



Friends of Korea

Dedicated to fostering cultural awareness and
friendship between Americans and Koreans

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Kenneth Klein of USC East Asian Library Honored for Promoting Korean and American Cross-Cultural Understanding

[Washington DC – November 8, 2020] Friends of Korea (FoK) presented the fifth annual Kevin O’Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award to Dr. Kenneth Klein, the recently retired Head of the East Asian Library at the University of Southern California. The presentation was made at the Friends of Korea Annual Meeting, a virtual meeting this year.

For decades, Dr. Klein has shown himself to be dedicated to the mission of fostering cultural awareness and friendship between Americans and Koreans. He has consistently done so throughout his career as librarian of East Asian collections at the University of Southern California. His purview included the Korean Heritage Collection which is a part of the East Asian Library. Trained in both library science and the academic study of pre-modern Chinese history, Dr. Klein dedicated his career to the acquisition, preservation, and promotion of USC’s East Asian Collection. This included the acquisition of important materials related to Korean and Korean American History, working collaboratively with both Korean American and Korean organizations and institutions.

In addition to overseeing the acquisition and preservation of materials for the Korean and Korean American collection at USC, Dr. Klein was active in promotion of cultural understanding between Americans and Koreans at particularly critical junctures. In 1993, he served on the Planning Committee for a conference on new directions for the Korean American community in the aftermath of the unrest of April 1992 in Los Angeles.

Among other outreach activities, Dr. Klein contributed to drafting a Senate resolution recognizing contributions of Korean Americans and advised the LA City Planning Department on important Asian American (including Korean American) monuments; mounted photo and other exhibits; gave papers and presentations at diverse venues; contributed to or edited newsletters or journals;

produced documentary films and conducted numerous oral history interviews. Closer to home (the Peace Corps experience in Korea), Dr. Klein, together with a colleague, conducted oral history interviews of former volunteers and oversaw the project to create the USC Peace Corps Digital Archives, a collection of photos and other contributions of former volunteers.

The Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award recognizes individuals and their accomplishments that further cultural awareness and friendship between Americans and Koreans. This award is a tribute to the ground-breaking contributions made by Kevin O'Donnell, U.S. Peace Corps' first country director in Korea and the fourth director of the Peace Corps. O'Donnell accepted the post in 1966, served for four years, and is remembered for his extraordinary leadership that created the foundation for Peace Corps' successful 15 year commitment in Korea. Following his service in Korea, he served as the fourth director of the U.S. Peace Corps.

About Friends of Korea: Friends of Korea is dedicated to enhancing cultural awareness and friendship between Americans and Koreans. It was founded in 2002 by former Peace Corps volunteers who served in the Republic of Korea between 1966 and 1981. In recent years, however, it has grown to include participants from variety of backgrounds who share an interest in promoting greater understanding and friendship between the United States and Korea. Friends of Korea sponsors a variety of events across the United States. Its flagship event is an annual meeting, held in the fall, at various cities across the United States. For more information, visit the website at: www.friendsofkorea.net.

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