

**Peace Corps Korea:
A Story of Personal, Professional and National Transformation**

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I. Introduction

Over 70 years ago, the famous German psychologist Kurt Lewin stated "nothing is as practical as a good theory" (1945). In the case of the dramatic development of the Republic of Korea, we may want alter his phrase to "there is nothing as practical as a good story." And the story of the development of Korea, as experienced by American Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) from 1966 to 1981 is certainly that -- a good story with practical applications for understanding Korea's dramatic development into a modern nation.

As in all stories, our main characters, Korean citizens and the American Volunteers, experienced a range of emotions: excitement, anxiety, frustration, confusion, satisfaction, and affection. They lived and worked together in an environment replete with complex bi-national relations, changing bureaucratic regulations, threats of war, and shifting cultural norms. However, the result was a transformative experience for both, that at times was readily apparent, and at other times, not realized until decades later.

From the American perspective, the Volunteers were coming to Korea to 1) help meet the need for trained manpower for Korea's development; 2) help promote a better understanding of America on the part of Koreans; and 3) help promote a better understanding of Korea on the part of Americans. These three goals of Peace Corps were to be achieved by the Volunteers working and living alongside their Korean colleagues in villages and cities, usually outside of Seoul. From 1966 to 1981, more than 2,000¹ of them volunteered in Korea, typically for two-year assignments. They were assigned to secondary schools and universities, health centers and leprosy villages, special education centers and much more.

From the Korean perspective, the Volunteers were needed to help develop the country's export-oriented economy and act as role models in social institutions central to the government's ambitious development plans. In education, particularly the Teaching of English as Foreign Language (TEFL)², the Volunteers were seen as catalysts of change to "help Korea revamp its inadequate English education system [by introducing] an alternate method of teaching English uniquely designed to the totality of the Korean situation" (Hahn 9). In understaffed public health centers, the Volunteers would also provide manpower and facilitate Korean understanding of western concepts and practices of public health (Hahn 10).

¹ According to the Peace Corps website 2,068 Volunteers served in Korea.

² In this paper, the terms TEFL and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) will be used synonymously.

The following pages will briefly describe the history of Peace Corps in Korea, the daily living experiences of the Volunteers who resided in the villages and cities of the Republic, and the impact of those experiences on their lives in their post-Peace Corps years. The story is told through the voices of the Volunteers and Peace Corps Staff either in their writings, interviews or survey responses³. It is impossible in this brief account to include the stories of all the Volunteers and Staff. The names cited are not meant to signify the most prominent individuals; rather, they serve as examples of the more than 2,000 stories that can be told. I hope this depiction, however brief, will give the reader an understanding of Peace Corps in Korea. Any historical inaccuracies or mistakes in this representation are my responsibility.

II. Peace Corps Korea

A. *The Luck of the Irish*

Our story begins on September 16, 1966 in *The Land of the Morning Calm*. A strong breeze swept across the peninsula as the door of a chartered Pan American flight from Hawaii via Midway Island opened and one hundred, well-dressed young Americans descended the stairs onto the Gimpo International Airport tarmac. Unlike other corps from America, the members of this group didn't wear uniforms or stand at rigid attention. They didn't have short haircuts and generally didn't respond with "Yes Sir" or "No Sir." Their leader didn't have four stars on his shoulders. He was Kevin O'Donnell, a pragmatic problem-solver, an Irish-American business executive from Ohio, who left the corporate life in order to serve as the first Director of Peace Corps Korea. Kevin recalled his job interview for the position:

I went through a whole series of interviews in Washington [to be a Peace Corps Director] and I ended up with the opportunity to choose two or three different countries. I sat down with the head of the East Asian Pacific region and he said, 'Forget those other countries, Kevin. Korea is for you. You got to go to Korea.' He told me about the people. He said they were wonderful people. 'The language is a jawbreaker but you scored high on your MLAT [language aptitude] test. It's going to be difficult and I need someone like you to go over there and lead it.' He also said 'Oh, by the way, Kevin, the Koreans are known as the Irish of the Orient. And I said 'Oh they are?' And I looked at the calendar and it was March 17, St. Patrick's Day. The stars are lined up. Go to Korea. (Kevin O'Donnell Interview)

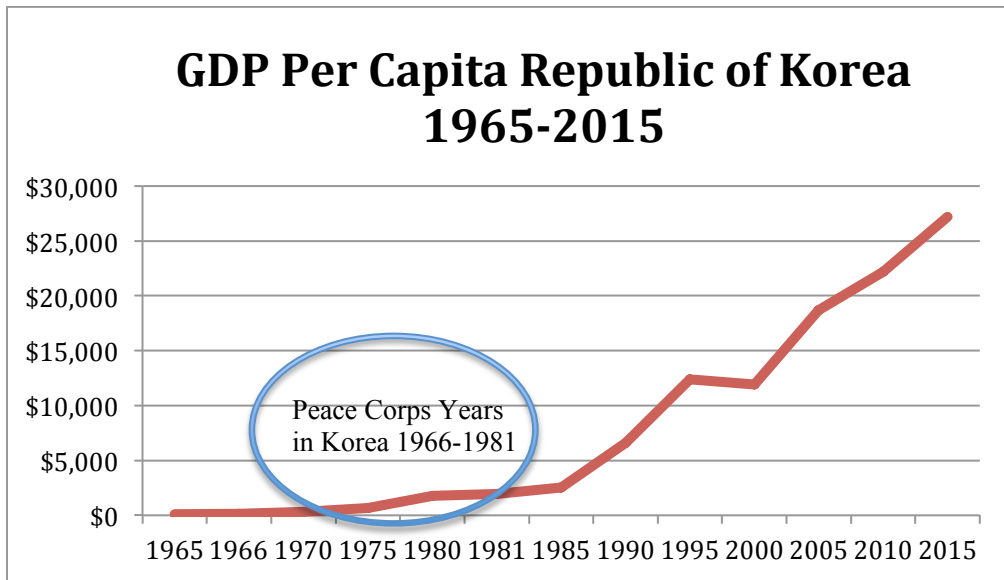
By accepting the offer to be the first Director of Peace Corps Korea, Kevin was joining a unique initiative in American history. The Peace Corps was born out of President John F. Kennedy's call to his fellow Americans in his inaugural address on January 20, 1961: "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" (Kennedy). The President's call to service was met with an enthusiastic response on the part of young Americans. As a result, on September 22, 1961, Congress

³ In summer 2016, the author surveyed 285 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for this article.

authorized \$40 million to create the U.S. Peace Corps, an organization that “shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve under conditions of hardship, if necessary” (Peace Corps Act). In spite of the Korean government’s requests since the inception of Peace Corps in 1961, it took five years for the first Volunteers to reach Korea (Korea Program 8).

