

# **A Mission President's Journal**

## **Part 3**

Selected Excerpts from the Mission President Journal of

Richard C. Rife

Korea Daejeon Mission

2001-2004

**by**

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## Chapter 5      Year 3

### POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AND JOURNAL ENTRIES—YEAR 3

#### July 2003 Journal Entries

##### Diet Coke and Notes

July 1 was also our first of two multi-zone conferences, this one in Daejeon in the chapel near the mission home. Fifty-five missionaries were in attendance. Without warning, at a certain point in the meeting, one of the APs said, “As you know, this is the second anniversary of President and Sister Rife’s mission. Please stand here and accept our greetings and expressions of congratulations.” Each missionary passed by, one by one, and gave us a note and one can or bottle of Diet Coke. I really scored—55 cans or bottles of Diet Coke!

July 3 was our multi-zone conference in Gwangju, for the remaining 70 of our missionaries. Since it was not our second anniversary today, we hoped to avoid the “Diet Coke” barrage—but, no such luck. We received many, many more notes, and many, many more cans and bottles of Diet Coke.

*And now the rest of the story: I got great news today at ZLC. My drinking of Diet Coke, far from being a problem, has actually led directly to a conversion. As reported earlier, on our two-year anniversary as mission president, every missionary in the mission gave me a can or bottle of Diet Coke. The zone conference where this occurred in Gwangju was held on July 3. Just before zone conference, dozens of missionaries flooded the nearby 7-Eleven convenience store to buy one can or bottle of Diet Coke each. The clerk that day was a 20-year-old man named Na Hyung Woo. He was interested in the onslaught of missionaries and began talking with Elder Lee Jae Hyun. Elder Lee was not serving in the area where Brother Na lived, so Elder Lee referred him to Elders Harris and Troxel. He was a golden investigator. The elders taught him the six discussions and baptized him on August 10, 2003 and confirmed him on August 17, 2003.*

##### Antidote for Discouragement

Elder Karren is a wonderful missionary. He told me that he was discouraged recently. He prayed sincerely, and then he listened. He heard a voice in his mind. It sounded like the voice of his earthly father, but he felt that it was the voice of his Heavenly Father speaking to him. The voice said: “Hang in there; do your best; be patient; this is for your good.” He was greatly comforted. And things got better after that.

##### Using Well the Last 30 Minutes

Elders Farley and Kennington were working in Cheongju. There were 30 minutes left in their missionary day. They decided to cross street to other elders’ area, because it’s on the edge of their area and never gets tracted. They decided to visit some apartments. After knocking on five doors, they met a 48-year-old lady. She is alone in Cheongju. She was recently divorced and became estranged from all her friends. Her daughter lives in Seoul next to our chapel there. Her daughter has been impressed with missionaries. Their talk occurred outside the apartment, because the

elders would not go in, as it would have been against the rules. The elders are now marshalling the forces of the Heungdeok Ward to help this woman.

### **Warmth and Light**

A new member of the Church named Jang Eun Hee was baptized in Jeonju in early July. She was taught by our two sister missionaries there. The new member told the sisters that she felt a great warmth while she was under the water and that she saw a bright light when she came out of the water. She took this as a spiritual confirmation that it was right for her to be baptized.

### **Street-Boarding Success**

Elder Sean Stewart, a wonderful missionary, had a great experience—every missionary's dream. Elder Stewart met a young adult man while street-boarding. The man expressed interest. Elder Stewart was able to teach him all six discussions. Elder Stewart baptized the young man, and he is now actively serving in the Jungang Ward in Jeonju.

Elder Stewart reflected back on the day that he first met this wonderful young man. That day, weirdly, Elder Stewart did not want to proselyte. This was unusual, because Elder Stewart normally likes to proselyte. He felt dark. He felt tongue-tied. He couldn't contact anyone. The zone leader, Elder Russell, who was also there, asked Elder Stewart if he was all right. Then, just as this young man was about to leave the area, Elder Stewart rushed over and approached him. Elder Stewart thinks there was a dark force trying to keep him away from this young man, because Elder Stewart has never had trouble proselyting either before or after this incident.

### **Positive Effect on Missionary's Family**

In her interview, Sister Yi Jung Hee, gave me some happy news. Before her mission, her dad was completely inactive in, and negative about, the Church. She has been writing home. Her brother has since gone on a mission to the Seoul Mission. I set him apart in Jinju in front of her parents. About a month ago, Sister Yi had a dream in which she received a one-page letter from her dad, saying "I'm sorry for the past; do your best on your mission; and I know the Church is true." She was so happy—and then she awoke. Last week, she received a one-page letter from her father that said just what the letter had said in her dream.<sup>30</sup>

### **Dreaming of a Transfer**

I received a call from Elder Sun Chang Hee the other night. He was notified of his transfer to Cheongju. He called to say that he had dreamed the night before that he was being transferred to Cheongju.

### **Importance of a Word of Praise**

One somewhat touching thing happened in my interview this month with Elder Berry. I sent each missionary a handwritten note in June. In each note, I gave what I felt was needed encouragement, and I gave each missionary one or more sincere compliments in an area of missionary work in which I felt they were succeeding. Elder Berry told me that he appreciates my note so much that he reads it every day. These young missionaries are terrific!

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<sup>30</sup> Her father later became active in the Church and was called to serve in the bishopric.

## **Great Senior Missionaries**

The second week of July was filled with many missionary interviews. It is a taxing task, but a delightful one. On Wednesday of that week, we had a visitor from Salt Lake City, Larry Hutchinson from the Finance Department. He spent several hours with Elder Parsons discussing our finances. Then, I met with him. His first words were “You are one lucky mission president to have Elder Parsons.” Our finances are in great shape—thanks largely to Elder Parsons. Actually, I believe that Brother Hutchinson was making an annual tour to Asia. It was hinted to me that the Seoul office chose our mission to visit, because Elder Parsons has our finances in such great shape. It truly has been a blessing to have Elder and Sister Parsons serving with us in this mission.

## **One Last Baptism**

Elder Robison, a great missionary, had some baptisms with his trainer at the first of his mission. Then, he went 18 months without a baptism.<sup>31</sup> At the satellite broadcast for mission leaders, he felt impressed that he would have the chance to baptize at least one more person on his mission. At times, it looked as if this “promise” would not be fulfilled. He found himself doubting. Yet, the month before he went home, he found a man on the street, taught him all six discussions, and baptized and confirmed him just before finishing his mission.

## **What Sister Andersen Learned**

Pre-mission, the gospel made sense in Sister Andersen's mind. Now it makes sense in her heart. Pre-mission, she had no idea what the Spirit felt like. Now she knows. To her, the Spirit is a feeling of peace. When Elder Kikuchi told the Joseph Smith story at a mission conference, it was the first time she had felt a burning feeling in her heart. She learned how much Heavenly Father loves His children. She believes the active Korean saints are AWESOME! They are good at reaching out to others. Sister Andersen was a diligent missionary who struggled to learn the language, but ultimately learned it very well and was a good teacher of the gospel.

## **Elder Park Hyun Soo's Conversion**

I was impressed at zone leader council this month by the testimony, actually conversion story, of Elder Park Hyun Soo. When he was 15 years old, a sophomore in high school, he was riding a bus. He was standing. The bus lurched, and he was thrown in the lap of a foreign missionary. Without thinking, he blurted out in English, “I'm sorry.” The American missionary responded in Korean “that's okay.” And then the American merely handed Elder Park a pamphlet for our English class. He took the pamphlet, without saying anything, and then got off the bus. He looked at it, realized that he was really interested in learning English, and so he attended our English class. And the rest is history. Elder Park is now a great member of the Church and an outstanding missionary. He just passed the TOEFL exam and will be attending BYU-Hawaii after he finishes his mission in the fall.

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<sup>31</sup> I do note that he taught a number of people who were ultimately baptized after he was transferred out of the area.

### **Serving the Flood Victims**

Saturday was supposed to be preparation day for our office elders. However, the night before, the bishop of the Dunsan Ward in Daejeon called to ask if they would help him clean out his parents' home in Geumsan, a town close to Daejeon. The constant rains had caused a flood in that area. The elders agreed to spend the day helping him.

We were going to Gunsan for our preparation day, so I allowed the elders to drive my car to Geumsan. They did not return until almost 9 p.m. that night. They helped the bishop's family—and then, rather than return home, they walked through the village and helped other people who had suffered flood damage. They spent a fair amount of time helping an older couple who had lost most of their household goods and, even more tragically, their entire crop. In Elder Farley's words, "before the floods, they had very little of this world's goods, and what they had they lost in the flood. Yet, they were laughing and expressing their gratitude and spending their money to buy watermelon for the foreigners who were helping them." In the midst of their tragedy, they were cheerful and generous, thinking of others. What a great experience it is for these young foreign missionaries, from prosperous backgrounds, to see how others live, and to serve them.

### **The Gwangju Stake**

The last week of the month I spent most of my time in the south. I interviewed the three zones there and attended an English class, which was well taught by Elder Porter Nielsen. I also met with President Jo, the new Gwangju stake president. He is emphasizing missionary work in his stake, believing that the spirit of missionary work is what is necessary to bring joy and happiness to the members of his stake. And it's working. The Gwangju stake is clearly our leading stake when it comes to missionary work.

### **Passing Off the Discussions to Strangers**

Elder Jacob Nelson from Orem, Utah recently arrived in the mission. His trainer is a great missionary, Elder Ryan Russell from Arizona. Each new missionary must pass off the discussions. Usually this is done in one's apartment to one's trainer or senior companion. However, Elder Russell made Elder Nelson pass off to strangers on buses as they traveled. Each principle of the discussions had to be passed off to a possible contact. I thought that was creative on Elder Russell's part. It also helped Elder Nelson lose his shyness, if he had any, in a hurry.

### **Elder Bojorquez**

Elder Alfredo Bojorquez is a great missionary. He is of Hispanic descent, and he speaks English and Spanish at a native level. However, he has had a hard time learning Korean. Yet, he tries hard and talks to everyone he meets about the gospel. I have never met a person who is more enthusiastic about the gospel than Elder Bojorquez. He is a little older than most missionaries. In fact, before learning about the gospel, Elder Bojorquez was involved with drugs and other bad things. Now, he is a great saint. Last week, he taught 16 discussions in Naju, where he is serving. Naju is tiny. Many missionaries who have served there have found it hard to teach one discussion a week. I am so proud of him for this great achievement.

## **Small Miracle**

Speaking of teaching a lot of discussions, I would like to report on a “small miracle.” It is not as easy to teach a full discussion to a Korean as it is in some places in the world. Some missionaries go through the entire week without being able to teach a full discussion. We have lots of fakes too. About nine months ago, our mission was teaching, on average, 0.9 discussions per companionship per week. At that point, we were not satisfied, and we started praying for the opportunity to teach more people. We want to share the gospel, but we also know that the missionaries are happier when they are teaching. We continued to try to contact many people and to do our best. Nine months later, the average number of full discussions taught by our missionaries per companionship per week is 4—4x what it used to be. And it is going up. And, some of the missionaries are teaching 10, 12, and as high as 16 per week.

## **August 2003 Journal Entries**

### **Daejeon Stake Youth Conference**

On August 8, the APs and I attended the Daejeon Stake youth conference, somewhere in the mountains south of Daejeon. I spoke for 30 minutes on preparing to serve a mission. The APs then divided the youth into three groups and taught them how to teach the Joseph Smith story—and then had them teach each other. We then gave each of the three groups a bag of props and a topic and had them prepare and give a skit. After the skits, we showed the video “Finding Faith in Christ,” along with the Korean script. It took just over two hours. By then it was lunchtime; the sisters graciously gave us lunch; and we headed back to Daejeon.

### **Brother Yang Passes the Government Test**

I interviewed 24 missionaries in Jeonju, while Janet did house checks. In addition, I received a visit at the chapel from Brother Yang who is a member of the tiny Gimje branch near Jeonju. Brother Yang just passed the examination to become a government official. In his part of the country, there were 60 applicants—and two were accepted. He was one of the two. He was surprised that he passed. There is an oral interview part of the process. The other candidates had long oral interviews. His was short. He was asked what made him happy. He responded that it was the gospel, and he explained a little bit about the gospel. And then he was dismissed. He assumed that by talking about the gospel, he had made a mistake. He was wrong.

Brother Yang's reason for wanting to meet me was to thank me for the missionaries' help. There was an English section on the test, and they helped him prepare for it. He also asked for advice on how he could use his position to further the Lord's work in Korea. We had a good discussion about that. He is a very nice brother, and it was a good experience to be talk with him. I wrote him a letter when I got home from Jeonju.

### **Liberation Day**

August 15 was Liberation Day, a national holiday, the day in 1945 that Korea was liberated from Japan. I have two things to say about this day, one of them negative and one of them positive.

First the negative.

I received an email from the U.S. embassy warning Americans to stay away from downtown Seoul on Liberation Day, as there would be a large anti-American demonstration. This is what ran through my mind. “My father gave up five years of his life—missing his father’s death and funeral—in order to fight the Japanese and, among other things, hand the Koreans their freedom in 1945 free of charge. For the next 10 years his tax dollars were used, in part, to feed almost the entire country of South Korea. And now they’re going to all the trouble of having a major anti-American demonstration on Liberation Day—a simple ‘thank you’ would have been enough!”

Now the positive comment.

When it’s a national holiday in the U.S., we play. We golf, boat, camp, or otherwise recreate. When it is a national holiday in Korea, the faithful Korean saints go to the temple. President Bae of the Suncheon District called me to let me know that at 4 a.m. on Liberation Day, a group of saints from the Suncheon District boarded a chartered bus for the 5+ hour (one way) ride to the Seoul Temple, where they participated in temple ordinances and then returned home that night. Korean temple recommend holders average nine visits to the temple per year, which ties with the Japanese saints for the highest number in the world. When I go home from my mission, I hope to remember the great example of the faithful Korean saints in their temple attendance.

### **Notes at Suncheon District Conference**

We slept over at the Royal Hotel and attended the Sunday sessions the following day. Attendance at the general session was 227—a new record. My convert, Sister Lee In Hyung, and her husband were not there, so I called her later in the week and learned that he had a cold and she hadn’t been feeling well. Still, they are doing fine. The conference was really good. After it was over, I had the APs distribute tootsie roll pops to all the children. Prior to the general meeting, I received a note from nine-year-old Sister Lee Soo Bin, which read:

Dear President Rife:

Hi. Nice to meet you. I am Sister Lee Soo Bin. I am nine years old, and I attend Primary at the Yeosu Branch. I am anxiously waiting for the District Conference. Do you know why? Because I can hear President Rife’s interesting testimony and receive candy from you. Yesterday, my younger sister attended the Saturday meetings. She said ‘I saw the mission president and he is going to give us candy on Sunday.’ Please give me candy, President Rife!

I hope you will be happy through the gospel.

Love, Soo Bin

And we also received a gift (wedding ducks and candle) from Brother An Tae Hoon and his wife, Sister Kim Sun Hee. They wrote:

Hello, President and Sister Rife:

We are the An family from the Gwangyang Branch. Do you remember that after the last district conference, you, President Rife, gave your mission president nametag to my son, An Hwi Gun. My son wore your nametag often, and when missionaries visited our house, we asked them where they wanted to be transferred next, since our son was the mission president. When we look at your nametag, we hope that our son will grow up to be a

wonderful servant of our Heavenly Father like you. As he grows older, the nametag will have more meaning for him and will give him direction in his life.

When our family was shopping in Gwangju, we saw something we thought you would like. It is not much, but it will help you remember Korea when you finish your mission. Please receive our gift.

We hope that you will always be in peace. We feel familiar with you and feel that you have an open heart when you interview. We love your humor and wit and we love Sister Rife's beautiful smile. We hope you will always be healthy and happy.

