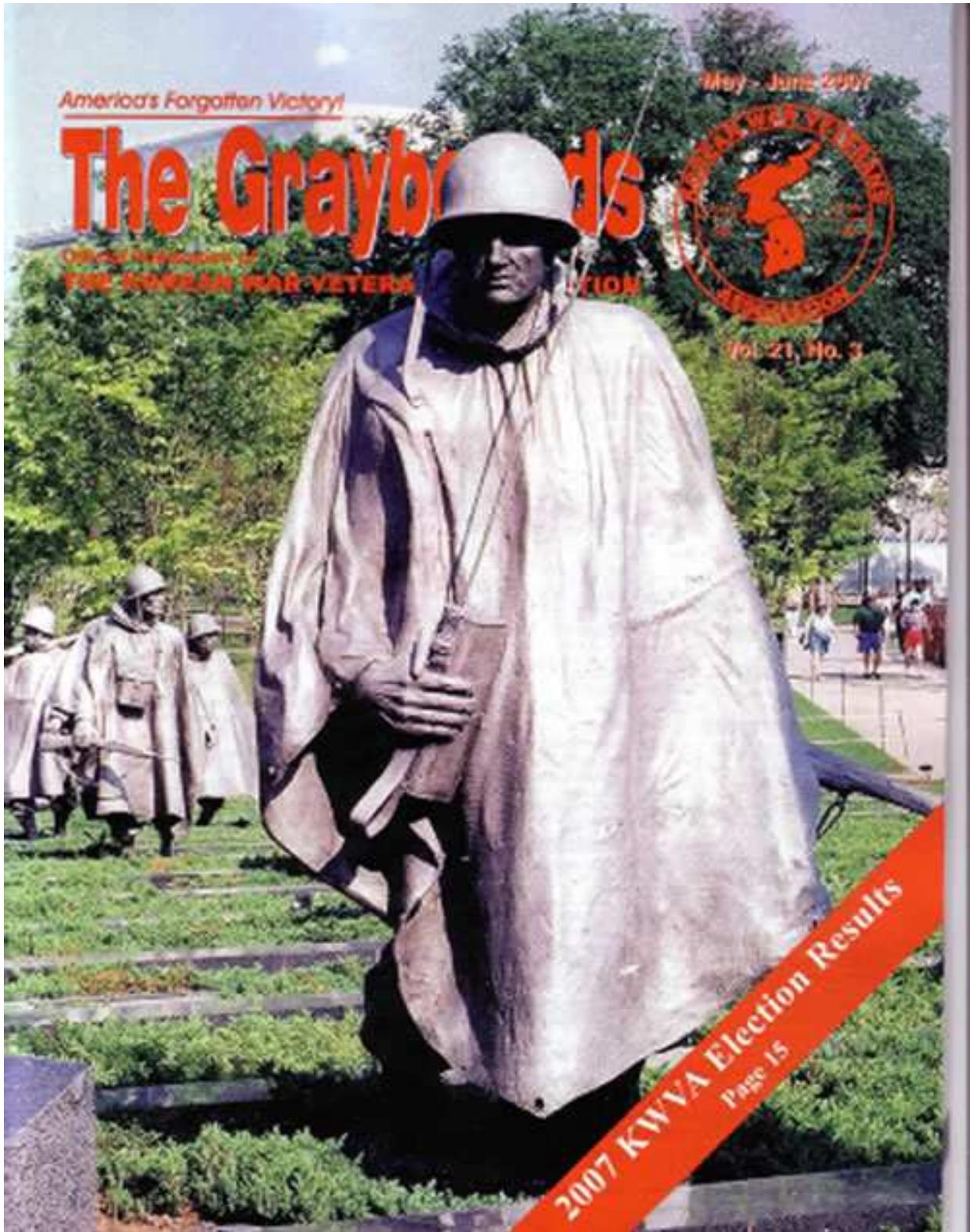


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# Free from prison and certain death