B. The Early Years -1966-1970 (K1 to K12): 고생 끝에 낙이 온다

The Korean proverb *고생 끝에 낙이 온다* (At the end of hardship comes success) characterized the first four years of Peace Corps in Korea. During this time, the Peace Corps staff, the Volunteers, the Korean government and Korean co-workers struggled to find the best utilization of the Volunteers. Korea of 1966, unlike Korea of the 21st century, was largely rural based, had a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$105, had a citizenry unfamiliar with interacting with Westerners, and was in the early stages of building its export-driven economy. Korea also had a gap of approximately 45% fewer teachers in the secondary schools than the desired number authorized by law and suffered from a shortage of health care professionals (Planning 3).



Source: World Bank Data

With these conditions and with the need to prepare a citizenry who would be ready to contribute to a modern economy, education was high on the Korean government’s priority for Peace Corps. Thus, for the initial group of Volunteers, the Korean government asked for one hundred teachers. The majority of the first Volunteers (known as K-1)⁴ were trained for TEFL; however, the group also included twenty-four science and eight physical education teachers since developing modern scientific technology and

⁴ Peace Corps groups in Korea were designated with the letter K and a number to signify their chronological order of arrival in country. K-1 was the first group and K-51 was the final group. One group – K-33 – was cancelled due to university closings during political unrest in 1974.

promoting attitudes of cooperation and responsibility along with physical fitness were important to the government (Planning 4). However, not everything went according to plan once the Volunteers arrived in Korea and were assigned their duties. Volunteer David Lassiter (K-1) described his experience:

I was assigned and taught English conversation in a junior and senior girls high school in Uijeongbu, Kyonggi Do [의정부, 경기도]. That's about 30 kilometers north of Seoul and a similar distance from the DMZ. English teaching methodology in Korea was traditional and focused on reading and grammar. College entrance exams focused on this approach so naturally that was the way it was taught in the secondary school system. So while most high school graduates could read and write English, hardly anyone could speak it. Our challenge was to first bring English conversation into the picture and second, to influence the shift in emphasis away from reading, writing and grammar.

In my first year, I was assigned to teach one hour a week to every middle and high school class. There were about 800 students in the school so this was a rigorous schedule. The English conversation class was to be in addition to the existing grammar and reading classes which were more frequent and taught by Korean teachers. It did not take long for me to recognize that students were not remembering the conversational phrases, sentences and interactions they had been taught the previous week. It seemed evident that this approach wasn't working and a waste of effort. I believed that if we maintained this approach the overall PC effort in Korea would not succeed. So I put together a plan, with the help of our PC staff advisors, to concentrate the conversation teaching time to three hours a week and limited to the high school classes. Convincing the other English teachers and the principal of this was no easy task. Like most school systems, they were resistant to change and the argument from a twenty- three-year-old neophyte teacher. It was an uphill battle. At the same time, PC wanted to move me to Seoul to teach in a university for my second year where my efforts might have a better chance at success. I was highly tempted by this. But I figured if I could get my school to go with this new idea of more intensive conversation classes with fewer students I'd stay in Uijeongbu [의정부] to see it through. The plan was approved. I spent my second year more full of energy than ever and happy to see my students increasingly able to speak to each other in English.

In spite of David's apparent success, it soon became evident to Peace Corps that placing the Volunteers in high schools was not the best use of personnel. Thus, Peace Corps proposed to the Korean government a broader-based English teaching program (Korea Program 1). Subsequent groups of education Volunteers (K-2, K-3 and K-5) were posted to a variety of levels throughout the Korean education system. By May 1968, it was reported that 217 to 224 PCVs were involved in education in the Republic (Korea Program 1).

Just as the Korean education sector experienced inadequate facilities and manpower in the 1960s, the public health sector also suffered from the poor delivery of health services

in the rural areas due to a lack of government funding and trained medical personnel. To help remedy this problem, in December 1967, sixty-eight K-4 Volunteers arrived in Korea to work in rural health with a focus on treating respiratory illnesses and communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB). They were quickly followed by thirty-six more Volunteers (K-6) in January 1968. Both groups were initially assigned to *myeon* (면) Health Sub-centers to work with Korean co-workers, many of whom were new to their positions (Korea Program 1-2). The Volunteers, particularly those with medical or paramedical backgrounds, were seen as one remedy for the lack of trained Korean personnel in the rural areas. However, after five months in country, Peace Corps discovered that a previously unrecognized problem was the lack of an organized administrative structure to record which citizens in the countryside were receiving immunizations, medicine and other medical services (Korea Program 9-10). Thus, in addition to their health care duties, the Volunteers were tasked with assisting in the creation of administrative processes to maintain health records.

Like the education Volunteers, the health Volunteers also experienced program challenges. Uneasy in vaguely defined jobs, they also did not have the necessary language proficiency to interact with citizens who spoke rural dialects. In the Volunteer-produced newsletter *여보세요* (Yeoboseyo)⁵ John Carter (K-4) commented on the situation:

At its onset, the health program had uniform (although somewhat vague) objectives . . . individuals . . . are trying in their own way to do something constructive . . . there are Volunteers working on rat control, patient records systems, baby-weighing services . . . Some Volunteers are working cooperatively on Health Fairs; others are working in coordination with various Korean educational and health organizations. . . Still others are working alone in the myeon (면) within the rough outlines of the original objectives of the Health Program, i.e., TB Control, Family Planning, MCH [maternal - child health], and in some cases, Public Health and Sanitation (3).

The experiences of the early Volunteer groups in Korea reflected many of the challenges that Peace Corps programs faced throughout the world: How can the host country, in this case, Korea, properly utilize the manpower provided by Peace Corps? Particularly, manpower that is embodied in the form of a recent college graduate with limited Korean skills and on-site for a two-year assignment. In contrast, their Korean colleagues, who the Volunteers were expected to train or influence, may have had more experience and were certainly better in navigating Korean culture.