### **Converts Are Your Special People**

During the course of my interview with Elder Song, he told me another “Jared Peterson” story. Elder Peterson was an outstanding missionary in our mission—and he converted Sister Lee Gye Soon, whose nonmember husband will no longer allow her to attend church meetings. Apparently, Elder Peterson, now a returned missionary, sent Sister Lee a DVD of general conference to watch when her husband is not home. Later, he learned that Sister Lee does not have a DVD player. So, he saved his money (on his college student budget) and sent her the money to buy a DVD player so that she could watch the DVD of general conference. Elder Peterson still shows love and sets the example for all of us, even after completing his full-time mission. He also follows President Hinckley's counsel not to forget our converts. President Hinckley encourages missionaries to write their names and addresses in their scriptures and to maintain contact with them. “They are your special people,” said President Hinckley.

### **The Remarkable Sister Park Jeong Rim**

Elder Russell told me how much he admires the Jeonju Ward Bishop's wife, Sister Park Jeong Rim. I made Elder Russell tell me why. Here is how he described Sister Park:

- She meets all the new missionaries at the bus station and drives them home with their luggage.
- She does the same for exiting missionaries. She drove Elder Russell from his apartment to the bus station (with his luggage) earlier that very day.
- She feeds the missionaries fairly frequently.
- She serves at an orphanage, free of charge.
- When she dropped him at the bus station earlier that day, she had already been at the orphanage and was on her way to teach three new member discussions later that day.
- She is full of love.
- She almost always has someone (non-family-member) sleeping at her home—someone who missed the last bus; someone who had a fight with his or her spouse or parents; someone who has no place else to stay.
- She fasted and prayed for 14 years that her husband would join the Church. He is now the ward bishop.
- The trees in the chapel parking lot were dying, so she fasted and prayed for them—and they are now green and growing well.
- When she notices that a member is not at sacrament meeting, she prays for him or her.
- The Jeonju ward has had 16 convert baptisms this year, and she has had a part in all of them.
- She's a saint in every possible way.

- She helped a quadriplegic learn about the gospel and be baptized. She now helps her participate in the ordinances, and she bathes and takes care of her from time to time.

Sister Park truly is a heroic member of the Church. I was inspired just hearing Elder Russell talk of her.

### **Robert Holley Fireside**

Saturday was a special day for the mission. In Gwangju, I attended our second “Robert Holley fireside.” And this time we got it right. We advertised well. And the members were involved so that they brought their friends who were interested in English and in the Church. I asked Elder Farley to make a count. We had at least 400 persons in attendance to hear Robert Holley and to have their picture taken with him. I would estimate that at least 150-200 were nonmembers. It was a big hit. I was so grateful to the missionaries in Gwangju and to the members for their hard work. I am sure that many good things will come out of this event. After the fireside, and the picture taking, we had dinner with Rob Holley and his family at a nearby restaurant. We didn't get home until almost 11:30 p.m. And oh was it hot today! We had the air conditioners on full blast, but with 400 people in the room, it was to no avail.

### **Meetings in Gimje**

My APs were otherwise occupied, so I drove alone to Gimje, Korea, south and west of Jeonju, and met with the Gimje Branch. There were 12 of us, total, in attendance. That included two missionaries, one mission president, and two investigators. As the branch president announced that I would be speaking, he noted that it was the first time the mission president had ever attended one of their branch meetings. It made me happy to have decided to follow President Rob Slover's example of trying to visit every unit in my mission at least one time. The branch has an organ—but no organist—so I accompanied the hymns. I either need more practice, or the organ was hard to play (it's not that great an organ), or both.

### **Blessing an Injured Child**

This is a story told to me by Elder Yoon Gyeong An. A child in the ward in which he was serving fell from the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of the apartment building where her family lives. She was not killed instantly, but was badly injured and was not expected to live. He was asked to give her a blessing. He fasted and prayed. When he performed the blessing, he felt the spirit very strongly. He felt prompted to say that she would survive. She has in fact survived and is getting better. The doctor told her family that he was amazed that she had lived and was now improving so steadily.

## **September 2003 Journal Entries**

### **50<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

The first week of September I traveled a bit and interviewed most of the mission. Friday was my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. It does not seem possible that I could be that old. When I was in high school, I thought a 50-year-old man was ancient, but here I am 50 years old. In the morning, I went on a walk with Janet. I worked in the office most of the day. We had McDonald's burgers with the office missionaries in the early evening. Janet made ice cream pie—my favorite—for dessert. Our wonderful Church member and friend, Ryu Mi, gave us seven tickets to the symphony for that evening.

It's my theory that women like birthdays more than men. Still, I like my birthdays. I really don't want to do anything special. And I really don't want any gifts. But I always feel thankful for my blessings and thankful for my life on my birthday. And I felt that way today.

I got some nice gifts from the family members, but let me mention one gift of self that I received today. It was a book of email tributes beautifully prepared by my daughter Laura. Two months in advance, she wrote to a number of friends, family members, former missionaries, and former colleagues. She asked them to email her their memories of me for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Then she used her artistic skills to put them in book format. It was really a terrific gift. I'm sure it was time consuming to make, which is why it is all the more special. Thank you, Laura!

### **Dedicating an Apartment**

I had a nice experience on Sunday. I spoke at the Hongseong Branch. After the meetings, the branch president, Brother Choi Young Min, told me that he had moved to a new apartment and was having a house warming. He asked if I would have dinner at his new apartment, and I readily agreed. My AP, Elder Murray, and I drove over to his apartment with the Hongseong elders. Brother Choi and his wife then proceeded to cook a great meal of samgyeopsal. In typical Korean fashion, there seemed to be no end to the meal. It just kept coming. I quit early, but the elders kept eating as did the other branch members. The district president came by—and he ate a lot. The Seosan branch president heard I was there, and needed his temple recommend signed, so he and his wife and their four sons showed up—and they ate and ate. The food just kept coming. I don't know how the Koreans do it.

After everything was done, and after I had interviewed the Seosan branch president and his wife for their temple recommends, President Choi asked me to dedicate and bless his house. He said "I intended to dedicate my new home today, but we have never had a mission president visit our home, so I would like you to dedicate my home." I was really touched and really honored. I told the group that I had some confidence that I could do a good job in English, but that I was concerned that my dedicatory prayer in Korean would be inelegant and a bit rough around the edges. I asked for their patience and told them that I would do my best in Korean. I really felt the Spirit as I gave the dedicatory prayer—and felt it a privilege to be there at that setting with that great family.

### **Not Interested in English**

My AP, Elder Farley, had a good experience on a visit with Sister Jin So Jung and her companion, Sister Jackman. They were knocking doors and were admitted into a home. Sister Jin introduced the English program. The man of the house said that sounded fine, but that he was really more interested in our religion. At that point, the wife entered the room, and she was very warm and friendly and seemed very interested. A year ago, this couple saw from their apartment balcony two elders with white shirts and ties and black nametags, in the playground playing with the children. The young men looked so clean and pure. They said to each other that they wanted to learn about a religion where such fine young men come to a foreign country to serve. Sister Jin introduced the discussions—and the family is now studying the gospel with the sisters.

### **Mission Sports Conference**

We prepared for and executed mission sports conference in Gunsan at the city's huge soccer field and gymnasium. We had the entire mission together for one day at Gunsan. The APs planned all the events—and did a great job. We had prayed for no rain, but it rained hard all day. Undeterred,

many of the missionaries played soccer all day long in the pouring rain on the Astro turf soccer field. Meanwhile, many of the missionaries played basketball and volleyball in the gym. Before the sports began, we had a one-hour meeting, in which Janet gave a “blue handbook” quiz (our mission handbook is blue in color). The four Suncheon elders did a cute number about the LODEstar (our mission theme). The four exiting missionaries bore their testimonies. And I gave a talk about missionary experiences that made me feel “exceeding great joy,” like the exceeding great joy felt by Ammon in the Book of Mormon. I wrote the talk in English and gave it to the American missionaries who cannot yet speak Korean well. And I then gave the talk in my own words in Korean. I did this for two reasons. First, from time to time, I like to give my zone conference message in Korean, so that the native Korean missionaries will enjoy conference more. And secondly, I want the new missionaries, and even the older missionaries, to hear their mission president giving a lengthy talk in Korean, hoping to spur them on to more intense and focused Korean language study.

We escaped sports conference without major injury. Elder Edgeworth sprained his ankle. Elder Johansen got sick to his stomach. And Elder Brown bumped into Elder Malone during the soccer game and split open a cut above his left eye that required 10 stitches. It could have been worse.

One of the highlights was at lunchtime, when Elder and Sister Parsons appeared with 500 tacos from Taco Bell on the military base. It was so kind of them to arrange for this. And, although the hard shell tacos were really soft shell tacos by the time they were eaten, this was really a great treat for the missionaries.

### **Death of Stake President's Mother**

Right after school we planned to go to Seoul to spend the night in a nice hotel on the Yongsan Army Post with Elder and Sister Parsons and our children. Fairly early in the morning, I learned that the mother of President Jung Tae Gul of the Cheongju Stake had passed away in the early morning hours. Koreans undertake a three-day vigil when a death in the family occurs. The person is buried on the third day. Knowing that I would be gone Friday evening and Saturday, I arranged for flowers to be delivered and I rushed to the place where President Jung and his family were receiving visitors. I did not know that his mother's passing had come as a surprise. She had not been ill. When I arrived, President Jung was very happy to see me, but he hugged me and cried a lot. He was in a state of shock. He had given his mother mouth-to-mouth resuscitation when she had stopped breathing—to no avail. He was heartbroken and distraught. President Jung insisted that we eat something. His wife—8 months' pregnant—was there and was helping to serve food to the visitors.

The flowers we ordered were huge and beautiful and were apparently the first to arrive. I had asked that they say “Korea Daejeon Mission.” What the long ribbon said, in small letters, was “Korea Daejeon Mission” and then in huge letters “President Richard C. Rife.” I was embarrassed, worried that everyone would think I was trying to get attention, but there was nothing I could do about it at that point. The flowers were nice. I was glad the missionaries informed me in a timely manner. And I was glad I could attend and offer some words of comfort to a truly wonderful man, Brother Jung Tae Gul.

### **Happy News for Elder Dunnaway**

Elder Dunnaway gave me some happy news. His paternal grandparents are getting sealed in the temple in Georgia. A missionary baptized his dad and his mom and siblings. Forty years later, as Elder Dunnaway serves his mission in Korea, his grandfather joined the Church and is now

getting sealed. It happened this way. The grandfather asked his wife what she wanted for her birthday. She said that she wanted him to attend gospel doctrine with her for one year. He readily agreed, thinking it was cheaper than a real gift. And he did attend for a full year, but he did not stop at the end of the year. Instead, he started going to Sacrament Meeting too. And the rest is history. Elder Dunnaway's father and three siblings will travel to the east (they live in Sacramento) to be sealed to their parents in Georgia.

### **Elders Whitman and Ashman**

Elder Whitman, a delightful elder, told me that the moment he saw Elder Ashman he knew that he would be Elder Ashman's trainer—and that it would be a great experience. He was in fact Elder Ashman's trainer—and it was in fact a good experience for both of them.

### **Rock Concert Proselyting**

Elder Murray, my new AP, told me about an experience he had with Elder Barley over a year ago. There was a big rock concert in Gwangju. It was free, if you were willing to stand in a long line for tickets. Elders Barley and Murray worked the line outside the concert passing out English flyers. They were also able to teach three or four mini-first discussions. There were two or three teenaged girls that seemed to have a lot of "Barley and Murray" interest, even if they did not have any gospel interest. The girls gave the elders a bottle of cold water from a convenience store. Finally, mostly to get rid of them, Elder Barley invited them to English class and other church meetings. An 18-year-old girl attended six church meetings the following week—two English classes, all the worship services, and two young single adult meetings. She joined the Church shortly thereafter and is now a truly stalwart member of the Church in Gwangju. Her name is Park Ji Young.

### **Directed by the Spirit**

In her interview, Sister Kim Ji Kyoung, a wonderful missionary, told me that she had been impressed to meet with a less-active Relief Society sister. Sister Kim prayed and fasted. She knew that the woman would not be home, but she was impressed to stop at her home anyway. At least she could leave a note for the sister. But, the sister was home, and she was amenable to talking. They had a very good talk. Sister Kim felt that she had been clearly directed by the Spirit.

### **Street-Boarding**

In her interview, Sister Jang Hyo Jeong told me that she had met woman while street-boarding. She actually felt compelled by the Spirit to meet this woman. At first, Sister Jang intended to introduce our English class, but then she felt strongly that she would give her the message of the restoration. She actually was able to teach her an entire discussion. The woman said that she believed the Joseph Smith story was possible and that she would like to meet with Sister Jang again to discuss the gospel in greater detail.

### **Off to a Good Start with the Language**

Elder Rasband is one of our outstanding new elders. He had been in Korea about three months when he was transferred to Jeonju. He introduced himself to one of our long-time great members there, Brother Park Joo In. Brother Park was confused. He thought Elder Rasband had said he was going home in three months. Elder Rasband's Korean was way too good for having just been in the country for three months, but was not good enough for someone going home in three

months; thus, the confusion. When he learned that Elder Rasband really had been in Korea for just three months, he was really impressed with Elder Rasband's Korean language ability.

### **Gwangyang Branch Conference**

Sunday was branch conference in Gwangyang, located on the southern coast. I arose early and drove there in time for the first meeting at 10:00 a.m. The main conference session was from 11:00 to 1:00. I was the last speaker. It was a long meeting, and the children had been good, but you could tell that everyone was tired. So I let my hair down a bit (what's left of it) and had some fun with the congregation, but did seem to have a spiritual note about it too. We had a nice lunch after the meeting. I gave candy to all the kids and to some who were just young at heart.

### **October 2003 Journal Entries**

#### **Temple Marriage in Seoul**

Friday was a great day. One of our great RM sister missionaries, Sister Kim Jin Hee, was married in the Seoul Temple. Janet and I went to Seoul for the event. Actually, we went early and did some shopping at Itaewon. We ate at Schlotsky's, a treat. And then we attended an afternoon endowment session at the temple. Unexpectedly, we met my Korean parents, the Chos, at the temple and were able to attend the endowment session with them. After the session, and before the wedding, Bishop Cho took us out to a Chinese restaurant for dinner. Then, we bade farewell to the Chos and went back to the temple for Sister Kim's wedding/sealing. We got home at about 10:30 p.m., but what a great day it was.

Rhee Honam was a pioneer of the Church in Korea. He was a friend of mine. He passed away earlier this year. He is the voice of Elohim in the temple. I went through in Korean. It was so nice to hear his voice throughout the service. I should add that Bishop Cho and Sister Lee's son, Duk Hyun, is the voice of Lucifer in the temple ceremony. I told them that they must be ashamed as parents to have raised a son who grew up to be the devil.

#### **Somebody Wants My Autograph**

Saturday was a good day too. In the morning, I drove to Suncheon with Elders Farley and Sparrow. I was tired after having been in Seoul just a few hours before. In the afternoon, I interviewed the 12 missionaries in that zone. In the evening, we held the fourth in our series of five Robert Holley firesides. Attendance was about 120, not bad for that small an area. There were a number of investigators.

After the fireside, a sister asked me if I was sad that everyone wanted Robert Holley's autograph and that nobody wanted mine. I said no, not really, that actually there were two sisters waiting in the district president's office below who wanted my autograph—otherwise, they would not be able to enter the temple. The two sisters who were waiting for me were: the older sister of Sister Yi Jeong Hi, who is serving as a missionary in our mission, and Sister Yi's dear friend whom she referred to the missionaries and whom she helped to convert. Both these sisters are going to the temple for their own endowment—and it was a pleasure to interview them and an honor to “autograph” their temple recommends for them.

