are also my people. They are my own brothers." While praying, my body shuddered and the revelation came: "Yes, they are your brothers and sisters, and uncles. They are your own flesh and blood."

Chongju, my hometown

March 31st was the day we were permitted to visit Chongju. I did not know whether it was really happening or was just another of my dreams. I pinched my leg; it was not a dream. I was really going to Chongju to see my flesh and blood relatives. I hadn't been able to sleep all night. How could I sleep? We had our breakfast and got in the car. We passed through downtown Pyongyang and headed for Chongju.

There were so many people walking by outside the car. I wanted to shout to them. I wanted to boast to them. I became a little kid again. "Who will come? Of course, my older sister will come. My nephew as well." Pyonghwa Motors president Park Sang-kwon told me that my relatives would come to meet me. My heart was full of expectations. "What should I say to them?"

"Thank You, Heavenly Father. How can I repay True Parents? Please have pity on our people. Please guide Korea to reunification. Several million are missing their flesh and blood just as I am. Please allow them to have this same opportunity. I sincerely hope that our people could bring true joy to You."

Through the window, I could see so many people walking by, carrying

shovels and other tools and following behind flag-bearers. They were probably heading for work. What must they think of us? There are not many cars in North Korea. The cars we were in would not have seemed so great in Seoul, but they must have looked very special to North Koreans' eyes. People were staring at us with odd expressions on their faces.

I was too excited to remember what time we'd left Pyongyang. We must have been riding for about two hours. The landscape started to look familiar; we were in the village of Nak Chun, in the district of Park Chun. I had come there with my mother when I was young. I remembered that my aunt had lived there. She had bought me apples and taffy at the market. Where is the aunt who had cared for me now? Where is she buried? "I really miss you, Auntie. I really do."

The thought of my aunt brought tears to my eyes. While I indulged myself in my reminiscence, I could feel that we were almost in my hometown. "This is my hometown! How terribly have I been missing this place! How are you? So many things have changed." I could hardly recognize anything. Too much had changed! My house is gone. My parents and my brothers aren't there any more. No one was there to welcome me. I stood in front of a well I used to drink from in the past. I talked to the well, "You must remember me. I'm here now. I came back alive. Do you know of the sorrowful history I've lived through? Can you tell me where my grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, father and mother, who used to drink

water from you are?" No answers.

When I looked at the mountains in front of or behind me, there was not a trace of anything familiar I could recall from my past. How could this be? I didn't know if it was a dream or reality. It surely was not a dream.

Meeting family members

We went to the graves of my father's elder sister and elder brother [Rev. Moon is here referring to True Father's parents]. My mother and sister-in-law were next to them. I bowed first to my uncle. "Uncle, your nephew, Yong-hyun is here. It was so hard for me to come. You must have suffered so much and missed your son terribly. Please have eternal joy with True Parents."

I offered glasses of wine and earnestly prayed to God. I offered glasses to my mother, too, "Mother, your unhappy son is here before you. I ask your forgiveness for having abandoned you. I have missed you so much. Mother, I have really missed you."

They told me that there was no more time, but I couldn't leave. Who could understand the heaviness I felt inside? I bid my uncle and aunt farewell. "Uncle and Aunt, and Mother, goodbye." I looked back again and again and reluctantly moved away. Where are the mountains and fields I used to see? I got into the car and looked back at the scenery as we drove away.

The next stop was the Won Bong ri local office. It looked quite familiar. I couldn't see anyone I knew. I waited about ten minutes and someone came up to me and took hold of my hands. I was so surprised to see my sister, who

looked so old and humble. I couldn't believe she was my once young, beautiful sister. I felt so sad and choked with tears. Tears blinded me. I held her hands, but her right hand had no fingers. "What happened to you, sister?" She told me her fingers had been chopped off by a machine. How much suffering did she have to go through just to survive? In an instant, I could feel the unbearable weight of her suffering life. "If you live long enough your suffering will come to an end. Just don't die. I'll come as often as I can to take care of you. Please don't worry."