The young Americans, mostly in their mid-twenties, were usually idealistic in their motivation to serve and in their willingness to work hard. However, they often found

⁵ This article will use the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism's standards of Romanization. In the original versions of the newsletter, *여보세요* was romanized as "Yobosayo." *여보세요* means *Hello*. Direct quotes of the Volunteers in this article will retain the original Romanization used.

themselves in what the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner called a “liminal period,” a fertile “betwixt and between” context (Turner 96). In such a state, with only a basic living allowance and bereft of the comforts of their own culture and language, Volunteers came face-to-face with the realities of Korea, a nation just beginning to develop economically, but with an age-old culture shaped by a proud history and based on Confucian ethics and values. This “between-state,” however, allowed the Volunteers to move from a mono-cultural, ethnocentric view of the world to one that was more open and intercultural. As a result, they could open their minds to a perspective that diverged markedly from the one they had brought with them. Many, however, were so absorbed by the demands imposed by language, the workplace, and life in general, they didn’t realize that just as Korea was undergoing a national transformation, they too were experiencing their own transformation, one both intensely personal and professionally humbling as they transitioned from an idealized notion of a Peace Corps Volunteer to a Volunteer *in situ*. That transformative process forged a bond, a sense that they were no longer living among or “side by side” Koreans, but living *with* them (Buber 37).

For many, the lessons learned in this period could be as immediate as the one described by Volunteer Fred Toomey during his work to vaccinate the village children against TB:

Problems developed because I attempted this program near the end of my tour of service . . . I, myself expected to do too much too quickly...I attempted to vaccinate an entire myeon’s [면] qualifying children in 10 days, which is far too demanding. Dividing the myeon [면] in half . . . is sufficient due to the effort involved and the short time period caused by the expiration of the BCG [the main vaccination for TB] . . . Perhaps another PCV like George Cauthen or Brian Barry would be interested in such a program. (Kun 33 34)

For other Volunteers, the lessons were not apparent until their post-Peace Corps life:

It [Peace Corps service] changed my life in ways I never anticipated. What I learned about cross-cultural interaction, language, and human relations I feel I never would've learned if I'd never joined the PC and gone to Korea. I also learned valuable mental tools, including methods for attaining focus, calmness, and serenity. Social practices in Korean society vary from ours greatly, and this was also a valuable education. (2016 survey response)

The difficulties that the Volunteers faced during their service did not preclude meaningful work being done in cooperation with their Korean co-workers. In a 1969 *여보세* newsletter, health Volunteer Kathy Stobbs reported on a health fair “puppet show” experience with her Korean co-workers and Peace Corps colleagues:

Ever since last April, when a bunch of us first got the idea of having a health fair with a puppet team . . . [and] after much planning, talking, meeting and general working through of red tape . . . the Chon Puk [전북] PCVs put on the first health fair in Cathy Mathews’ myeon [면] last August. . . . About 1,500 patients made use of the dental clinic, x-ray mobile, or general clinic . . . A little zip was

added to the occasion by several sterling performances in the entertainment department, both by the PCVS and Koreans.

Seven months later, the PCVs put on a similar, but smaller fair in OonBong [sic] . . . We made some home visits to urge people to come . . . we went to some of the most remote rhees [리] and had a number of lovely visits. . . . We talked mostly with ajumonies [아주머니들] and encouraged them to come to the fair. . . . Another day, my co-worker and I had a similar outing. . . . She was terrific in talking to the people. (4, 16)

According to Kathy's report, the fair was a success with participation by the Volunteers and the Korean co-workers. The Volunteers handed out pamphlets and helped with 'traffic control' and mostly 'grooved' with the people. The Korean co-workers registered the patients and organized them for their examinations. The doctors performed physical exams until evening. A sudden snowfall and car trouble forced the medical team to stay overnight in the village, but the "calamity turned into a gala party." Kathy commented:

This is how I always pictured PC. We served as catalysts, bringing the people with medical needs into contact with available resources. At the same time, we had a ball mixing and mingling with the people. The Oonbong health fair was indeed a fair to remember. (16)

Similarly, Rick Laylin, a K-1 Volunteer, recalls that after his first year teaching English at a boys high school in Jeonju, he was assigned to Chonbuk National University to develop a TEFL training program for teachers in the province:

That second year was a totally different experience from the first year, and not nearly as frustrating as the first year since I now had a year's worth of experience to draw upon. I made several new friends in the process, but still had the old friends as well, so it was doubly rewarding. (Krzic)

The early years of Peace Corps Korea also featured Volunteers with unique skills being assigned to "special placements" outside of the health and education sectors. Volunteers were placed in the following organizations: the Housing, Urban and Regional Planning Institute (HURPI) to assist with a study of the new Seoul-Pusan highway and its effects on the surrounding countryside (Lane 4); the Chosun Hotel, the first "class A" tourist hotel, to teach English to future staffers in Korea's fledgling tourist industry (Sveda 3); the Holt orphanage in order to provide physical therapy services to children with congenital deformities (Moura 15); and the Sam Yook Children's Rehabilitation Center to work in occupational therapy for cerebral palsy and post-polio cases (Allred 5).

By the close of the decade of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, Peace Corps and the Korean government now had four years of experience with Volunteers in country and had a better idea of the likely success and failures of programs. The health Volunteers began to focus more on TB control and the education Volunteers began to serve as English teacher trainers in institutions of higher education. Additionally, Peace Corps

pre-service training for Volunteers was now able to incorporate returned K-1 Volunteers who had recently completed their two-year assignments. Thus, for the first time, trainees could hear first-hand the experience of being a Volunteer from their peers. Charles Hobbie (K-8) describes his training experience in Hawaii:

Most of the American training staff had taught English as members of the first group in Korea . . . and had been trained to be secondary level teachers. . . . We learned that we were the first group of Volunteers to be trained to be English, or TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) instructors at universities and colleges. . . . Approximately half of the trainees at the center in Hilo [Hawaii, site of the training] were to be K VIIIs, or K-7s. The other half were to be KVIIIs or K-8s. . . . The K-VIIIs were to teach at teacher colleges and the K-VIIIs were to teach at universities. We were all to focus on teaching the methodology of teaching English, so as to teach future Korean teachers how best to teach English. (53, 54)