### **President and Sister Nielsen**

Sunday I attended testimony meeting at the next-door ward. I also worked on my upcoming zone conference message entitled “The Message, The Messenger, and the Blessings of Missionary Service.” The temple president and matron, Ron and Ruby Nielsen, gave a fireside in the Daejeon Stake in the afternoon, which we attended. The Niensens will return home at the end of the month, having completed their three-year term. The Koreans really admire and respect President Nielsen, as he has served nine years in and for Korea—three years as a young missionary; three years as a mission president; and three years as a temple president. We hosted them at the mission home after the fireside. Janet fixed a great dinner. The kids were so polite and delightful for President and Sister Nielsen. They really turned on the charm; I was proud of them. They acted very mature. And they conversed well with adults. Many kids can't carry on a conversation with an adult, but the kids did a great job—and we were very proud of them.

### **Outback Steakhouse**

For family home evening on Monday, we drove the new mission president car to the Outback Steakhouse. Janet read scriptures as we rode along. We got lost and could not find Outback. Finally, we did find it. And the food was delicious. The kids were really happy with the meal and the evening. The server at Outback, a cute girl whose English name was Ray (like a ray of sunlight), charged us 65,000 Won. Janet caught that she had failed to charge us for three of the meals. The total should have been 140,000 Won. It took Janet some time to explain the mistake to the server. When she understood the problem, she was relieved. She thanked us over and over again. Had we not caught the mistake at the time, she would have had to pay the difference from her own pocket. I gave her a card and invited her to our English class.

### **New Convert**

At the Jeonju Zone interviews on Tuesday, I heard a great story from the zone leader, Elder Hermansen. A young man named Lee Tae Il came to English class with a member friend about six weeks ago. The member and referred him to the missionaries. The missionaries taught him at the member's house. In the past six weeks, Brother Lee has been baptized and has not missed a single activity or church meeting. He is 25 years old. He wants to go on a mission. He's a student at Gunsan University.

### **Fasting for the Members**

Sister Kim Ji Kyoung, one of the missionaries in Yeosu, told me that she fasts and prays for the members by name, specifically. When I go home from my mission, I need to fast and pray for the Korean members all the time. It's hard to be a member in Korea. And Korea is undergoing some hard economic and political and societal times.

### **Success Story in Yeosu**

The sisters and elders in Yeosu recently had a great success story. Brother Lim Jae Soo had been less active for over 10 years. The district president, Brother Bae Ki Jun, is his home teacher. Brother Lim and his nonmember wife started coming with their family to English class. The sisters were able to teach his wife, Jo Mi Seon, and children, Lim Jin Hwan (boy) and Lim Eun Jeong (girl). Brother Lim, newly activated, baptized his wife and children on September 28.

### **Not Well Executed, and Then Well Executed, Conferences**

District Conference: On Sunday, I went early with Janet and interviewed some less-active members, inviting them to return to full activity and to set a goal to attend the temple. Then, we held the general session, had an evaluation meeting, ate lunch (thanks to the sisters), and drove back to Daejeon. The meetings were generally good, but were not well attended. It is harvest season in Korea, and it is wedding season in Korea (spring and fall), and many of the members were otherwise engaged. The leaders were disappointed in the attendance. At the night meeting, one leader, who was supposed to speak for 10 minutes, spoke for 35 minutes, and another leader, who was supposed to speak for seven minutes, spoke for 20 minutes, thereby making it impossible for my counselor, his wife, and I to give our full talks. The three of us had driven hours to attend the conference; the longwinded leaders, who live in the area, could give lengthy talks to the members any week of the year. I guess that's just life in the Church.

Daejeon Stake Conference: I spoke at the priesthood leadership and Saturday night sessions—and again at the general session on Sunday. The stake presidency and the members were so kind to me. I have a real affinity for these Daejeon members, many of whom I have known since I was a missionary here in 1972-73. The Daejeon Stake Conference meetings were very inspirational and edifying. They were well planned and well executed. Every speaker spoke the assigned amount of time. I think it was the best executed stake conference I have been a part of in my time as a mission president.

### **Will I Really Be Clean?**

Elder Park Hyun Soo recalled one of his fond memories from his mission—the baptism of Brother Lim Heon Guk. Brother Lim had lived a hard life before finding the Church. He had lots of tattoos and scars on his body. Just before he and Elder Park entered the waters of baptism, he said to Elder Park: “Will I really be clean when I’m baptized? I really want to be clean.” Elder Park assured him that he would be clean.

### **The Kindness of a Stranger**

One recent night, Elders Michael Nielsen and James Farley had a great experience. Elders Farley and Nielsen had gone to Daesan, a town 40 minutes by bus away from Seosan where Elder Nielsen is serving, to visit a less-active member. Before entering the apartment, they asked the guard what time the last bus left for Seosan. He said “9:00 p.m.” So as not to be late, they arrived at the bus stop at 8:15 p.m. And they waited and waited, but no bus came. At 8:45 p.m., a man, who had just finished his shift at the nearby chemical plant, drove up to them and asked “Are you waiting for the bus to Seosan?” They answered “yes.” He said, “Hop in; I’ll give you a ride.” They said “Are you going to Seosan?” And he responded that he was. They had a nice visit with this wonderful man. He was absolutely delightful. He is a Buddhist. He goes to the temple each Sunday to pray. He is not interested in Christianity. The elders tried to convince him to hear their message. He took a pamphlet and a card, but said “I probably won’t contact you, because I am satisfied with my religion.” As they were getting out of the car in front of their house, the elders asked the man where he lived in Seosan. He said, “Oh, I don’t live in Seosan; I live in Daesan.” The elders were shocked and asked why he had gone 80 minutes out of his way (40 minutes each way), after a full shift at the plant, to give them a ride to Seosan. He responded: “The last bus to Seosan from Daesan leaves at about 6:00 p.m. on Saturday nights. There was no way you were going to ride a bus back to Seosan. You needed to get to Seosan. And so I gave you a ride.” This is just another example—and we have many—of the kindness and thoughtfulness of the Korean

people. And, I am sorry to say that this is just another example of Buddhists being more “Christian” than many of the nominal Christians our missionaries meet.

### **Angels and Baptisms**

Elder Peter Harris told me that he believes missionaries really are angels. Pres. Jo Yong Hyun, the Gwangju stake president, says this all the time. The people really do see missionaries as angels. One time, when a less-active member saw him and Elder Nelson, she thought they looked like angels. She said they looked to her like they were wearing white shirts and white pants, even though they were actually wearing black pants.

Although Elder Harris proselyted regularly, he told me he never found anyone who was ultimately baptized. All of his baptisms came from member referrals and through English class. But, the more he tried to proselyte and show his desire to preach the gospel, the more likely it was that the Lord would help him find a prepared investigator in an alternative way—usually through a member.

### **Importance of Mission President's Wife**

*Janet had gone to New York to help our daughter, Laura, with her first child (and our first grandchild), when I made this entry.*

I am a much better mission president when Janet is around. She keeps everything organized and running smoothly. I'm okay at talking to large groups, interviewing missionaries, greeting new missionaries, etc. (ministering), but I need Janet to help administer the mission. I'm so grateful for her. She is such a great mission president's wife (she's the one who is great). I appreciate it that she is involved in the mission and takes her calling as a missionary seriously.

### **Halloween in Korea**

Unlike Utah, where Halloween is often the first or second really cold day of the year, causing little kids to have to wear their overcoats over their costumes, Halloween Day in Korea was absolutely balmy. In the evening, the boys and I drove to Cheongju, where we ate at Subway (the Subway in Daejeon closed). Then, we attended the Cheongju Halloween Party. The missionaries really went all out. They had lots of activities and even started off with a history of Halloween. I have never seen so many little Korean kids in one place in my life. The party was a huge success—over 300 in attendance, including members, investigators, and English class participants. It's obvious that Halloween—hey, we'll give you candy if you'll dress up—is universal in its appeal.

### **November 2004 Journal Entries**

#### **Because I Was His Teacher**

Sunday I attended and spoke at the Jeonju Stake Conference. The new temple president—Lee Do Hwan—was also there. It was good to see him and his wife. They were at the Church College of Hawaii (now BYU-Hawaii) in 1972 when I studied Korean there for two months at the Language Training Mission (now the MTC). Brother Lee was a janitor and was also my Korean teacher. In my talk, I invited him to tell all the missionaries in the audience what a great, diligent, obedient, and serious (no joking) missionary I had been. He said nothing about that, but said “Did you hear how well President Rife speaks Korean? That's because I was his teacher.”

### **Church's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Korea**

Elder Ko (area authority seventy) told us about the exciting plans for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Church in Korea. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith dedicated the land of Korea for the preaching of the gospel on August 2, 1955. Elder Ko, a great organizer, has big plans for a celebration in late July and early August 2005. (I first heard of this about two weeks ago; my response was “August is too hot; I don’t want to come back to Korea in August; can’t we do it some other time?”)

Elder Ko is asking every returned mission president (which I will be in 2005) to be in attendance at the anniversary celebration. One of the first mission presidents and a dear friend, Robert H. Slover, now 90 and in good shape, has agreed to attend the celebration with his son Rob, who is also a dear friend and a former mission president. In fact, there have been 39 mission presidents in the history of the Church in Korea—five have passed away, including Spencer W. Palmer, and 34 are alive and expected to be in attendance.

There will be mission reunions, a culture night, an Area Conference (which will be shown by satellite throughout the country), and a reception on the actual anniversary day, Tuesday, August 2, 2005.

When he was in Salt Lake for October conference, Elder Ko asked President Hinckley if he would attend. President Hinckley, the apostle to Asia, has been an integral part of the Church’s growth in Korea. President Hinckley asked when it was; Elder Ko replied August 2005; and President Hinckley said, and I kid you not, “It’s too hot in Korea in August. I don’t want to go there in August.” Elder Ko assured President Hinckley that he would provide a big air conditioner, to which President Hinckley replied, “Okay, I’ll attend then, if I’m still around.” As I had the same initial reaction as President Hinckley (it’s too hot in August), it’s nice to be in tune with the prophet.

### **Onyang Branch Visit**

On Sunday, I visited the Onyang Branch—and what a great experience that was. Just a couple of years ago, there were about 10 or 15 coming out to that branch. There were 33 in attendance. I spoke for 30 minutes. This is part of my “visit all the units in my mission before I go home” effort. Elder Sykes and Elder Malone are the missionaries in Onyang. They are doing a great job. I also attended Priesthood Meeting and Sunday School. They were well taught. After the meetings, we had a simple lunch of rice, seaweed, and curry sauce. Elder Sparrow and I left greatly edified.

### **Fame is an Interesting Thing**

On Friday, we held our fifth Robert Holley fireside, this time in Cheongju. Fame is an interesting thing. As I have noted, Rob Holley regularly appears on Korean TV, and every man, woman, and child in Korea knows who he is. Before the fireside, we had dinner with him at a local restaurant. The stake president had invited some reporters to interview him during dinner. When we walked into the restaurant, the clientele went wild. Every eye turned to him. Girls were giggling. Men were trying to take his picture with their cell phone/cameras. It was really a sight to see. He is very kind to all the well-wishers when he is out in public.

### **Positive News**

There is some very positive news I want to include. Sister \_\_\_\_\_ is serving in \_\_\_\_\_ and is doing a great job. A number of months ago, Sister \_\_\_\_\_ decided to leave her mission early because she could not get along with her companions. And the failing was hers, not her companions'. I asked her to stop in Daejeon on her way home. She did, and we decided that she would try one more time. Since that time, Sister \_\_\_\_\_ has been a model missionary. She was always a hard worker, but now she is a good, loving companion as well. I am so proud of her that I am going to make her a trainer this next month.

### **Blessing Sister Kim**

Sister Kim Ji Kyoung asked me to give her a blessing after the last zone conference, which I did. This time, during her interview, she said that "when [I] laid my hands upon her head, she felt the Spirit from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet and that it lingered long after the blessing was finished." She said "the blessing made my heart feel light, despite the problems I am struggling with at this time." Sister Kim is one of the sweetest sisters I have ever met.

### **Elder William Walker Mission Tour**

Today is also the first day of our general authority mission tour. Elder William R. Walker, a Seventy and first counselor in the Asia North Area Presidency, and his wife Vicki are visiting us for the next several days. Elder Walker knew that I would be involved in a coordinating council meeting, so he said it would be okay to send the APs to the airport to meet him and Sister Walker. I sent Elders Sparrow and Murray. They did a great job, and the Walkers "fell in love with them" on the ride home.

I expected to see the Walkers at 7:30, when I got home from Jeonju, but they did not arrive until about 9:30 p.m. We waited dinner for them and enjoyed Janet's enchiladas. We visited for a while and then retired for the night. The Walkers are warm and genuine people, and we knew right at first that we would enjoy their visit.

President Sol of the Daejeon Stake put Elder and Sister Walker to work on Sunday. They spoke at the Yuseong Ward Sacrament Meeting at 9:00 a.m., at the Samsung Ward Sacrament Meeting at 11:50 a.m., and at the Daejeon Stake leadership meeting from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Elder Walker asked me to speak at all the meetings as well. In between all those meetings, Janet prepared delicious meals. And we enjoyed visiting with Elder and Sister Walker.

Before his call, Elder Walker was an investment banker and was also involved with Beneficial Life Insurance Company. He has been a general authority for about 18 months. He is easy going and friendly, and he is a very good public speaker. He was a stake president, a bishop twice, and served as president of the Tokyo South Mission about 10 years ago. Sister Walker is originally from Provo. She was a Cougarette when she was in college, and she knows Connie Cloward Parsons and Cheryl Cloward. Elder Walker is a close friend of Lowell Smith, with whom I worked on a case early in my legal career, and of Matt Durrant, who is now on the Utah Supreme Court (Matt used to represent Novell in piracy cases when I was at Novell-Legal). We had a lot to talk about.

Monday we held a zone conference in Daejeon for the northern zones. It was a fairly easy day, because no travel was involved for us. Elder Walker took most of the time, speaking for about 75 minutes in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. I spoke twice for a total of 25 minutes. Sister Walker and Sister Rife spoke for 10 minutes each. Our departing missionaries were able to bear their testimonies. We had a nice vocal duet from Elders Luschin and Hermansen. It was a very good meeting. I took copious notes of Elder Walker's presentations.

After zone conference, we rested for a while. Elder Walker—a self-proclaimed newspaper junkie—wanted to read a newspaper, so I found him one. Then, he took us out for dinner with the kids. We chose the local Korean restaurant for its convenience and because it would be a cultural experience for the Walkers. They enjoyed the bulkogi meal. After dinner, we had family home evening. Janet gave a little lesson, and then Elder Walker told us spiritual stories about miracles in these latter days.

We went to bed fairly early on Monday night, as we had a busy day the following day. We had a light breakfast at 6:45 a.m. Tuesday, and then drove to Gwangju, arriving at the chapel at 9:35 a.m. The elders had everything in order, and we were able to start the southern zone conference early. We had essentially a repeat of the previous day. I gave the same talks, because I have to have the entire mission on the same page. Elder Walker varied his talk, because he wants to try to follow the spirit and because it's boring to say the same thing over and over again. My talks were on how missionaries and members can work together to do missionary work effectively and on "the victory formula" of diligence+faithfulness+humility+prayer of faith (see Doctrine & Covenants 103:36 and 104:79, 82).

We had to leave for the Gwangju airport right after the zone conference ended. It was actually hard to say goodbye to the Walkers when they entered the airport to go to Seoul and on to Tokyo, where they live. We had a very good time with them, as did our kids. I gave them a "Roger Hoffman" CD, and Janet gave them some treats for the airplane. Jenny also gave them a treat and a cute note. She thanked them for a small gift that they had given her and wrote "you are the first General Authority to visit us who has brought me a gift." The kids were great with the Walkers; Jenny was especially terrific.