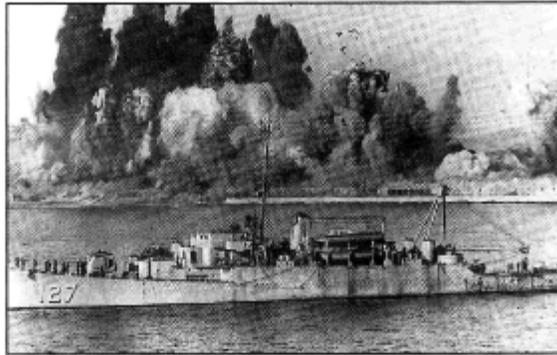
■ **Hungnam, Korea. 0500 hours. October 14, 1950**

In the small hours before dawn, the industrial city of Hungnam on the east coast of North Korea was eerily quiet. The aerial bombardments which had been systematically destroying bridges, factories and other key military targets for weeks was suddenly over. US and ROK troops, spirits buoyed by the triumph of the September 15 Inchon campaign, were advancing up the Eastern coast toward the Yalu River and the Chinese border.

But in the Hungnam Special Labor prison camp, the 152 surviving prisoners didn't think they would get to see the sun rise even one last time. Over the previous nights, North Korean guards had been systematically executing the men, with the idea of leaving no one alive. The only reason the executions had not already been completed the night before was that as ROK and US/UN forces entered the city, the guards had begun to desert, afraid for their families' safety. Later that very day, the prisoners were suddenly set free to return home. The 'shock and awe' of such bombardments spared countless lives.

However, the dramatic story of the prisoners freed from Hungnam and forced labor camps like it, and their reprieve from certain death, might have remained largely unknown. But among the men liberated that cold October morning was a young Korean who was later destined to become known around the world: the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, The Washington Times and many other humanitarian and philanthropic enterprises. And he was determined that the story should be told.

Moon had been sent to Hungnam on May 20, 1948, after having been arrested for preaching the gospel in Pyongyang and thus 'creating public disorder.' Many of the inmates were imprisoned on similarly politicized charges as the North Korean communists extended their grip on society. The camp's goals were simple: work the prisoners to death in Hungnam's huge industrial complexes,



The USS Begor standing by during the final demolition of Hungnam industrial facilities in December 1950, after the successful evacuation of US/UN forces following the Chinese communist counteroffensive.

After being freed from Hungnam, Sun Myung Moon went as a refugee to Busan. He is pictured here with some of his early followers outside his first church, a cardboard shack made from US Army ration boxes



the largest in all of East Asia and crucial to Kim Il Sung's war effort.

Each ten-man team had to load 700 40-kilo sacks a day of ammonium sulphate fertilizer, later raised to 1300 sacks. Failure to meet the quota meant half-rations the following day. During the three years Moon was imprisoned, more than half of the original 1500 inmates had succumbed to disease, brutal treatment and starvation. Moon knew that he had been sent to die and that his only chance of survival was to fight a spiritual battle by loving everyone—his fellow inmates, the communist guards and even God.

"I realized very clearly how God

loved me and that He knew how much I was suffering," he later recalled, "Therefore, I could not ask Him to remove or relieve the suffering. I did not ask for help but told God to worry about others, about the nation and the world." With this resolve, he threw himself into the work, determined to make it fulfilling. Other prisoners noted that he hardly ever seemed to sleep but was often seen in prayer during the early morning hours. Finally even the guards came to respect him. He won an award as an outstanding prisoner.

Throughout his life, the Reverend Moon has often spoken of his gratitude to

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the US and United Nations servicemen who saved him on that October morning and rescued his country from slavery and despair under the communist system, and for the United States' ongoing efforts to defend freedom throughout the world. But he always saw it as more than just a human effort.

"Victory came because God had chosen and raised the United States of America, in accordance with His providential program, and had raised the American people," he said in a recent speech in Hawaii. Even today, "the future of humankind lies in the preservation of peace in the Pacific Rim region, centering on the United States."

In 2003, Moon founded the United Nations Peace Forces of the Korean War Memorial Federation (UPKMF) to mark the 50th anniversary of ceasefire. The foundation has two goals. First, to enable veterans from the United States and the other fifteen nations supporting the UN effort to visit Korea, retrace their footsteps, meet with each other, and even visit the final resting places of former colleagues. More recently, the UPKMF has enabled ROK veterans to make return visits to the veterans' associations in each of these sixteen nations and pay respect to the spirit of sacrifice and honor that was the mark of those who fought in the Korean War.