Portending the future direction of the Peace Corps TEFL program, K-12 Volunteers were placed in provincial middle schools in co-teaching roles with Korean teachers. Special placements were still available to meet Korea's other development needs such as tourism (K-11). From insight gained from these initial years of experience, Kevin O'Donnell offered his perspective on Peace Corps Korea:

We in Korea have a viable, real thing which we can work at improving. We'll never perfect it, because by its nature it's not perfectible. But we'll get a lot of satisfaction in the attempt." [We'll make] individual and collective progress toward meeting the second and third goals. We seem prone to measure our results with regard to the first goal only, I detect a tendency for us to have a sense of guilty feelings when progress in this goal isn't apparent. (11)

C. The Middle Years - 1971-1976 (K-13 to K-40): 비 온 뒤에 땅이 굳는다

Much like the ground needing rain to produce crops for the farmer, the initial years of Peace Corps Korea, with its trial and errors, provided the necessary conditions for programming to take shape into the 1970s. Education Volunteers were now primarily engaged in middle school instruction, university pre-service teaching and in-service teacher training. Health Volunteers were focusing on TB and maternal-child health care (MCH). Further innovations in both fields were to be introduced.

In education, Peace Corps, working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MOE), instituted middle school co-teaching assignments and in-service re-training for English teachers based on the recommendations of Seoul National University Professor Juck-Hyoon Hwang's report to Peace Corps in 1969. This initiative not only gave clarity to the role of the secondary school Volunteers but also gave Korean teachers "a more intensive exposure to oral English and new teaching techniques" (Hahn 2). Furthermore, a 1971 decision by the MOE "to give credits to the [Korean] teachers attending a vacation workshop taught by Volunteers provided further impetus to organizing

provincial workshops” (Hahn 2, 3). Thus, in their second year of service, Volunteers would begin to conduct teacher-training workshops in a variety of locations outside their assigned schools (Hahn 3). At the university level, primary emphasis was on instructing future English teachers and secondarily to provide English instruction to students majoring in business, law, medicine and liberal arts and sciences. (Hahn 3-4). From 1967 to 1973, Volunteers were reported to have had contact with 2,000 English teachers and 350,000 students in school settings and to have facilitated workshops, both during semesters and vacation periods, for over 2,900 teachers (3).

A major innovation in the TEFL program occurred in 1974 with the creation of the textbook series *Middle School English 1, 2, 3* for use in all the public schools in Korea. Volunteer Daniel Holt (K-12), was intimately involved in the process:

The textbooks were developed for middle school grades one, two, and three. The series was the result of a successful collaboration between the Korean Ministry of Education and Peace Corps. Kim Dukki was the Ministry of Education official who led the project. In 1973, Mr. Kim contacted the Peace Corps Office and requested assistance in designing and publishing the first-ever middle school English textbook series that would be (1) designed with the help of a native speaker; (2) designed with a focus on teaching students to communicate in English, rather than simply translate and memorize grammar rules; and (3) used in every Korean middle school throughout Korea. Forward-thinking and courageous, Mr. Kim was the right choice to lead this groundbreaking effort. He would later become Training Officer for Peace Corps/Korea.

Middle School English 1, 2, 3 was pivotal in shifting the focus of English education to the teaching of listening and speaking skills. It served to create a need for teachers who had fluency in English and knowledge of communicative-based methods. Now that every middle school volunteer could teach with the same textbooks, Peace Corps could better focus its training on the methods volunteers would need to use the new textbook series. This focus led to the development of Peace Corps Korea’s Methodology for Teachers (MFT).

In 1975, Peace Corps Korea published the *Methodology for Teachers [MFT], Volunteer’s Manual and Teacher’s Manual* to accompany the Middle School textbook series. These books were co-authored by Volunteers Daniel Holt, Dennis Dunham (K-25), and Song Young Ok. Again, Holt provides the description of the process:

The Volunteer’s Manual (in English) and the Teacher’s Manual (in Korean) represented a major breakthrough in Peace Corps/Korea’s TESOL program. The manuals streamlined the guidance volunteers needed to prepare lesson plans for Middle School English 1, 2, 3 and help Korean English teachers improve their methodology. The structure of MFT mirrored that of Middle School English with specific methods designed for each section of the textbooks. Methods were selected for each section, presented in a step-by-step format so that Volunteers and co-teachers could choose who would do what during each class. Also, time

allocations for each section were suggested in an effort to convince English teachers that they could devote time to teaching listening and speaking skills and still teach grammar and translate content.

Volunteers used MFT for teaching the methods presented at the official workshops held for English teachers during the summer and winter vacations. MFT was also used in pre-service and in-service training programs for TESOL volunteers. . . . In 1974 Peace Corps/Korea published English for Teachers (EFT), the first-ever English textbook specifically designed for teacher's workshops. It greatly reduced volunteers' time and effort needed for selecting English content and designing lesson plans. EFT and MFT became companion tools for TESOL volunteers.

The Teacher's Manual was the Korean language version of the Volunteer's Manual. It was translated by Song Young Ok [Dan's co-teacher and successor as PC TESOL Advisor]. The Teacher's Manual enabled volunteers to help Korean English teachers understand the rationale for communicative approaches and strategies for combining them with traditional grammar-based instruction. In choosing the methods, every effort was made to adapt communicative approaches to the realities of Korean classrooms and the all-important exams that dominated the attention of Korean English teachers. For the first time in the history of Peace Corps/Korea, all TESOL volunteers and their co-teachers were on the same page—whether from their English textbook or their teacher's Korean manual.

MFT went through many drafts and extensive field-testing for approximately 18 months before the final version was published in 1975. Co-authors Dennis Dunham and Ms. Song led the field-testing to confirm the viability of the methods and the time estimates for each section of the textbooks. Other volunteers tested drafts of MFT during their middle school classes and teachers' workshops. (Holt, Reflections)

Newly arriving TEFL Volunteers and their Korean co-teachers now were able to have structure to their classroom instruction and a common methodology for use in teacher trainer workshops. Jim Robinson (K-32) recalls his experience with MFT:

I believe that we were prepared to use it [MFT] in our first in-service program most likely in winter 1975, and that we began using it in middle school teacher workshops immediately. These were three-week intensive workshops where we used EFT in the AM [morning] and MFT in the PM [afternoon]. My second year assignment was actually in Ulsan at the City Board of Education where we taught English teacher workshops during the semester. For one PCV pre-service program, I remember giving a demo of how to use MFT. Later, I remember preparing PCVs to use MFT for K-43 in 1977 or so and for in-service programs also at the Sejong Hotel [세종호텔] in Chuncheon [춘천, site of Peace Corps in-service training for Volunteers].

