

After Sixty Years, Time to Remember that “Freedom is Not Free”

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As the blazing sun beat down from the June sky, an appreciative and at times self-reflective crowd gathered near the Korean War Memorial on the National Mall in Washington DC to remember and reflect on the outbreak of the Korean War sixty years ago, on June 26 1950. The Little Angels, the noted Korean Children’s Folk Ballet founded in 1962 by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, were the star attraction in a special program to honor the veterans from sixteen nations who paid such a great price to defend freedom on the Korean peninsula.



Despite the festive atmosphere, this was a solemn occasion as the audience of Americans and Koreans reflected on all those who have lost their lives. In addition to hundreds of thousands of dead and injured from the United Nations forces that went to Korea’s defense six decades ago, more than three million Koreans from both North and South were killed and millions more orphaned, widowed, and made homeless. The conflict still simmers on, with the recent sinking of the South Korean navy vessel *Cheonan* as a grim reminder that the Korean War is not yet over.



Korean War veterans and members of Washington DC's Korean community brave the noon-day sun.



Little Angels tour director and Korean War Veteran Dr. Bo Hi Pak holds up the "Heroes Medal"

After patriotic and martial music from the Northern Virginia Korean Veterans Band, and a spirited rendition of the national anthem from US Marine veteran Sergeant Elizabeth Quinones, Dr. Thomas Walsh, the President of the Universal Peace Federation, introduced three notable speakers to the stage to attempt to answer the all-important question, "Was it worth it?"



Former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert greets the Little Angels after the performance



Ambassador Han Duk-soo expresses the gratitude of the Korean nation for their freedom and prosperity

Dennis Hastert, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Co-Chair of the organizing committee for the Little Angels tour, spoke of the contrast between current satellite photos of North and South Korea at night. While the South blazes with city lights, the North shows only a few dim glimmers. "It is the difference between the light of freedom and the darkness of tyranny," Hastert said, "and that is the clear result of the sacrifices of the veterans we honor today."

The Korean Ambassador, His Excellency Han Duk-soo, who was appointed to Washington just last year, was more matter-of-fact in his remarks. "Without the efforts of American and United Nations soldiers, the Republic of Korea simply would not exist," he said. "As it says on the Korean War Memorial, 'Freedom is not

Free.” The Korean people are eternally grateful to those brave men and women who travelled across the world to defend a country they had not heard of and a people they had never met.



The Little Angels “Spring Festival Dance” offers hope for a new beginning in Korea

Dr. Bo Hi Pak, the Little Angels tour organizer and a retired Colonel in the Korean army, gave a first-hand account of his own experience in the chaotic first days of the Korean War. A freshman cadet of less than three weeks experience, Pak and the other 350 members of his class were sent to the frontline to defend Seoul from being overrun by the Northern invaders. Untrained, inexperienced and equipped with only M-1 rifles in the face of Soviet-supplied artillery and weapons, the young Korean students were almost wiped out overnight.

Pak managed to escape southwards in the retreat to Osan, where he met up with American soldiers from Task Force Smith. “I just fell to my knees and thanked God,” Pak said, “and I thanked America for saving my life.”

“Today the Little Angels Korean Children’s Ballet have come to America to thank all Americans,” Pak said. “Our first thanks go to those surviving veterans who have joined us here today, and secondly to the families of those who never made it back. I also want to thank those fallen heroes who are now in heaven to recognize their indelible contribution to our freedom. Thank you, veterans. Thank you, America.”

Earlier, Pak and the Little Angels joined Korean community leaders and veterans representatives in a simple and moving wreath-laying ceremony at the Korean War Veterans Memorial less than a hundred yards away. The entire event was covered on [CNN](#) and in local and by Korean media outlets.



The Drum Dance



The Fan Dance

With the solemnities concluded, the Little Angels took the stage. Defying the heat and humidity, which drove hundreds of people from their seats into the shade of a nearby avenue of trees, the 34 girls and one boy offered a rich feast of dance and music, including traditional favorites as the Fan Dance, the Drum Dance and others.



The Little Angels, who are on a tour to the sixteen nations who participated in the UN forces in the Korean War, now move on to Fort Benning and Atlanta, Georgia to conclude the North American leg of the tour.