Elder Walker was very complimentary on our running of the mission and on the cleanliness and orderliness of the mission office. I asked what we could do better. He said that we were doing a great job. His suggestion was that, as with all the missions in North Asia, we need to have faith that we can find prepared persons and baptize them in Korea. We told him we would do our best.

### **Revamping the Transfer**

Saturday was also a good day. But, I didn't sleep well the night before. I was worried about the transfer I was to announce this morning. I worried and worried about one Korean sister and one American elder. I awoke early, went to the mission office, looked at the board, and was able to find a better transfer for each of these missionaries. It required a bit of work, but I felt better about it in the end. Elder Murray helped me call out the transfer from 7:00 until about 8:30 a.m.

### **President Jung Tae Gul**

This month, President Jung Tae Gul and his wife, Sister Kim Mi Kyung, of the Cheongju Stake, had their fifth child, a little girl. They are among the greatest of the Korean saints. Janet sent Sister Kim a baby blanket she had made. They could not just say thank you. Instead, they sent us a delicious box of chocolates and the following card, written by President Jung in English:

Thank you for the beautiful baby blanket you sent to us. It is so nice and warm that it could melt down every worldly sorrow and grief that sneaked into it. My wife was so happy and delightful when she first saw it at the baby care center near my house where she is staying for three weeks after the delivery. She and I would love it very much, and regard it as a family treasure. We have been very much blessed with your love and sacrifice, and in that sense, we owe too much to you. I hope my prayers and efforts will be a little something for your ministry, and tomorrow, we will see and enjoy together its sweet fruits. I also pray for your good health and prosperity as a family, and above all, you fulfilling your duties and assignments and returning with honor to God, our Father.

## **December 2003 Journal Entries**

### **Elder Sun Chang Hee**

Elder Sun served the first half of his mission several years ago—then did his military service—then returned for 11 months. It was tough at first when he came back, but he got in his rhythm and did a great work. He baptized nine people in his last 11 months, an excellent record for our mission. At first he had lots of concerns, but then he focused on the work and forgot about other concerns.

He baptized a man whose initial contact with the Church was over 10 years ago. The man had received a copy of the Book of Mormon at that time. He taught the man's wife. Elder Robert Stewart introduced him to this family on an AP split. The man said he has a peaceful feeling when he is at the church or with the missionaries. He was describing how the spirit feels.

He baptized several high school students in Cheongju. One student got permission because she went from being a bad citizen at home to being a great citizen at home. Her mom even attended the baptism.

Another convert, Sister Park Mi Jeong, saw Elder Sun in Cheongju two years before in dream. He was in army then, not in Cheongju. She read the Book of Mormon in its entirety in four days. She is a college graduate.

### **Sister Jang Hyo Jeong**

Sister Jang taught a wonderful convert in Gwangju, Sister Park Ji Young. Sister Park stopped studying for a while, but then realized when she was not meeting with the missionaries how much she enjoyed church and the missionaries. Eventually, she was baptized and wept openly. She is thinking about being a missionary and is preparing for a mission. Sister Park wrote a letter to Sister Jang, saying "I attend church because of my love for God." She will be a great missionary; she is 20 years old and lives in the Baegun ward.

### **Elder Lee Jae Hyun**

Elder Lee served the first half of his mission in Canada Toronto East Mission, but then was reassigned to Korea, because the Korean government would not give him a two-year visa. We were happy to have him for the second year of his mission. Elder Lee had a good experience the last weekend of his mission. Sister Lim Yang Hee, an investigator, called Friday night. She said that her mom was in the hospital and that she could not get baptized on Saturday, as planned.

Elder Lee was disappointed, but he understood. Elder Lee prayed and felt he should call her again. She said “thanks for calling” and that she had not felt peaceful since she had told him she would not be baptized. She was then baptized on Saturday as planned.

### **My Convert, Sister Lee Keun Soon**

I wish to give an update about Sister Lee Keun Soon, a wonderful woman I was privileged to baptize in Incheon in 1974. Sister Lee and her husband served a temple mission a few years ago. About a year ago, Brother Lee passed away. Sister Lee is now serving her second temple mission. It is her dream to die while serving on her mission, but the temple president told me that she is so healthy and so vibrant that he doubts that will happen.

### **Christmas with the Rifés**

December 8 was our first of six “Christmas at the Rifés” days with about one-sixth of our missionaries. I can tell you what we did one time, and then multiply it by six.

Opening Hymn and Prayer

President's Random Thoughts and Training Items

President's Spiritual Message (on my Christmases as a young missionary and on “The Three Gifts of Christmas”)

Sister Rife's Spiritual Message on Christmas music

The new “Joy to the World” video from the Church

Sister Rife's delicious Christmas dinner (chicken—no turkey in Korea, potatoes and gravy, stuffing, green beans, jello salad, rolls, brownies) (I really, really appreciate my companion for having prepared a delicious home-cooked Christmas dinner for every missionary in our mission.)

The White Elephant Gift Game

“The Muppet Christmas Carol” movie (or nap) (or brief interview with the President, if necessary)

A Visit from Santa Claus<sup>32</sup>

We gave each missionary an official Korea Daejeon Mission Christmas ornament with 2003 on it, as a remembrance of this Christmas spent in Korea

Christmas Carol Singing

So, we did the above six times. Every missionary had a turn. It was great fun, even the last time. The missionaries had fun; they were polite; and they were appreciative. Many of the Americans said it was a real treat to be in an American home for a day at Christmastime.

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<sup>32</sup> Fortuitously, the mission president looks a bit like Santa Claus.

### **Sister Lee's Temple Marriage**

One of our great Korean sisters, Lee Eun Ha, was married on December 13 in the Seoul temple. Janet and I drove to Seoul early that morning and attended the sealing ceremony. There was a reception later in the day, but we could not stay all day in Seoul, so we took some pictures, gave the happy couple a gift, and drove back home to our family. Sister Lee looked beautiful and happy—and we really liked her new husband. He seems to have a delightful personality and a well-developed sense of humor.

### **Jungang Ward Visit**

On Sunday I visited the Jungang Ward in Jeonju. The ward is great. The bishop is a great man named Lee In Gi. “In gi” means “popular” in Korean, so he must be a very popular bishop. He does seem to be a very good bishop. I spoke at sacrament meeting and attended the other meetings. After the three-hour block, I ate lunch with the ward, and I passed out candy to the ward members in a blatant attempt to win my own “in gi” (popularity). I enjoy so much meeting with the Korean saints. I spoke about Christmas customs that point to Christ and told stories of my Christmases in Korea.

### **Namweon Branch**

On December 21, I visited the Namweon Branch and gave a Christmas talk in sacrament meeting. There were seven members in attendance, not counting the missionaries or mission president. But, they were terrific members. They wanted me to stay for the entire three-hour block and for dinner thereafter, but I had to go on to Gwangju, so they stopped the meetings for a while after sacrament meeting and gave me some juice and a snack.

One of the talks prior to mine was from a beautiful young woman who is just graduating from high school. Her family has a farm out in the countryside, far from Namweon. She prayed about what to do after high school, and she received inspiration as follows: She will work for two years, rather than going to college now and putting a financial burden on her family. During those two years, she will be frugal and save as much money as possible. Then, she will serve a mission for the Church. Then, she will try to attend BYU-Hawaii to get her education. She said she feels the Lord is pleased with this plan—and she is excited to get started. I felt the Spirit as she spoke.

### **Punghyang Ward**

After sacrament meeting in Namweon, I drove to Gwangju just as the Punghyang Ward was about to conclude its meetings. I was there a few minutes early, and the teacher in the priesthood quorum ended his lesson early “so that we can hear a message from our mission president.” I didn't have a message ready, but I winged it.

After the services, I attended a baptismal service in which five new members were baptized—two teenaged boys, who had come to English class, and whose mother supported them in being baptized; a college-aged girl; and two 40-year-old men, the husbands of sisters in the ward. The Punghyang Ward is our best missionary ward. I wanted to show my appreciation for their sincere efforts to do missionary work by attending the baptismal service. This baptism seemed perfect to me. We need teenaged boys who will become missionaries. We need college-aged girls who will become missionaries or who will help create eternal families. And we are so happy when part-

member families become united in the gospel. It was a thrill for me to attend and speak at the baptismal service.

### **They Know Me**

On Sunday, I was asked to speak at the ward next door to our chapel. I spoke for 30 minutes and seemed to get a good response. My kids said they understood the talk, not because they know Korean, but because they know me.

### **January 2004 Journal Entries**

#### **Supporting One's Husband**

Happy New Year, 2004! In the afternoon, I attended a four-hour meeting with the Daejeon stake presidency and bishops. After the meeting, they all came over to the mission home to meet their wives and to have dinner. It was a busy, but enjoyable first day of the year.

President Sol, the stake president, asked Janet to speak to the sisters about sustaining and supporting their husbands, which she did. It seemed to have an impact on at least one of the sisters, who said that day and the next day at church that she felt she should be less resentful of the time her husband was spending as bishop and should be more supportive of him. I can say that I have felt Janet's consistent support whenever I have had a church calling that demanded significant time and attention. President Sol could not have asked a better sister to give a talk on the subject of supporting one's husband.

#### **Reading the Scriptures in a Foreign Language**

Today I finished reading the Book of Mormon in Korean. It has taken about nine months. I am now reading the Doctrine & Covenants in Korean—and then I'll read the New Testament in Korean. I consider this my language study, rather than my scripture study.<sup>33</sup> Our family went to the movie "The Cat in the Hat." I slept through the entire movie. Janet kept nudging me when I *allegedly* made snoring noises.

#### **Training the Trainers**

Today was a typically good mission president day. I had breakfast with, and interviewed, the five new missionaries. Then, while they ran errands to the bank and immigration office, I sought inspiration relating to their trainer assignments. Then, I met with and encouraged the trainers. Janet said something particularly interesting to the trainers. She said that (even though the Missionary Department doesn't approve of this) the new missionaries call their trainer their "dad" or their "mom." She told the trainers that this really is the chance to practice for parenthood. This is their chance to take new missionary and nurture, love, and train him or her. We had lunch with the entire group—and then we had new missionary orientation. There was a good spirit present.

#### **Elder Sparrow's Great Experience**

Before he left, I asked Elder Sparrow to write up this inspirational missionary experience for my records. Here it is in Elder Sparrow's words (I have changed the names to protect their privacy):

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<sup>33</sup> Elder Richard G. Scott said that we should always pray to God and study the scriptures in our native language.

Elder Wright and I served in \_\_\_\_ together for two transfers. During the first transfer, we met a lady named Sister Kim. She was a very nice lady in her mid-thirties. It was hard to meet with her, but after much trying, we made an appointment and taught her a first discussion, which went very well. Elder Wright and I were really excited to work with her but she was still really hard to meet with. So we decided to just go over there and see if we could catch her at home. Instead, we ended up meeting her husband who had heard a little bit about us from his wife. He didn't even know we were missionaries, just that we were foreigners. We ended up teaching him a first discussion right then and there. He told us how he had never believed in God and how it sounded nice to him but religion just wasn't his thing.

This couple, Brother and Sister Kim, were having marital problems. He wasn't coming home on time, and he was also in some trouble with his work. She didn't think he paid enough attention to their two children either. At about this point, she came over to our house at about 2 a.m. She walked right into our apartment [**mission president comment: maybe missionaries should lock their doors at night**] and turned on the lights and threw herself on the floor and was just crying. We ended up calming her down and finding out what was wrong. Her husband didn't come home till late that night and she needed someone to talk to so she came over to our house. We told her that she needed to leave after a few minutes of talking and she said that she wouldn't leave until we all kneeled down and prayed together. We prayed and she left saying that she knew that our prayer would help her.

She had finally had it and didn't care about what other people thought; she only cared about being happy. Her husband had been thrown in jail for doing some dishonest stuff at his business. She was determined to figure it all out by the time he was out of jail. So she started meeting us all the time and we started teaching her the gospel slowly but surely. She had a lot of questions so it went kind of slow. She would bring a notebook with a lot of questions that she had thought of that week and then would take notes on the stuff we talked about so she could review and remember what we were telling her. She was AWESOME! I knew right then that with a little faith and some prayers that she would get baptized. She was baptized in January by one of the members that she was able to get really close with.

Her husband got out of jail in April. They decided to try and work things out because both of them had changed a lot since they were last together. Over the next few months, she wondered how she would introduce the gospel to him but she just didn't know how. She said that she would dream of her whole family walking to church together on Sunday mornings. She continued to pray and ask for help from the missionaries and the branch president. Finally one morning, when she got up to go to church with her two little girls, her husband asked her why she never asked him to go to church with her and the girls. She was so happy. Her prayers had been answered. That morning she and her entire family got ready and walked to church together. He knew he had to continue to change so they could continue to be happy. He ended up taking the discussions from Elder Bojorquez and later Elder Griffith. He was baptized in September 2003.

Sister Kim spoke at stake conference and told the whole story and how they are now working together to learn as much as they can about the church and working on sometime in the future to go to the temple and become an eternal family. Pretty neat huh?"

Yes, Elder Sparrow, that is “pretty neat!” The gospel can and does change lives!

### **Bowing to the Mission President**

January 10 was a busy and memorable day. Janet worked hard to prepare dinner for lots of people. We had twelve returned Korean missionaries, and some of their spouses, visit us to wish us Happy New Year and to bow to us. That whole bowing thing is hard to accept as an American. They bow to the ancestors, and they bow to their elders on the major holidays of Thanksgiving (Chusok) and New Year's Day. However, it is an odd feeling to have a whole room of people bowing to you. They take it pretty seriously, but I felt like saying “Arise, I'm merely a man.” After dinner we played “yut,” the traditional Korean New Year's game. It was great to see all our Korean RMs. We will have a bigger reunion for our Korean missionaries just before we finish our mission.

### **Confession the Last Step**

After lunch, I drove to a southern city to meet a leading member (name withheld) of the Church in that area. He said that he wanted to confess to me. I was very worried about it in advance. In fact, our interview was very positive. He is striving to have the Spirit with him. He has spent the last two years studying about the Spirit, and he has wondered whether a failure to confess on his part has lessened the influence of the Spirit in his life. In fact, he gave me a 200-page document with the results of his study about the Holy Ghost.

His confession was that about 13 years ago, three years before he joined the Church, he got a girl pregnant and tried to marry her. She refused to marry him—and she got an abortion. He was not involved in the abortion, but still feels responsible for it. When he was baptized, he did not confess this to the missionaries or the branch president. He was not clear at that time regarding confession (it's true that new converts are “babes” and do not understand that kind of thing, especially if it is not well explained by the young missionaries). He has wondered whether failure to confess at that time has diminished his capacity to feel the Holy Spirit in his life. Since baptism, he has consistently tried to do what is right, and he has been guilty of no major sin.

I told him that, to the extent confession was needed, it had now been completed and that he should move forward. He was reluctant to accept that. He said he felt that perhaps he should be removed from his Church position. I responded that I had a lot of experience in such matters and was sure that 10 years of devoted Latter-day Saint living meant that the repentance process was completed. For his peace of mind, however, I said I would lay his case before a General Authority. He accepted that willingly and said he would do whatever the General Authority said.

I wrote to Elder William Walker, my contact with the Asia North Area Presidency, and explained the situation to him. He agreed with my conclusion that confession was the final step. I called and told this great brother. He said that he accepted that result and would move forward with faith to serve the people under his stewardship.

### **Needs an Easy Companion**

On Monday, I went back down to Gwangju to interview the 17 missionaries in the East Gwangju Zone. Most of the missionaries were doing fine. One Korean sister, who has been here about five months, told me that she had not had a positive experience thus far, mostly because of companion problems. She indeed has had two of the more difficult companions. I need to help her have a

positive experience, and so I will put her this next transfer period with a loving, kind, “easy to get along with” companion.