Robinson also wrote *A Guide for Teaching High School English Teachers' Workshops* in 1976 to attend to the high school teachers' needs. Although TESOL volunteers were not assigned to high schools, Volunteers taught English and methods to high school teachers in teachers' workshops as needed.

The foundations for the innovations of the Middle School English series, MFT, EFT and the High School Teacher's Guide were the product of the trials and errors experienced by the Volunteers and their Korean colleagues in the earliest years of the TEFL program. Holt acknowledged this and the support of the Peace Corps Headquarters in Seoul:

It should be emphasized that the foundation for MFT was laid by TESOL volunteers who served in Korea since 1966. They saw the need to complement their teaching of English to students with the teaching of modern methodology to English teachers in order to deepen the effectiveness of Peace Corps/Korea's TESOL programs. Jon Keeton, Director, and Bill Reich, Education Advisor, and other colleagues in the Peace Corps/Korea office contributed suggestions and budget support for the field-testing and publication of MFT. (Holt, Reflections)

For health Volunteers, assignments shifted from roles as multi-purpose health aides in health centers at the *myeon* [면] (sub-county) level to specialists in TB control at the *gun* [군] (county) level health centers. Volunteers were now performing duties such as drug distribution, sputum and x-ray examination, and record keeping for patients (Hahn 4). In 1973, eight Volunteers began a new initiative by working in the treatment of patients with Hansen's Disease (HD; leprosy) (4).

According to *An Evaluative Study of Peace Corps/Korea*, over an eight-year period (i.e., from 1966), 220 health Volunteers had helped to treat over 60,000 TB patients and co-supervise the work of more than 1,800 TB health workers (Hahn 4). The report suggests that Volunteers had provided a significant manpower input to achieve the government objectives of reducing the incidences of TB and had provided the unique opportunity for "Americans to establish direct personal contact with Koreans on the lower sector of society, which other foreign groups generally have little impact on" (5).

In spring 1974, the first group (K-31) consisting of health Volunteers who would focus on either TB or leprosy (HD) arrived in Korea to begin a thirteen-week in-country training (Everett 102, 103). Training for the group included ten weeks of Korean classes and training in the technical aspects of HD and TB; the Volunteers also had a three-week "float" consisting of a week each of practice home visits, education seminars at the National Tuberculosis Association, and lab training at the Leprosy Institute on the island of Sorokdo (소록도) (103). In early August 1974, Myung Hwa Lee of the Peace Corps Office in Seoul visited four of the HD Volunteers in Kyeongsangnam do (경상남도) and reported that "Everything looked fine with them and I was pleased to see that our new project was off to a good start" (3). Nine months later, the K-31 HD Volunteers, in a survey report compiled by Volunteer Rich Everett described their experiences:

I've had trouble defining my role as my relationship with my co-worker. (Am I a student? Errand girl, helper, or a worker of equal status?). (109)

I felt pretty comfortable soon after arrival as my co-worker included me in everything from the start. My co-worker is really good . . . He was fired up to have me from the start, and from then until now he has been most warm to me and has worked hard with me. Other people in the health center have really been good to me also. (115)

At first I tried to encourage my co-worker to set up a work schedule but I was not able to do so. Now that I have been in Korea for one year, I realize that day-to-day scheduling, when done in advance, is a waste of time. There are so many unexpected variables . . . (bad weather, sickness, military drills, political rallies, unexpected holidays) that long-range planning is impossible. (120)

The major portion of my work has been giving health education talks on HD and other health center services and consequently trying to discover new patients through these talks. . . . Not much laboratory work or paper work exists at the health center, but when laboratory work exists, I usually participate. (126)

These comments were not to be unexpected since feedback from Volunteers during initial assignments in education, TB control, and special assignments in the 1960s contained similar sentiments. Everett offered some concluding remarks in his report:

Taking it [HD Volunteer experience] at face value, of course it is not all lollipops and roses, peaches and cream, or even 100% satisfying. Problems do and will occur. But it is all contained in the concept of being a PCV [emphasis added]. . . . Korea is a beautiful country, its people are warm and friendly, and offer a lot to a foreigner. . . . The rewards of living in a different culture need not be explained. It is hoped that this paper [the report] has fulfilled the intended purpose of informing you of HD work in Korea. If so, then it 'has become.' (128)

Another major innovation during the 1970s of Peace Corps Korea was the shift of pre-service training from the U.S. to Korea. Prior to the arrival in Korea of the K-22 group (Special Placements⁶) in November 1971, Volunteer training had taken place in the United States in places such as Hawaii, New Jersey, Vermont and Tennessee. Throughout these years, Peace Corps was constantly trying to improve its training. Earlier trainings had included physical fitness and psychological assessments from which some Volunteers were “deselected” in order to fulfill one of the Peace Corps early promises to Congress to “have gotten rid of anybody who hasn't got what it takes” (United States 15). By the time trainings were in Korea, these aspects were eliminated and the focus was on cultural knowledge, technical competence, and language skills. The

⁶ K-22 consisted of seven Volunteers. Five Volunteers, skilled in electrical and mechanical work, were assigned as instructors' aides in Rural Vocational Training Centers for “out-of-school youth.” One was assigned to a hospital as a physical therapist and the other was assigned to teach university English and Spanish.

most common site for in-country training was at the Peace Corps training center in Cheongju (청주) and at the Sejong Hotel (세종호텔) in Chuncheon (춘천). Depending on the Volunteer groups, training could be 10 to 13 weeks of duration and consist of technical training in either TEFL methodology or health care. In-service training after six months in country was also provided to the Volunteers.

Before the advent of email and listservs, Peace Corps Korea staff and Volunteers devised methods to communicate with each other. At various time in the fifteen-year duration of Peace Corps, Volunteers produced printed newsletters titled *여보세요* (Yeoboseyo), *The Noodle*, and *짬뽕* (Jjamppong) to provide a forum to discuss issues pertinent to their work in Korea. Topics included technical advice, descriptions of projects, and lively debates on issues related to adjusting to life in Korea. Although Volunteers were supposed to stay apolitical during their service, they would also include comments critical of the U.S. government, particularly in the early years of Peace Corps Korea when the war in Vietnam was in progress. The health Volunteers also had a forum to publish papers on TB and leprosy in *Tubercule* and *Macule* in the early 1970s. Peace Corps headquarters also assigned regional advisors throughout the country in the early to mid-1970s so that Volunteers would have a local contact to whom they could bring issues of concern.