I realized that, by then, many people surrounded me. My uncle's son, Young-suk was there. Someone called Byung-il also introduced himself. Byung-il's four younger brothers and sisters had come, too. I couldn't see my younger brother and nephew. "How come I can't see Dogyun?" No answer. My sister told me that he couldn't make it. I asked why. She looked uneasy. I realized what she was thinking and said, "Alright. I understand. He couldn't get permission." My sister didn't say anything; her eyes agreed with me.

The mayor of Chongju district was next to us, listening to our conversation.

"Mr. Mayor! I hope that we can be good friends!"

"Please come often."

"Yes, I'll try my best."

Everyone went to a restaurant. My sister sat on my right and the mayor sat on my left. I could tell that they put so much effort into preparing the food. My sister didn't eat anything but seemed to carefully read what others were thinking. I asked her where my grandfa-



Moon Yong-hyun with Father's younger sister Moon Hyo-sun, their first meeting for fifty years; at back is Park Sang-kwon



Comparing photographs of long-lost relatives; at back, other North Korean relatives (wearing Kim Il-sung badges)



At the grave of Father's parents, a traditional Korean ceremony of greeting is prepared

ther's grave was, the whereabouts of my big brother, his wife, and some of my cousins. Although I still had more to ask, I couldn't ask any questions that might put her into an awkward position. It was so heartbreaking.

Finally, the dinner was over. We were at a small public hall in the countryside. They told me that students there would come and perform to welcome us. The children sang and danced very well, but I couldn't see or hear anything. Everyone sang *Tongil* while holding hands and the curtain fell. It was now really time to say goodbye. "Sister...Sister! I promise I'll be back if I have another chance. Please take good care of your health." I was choked with tears. I waved to my sister from the car. The car moved away so fast, leaving behind no real promises. I felt so heartbroken; but the pain I was feeling is the pain of our people. Nothing can describe my heart at leaving my hometown behind—the hometown I had been missing even in my dreams.

The Myo Hyang Mountains

We arrived at the Myo Hyang mountains, where we went to a museum housing all the gifts that Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il had received as head of state. We had dinner at the hotel and each of us was assigned a separate bedroom. Night came and I turned off the light but couldn't sleep. I finally got some sleep, but awoke early. It was dawn. I took a shower and went outside.

Many of my companions were outside taking walks. They also must not have been able to sleep. I started to take a walk, too. The mountains were truly

beautiful. The air was clean, the water clear. Everything was crystal clear. How long has it taken me to get back to this land again? How painfully have I been missing this place? "The mountain of Myo Hyang! Do you have any idea how many times I have called your name? Do you have any idea how many people have been missing your beauty through sleepless nights and even on their deathbeds? I will tell my friends in Seoul that you are still waiting for us with the same beauty they remember."

The production plant

On April 6th, we had breakfast and drove to the Pyonghwa Motors plant in Nampo on a ten-lane highway. They'd finished the first paving, but hadn't quite finished the second paving. It felt quite rough but we made good time.

There were just a few cars. Not long after setting off, we arrived at the Nampo factory. Thousands of people were waiting. They welcomed us with applause.

We stood in the middle of a platform with a completed car on display. It was petite and pretty. We were there to celebrate the completion of the car assembly plant. Three years ago, it was a rice field. I am truly grateful for all the effort made by Park Sang-kwon. After the ceremony, we went into the plant to look around. The members of our group seemed very satisfied. We all felt proud and joyful.

Once back in Pyongyang, we were invited to a special dinner. Everything was just perfect. I was speechless. With the special care of Kim Young-soon, chairman of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, we were treated so well.

Yet, I felt heavy in my heart. How will the future of our people turn out? When will Korea be unified? How can South Koreans accept North Koreans? North Koreans must think of us as their enemies. I don't even want to remember what happened in the past. How terribly we had to suffer! How much starvation there was.

I want to forget the past and to look forward to the future for the rest of my life. I want to think positively about everything. I want to love everyone and forgive everything. That should be my life. That should be the course of Korea's unification. It all depends on our thinking. I should forget the painful past and live the rest of my life with a grateful heart.◆

Moon Yong-hyun is the third son of the younger brother of True Father's father

True Mother's birthplace (location marked with a circle), in Anju—about one hour by car from Father's birthplace—is no longer standing; in its place are apartment buildings