### **Elder Thueson**

Tuesday was zone leader council, one of our best ever. The Spirit was strong as I gave my concluding “spiritual words” and as Janet and each missionary bore her/his testimony. Elder Thueson talked about the first time he bore his testimony in public. He was 15 years old. He was seated behind the bishop and was serving as the bishop’s “helper” during the Fast and Testimony Meeting. His dad, as a counselor in the bishopric, was conducting the meeting. Several times during the testimony meeting, he was prompted to bear testimony, but he resisted the prompting. Finally, just as his dad arose to close the meeting, Elder Thueson arose and said he had to bear his testimony. He does not remember what he said, and it could not have lasted more than 15 seconds, but he noticed that his mother was crying. Later he learned that she had been praying that week in faith to know about his spiritual status and whether he was growing in the gospel. His brief testimony was the answer to her prayer.

### **My Convert's Grandson!**

I have known for about a month that we would be getting a new Korean elder named Lee Chang Yup. Elder Lee served the first year of his mission in the New Jersey Morristown Mission. However, because he has not completed his military service, the Korean government would only give him a one-year passport, so he has been assigned to our mission for his second year. Two days before Elder Lee was to arrive, just as I was driving into our driveway from Gwangju, I received a call from Sister Lee Keun Soon. I baptized Sister Lee in Incheon 29 years ago. She served a full temple mission with her husband, who passed away last January. She is now seven months into her second two-year temple mission. She lives in a small apartment next to the Seoul temple. Sister Lee said to me “When is my grandson arriving?” I was confused. I said “I’m not sure what you mean.” She said, “Lee Chang Yup is my grandson. When does he arrive from New Jersey?”

I was shocked—and so excited. Our new Elder Lee Chang Yup is the grandson of the woman I baptized in Incheon 29 years ago. Recently, I have been encouraging the missionaries to try to find a missionary to take their place—in other words, to baptize someone who will become a full-time missionary later. When I learned about Elder Lee, I told the missionaries that I had found two missionaries to take my place, Sister Lee who is serving a temple mission and Elder Lee, her grandson, who is serving a proselyting mission in Daejeon, Korea.

I cannot express in words the satisfaction and joy I felt to know that my convert, Sister Lee Keun Soon, is a missionary, and so is her grandson.

On January 15, I had breakfast with and interviewed Elder Lee Chang Yup. He looks like his grandfather, only more handsome. And he has a perfect temperament. He is such a fine young man and will be a great missionary in Korea (as he was in New Jersey).<sup>34</sup>

### **Another Wonderful Mission President Day**

Sunday was a good day. Elder Tuia and I left early for Seosan, in the northwest corner of our mission. Because of a major snowstorm, we arrived just a few minutes late for the first meeting,

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<sup>34</sup> Elder Lee turned out to be a great missionary and served as an assistant to the president.

Priesthood Meeting. When we entered the room, Elder Michael Nielsen was standing in front of the brethren teaching the Priesthood lesson. He did a very good job. It is one thing to teach the discussions—we practice them constantly—and it is another to teach a 45-minute lesson in the world's second hardest language. Yet, Elder Nielsen did a great job, especially since he was doing it in front of his mission president. I promptly went home and wrote a letter to his mom telling her about the whole thing.

I spoke at Sacrament Meeting—and then after the meeting, I had the privilege of setting apart Sister Jeong Jin Sook as a full-time missionary. Sister Jeong is the daughter of the Hong Seong district president. Let me back up. I prayed diligently this morning that I would be able to speak Korean well in my talk and that I could give Sister Jeong a beautiful setting apart and blessing even though I would not be speaking my native tongue (it's hard to give a blessing in Korean). Interestingly, I struggled with the language during my talk. I'm not sure anyone noticed but me, but I did not feel that the language was flowing for me. However, when I placed my hands on Sister Jeong's head, all of a sudden I felt the Spirit in my heart and a blessing in fluent Korean flowed into my mind and out of my mouth. It was a wonderful experience for me. The setting apart of a missionary is a special moment, and I had prayed in faith that I would be able to do well for Sister Jeong, even though Korean is not my native tongue.

After the setting apart, we drove 40 minutes out in the countryside to the place with the Jeongs have their home and fishing supply store (they sell fishing poles and all the supplies necessary to fish). Sister Lim, Sister Jeong's mother, fixed us a nice meal—and then the district president asked me to bless his home and fishing store, which I did. Another great mission president day!

### **Lunar New Year Again**

The week of January 19 was Lunar New Year week in Korea. Monday and Tuesday were normal days, so I interviewed the 20 Jeonju missionaries on Monday and the 18 Daejeon missionaries on Tuesday. January 21-23 were national holidays in Korea, the time when the expressways turn into parking lots as 24 million people try to drive across the country to visit the remaining 24 million people who are at home waiting for them. It's a good time to hunker down at home if you can. It's impolite for missionaries to proselyte during this major holiday, so our missionaries eat New Years' meals with members, if invited, deep clean their apartments, work on their area records, etc. It's a good thing they are inside, because it is bitter cold here—it was 9 degrees when I awoke yesterday.

One Lunar New Year Day, I had a delightful time with Sisters Kristen Wood and Beck Soo Jin. We visited the home of Choi Byung Yoon and the home of Jin Ki Shik. I baptized Brother Choi in June of 1973 and Sister Jin and her two boys in March of 1973. Brother Choi and his entire family are active members of the Church. Brother Choi has been bishop, a member of the stake presidency, and is now a high councilor in the Daejeon stake. Sister Jin, age 75, still attends church each Sunday at the ward building next to the mission home. She has two sons, Nam Soo and Bong Yup. Nam Soo is active and is a guard at the Seoul temple. Bong Yup has been inactive for years. He was there with his mom for New Year's Day. I was able to meet him and his wife and family. We had a good visit, and I offered a prayer with them before we left. The purpose of visiting Brother Choi and Sister Jin, my two Daejeon converts, was to give them a box of apples and wish them a Happy New Year! And the sister missionaries got two member visits as well.

### **A New Office Couple**

In the afternoon, Janet, Elder Thueson, and I drove to the Incheon Airport to meet our new office couple, Elder William and Sister Judith Scheepsma, from Elmira, New York. There was more traffic than normal, but by using the van (and the bus lane), we were able to arrive at the airport in just over three hours and before the Scheepsma's plane landed. We made it home in good time, while the cars going north toward Seoul were jammed. We heard on the news that during the actual three days of Lunar New Year, it took 22 hours to drive from Seoul to Busan. Ordinarily, that would be about a five-hour drive. The Scheepsmas seem to be delightful people. We sense that they will do a good job as office couple. We appreciated Janet's parents, Elder and Sister Parsons, going to the MTC to meet with the Scheepsmas the night before they left for Korea. They briefed the Scheepsmas well. And, they have been in email communication with them since we learned of their call.

### **Visiting the Yongam Branch**

Sunday was a bitter cold, snowy, icy day. Elder Thueson and I drove about an hour north to Cheongju and attended church at the Yongam Branch. The branch president, Brother Kim Bong Soo, is a delightful man with a quick smile. As I sat down by him on the stand, I said to him, "Do you know why I am here?" He responded "Is it because we are doing a bad job of missionary work?" I said "No, I'm visiting all the units in my mission, trying to cheer the hearts of the members and spend a little time with them." He seemed relieved. Sometimes the message does not filter down clearly. Well, I had a great time speaking to the ward and attending Sunday School and Priesthood Meeting. Sunday School, taught by a doctor of internal medicine, was especially good. The doctor has only been active for 10 months. Ten months ago, Elder Hallstrom met with him and challenged him to return to activity, which he has done. His wife, however, has not accepted the challenge, and they are divided on this issue, which makes it hard for him at home. The branch had invited me to have lunch after the meetings, but their pipes froze—and apologetically they told me that we would have to eat together "next time." It was just as well, because when I got home, Janet had prepared salmon and baked potatoes—and so I thoroughly enjoyed eating at home.

### **Interviews and Stake President Meetings**

The week of January 26, I interviewed missionaries in Cheongju, Cheonan, and Gwangju. I also met with all four of the stake presidents in my mission (my counselors meet monthly with the two district presidents). There were some problems in the Cheonan zone—and Tuesday (the day I was there) was excruciating. I was tired and drained when I got home. Thursday was a long day, interviewing the West Gwangju zone in Gwangju and meeting with President Jo in Gwangju and President Lee in Jeonju and arriving home just in time to watch "West Wing" with Janet at 10:15 p.m.

I have a lot of love and respect for our four stake presidents. They are great men facing significant challenges. The Gwangju Stake is fairly strong, but the other three stakes are struggling. In one stake, three of the bishops work on Sunday and cannot attend church. I can tell you this: If the ward does not have an effective and enthusiastic bishop, there is no zip or strength in the ward. Still, we all go on, doing the best we can, trying not to be discouraged, and counting our blessings.

### **Sister Missionary Luncheon**

Friday we had a luncheon for the sister missionaries. Note that I did not say “sisters conference,” as we do not have sisters’ conferences in the mission field. Still, we did have lunch. The sister missionaries are widely dispersed and seldom see each other all in one place. And, they don’t get to come to the mission home for ZLC like some of the elders do. And, we have felt that there have been some companion problems, unkind feelings, and reluctance to forgive. Anyway, we decided to invite the sisters to have lunch with us. Janet fixed a great lunch of taco salad. Janet conducted the event. I spoke for a few minutes on being happy—and driving out the gloom. Each of the new sisters bore her testimony, and I translated. (Yes, I was able to say in Korean, “I feel a lot of love—and estrogen—in this room.” And I told the sisters that I was there in my capacity as an “honorary sister missionary.”) After lunch, I left, and Janet talked to the sisters about various matters, including dress and grooming, proper deportment as a missionary, getting along with others, being willing to forgive, and other important matters. It was an uplifting and spiritual day, intended to recharge the sisters’ batteries. During my brief talk to the sisters, I mentioned the great impact women can have in the lives of others. I noted that I have been writing my life history. As I have reflected on my life, I have realized that the two people who have had the most influence for good in my life are women—my mother and my wife.

### **February 2004 Journal Entries**

#### **Balmy February Sabbath in Daejeon**

Sunday was a balmy, warm, delightful day in Daejeon, Korea. It was Fast Sunday. Our mission continues to fast for opportunities to teach the gospel—and for the ability to find people who are prepared to hear and accept the gospel.

In the morning, I worked with Michael to help prepare him to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained to the office of deacon in two weeks. We had a nice visit about the Priesthood. I have another brief lesson in mind for him next week.

It was my turn to teach family Sunday School this week. Janet usually teaches; she is best at making sure that we have a Sunday School lesson at home, since there is no English Sunday School at church. We had missed one lesson, so I taught two, from 1 Nephi 12-22. We had a great visit, and the kids were attentive.

We attended Fast and Testimony Meeting at the Samsung Ward. Elder and Sister Scheepsma, our new office couple, were asked to introduce themselves and bear their testimonies. I translated for them. Fortunately, they did not say anything too complicated, so I think I did okay.

We raced out of Sacrament Meeting and hurried across town to the Seonhwa Ward baptism at the Stake Center. Four people were baptized—an older man; the husband of a member wife; and two boys. It was a delight to be there. It is always great when a family becomes united in the gospel. I had the chance to represent the Church to welcome them as members and to bear a brief testimony.

At the baptismal service, I met a man, his wife, and two children from the other ward that uses the Stake Center (the Dunsan Ward). The man has been less active for 20 years, but he has returned to activity and will baptize his wife and two children next week. I also met a woman and her daughter who will be baptized in early March. The woman first learned of the Church when she

attended the Robert Holley fireside in Daejeon. I wrote down her name and told her I would tell Robert Holley and that he would be happy.

### **Accentuating the Positive**

In the evening, we had dinner in Daejeon with Choi Yoon Hwan and his family. Brother Choi is head of the Presiding Bishop's Office in Seoul, and he is a stake president in Seoul. He and his wife, Sister Koo, are delightful people, and Janet and I enjoy spending time with them. We talked about some challenges we had faced in our lives, and they did the same. Brother Choi said "I would have never guessed that you had any problems, because you are always so happy and positive and funny." I said that Janet and I reserve the right to be negative in private, usually as we discuss things in our bedroom. But, when we open the door and go back out into the world, we try to put on a happy face and be positive and encouraging.

### **MTC for Our Life**

One of the returning missionaries, a delightful young man named Elder Derek Whitman, said something profound in his farewell testimony: "The first two months of my mission were spent at the MTC; it was the training for my mission. It seems to me now that my two-year mission has been the MTC for the rest of my life." When an elder or sister serves a great mission, it really does become the MTC for his or her life. I could further analogize that this life is the MTC for eternity.

### **Small in Number; Strong in Spirit**

Sunday I attended church at the Gunsan Ward. There were only 18 people in attendance, not counting the missionaries and mission president. Gunsan used to be a thriving ward before (1) a bishop apostatized, (2) a missionary several years ago got out of control with the sisters, and (3) the economy turned bad and many people moved to larger cities. It's sad to see the small number of people, but they were great people, and I thoroughly enjoyed the three meetings. They also served a nice lunch after the meetings. It was a pleasure to meet with these good people.

### **New Korean Missionaries**

Tuesday I trained the trainers of three new Korean missionaries. And then we met those three new missionaries at the Daejeon train station. They are Sister Chong Shin Ye, and Elders Jeung Jin and Lim Jong Il. They are great young people. Janet fixed lunch for the group. We did orientation, and I interviewed them, and we sent them on their way.

Sister Chong's father works at the PBO in Seoul. He is an acquaintance of mine. Elder Jeung's dad also works at the PBO. He and I are good friends from years back when I did legal work for the Church in Seoul in the 80s.

In fact, I was able to see both fathers the next day. The APs and I went to Seoul on our way to the airport to meet the new American missionaries. We had to pick up some things at the Church office there. I bounded into the office, found the two fathers, and told them that their children were off to a good start. And I told them where they had been assigned and with whom they were serving.

### **The Best Job I've Ever Had**

February 12, in addition to being Abraham Lincoln's birthday, was interview day and new missionary orientation day for the new U.S. missionaries. As always, it was a great day. Greeting new missionaries, interviewing them, and orienting them—it's the best job I've ever had.

### **Our Son Michael Receives the Aaronic Priesthood**

Sunday was a GREAT DAY! Michael was given the Aaronic Priesthood and was ordained to the office of deacon. I helped the bishop, who speaks no English, interview Michael. Then, he was sustained in Sacrament Meeting. And after the meeting, with the help from lots of elders, I gave Michael the Priesthood. The best part of it was that he was excited about it. The rest of the day he walked around the house saying "Hey, I hold the Priesthood!" It was so great to see him take seriously this momentous step in his life.

### **Baptisms for the Dead**

Holding the Priesthood, Michael (and Jenny too) wanted to do baptisms for the dead in the Seoul Temple. So, I called Bishop Cho (my Korean father) who is an ordinance worker. I inquired about doing baptisms. He said he would look into it. I told him no hurry, just to ask on Tuesday when the temple was open. Thirty minutes later I received a call from a temple missionary who said "The temple president told me that you wanted to baptize your children for the dead." It was so kind of them. We made an appointment for the next Friday, when the kids would be out of school.

Friday, Janet, Jenny, Michael and I went to Seoul. We went directly to the Seoul Temple, where I confirmed each of Jenny and Michael for 10 deceased sisters and brothers. And then I baptized each of them for 15 sisters and brothers, respectively. It was a great experience. The temple and the temple grounds are beautiful. The temple president dropped by to say hello. We saw Sister Lee (Bishop Cho's wife), but did not see Bishop Cho. The kids loved the opportunity to be in the temple.