By summer of 1975 when the *Evaluative Study Peace Corps/Korea* was published, approximately 935 Volunteers either had served or were serving in Korea. They had participated in “secondary and university English education, rural guidance, tuberculosis and leprosy control, vocational education, science education, tourism, and special fields such as speech therapy, and forestry” (Hahn 1). Many of these programs brought challenges but as the Korean proverb “비 온 뒤에 땅이 굳는다” suggests Peace Corps Korea was on solid ground. However, changes in political leadership in Washington were about to shake that foundation.

D. The Final Years - 1977-1981 (K-41 to K-51): 나의 살던 고향

While Peace Corps was refining its programs in Korea, a shift in Washington politics was underway as the Jimmy Carter administration came into office in 1977. Carter wanted to focus on “basic human needs” in U.S. government volunteer programs and, as a result, education programs worldwide were under scrutiny if they did not meet this criterion. The assignments of the Volunteer groups coming to Korea from 1977 reflected this change in philosophy. More groups had assignments with basic human needs such as TB, HD, special education, social work in institutions such as Amerasian orphanages, and maternal - child health (MCH) care. Among the Volunteers there was a vigorous debate whether Peace Corps should remain in Korea. *짬뽕* (Jjamppong) newsletter editor and Volunteer Stephen Werner editorialized:

PC has been in Korea for 12 years now and those 12 years have been ones of phenomenal economic growth for Korea. PC can claim a little credit for this growth, but the bulk of the credit goes to the Korean people themselves. Their

desire to grow and educate themselves is what caused this growth. The GNP is only a reflection of the diligence of the Korean people. Any country whose hard work and self-sacrificing grows at 10% a year doesn't need PC. (2)

Other Volunteers disagreed with this assessment, but at the March 4, 1978 Volunteer Advisory Council meeting in Seoul, Volunteers were informed that Peace Corps would likely be phasing out of Korea (Werner 2). The decision had been made in either late 1977 or early 1978. (Mayer 3; Kailian 1). Additionally, a policy change by the Korean government would have ramifications for any future Peace Corps TEFL programming. The MOE had decided “new secondary textbooks would be introduced in March, 1979 (a return to the former, multi-text system)” (Kailian 3). Thus, with these policy changes it was time for Peace Corps to conduct a summative evaluation of its effect on the teaching of English in Korea.

Two studies were conducted to determine the effectiveness of the TEFL program in Korea. The first, conducted in 1979 by Kailian and Haag, surveyed 4,000 students and 15 teachers. The tentative results suggested that:

- Students who had been exposed to Peace Corps teachers and PC/Korea methodology had higher English test scores if their Korean English teacher had a basic level of teaching and English competency (Kailian 1).
- Students who were taught by teachers who did not have basic competencies may have actually had lower English test scores in spite of being exposed to a PCV and MFT (1).

The report also found a positive relationship among students' perceptions towards the PCVs presence in the schools, the Volunteers' appearance in class, and teaching effectiveness. Korean teachers' attitudes towards the PCVs were positive in areas such as listening, speaking and reading, but less positive about the contributions PCVs made in teaching writing skills (2).

The second study, a survey of Peace Corps English programs with emphasis on in-service training for teachers, was completed in July, 1980 by Mr. Song Yun-Ku, Director of the Peace Corps TEFL Program, and Volunteer Kipp Milliron. The survey was sent to over 11,139 English teachers and 3,493 surveys were returned for a 31% response rate. The results indicated that sixty-three percent of the teachers found the Peace Corps workshops very useful and helpful and another twenty-four percent said that the workshops were not as effective as they had hoped but would participate in another (PC/K 29). Only eleven percent would not want to participate again. When asked their opinion of the Volunteers' service to Korea, ninety-four percent of the middle school teachers and ninety-five percent of the high school teachers said the Volunteers were either helpful or extremely helpful (43). Included in many returned surveys were individual letters asking about old Peace Corps friends. The report concluded “the TEFL program has genuinely contributed in a positive way to Korea's English teaching program” (48).

Although there is not a final summative report on Peace Corps work in the Korean health sector, the annual risk of infection for TB had decreased from 5.3% in 1965 to 1.8% in 1980. Additionally, pneumonia and TB, two communicable diseases which had been the

number one and two causes of death in Korea in 1967 and 1968, were no longer listed in the top three major causes of death in 1980 (Sohn). According to one returned Peace Corps Volunteer's survey response for this article:

I was told by a Korean senior government official that they (Koreans) could have solved their TB problems without Peace Corps, but they were motivated to work harder to solve their problem faster because there were young Americans willing to take two years away from family to help them. He said that it motivated them.

One can speculate that Peace Corps could have stayed for a few more years in Korea beyond 1981. James Mayer, the final Peace Corps Korea Country Director, suggested possible projects in which Peace Corps could still be involved, particularly in social and health services for the poor and in special education⁷ (Mayer, 9, 10). In the final issue of *짬뽕* (Jjamppong), Mayer summarized Peace Corps' time in Korea:

Peace Corps Volunteers contributed towards the quality of life for those with whom they served. . . . To suggest, however that the Peace Corps was responsible for a particular achievement is to deny the interdependence between the Volunteer, the co-worker, and the various Ministries and international organizations, which provided needed resources over the years, let alone the Korean people . . . Whatever program accomplishments we may have attained are paled in comparison to the love, mutual respect and understanding that results from the opportunity of sharing experiences with our peers and friends we have made in Korea. (A Message 3)

Perhaps, the most poignant statement on the imminent closing of Peace Corps Korea, scheduled for September 30, 1981, was by a K-50 Volunteer:

Korea became like a second home. When I got the call from Seoul saying the program had been cut, I cried (2016 Survey Response).

