

The Pride of My Country

Michael Downey
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Sculpture: Korean Unification

On June 12th all eyes will be focused on Singapore when the President of the United States, Donald Trump, will shake hands with Kim Jong Un the leader of North Korea. Folks here in the Republic [South Korea] are waiting anxiously and with great expectations for the results. We can't know for sure what they will agree to do but it clearly is an opening of a door.

Today, I can't help but reflect on the reality of not only this day but the many days and years that have brought us to this point. What is it more than anything else that has made this day possible? No doubt in my mind it is the sixty five years that the United States of America has faithfully stood with The Republic of Korea. Three generations of young Americans have come to this country and stood up there on that wall guaranteeing the security and safety of South Korea. During that time, in security, South Korea has risen out of the ashes of the absolute devastation of war to become not only a first world nation but a leader among those nations.

South Korea today is an energetic democracy that is continually developing both economically and socially. South Korean companies, such as Samsung, Hyundai, and the Lotte group are leaders around the world. I am continually amazed at the pace that new buildings, commercial and residential, are going up. The country is also engaged, as an open society, in confronting the ills of the past and grappling with the same issues that confront modern nations around the world. This is in stark contrast to the People's Republic in the North. When President Trump visited South Korea last fall he spoke to the National Assembly and highlighted this contrast. He spoke about the satellite images taken at night that show the bright lights of the modern, free, and forward leaning south and the darkness of economic, social, and political failure above the 38th parallel.

The young Americans who came here were not always the most educated or well behaved. They, typical of the young away from home and community, sometimes caused trouble, drank too much, fought, and

I'm sorry to say committed crimes against the Korean people. But these were a minority. Most came here and did their duty as soldiers, trained to standard, and were always ready to fight—tonight. They are my heroes and I salute them.

Before that in the South's darkest hour, the United States came to the aid of the small nation under attack. It is always said that it was the United Nation and troops from 36 nations that came to Korea's rescue and of course that is true. But it was the United States who did the heavy lifting in terms of resources, manpower, and blood.

About ten years ago my wife and I went to the city of Busan and visited the UN cemetery. There we found marble walls set up with the names of those who died defending this country. In alphabetical order, each of the thirty six nations had the names of their people who died carved into the surface. I looked at the walls of names and was immediately struck. Some nations had ten or twenty names, some only one or two. The United Kingdom had several thousand inscriptions. Then we came to our country. There was not space on part of a wall or even one wall to hold the names. There were seven walls to hold the names of more than 38,000 Americans who died from 1950 to 1953. The names seemed to go on forever.

On that day we spent three hours there and touched each and every name. I cried and cried and I thought this is the pride of my country. These names represent the treasure of my country. Most of them didn't even know where Korea was when they answered the call to arms and yet they came here and these names are of the ones who never went home. The greatest pride of my country is not it's wealth, power, military, culture, language, or anything else. It is these young people who answered freedom's call and paid the ultimate cost. On that day, I prayed to God that they will have not died in vain but that the Republic of Korea and its people will continue to grow and prosper in freedom.

From now we have the opportunity to bring the people of North Korea into this realm of freedom and prosperity. May their long dark night of oppression under tyranny soon be over.

On June 13th the day following the summit the people of South Korea will go to the polls to freely select their representatives to their Nation Assembly in the by election and will vote for candidates in the many local elections. The past fourteen days the streets have been alive with the candidates and their supporters campaigning for their man or lady. It's very noisy with sound trucks baling out the message, hordes of mostly middle age ladies dressed in T-shirts in the colors of their boss, and the candidates themselves shaking hands and urging all to vote for the right person. Some folks complain about the noise but it will soon be over and I am reminded; it is the sound of freedom.

All the best to President Trump in Singapore.