### **Jenny Uses a Stratagem**

I need to report something about our daughter Jenny that makes us proud. She was supposed to attend a cheerleader sleepover at the school the night before the temple trip. She did not want to attend, because she knew that the atmosphere would not be conducive to having the spirit. She said she wanted to read the scriptures and go to bed early the night before the temple, not hear constant inappropriate talk about sex. Janet had been reading about how the Nephites used trickery and stratagems at time of war. Together, they decided to use one to help Jenny avoid a bad situation. They considered several options, and finally concluded that it would be better for Jenny to be "sick" on Thursday; otherwise, the girls and teachers would pressure her into attending the sleepover. Jenny later learned that the girls had watched some new sex comedy from America that was full of bad language and nudity. She had wisely avoided an unpleasant situation. We are so proud of Jenny for her desires to do right.

### **Suncheon District Conference**

In the Priesthood leadership session, I spoke on missionary work and on the Prophet Joseph Smith. The theme of the Saturday night session, as set by the First Presidency, was temple and

family history work. I talked about the temple and then showed the members my parents' life history, my mission history, and my newly printed life history. We slept at the Royal Hotel in Suncheon. It was hot all night and we couldn't cool the place down. But I thought about how uncomfortable Joseph Smith must have been in Liberty Jail and how cold Brigham Young was when he was crossing the plains—and I decided not to feel sorry for myself. On Sunday, I spoke on love within our wards and branches, on loving and supporting our local leaders, on not gossiping, backbiting, and criticizing. I also spoke about how local leaders must be servant-leaders, not dictators. I thought it was important for the members to hear that message. Sometimes leaders are a bit dictatorial, and sometimes the members are not very supportive, even when the leaders are following Doctrine & Covenants 121 in their leadership.

When I showed the members the book containing my life history, a sister said: “Hey, your book is not very long.” I responded: “I left out the bad parts.” She said: “Oh, I see.”

After the conference, I give candy to the little kids who sit quietly for two hours during the meeting. A father came up to me and said that his little boy had said to him, “Dad, if President Rife goes home in July, who is going to give us candy?”

### **Missionary Interviews**

The week was full of missionary interviews in Daejeon, Jeonju, and East Gwangju. The missionaries are doing well for the most part. It is always a delight to meet with them. It is always my goal to uplift and edify them—to spur them on to greater achievement, but to make them feel happy and appreciated.

### **Gospel Gives Us Important Work to Do**

On Wednesday, I drove Janet to Seoul. She had her hair done by Miss Han, who did a pretty good job. Janet's bangs were too short, but she quoted that saying that I often quote: “What is the difference between a good haircut and a bad haircut? Two weeks.” We met Bishop Cho and Sister Lee, my Korean parents, in Itaewon for lunch. We had a delightful visit. Bishop Cho met the missionaries in 1958 when he was lying drunk in the street on a rainy night. We talked about what the gospel meant to him and his family. At age 75, he serves in his ward bishopric on Sunday; he does home teaching during the week; and he serves with Sister Lee at the temple at least two times a week. He is the head of the Friday ordinance worker team at the temple. At age 75, his life has meaning, because of the gospel. He has important work to do, because of the gospel. As he put it to me, “old people who don't have anything to do just sit around thinking weird thoughts.” The gospel is great, because it gives meaning to our lives eternally, but also because it gives us important work to do whatever our stage of mortality.

### **Another Korean Missionary Conference**

Friday was our Korean missionary conference in Jeonju. Holding such a conference is probably not technically legal for a mission president. But I have felt compelled to do it once a year. Stated simply, it is hard to be a latter-day saint in Korea. I know it's hard anywhere, but I think it's harder in Korea than in America. All of our zone conferences are in English. The Korean missionaries don't get the full meaning or benefit from them. I don't feel badly about giving them their own meeting once a year.

The meeting was just great. In the morning, I gave a brief talk on how to stay active in the Church following your mission. Then, we had two one-hour speeches by exemplary Korean latter-day

saints, one man and one woman. I let the Korean missionaries pick from whom they wanted to hear. They chose Jo Yong Hyun, president of the Gwangju Stake, and Sister Park Jeong Rim, from the Jeonju Ward. President Jo is an outstanding latter-day saint. He is a CES teacher—and he is a master teacher. He is also a great stake president. Sister Park, to put it simply, is an angel. She serves all the time. She prayed for 14 years before her husband joined the Church—he is now the Jeonju ward bishop. She prayed for her dear friend for six years before she joined the Church—she is now the Jeonju Ward Relief Society president. Sister Park is full of faith and full of service. She helps the missionaries more, teaches more discussions and new member discussions, and performs more pure service than anyone I've ever heard about. She told me that serving is not a burden; it's an honor.

President Jo, who knows Sister Park well, told me that Sister Park is so full of faith, so pure and sweet, and so service-oriented that God always answers her prayers. The way he put it was this: "When she asks for something, God gives it to her." I suspect that one reason for this is that she never asks for herself.

We had Korean food for lunch at the conference. Elder Min Hye Ki, an area authority seventy, came to the stake center for another meeting, so I had him speak briefly to the missionaries. In the afternoon, they played a game and had discussion groups. One group included Korean RMs who were there to discuss how to be active and faithful following your mission. Another topic, selected by the missionaries, was "how can we help our foreign companions?" Then, there was time for some testimony bearing. It was a great day.

### **Hongseong District Conference**

Saturday I attended the Hongseong District Conference. Elder Min Hye Ki was the presiding authority, so I just had to stand up at the appropriate time and say something funny and spiritual, if possible. Janet did not attend on Saturday; she stayed home with the kids, as she should have done. She did go with me on Sunday. She gave a good talk entitled "the challenges are temporary, but the blessings are eternal." On Sunday, after the meetings, settings apart, temple recommend interviews, and two+ hour drive, we arrived home at about 4:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m. I spoke at a Daejeon Stake meeting for ward missionaries and ward mission leaders. The Daejeon Stake is making a real effort to improve missionary work.

### **Baptisms**

I rarely talk about baptisms, but I will this time. Why? Because I truly believe that our missionaries are to invite people to come unto Christ and leave the harvest to the Lord. Our baptism numbers are not high in Korea. They were particularly not high in 2003. I was disappointed. Starting in January, each Friday our missionaries have been fasting one meal before district meeting. Just one meal, because the missionaries need their strength. We have been praying for many chances to teach the gospel and for the ability to find prepared persons. In January we baptized 19 people. (That may not seem like many to some of you, but it's pretty good for us.) In February 40 people were baptized. Some of them will be confirmed in March, and so some of them will count in March, but 40 people were baptized in the month of February. I am very excited about this result. I know in part it is because of the faith and hard work of our missionaries. Our number of discussions and our number of investigators are up as well.

I mentioned in previous entries about Rob Holley, the TV celebrity, doing five firesides for us in the latter half of 2003. As of now, 11 people have been baptized as a direct result of those firesides. These 11 people had never heard of our Church until they attended the fireside to hear

Rob speak. In Doctrine & Covenants 18, it talks about our joy if we bring one soul into the kingdom with us. Rob brought 11 into the kingdom by giving five talks. I wrote him this past week and gave him a full update on the impact his service had for good in our mission.

### **March 2004 Journal Entries**

#### **Mission Tour—And the Great Snowfall of '04**

Early on Wednesday, Janet and I and the APs drove to Gwangju for the multi-zone conference of the Suncheon, West Gwangju, and East Gwangju zones. We met Elder Ko and his wife, Sister Kim Eun Hee, at the stake center in Gwangju. We had a good zone conference from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. I gave some “random thoughts” and bore my testimony about Joseph Smith and the Restoration. Janet abandoned her prepared text to talk about her recent experience with Jenny using a Nephite-like “stratagem” to avoid a potentially difficult situation. Sister Kim told about her conversion story. Elder Ko trained on a variety of items, including what it takes to be a successful missionary in Korea. After the meeting, Elder Ko interviewed the zone leaders. We then drove to Jeonju for a fireside. We met President Lee Cheol Oh of the Jeonju stake and his wife for Jeonju “bibimpap,” rice with meat, egg, vegetables, and red pepper paste. I usually don't care for that dish, but Jeonju is famous for it, and we went to the most famous restaurant in Jeonju, and I must admit that it was delicious. In the evening there was a fireside for new members, investigators, and English class members, but most of the congregation consisted of active members who were there to support Elder Ko. It is hard to hold a fireside on a weeknight in Korea, because most Koreans work or study until late in the evening. We did not get home until after 10 p.m.

On Thursday, we repeated the activities of Wednesday, except we did them in Daejeon in the chapel next to the mission home. No travel—and thus a more relaxing day. We enjoyed visiting with Elder Ko and Sister Kim.

March 5, Friday, was a day never to be forgotten. It was the day of the great snowfall of '04, as it shall come to be known. When I looked out of my bedroom window at about 5:30 a.m. and saw that it had snowed, I never would have imagined what the rest of the day would be like.

It doesn't snow much in Korea. When it does, the snow melts rather quickly. I assumed, wrongly, that this would be like every other Korean snowfall of which I was familiar. So, I predicted for Elder Ko that we would depart the mission home at 8:30 a.m. and arrive at the Cheongju Stake Center well before 9:30 a.m. As it was, we left slightly after 8:30 a.m.—and arrived at the Cheongju Stake Center at 2:00 p.m., four hours late for the zone conference. We learned later that in 100 years of recorded weather history March 5, 2004 had the greatest snowfall—19 inches. Stated simply, the midsection of South Korea—the Cheongju and Daejeon area—came to a screeching halt.

Eventually, we held an abbreviated zone conference in Cheongju—but only for the Cheongju zone. The missionaries from the Cheonan zone did not make it to the chapel until 7:30 p.m. And at that our two sisters serving in Cheonan, just 30 minutes (normally) up the expressway from Cheongju, were stranded in a bus on the expressway for over 24 hours. Daejeon was on the news in the United States, with scenes of helicopters dropping food to motorists stranded on the expressway. Sisters Massic and Barrus heard the helicopters, but did not see or receive the food.

In fact, I was very worried about them. I went to bed the night of March 5 not knowing where they were. And I awoke on March 6 not knowing where they were. Only a few people stayed on

the bus—many tried to hike out—and the few who stayed on the bus had dead cell phone batteries, so we did not receive news from the sisters. I was greatly relieved at about 8 a.m. on March 6 to learn that they were safe.

But back to the abbreviated zone conference: I loved what Elder Ko said to the missionaries in his Korean-style English. “Frankly speaking, my wife and I were very frightened by President Rife’s driving as we sat in the back seat of his car. But, I learned from President Rife that in deep snow you go fast uphill and slow downhill and you never stop. In fact, President Rife is a good driver in the snow based on his Utah experience.” It was my Utah experience that got us through the day, to be quite honest. We passed many stranded cars and hiking passengers. Looking back, it was a miracle that we made it to the chapel. And then, it was another miracle that we were able to make it to the train station in Cheongju.

Once at the train station, we abandoned the car in a snowdrift—and Elder Ko worked his magic. He wended his way to the front of an interminable line and succeeded in buying standing room only tickets for himself and Sister Kim to ride the train to Seoul and for Janet and me to ride the train to Daejeon. It’s a lucky thing that he did, or we would have been stuck on the expressway for 24 hours. In the deep snow, train transportation was the only kind of transportation that was moving. Ultimately, Elder Ko and Sister Kim made it home by 11:30 p.m.<sup>35</sup>

Janet and I rode the train to Daejeon. My feet were cold and wet, but I decided to be a pioneer and joke about it. My fear was that, because of the snow, there would be no taxis at the Daejeon station and we would have to walk to the mission home (about three miles). Of course, there were no taxis at the train station—and we had to walk home. But, I hadn’t thought about the fact that the sidewalks, which are already treacherous, would be ice-packed. And, of course, in brilliant fashion, I had not taken an overcoat with me to Cheongju. Thus, I had to endure a cold and slippery walk and a lecture on preparedness from Janet (who had worn warm clothing). After the mild chastisement, she shared a scarf and gloves with me—and they made all the difference. I was able to slip and slide home in relative comfort. It was a hard walk, but we made it and were grateful to be in our warm home with our kids at about 9 p.m.

Fortunately, the school had sent the kids home early in the day when it became clear that the snow was not going to stop, so they were safe and warm during the day. March 5 was quite an adventure!

### **A Kind Companion**

Sister \_\_\_\_ is a new American missionary. She had a tough experience with her first companion.<sup>36</sup> I transferred Sister Nam Hye Sook to be with her, even though Sister Nam does not speak English very well and Sister \_\_\_\_ can’t speak Korean yet. Sister Nam is, of course, the senior companion. On the first day of their companionship, Sister Nam slipped her arm through Sister \_\_\_\_’s as they walked along and said “We’re not senior companion and junior companion; we’re going to do this work together as friends.” Sister \_\_\_\_’s heart melted, and the two were off to a great start. They are having a wonderful experience as companions.

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<sup>35</sup> Elder Ko presided at the military district conference, which started the next morning at 9 a.m.—that’s dedication!

<sup>36</sup> I get really angry when trainers are not nice to their new greenies!

## Perfect Missionary Day

I had a very positive interview with Elder Chad Labrum. He was very positive and enthusiastic. He told me: "Today is a perfect missionary day. I studied the gospel this morning (and I love to study the gospel!). I am now meeting with my mission president. I have a lunch appointment with an investigator. Tonight I have dinner with the family of Choi Jung Bae (my first counselor in the mission presidency). I have two firm appointments for discussions. And I will do public service in the afternoon. What a great missionary day!"

## Staying Active

Many of our native Korean missionaries are concerned about staying active after their missionaries because of the pressures Koreans face. Here is some counsel I gave them about staying active in the Church:

**Remember who you are.** I was taught at the Mission President Seminar that missionaries will act properly if they remember who they are. And who are they? They are sons and daughters of God. They are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are His servants. They are those who are striving to reflect His light. Returned missionaries are also sons and daughters of God, followers of Jesus, His servants, those who are striving to reflect His light. If we remember who we are, we will be able to act accordingly.

**Be humble.** I quoted Doctrine & Covenants 11:12 and Mosiah 3:19. I spoke of early saints who fell away—Oliver Cowdery, who saw Jesus and angels and once said the Church would fall apart if he left (he left; the Church didn't fall apart); Sidney Rigdon, who saw Jesus sitting on the right hand of God; Martin Harris and David Whitmer, who saw an angel and the Book of Mormon plates; Thomas Marsh; William Law; William Smith; Lyman Wight; and many others. Why did they fall away? At least in part because they were too proud. They would not take counsel. If they had been humble, they and many of their posterity would still be in the Church.

**Perform personal worship daily.** That means studying the scriptures and having meaningful personal prayer every day. For a period of my life, I traveled internationally for one or two weeks each month. I quickly learned that, unless, I engaged in daily personal worship, I soon lost the guidance of the Spirit in my life. My perspective became less eternal and worldlier. It surprised me how quickly the Spirit left when I neglected to exercise spiritually each day. Daily personal worship—scripture study and prayer—is an essential in order to have the Spirit and stay active in the Church.

## Planning for the BYU-Hawaii Choir Tour

While new missionary orientation was going on, Brother Jung from the PBO was here to train Elder Scheepsma. And Brothers Choi and Oh from the PBO and President Sol and President Song from the Daejeon Stake were here to discuss the BYU-Hawaii choir concert on May 26, 2004. I skipped the AP and Sister Rife presentations to meet with the brethren about the concert. We are looking forward to the concert and are making a "concerted" effort to bring out a big crowd. An 1800-seat hall has been rented—and filling it will be quite a challenge for Daejeon. The choir will also be performing in Busan and Seoul, but both Busan and Seoul are far larger cities than Daejeon. Most of the missionaries serving in the Busan mission live in or near Busan. Seoul has two missions full of missionaries living in or near it. There are 20 missionaries serving

in the Daejeon area. The other missionaries live too far away from Daejeon to be able to attend (and get home on time) and to convince members and investigators to attend with them. I think the Daejeon brethren are doing a good job of planning. They are committed to having a large turnout. We in the mission will do all we can to help them.