IV. Peace Corps Korea Transformations: 되로 주고 말로 받는다

In an April, 1968 *여보세요* guest article, Lewis Butler, Director of Malaysia Peace Corps, described the value of the Peace Corps experience:

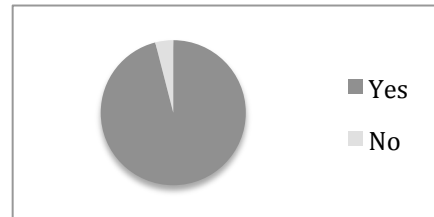
It changes the Volunteers and the people they worked with. It changes their attitudes and values. It reaches people emotionally and fundamentally rather than intellectually. It can motivate them, turn them on, or to use an old word, 'inspire' them. (1)

Now many years later, we asked returned Peace Corps Korea Volunteers three questions (A, B, C, below) pertaining to the value of their Peace Corps experience. The overwhelming responses indicated that the Volunteers felt they gained more than they imparted to the Korean people as in the proverb “되로 주고 말로 받는다.”

⁷ Special Education Volunteers assisted with organizing the first Special Olympics in Korea.

A. Would You Have Made the Same Decision to Join Peace Corps Korea?

Out of a total of 285 responses from Returned Volunteers from Peace Corps Korea, an overwhelming number of them -- 274 or 96 percent -- said "Yes."



B. Why?

The themes that emerged were all transformative in nature. Although Volunteers were sent to Korea to help the country transform, the greater transformation may have been in the Volunteers themselves by living and working with the Korean people. Below are sample comments from the returned Volunteers for each theme.

Coming-of-Age Experience

As suggested in Turner's theory of liminality, the frustrations and joys of working with their Korean colleagues and the challenges to their values and identity were now recognized by the Volunteers as a rite of passage -- "A Coming of Age" experience:

- "The experience has been a lifelong gift: an introduction to adulthood."
- "Learned about myself. The timing was perfect at that stage – between college graduation and the rest of my adult life. "
- "At the time I didn't realize it but it truly was a life-changing event."
- "It grew me from an old adolescent into an adult."
- "The experience, while having had its challenging moments, opened my eyes and heart to who I was, and how I fit into the world."
- "It was a good buffer between college and 'normal' life, a little adventure and life experience before 'settling down.' I learned a good deal about Korea, about politics, and about myself during my service."
- "It was an amazing experience. There's me before the Peace Corps and me after the Peace Corps."

A Personal Transformation

The Volunteers experienced dramatic changes in their intrapersonal development by being placed in their "betwixt and between" Korean environment:

- "I developed a part of myself that I had not known before. Even now, there is a part of me that has a particular Korean resonance. I loved the people, the rural region in which I lived, the music and sociability. I loved studying the language and their enthusiasm and appreciation that greeted me when I was able to speak Korean. I was shaped and moved by the strength of the spirit of the Korean people who had endured so much yet were resilient and determined to move forward."
- "It was a unique experience that taught me so much about the world. I do not think that I made all that great a contribution, perhaps some on a small personal scale; but I am deeply grateful for what I was able to learn and observe."

- “It remains the single most transformative experience of my life, through the experience to learn about and live in another culture and through the relationships developed both with Koreans and other Americans who were there for similar reasons.”
- “My Peace Corps experience taught me that I could survive in, learn from and actually enjoy, a culture more foreign than any other a girl from Iowa could encounter.
- “It was a defining experience for me. It broadened my view of the world, introduced me to a new culture far different from the one I had grown up in and deepened my commitment to service to others.”
- “We set our own salaries--and there was a ‘competition’ among us to see who could live with the least. I think living poor is an experience everyone should have in his or her life. It gives you an appreciation for what you have and does away with the entitlement attitude that so many of our children today seem to have. But, no matter how small my salary (I think it was \$22 a month) it was a drop in the bucket to Korea. Koreans made Korea the great country it is today. I don't think Peace Corps will work unless the people of the country are determined to help themselves. I grew up a great deal and learned far more from Korea than I gave to Korea.”
- “Exceptional experience in one's life. Changes us and builds understanding.”
- “I think we benefitted far more from our Korean contacts and friendships than they did. Our experiences affected our whole lives.”

A Professional Transformation

Many Volunteers also had their Peace Corps experience influence their future careers:

- “My whole life was changed. [I] have worked on Korean issues ever since for over 40 years-- in the foreign service (State Department).”
- “My experience, especially at Planned Parenthood, led me to change fields completely when I returned to enter graduate school.”
- “Living in Korea was an extraordinary and formative time in my life that gifted me with a second family and led to a career in international education.”
- “Peace Corps Korea produced an entire generation of scholars in the Korean Studies field, such as Edward Shultz, David McCann, Mike Robinson, and Carter Eckert.”
- “Heavily influenced my career choice, and continues to inform my evolving plans for post-retirement.”
- “It was a life-changing experience and the basis for my subsequent career in business.”
- “My experience in Korea greatly contributed to my future employments as director of international student and scholars office . . .”
- “I have lived and worked in Korea most of the time since I finished my volunteer period.”
- “I went on from the PC to get a PhD in Cultural Anthropology and Korean Studies.”

The Place Where I Met My Lifelong Partner

Many Volunteers married Koreans, other Volunteers, or fell in love with Korea:

- “But most of all, I have my Peace Corps experience to thank for introducing me to the lady who became my wife. Later we had our wonderful son who is now in his thirties. My Korean wife and I are still happily married.”

- “Hey, I met my husband there.”
- “I met and married my husband there and truly became part of a Korean family.”
- “It changed my life: I found there my good wife, a career I share with her (Korean-to-English literary translation), and a profession (professor of Korean literature and literary translation. . .”
- “ I also met my wife in Korea and both my sons were born there.”
- “It was a life changing. I married my co-worker. It broadened my perspective on life.”
- “My wife (another volunteer) and I met in Korea as volunteers.”
- “The experience changed my life. I fell in love with Korea as well.”
- “I loved Korea and Koreans.”