### **Baegun Ward Conference**

Sunday I visited the Baegun Ward in Gwangju. This is almost the last leg of my “visit all the wards in the mission before I go home” program. Because it was ward conference, I gave a shortened talk, as the stake presidency was there. I also spoke in Priesthood Meeting briefly on missionary work. It was a good experience to meet with the members in their three meetings. I also got to meet in person Sister Park Ji Young, a delightful young woman who is a great new member and a favorite of all the missionaries. Elders Barley and Murray met her when they proselyted to young people standing in line for a free rock concert in Gwangju. Since the moment these two elders first gave her an English pamphlet, she has rarely missed any meeting held at the Church. She is a great member and is looking forward to being a missionary.

I also was blessed to hear the testimony of a 50-year-old man who resides in Gwangju and is on the high council. Almost 30 years ago, he was studying at a Presbyterian seminary. He met the missionaries and received a copy of the Book of Mormon. He thought it was a great opportunity for him. He would read the Book of Mormon in its entirety and prove to the missionaries that it was false. Early the next morning, he began to read the Book of Mormon. Sixteen hours later, he finished—and he knew it was true. The following day, he contacted the missionaries and asked to be baptized. They were shocked and told him about the need to take the discussions. He asked how fast he could take them. The elders taught him three discussions a day for the next two days—and baptized him the following day. He gave up his desire for a career in the ministry and has been a devoted Latter-day Saint ever since.

### **Splits or Companion Exchanges**

Monday we held an office staff meeting. And we prepared the agenda for zone leader council meeting tomorrow. We also reviewed the APs' proposed calendar of visits for the month. Technically, when the APs visit other missionaries, it's called a companion exchange.” And, technically, it's wrong to call such visits “splits.” However, it's hard to weed that word out of the missionary lexicon, especially when all the members in Korea, especially those who served missions years ago, use the English/Konglish word “split” to describe when missionaries exchange companions or when members go out with the missionaries.

### **ZLC**

Tuesday was zone leader council meeting. What a treat it is to meet with the leaders of our mission! It is good for the young missionaries to learn how a council works. I ask them for their advice on many issues. They give their advice. This helps me (hopefully) make wise decisions, because I have the keys to lead the mission. The Spirit was very strong during the testimony-bearing portion of the meeting. After the meeting I gave several temple recommend interviews and discussed preparations for an upcoming Robert Holley fireside in Hongseong. Again, at the end of the day, I was exhausted, even though all I had done was sit in a meeting.

## A Good Day

Wednesday was a good day. Janet and I walked three miles. Janet cut my hair (she does such a great job with what's left of it). I worked in the office, reading "president letters," doing other correspondence, and preparing talks for the upcoming weekend. I met with the Samseong Ward bishop who wanted to talk about how to improve missionary work in his ward. Thereafter, I had my monthly meeting with Jung Tae Gul, the president of the Cheongju Stake. He is a great man and a wonderful Priesthood leader.

## Recommending Brethren to Serve as Mission President

I spent about two hours today filling out forms to recommend six brothers to serve as mission president—three Korean brothers and three American brothers. Stake presidents and mission presidents are asked (confidentially) to recommend men who could effectively serve as a mission president. In a few months, I will not be in a position to make recommendations (as I will be released). It has been nagging on me for a few months that I should recommend these six brethren whom I believe would be wonderful mission presidents. I am almost done. I am still gathering some information. None of these brothers will be called immediately. Some may never be called. But I want to present their names to the Missionary Department. It takes a special Korean brother to be able to preside over and inspire American missionaries—and 80% of our missionaries are Americans. And, I think it takes a special American brother to be able to preside over and inspire the native Korean missionaries. The brothers I am recommending are brothers that I am confident can do this successfully. It also takes a special woman to be a mission president's wife. I am blessed with such a wife—and so are the brethren I am recommending.<sup>37</sup>

## Interviews and a Few Minor Problems to Address

Thursday I drove to \_\_\_\_\_ with Elder Schmuhl, one of the APs. I interviewed the \_\_\_\_\_ zone. He helped them practice teaching the discussions. I learned of one companionship problem. In addition, there is a set of elders who are having a hard time with their branch members. Apparently, the branch wanted the elders to teach one of the English classes only to members. When two nonmember girls tried to attend, one of the sisters "kicked them out." The elders were upset, arguing that English class is a proselyting tool, not a member benefit. Anyway, I've got to get to the bottom of this and try to solve the misunderstanding.

On Friday, I interviewed the \_\_\_\_\_ zone. There was one interesting comment made by a fairly new Korean elder. He said "Are you planning to transfer my senior companion (an American) next time?" I said "probably, because he has been in [name of small city] for over six months now." The Korean elder said "Next time send me a companion with an outgoing personality." At first, I didn't know what to say. I thought he was being rude to his companion. I looked funny and said "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, my companion is quiet and boring, and I am quiet and boring, and the people of [name of small city] are quiet and boring—so when we visit people no one has anything to say. It would be helpful if you sent me a loud companion this time." I then knew what he meant, and we had a good laugh—but I did make a note to send an extrovert next time.

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<sup>37</sup> One of the brothers I recommended, Ken Jennings, began his service as president of the Korea Busan Mission on July 1, 2008.

## Mokpo and Gwangju in One Long Day

Sunday was a long day. Elder Bennion and I left for Mokpo at 7:15 a.m. Last time, when Janet and I went to Mokpo, it seemed like we got there quite quickly, so I proceeded at a fairly conservative pace. I don't want to get any more tickets during my remaining few months, so I am trying to drive more slowly. The meeting at which I was to speak started at 10:00 a.m.—and at 9:10 a.m., it dawned on me that we were nowhere near Mokpo. We had 97 kilometers to go—just to the outskirts of town, and it's a big city. Plus, neither Elder Bennion nor I could remember exactly where the chapel was; we were following a map. And so, I began to drive 150 kilometers an hour. We literally raced to Mokpo, followed the map flawlessly, and arrived at the chapel at 9:59 a.m. The bishop began the meeting just as I sat down on the stand. Whew! You don't know how painful this is for a person who likes to be early.

I spoke for about 25 minutes during the sacrament meeting. Then, the bishop asked me to speak separately to a group of older people who had come from a retirement home. They were not members. Most were in their 70s. I told them a number of funny misuses of Korean language by foreign missionaries—and they laughed at all the right spots. I also talked about temple work and giving all the chance to hear the gospel, either here or on the other side. Most of my impromptu talk was intended to be funny. When I was finished, one of the older ladies said “I'd like to see the mission president dance.” I had to decline, though, as I am not much of a dancer, and I'm not sure it would have been appropriate for a Sunday School class.<sup>38</sup>

We had lunch (kimpap) with the ward members after the block of meetings. Then, Elder Bennion and I drove to Gwangju. We had time, so we drove slowly. We still arrived at the Punghyang chapel (where I was to speak at a fireside) two hours early. We parked the car and took a little nap. Elder Bennion snores—so we did a snoring duet for a while in the car. At 6:15 p.m., we prepared for the fireside. It was for new members. Three new members bore their testimonies—and they were really terrific. Their testimonies were deep, spiritual, and meaningful. Elder Bennion, who has a beautiful singing voice (when he is not snoring), was asked to sing a solo hymn, which he did. It was wonderful. The Punghyang missionaries also sang a hymn—and did a great job. Thereafter, I spoke for about 35 minutes on how to overcome the challenges of being a new member.

Elder Bennion served in the Punghyang Ward before being called as AP, so this was like the “Elder Bennion reunion tour.” The ward members and investigators were so happy to see him. He has a major impact on people—and this was obvious as he interacted with the ward members on this occasion.

After the fireside, at about 8:20 p.m., I was anxious to begin the two and a half hour drive home. But Brother Kim Kwang Yoon, the ward mission leader, informed me that his wife was preparing dinner. So, we had dinner with that great family, and with the bishop and his family. It was delightful, and the meal was delicious (rice, kimchee chigae, various deep-fried foods, etc.), but we did not get back to the mission home until about 12:15 a.m. Still, what a great day it was!

I have one other point on the day. Lately, I have felt that my Korean language ability is getting worse, not better. I have wondered whether I am getting old, senile, or just tired. But today, with

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<sup>38</sup> Korean elderly people (nonmembers, of course) often get together to drink excessive amounts of alcohol and dance. I'm not sure why this elderly lady wanted to see me dance, though, as I was clearly not drinking at the time in question (or any other time, for that matter).

sincere prayer and with the Lord's help, I was able to speak freely in Korean. It felt really good—and I know I had the Lord's help. I was even able to make a spur-of-the-moment pun. Koreans don't make puns, so I went out on a limb. Here is what happened. The Korean word for "to have an impact" is the same word as the word for "going crazy." You can tell the difference simply by the context. As I was starting my talk, and as I was noting that all the members were so happy to see Elder Bennion, I said "I don't know whether Elder Bennion had a great impact on all of you or whether he just drove you crazy." And, to my surprise, the Koreans laughed heartily at the pun, and even quoted it back to me later.

### **Humor and Forgiveness**

Earlier this month, Pres. Sol of the Daejeon Stake spoke to our missionaries. He said two things that I wanted to record. First, he encouraged the missionaries to learn to speak Korean well. He told them not to try to be funny in Korean, especially to people they don't know well. He said "it's okay for your mission president to be funny in Korean, because he knows what he's doing, but you'd better be careful." In other words, "let's just leave the Korean humor to the trained professionals!"

On a more serious and inspirational note, Pres. Sol told about an 82-year-old woman, the Gongju bishop's mother, who was baptized this month. The bishop's wife had thought about introducing the gospel to her mother-in-law for some time, but had thought "well, she's too old; she doesn't need to repent at this point; it's too late to introduce the gospel to her." But then the bishop's wife was inspired to open her mouth—and her mother-in-law quickly responded positively and said she wanted to be baptized (even before hearing the discussions).

Later, the 82-year-old convert said the following: When she was studying with the young elders, they taught her about forgiveness. She remembered that there was one man whom she really hated, a Buddhist monk. Years earlier, when her husband died, she asked the monk if his casket could pass by the Buddhist temple in a procession. The monk said no. She was angry at the monk for being unkind to her at the time she had lost her husband. She said she hated him. But now, through studying with the missionaries, she knew that she must forgive the monk. So, she forgave him in her heart. And she immediately felt peaceful and her mind was at ease. What a great story about how the gospel is for everyone and it's never too late!

### **April 2004 Journal Entries**

#### **Easter Break and the DMZ**

Monday was the start of Easter break for the kids. We haven't had much chance to have vacation time during the past three years, but we decided to take a couple of days this week. Early this morning, Janet and Jenny rode the new 200 mph bullet train from Daejeon to Seoul. They got their hair done, shopped and ate lunch at Itaewon, shopped at East Gate Market, and then rode the subway to the Seoul West mission home. I worked in the office this morning and also met with an elder who made a belated confession. Then, the boys and I drove to the Seoul West mission home, arriving about 15 minutes before Janet and Jenny. We had a nice visit with Jay R. and Casey Bangerter (Jay R is the mission president and Casey is his son). Kathi Bangerter had to return home on an emergency basis, as her father passed away. We had dinner with Jay R and Casey at a restaurant in Seoul called Bennigans—and it was very good.

We slept at the Seoul West mission home on Monday night—and then bright and early Tuesday morning, we drove to the USO in Seoul with Casey (Jay R had to work) and went on the USO's

day-long tour of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). I have toured the DMZ two other times, but Janet and the kids have never been there. And none of us had ever seen the tunnels dug by the North Koreans in the 1970s in an attempt to infiltrate South Korea.

The tour lasted from 7:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. One of the things that really strikes you about the DMZ is its proximity to Seoul. In traffic, it took the tour bus just one hour from downtown Seoul to the DMZ. I understand that it takes a fighter plane 90 seconds to reach Seoul from the DMZ. The Seoul metropolitan area, where almost 50% of the South Korean population resides, is shockingly close to North Korea.

Another somewhat amusing thing about the tour was this—the tour guide, a retired high school English teacher and a native Korean, was not too easy to understand. I consider myself gifted in understanding non-native speakers' bad English, but I had a struggle with him. And most of the other passengers on the bus, who were Americans unaccustomed to trying to understand non-native English, were stumped and a bit frustrated.

We thought it would be a relief when we reached Camp Bonifas, on the outskirts of the DMZ, and were to be briefed by an American serviceman. I tell you his English was worse (or at least harder to understand) than the Korean volunteer tour guide. For one thing, he was using Army lingo and cadence, which bears little resemblance to intelligent speech. And then he was talking fast and slurring his speech. Not a single person on the tour could understand what he was saying. One lady asked him to slow down, which he did momentarily, but then he reverted to unintelligible babble.

Michael was amused by the propaganda, especially the signs placed by both sides (mostly the North Koreans) near the border. One North Korean sign said “our leader is great.” Another said “Yankee go home.” But the South Korean sign said “We have 10,000,000 cars and lots of rice.”

I enjoyed seeing Tunnel No. 3. It is accessed by riding a train down nearly 100 meters down into the earth. Thereafter, you exit the train and walk through the tunnel until you get fairly close to North Korea. The tunnel is tight—even I bumped my head a few times, but it is surprisingly big. The tour guide said it would have been large enough for 30,000 troops to enter South Korea per hour. The tunnels were discovered in the mid 70s, fortunately before they were completed. It is obvious that North Korea intended to move troops into the South for a surprise attack using the tunnels.

### **Return Visit from the Bangerters**

I interviewed the West Gwangju zone on Thursday. The next day, we received our return visit from the Bangerters. They wanted to see what it was like outside the Seoul metropolitan area, where they have been assigned for their mission. So, Jay R, Kathi (back from the U.S.) and their son, Casey, rode the bullet train to Daejeon. We considered taking them to a Buddhist temple; then we concluded that we had seen lots of Buddhist temples before, and we just sat and talked. The kids went to a movie at the Say II Department Store. In the evening, we ate at TGI Friday's. The Bangerters slept over at our mission home, and then returned home on the bullet train Saturday morning in time to view General Conference (which we receive one week late in Korea).

### **Multi-Zone Conferences**

On Monday and Tuesday, we had multi-zone conferences in Daejeon and Gwangju. Janet gave a great talk on submitting one's will to the will of the Father. The assistants gave a presentation on

being a balanced missionary (i.e., doing all the important “missionary things,” including proselyting and working with members). I did my morning training, which we call “the president’s random thoughts.” In the afternoon, I gave two 30-minute talks instead of one 60-minute talk. The first was on modern day pioneers, people I know in the Church (both in Korea and the United States) who, although they never walked across the plains, still have broken the trail for their family and are, therefore, modern day pioneers. I also gave my presentation (usually reserved for zone leaders and priesthood leadership meetings) about being a servant-leader. The most prominent image in that presentation is the image of the Creator of the Universe on His knees washing the feet of his apostles. We had a great spiritual feast at zone conference, because of the strong spirits of the missionaries.

### **Jeongeup Ward Fireside**

Saturday Janet and I gave a fireside at the Jeongeup Ward. Jeongeup is a small city, but it has a great ward. Janet gave a talk about scripture study. I spoke for 40 minutes on several subjects, including missionary work, the parable of the sower, and my testimony of Jesus Christ. I told some funny stories, and they laughed at the right places, so I was happy. Hopefully, there were some spiritual parts to the talk as well. One Korean sister was visiting from Provo. She graciously approached me after the meeting and said that now she knew why she came back to Korea for a visit—that she had needed to hear what I had said. When that kind of thing happens, it makes you feel good.