Intercultural Contact for Koreans

The Peace Corps experience also brought Koreans into contact with Americans during a time (1966 to 1981) when few non-Koreans were living in the countryside:

- “Well, on the revisit I was able to participate in, the Koreans certainly made it seem like the Peace Corps volunteers helped to bring them into the 21st century. Not so sure about that, however, that idea was quite humbling. My answer would be more pedantic I guess: learning about the American culture and having many of their citizens enjoying personal relationships with Americans. Being such an insular country at the time that we were there, perhaps opened their eyes to that.
- “In many cases volunteers were the only foreigners Koreans had met. Helped break down the insular nature of Korean society. Many Koreans became better at English. Also, the RPCVs formed a core of Americans with some understanding of Korea in academia and U.S. government.”
- “ The personal involvement that Koreans had with Americans gave many Koreans a window into the U.S. that they otherwise might not have had. When I was leaving my village for the last time, a grandfather made a special trip from his farm to thank me for motivating his grandson. ‘You probably don’t know him,’ he said, ‘and he’s not a very good student. But because of you he’s TRYING to be a better student, and for that our entire family is grateful.’”
- “I think that many PCVs helped many Koreans learn new ways of seeing the world and helped them learn that not all Americans were like the ones they saw in movies and TV dramas. Given that very few Koreans could travel abroad, PCVs were like a window to the real world. Also, given the large GI presence in Korea at the time, I think the PCVs presented a different perspective.”

C. In What Ways Do You Think Korea Benefitted from Having Peace Corps Volunteers?

Volunteers’ descriptions of their contributions to Korea mirror former PC Korea Country Director Jon Keeton’s advice to celebrate incremental changes (22):

- “Until I went back on the re-visit in 2013, I would have thought it didn’t benefit at all. I knew I had been important to some middle school girls, but I didn’t think that was of real benefit to the country as a whole. At the re-visit, I became convinced that the

sheer number of Volunteers who were spread across the country for 15 or so years, impacted a lot of people.”

- “I feel that by taking on some of the jobs that at the time Koreans looked down on, such as providing health care to sufferers of Hansen's Disease and tuberculosis, they may have helped people feel better about their jobs and elevated the role of health workers and others somewhat.” (Korean respondent)
- “Students learned authentic English from us. Teachers learned more proficient conversational English from us. Multiple choice English exams were improved by us. Formerly, some questions had two equally correct answers, or no correct answers. Middle school students who joined English Club learned about American culture and holidays by songs and hands-on activities, such as coloring eggs. Teachers learned or had opportunity to learn much of American way of life through us.”
- “Also, when I and Kevin O'Donnell started FOK, we were told by the Korean ambassador and other Korean government officials that PC-K's friendship and affection for Korea was important to them because they feared that many Americans wouldn't know much about Korea or feel that Korea was an important ally to America.”
- “One of the things that touched me greatly on my return visit to Korea was the fact that Korea has established its own Peace Corps. Also, they were so proud of the progress they had made in the area of TB control, which was the emphasis of my work in Korea. The Health Care Centers I visited in 2009 were very sophisticated and provided a broad range of services.”
- “Korea was not so opened to the world in 1970 - it still had the Hermit Kingdom feeling. Very few Koreans had traveled or had passports. By working along side the Peace Corps Volunteers, they gained confidence, not only in their English language ability, but in their capacity to be friends and colleagues with non-Koreans.”
- “I think our working at the level of our co-workers really was an eye-opening experience for them. By the time I left, I was considered part of the health center team and not an American, not a foreigner, not an outsider.”
- “The benefit was probably mostly in seeing that other countries cared about Korea and its people, and in learning about the real America from personal relationships. I would hope that some health education occurred as a result of the health education program, and learning English probably expedited their globalization and economy. In the deeply traditional rural Korea of the 70's I believe the mere fact that women could travel and do things beyond what Korean culture prescribed at the time was enlightening and inspiring.”
- “Intercultural exchange and giving a sense that we Americans cared about them.”

V. Conclusion: 네버 엔딩 스토리

The transformative impact of the experience of the U.S. Peace Corps in Korea can be felt on both sides of the Pacific. It is still visible in organizations such as Friends of Korea, which continues to promote Korea and conduct philanthropic work; in publications such as *Through Our Eyes*, chronicling the Peace Corps years in Korea; in reunions of Facebook groups of Returned Volunteers; in the establishment of an electronic archive of

Peace Corps Korea documents at the University of Southern California; and in the exhibit and collection at the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History in Seoul.

The knowledge that the Americans gained while serving in Korea produced a generation of Korean scholars, who in turn, educated a new generation of Americans about Korea. It has had an impact on Korean and American government relations as returned Volunteers served in the U.S. diplomatic corps, with one serving as the first American female Ambassador (Kathleen Stephens) to South Korea. Some Volunteers stayed and lived in Korea and became experts in Korean architecture, education, business, painting, and folklore, sharing their knowledge with a new generation of Koreans. For other Returned Volunteers and Koreans, the Peace Corps Korea story continues in small serendipitous encounters in daily life; little tales within the broader story of Peace Corps in Korea. As one returned Volunteer stated, “There is not a day that goes by when I am not reminded of something that happened then or about my experience.” I conclude with two recent examples:

In fall 2015, while attending a professional conference for language teachers in San Antonio, Texas, I participated in a session in which the speaker, a director of a TESOL program, was explaining a training she organized for her faculty to sensitize them to the second language acquisition process and to introduce them to alternative methodologies for language teaching. She said the training was facilitated by a professor from New York who introduced the teachers to “Silent Way” methodology by teaching them Korean. I smiled upon hearing this because I knew who the professor was -- a returned Peace Corps Volunteer from Korea -- who had taught me during my pre-service training in Cheongju (청주) when I was struggling to learn Korean through the Silent Way. Still, the lessons of my morning Korean classes in the chilly rooms in the Peace Corps training center in January 1977 were continuing decades later in Texas.

In summer 2014, a returned Volunteer from Korea was hiking in the mountains in Spain when he ran into some hikers from Korea. Because the Volunteer spoke Korean to them, they all quickly bonded as if they were old friends as in the Korean saying “죽마고우.” Within minutes, the group broke into a rendition of

산토끼 토끼야	Mountain bunny, bunny
어디를가느냐?	Where are you going?
깡총깡총뛰면서	Bouncing, bouncing as you're running.
어디를가느냐?	Where are you going?

In 1966, when Peace Corps first came to Korea, like the mountain bunny in the above famous Korean children’s song, neither the Volunteers nor the Korean people knew where their experience was going to take them or how the story would unfold. However, as we have seen, the tale continues even in unlikely places such as south Texas and the mountains of Spain. No one would have imagined that in 1966. For this wonderful story and for the transformative impact on our lives, I, along with more than 2,000 returned Volunteers, will be forever indebted to Korea, the Korean people, and the Peace Corps experience.

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