### **A Bad Cold**

After the last week, I was exhausted and sick—and so I took a day off on Sunday. I rested at home instead of infecting everyone at the Samseong Ward. I needed the rest, but it is surely boring to sit still and do relatively nothing. Well, I did read a huge pile of “president letters,” but that doesn’t seem like real work. And, first thing this morning, I called out the transfers. One of the Korean sisters could not recognize my voice, because of my cold. It took me a few minutes to persuade her that I was the mission president and not some elder trying to play a joke on her. When she did realize it was me, she was really embarrassed, but I was delighted. Later, she wrote me an apology letter, which was completely unnecessary, as I had really enjoyed the situation.

### **Goodbye to Two Great Elders**

Tuesday was an interesting day. At 8:00 a.m. I interviewed Elder Kyle Hampton, who is finishing his mission today. (I had interviewed Elder Zackery Tenney a few days earlier.) Instead of having our farewell dinner, because of the parents’ flight schedules, we had a farewell breakfast. Elder Hampton’s parents came to meet him (they are from American Fork). And Elder Tenney’s mother and younger sister came to meet him (they are from Mt. Green, Utah). It was great to meet them. Janet fixed farewell breakfast—oven omelet, cinnamon rolls, hash browns, etc. It was delicious. We had our farewell testimony meeting, gift giving, and picture taking. Both of these elders were fine “boys” when they entered the mission field two years ago. Now, as they return home, they are fine “men.” They have really grown. They were both outstanding missionaries.

### **Final Robert Holley Fireside**

Our final Robert Holley fireside, this time in Hongseong, was a smashing success. I could not believe it. We usually have 75-80 attend district (not branch) conference in the Hongseong District. The members rented a 200-seat theater. At 6:50 p.m., there were 20 people in attendance. By about 7:00 p.m., there were 200+ in attendance. Eventually, an elder brought folding chairs

into the theater to accommodate the 230 people that attended the fireside. I was so happy. Robert Holley was so happy. The Hongseong district president and members were so happy with the turnout. We took Robert out to dinner after the fireside and arrived home around midnight. It was a great event and will spur on the missionary work in that region of our mission.

Robert Holley told me something funny at dinner. When he was a missionary, he loved to go to public bathhouses (mogyoktangs). This continued until just recently. In the last year or two, most of the Korean cell phones have become camera phones. Everywhere he goes, people snap pictures of him with their camera phones. The first time someone snapped a picture of him naked in a public bathhouse was the last time he was able to go to a public bathhouse. No more mogyoktang visits for Robert Holley!

Speaking of Robert Holley, I recently wrote him a letter to express my appreciation for his time and effort in giving five (now, with Hongseong, six) firesides in our mission. I wanted to let him know what an impact for good he has had in our mission. Here is what I wrote:

Dear Robert,

I enclose a summary of the results of the five talks you gave in the Korea Daejeon Mission during the second half of 2003. I hope you will be as pleased with the results as I am. [*Many new investigators and English class members—and 11 baptisms!*]

In Section 18 of the Doctrine & Covenants, it says that if we labor all our days and bring just one soul to the Lord, how great will be our joy with that soul in the kingdom of God (see Section 18:15). You labored five evenings—and have brought 11 souls to the waters of baptism. I know that the five evenings you gave us were given at great sacrifice to yourself and your family. Rob, I hope you will find great joy and great satisfaction in seeing the results of your labors.

You have achieved fame, success, and wealth—and still you put the kingdom of God first in your life. You have every reason to be proud, and yet you are voluntarily humble and self-effacing. You are a great example to me and to all the missionaries and members in the Korea Daejeon Mission.

I love you, Rob, and I appreciate you very much. It is an honor to count you as a friend. I greatly appreciate what you have done to bless our mission.

Would you please let Hyun Sook and the boys—Robbie, Kevin and Bradley—know that I appreciate their sacrifice of time and the sacrifice of their father's precious weekend time for our mission.

May God continue to bless you and watch over you and your family.

With love, appreciation, and profound respect,  
Richard C. Rife  
President

The other night I asked Robert if he received my letter. He said yes, that he had received it, had greatly appreciated it, and had read it to his father (who lives in Utah) on the telephone. His father was so proud that he asked Robert to send him a copy of my letter, which Robert did. This

reminded me again that no matter how rich or famous a person might be, it is always nice to get a word of appreciation. As the great President Spencer W. Kimball once said:

I find myself hungering and thirsting for just a word of appreciation or of honest evaluation from my superiors and my peers. I want no praise; I want no flattery; I am seeking only to know if what I gave was acceptable. (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 489.)

If Robert Holley, a famous TV star in Korea, and President Spencer W. Kimball need a word of appreciation, then we all do. We should give honest, deserved praise to others. It spurs them on. We all need it.

### **A Busy Few Days**

On Sunday, Elders Thueson and Edgeworth and I drove to Seosan for Seosan Branch Conference. It is nearly three hours away in the far northwest corner of our mission. I love the Seosan Branch members. I attended all three meetings and then spoke during Sacrament Meeting. After church, we had a light lunch. Then, the APs went off with the Seosan elders (to train them for a day), and I drove home. It was a good day.

Monday through Wednesday, I prepared for zone leader council, held an office meeting, held zone leader council, attended and spoke at a speech festival in Gwangju, and read lots of "president letters." We had a great zone leader council meeting; the spirit was strong; and the ZLs' testimonies were very inspirational. The Gwangju Stake invited me to attend and speak at its English speech festival for English class members. I was surprised at how good the speeches were. All participants were elementary, junior high, and high school students. It was an effort, after finishing ZLC, to go to Gwangju and participate in the meeting and return home, but I was glad I went. I also got to see many of our wonderful missionaries who are serving in Gwangju.

### **The Art Exhibit**

Thursday I worked in the office and caught up on another week's president letters. In the afternoon, Janet and I (and Elder Thueson) attended an art exhibit. The Daejeon stake patriarch's wife, Sister Yoon Kyung Hee, is an artist. She and her husband, Brother Min Dong Gun, are both in their 70s. Sister Yoon did not start to paint until she was in her fifties. Initially, she painted in a sort of impressionistic style. Now, she is into abstract art. I don't care for abstract art (impressionism is okay), but I do love Sister Yoon and Brother Min, and I was happy to support her at the opening of her exhibit.

Let me just pause to say why I don't like abstract/modern art: It's not art if I could do it. I have absolutely no artistic ability. I could not paint a picture if my life depended upon it. When I look at a picture that I could have painted, then I say to myself "that's not art."

But back to the exhibit. Sister Yoon has exhibited her paintings all over the world, including Paris. I think it's terrific that she developed her talent. She told me that she loved painting from the time she was a little girl, but that she had waited until her children were grown to focus her attention on it. Without warning, Brother Min asked me to propose a toast to Sister Yoon. I uttered something about all of us wanting to leave something behind, to make our mark, to show that we had lived on this earth. I said that Sister Yoon had left us many beautiful pictures to remember her by, when she dies about 50 years from now.

### **Reaching High to Sustain**

Friday I drove to Suncheon to interview the missionaries serving in the Suncheon District. The interviews went well, but because of the distance, I did not get home until 8:00 p.m. Usually, I drive both ways, but I let Elder Schmuhl drive home so that he can practice for the new mission president, President Nemrow. Once again, I was reminded of how wonderful our missionaries are. When I was interviewing Sister Nam Hye Sook, she told me how much she loved me; how I am always in her prayers; and how when I am sustained (e.g., in Suncheon District Conference), she raises her hand as high as she can possibly reach to show her desire to sustain me completely. I was deeply touched. Sister Nam is a great missionary, and now she is training new Sister Kim Se Ryeon, from Seoul.

### **New Member Letter**

I paraphrase a letter I recently received from Sister Lee Seung Ok, a new member of the Yeseong Ward in Chungju:

I am writing to thank you for sending Elder An Hee June to serve in Chungju. Elder An has been a big blessing in my life and in the lives of my family members.

I first met Elder An when I took my boys to the Church's English class. I had no interest in religion, but I wanted my children to learn to speak English to give them a better future.

For almost 30 years, I believed in God and attended another church. However, my family was so poor that I finally gave up on God. I made the decision that I would not believe in God any more and that I would not attend church any more. I felt that God had not heard my prayers and had not improved my situation.

I was so sad that I thought death would be preferable to my life.

So, when Elder An asked me to study about the gospel, it was hard for me to accept his invitation. And it was very hard for me to decide to be baptized. However, because of Elder An's sincere interest in me and love for our family, I could not refuse to be baptized.

When I was baptized, I felt a warm feeling in my heart. The gospel has changed my perspective. Now I do not view my husband and children as a burden. I view my family as my greatest blessing. (And, by the way, my husband is now taking the discussions.)

I hope that my children will grow up to be missionaries like Elder An and that they will share the gospel with someone like me, a person who wanted to die.

I am grateful to Elder An's mother for raising him to be such a fine young man.

I will be faithful to the gospel, and I will raise my children in the gospel. I can do this with God's help and because of Elder An's love.

And that, my friends, is what it's all about!

## May 2004 Journal Entries

### Daejeon Stake Conference

Saturday morning Janet and I walked at the track and then got ready to host Elder William R. Walker, the general authority who is visiting the Daejeon Stake Conference. Rather than have him stay in a hotel (there are not any good hotels in Daejeon), we invited him to stay with us at the mission home. Sometimes the kids complain when they have to vacate their room for a visitor, but not for Elder Walker. Jenny said she was happy to vacate her room for Elder Walker, who is such a kind and wonderful visitor and who is so good with the kids.

In the night session, Janet and I spoke, along with the stake president and several others. Elder Walker took about 45 minutes. I translated for Janet. She spoke on "the problems are temporary, but the blessings are eternal." I spoke on temple work and family history, as that was the topic outlined by the First Presidency. Jenny attended and sat with the sister missionaries. She really enjoyed Elder Walker's talk.

In one part of his talk, Elder Walker spoke of Brittany Spears and said that her style of showing off her midsection had become an international style. One trendsetter's immodesty had become the nation's and world's immodesty. After the meeting, Jenny decided to destroy her Brittany Spears album, as it has bad lyrics. She wrote a note to Elder Walker and told him that his talk had impressed her to do that.

Elder Walker quoted the portion of the 13<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith that reads: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." He said that Hollywood has its own Article of Faith, which is: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we make fun of these things."

After the meeting, we had dessert at the mission home with Elder Walker and the stake president. We invited the stake president's wife, Sister Kim, but she was practicing with the stake choir for the next day's performance. By the way, the Daejeon stake choir is really good!

On Sunday, Janet fixed a delicious oven omelet breakfast. We then drove Elder Walker to the stake conference, which was held at a rented building, a youth educational facility (like a YMCA only probably nicer). We held the conference in a theater. It was really hot under the lights on the stage, where we sat. Janet was not scheduled to speak, but as we were going to the venue, Elder Walker asked her if she was prepared to say a few words. She spoke about the joy of reading the scriptures. I had a fairly lengthy talk prepared on supporting the bishop and acting with charity towards other members of the Church. But, when it got to our turn, we only had 10 minutes before Elder Walker needed to start his talk. So, Janet gave a short but good talk. And I spoke on how the gospel makes us happy. Actually, I basically did a mini-stand-up comedy routine. It was unplanned, but actually may have come off better than the talk I had prepared.

Elder Walker does not prepare a stake conference talk in advance. Instead, he tries to say what the Spirit directs for that stake. He also does not have a set program for the meeting. During the meeting, he hands the stake president handwritten notes as to who will speak. There were several scheduled speakers (the youth), but some of us did not know if, or how long, we would speak. It certainly makes it interesting.

Still, I learned from Clive Winn, our great stake president in the BYU 7<sup>th</sup> Stake, that we tend to over plan our Church meetings. President Winn encouraged us to systematically under-plan, and then to rely on the Spirit to guide us during the meeting. I remember him citing the following scriptures as authority for his position:

Doctrine and Covenants 46:2

But notwithstanding those things which are written, it always has been given to the elders of my church from the beginning, and ever shall be, to conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Moroni 6:9

And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.

Elder Walker said at least several of the apostles do not prepare stake conference talks. They simply rely on the Spirit to guide them. Once when he accompanied Elder Eyring to a stake conference, he asked Elder Eyring how long he should speak, or until what time should he speak. Elder Eyring replied: "Talk until the Spirit tells you you're finished." (Elder Walker took 10 minutes!)

The official attendance for the general session was 446. That is truly remarkable to me. When we first arrived in Daejeon to serve as mission president, the attendance at stake conference was 325, which I thought was tremendous. Thirty years ago, when I served as a missionary in Daejeon, we had one branch of 30 teenaged members. Progress is slow, so slow sometimes that it is imperceptible, but there is progress in Daejeon and throughout Korea.

### **Applying for a Church Calling?**

I note one thing Elder Walker said on Saturday evening when we were talking informally around our table. I mentioned that several people had approached me after I was called to be a mission president, said that they would like to be a mission president, and asked how I had applied for that calling. I told them that I "applied" by answering the phone and hearing a voice say "this is Luella from President Packer's office; can you and Sister Rife meet with President Packer tomorrow?" Elder Walker said he was surprised to receive a number of similar questions over the years. He said that one day a 53-year-old man in his stake asked to meet with him. They shot the breeze for a few minutes, and then Elder Walker asked what he would like to talk about. He said that he had been thinking about it a lot and thought it would be a good experience to be a mission president or a temple president. He wanted to know how one applied for such jobs. Elder Walker told him that he had been a mission president and that he had not applied for that job. Elder Walker told him that he could not tell him what to do, but that he could tell him what not to do. Years before, President Kimball had told Elder Walker that he kept a list of people who wrote to ask for callings in the Church or to offer their services for callings such as mission president, temple president, or general authority. President Kimball said "we keep a list and then we never call them to such a calling."

### **Gifts from a Sweet Sister**

Thursday we drove to Gwangju, and I interviewed the 16 members of the East Gwangju zone. Five of them are finishing their missions early next month. In fact, 17 missionaries are finishing their mission that day, and I don't have time to give each his or her exit interview all in one day.

So, I spent extra time on the five departing missionaries and did their exit interviews. It was a great experience to review their missions with them. They were all very good missionaries. One of them, Sister Kim Ji Kyoung, gave me a carnation, a picture frame with a picture of her and a handwritten note, and balloons on my car. The Koreans are so kind to give gifts. Being an American male, I don't need the gifts, and I don't know what to do with the gifts, but I think the Koreans are kind and sweet for giving them.

### **Jeonju Stake Conference**

Saturday, we left for Jeonju, arriving at 3:40 p.m., just in time for the beginning of the Jeonju Stake Conference meetings. I was able to participate in the priesthood leadership meeting. Presiding was Elder Ko Won Yong, area authority seventy and second counselor in the Asia North Area President. Also present was Elder Lee Yong Hwan, a newly called area authority seventy. He is about 60 years old and is a professor at Seoul National University. Koreans' eyebrows rise when he is introduced as an SNU professor, as SNU is Korea's Harvard. I liked him very much and think he will be a wonderful seventy.

There was a delicious meal of bibbim pap between the sessions. The Jeonju sisters always do a great job of feeding visitors. We enjoyed the meal and greatly appreciated their kindness.

Sunday morning, we attended the general session of the Jeonju stake conference. The building was packed, and the meeting was very good. Without any prior planning, Elder Ko, Elder Lee, and I all spoke on how the gospel makes us happy. Janet gave her great talk on scripture study and encouraged everyone, especially the sisters, to have their own "sacred grove experience" each day. Two recently returned missionaries gave excellent talks. One sister returned just a few months ago from the Busan mission. Yesterday, her mother was baptized, truly a dream come true for her.

Elder Lee, the new seventy, spoke of being called to be a counselor in the temple presidency some years ago. The president told him that he would need to work at the temple all day every Tuesday. He asked if Elder Lee could do so. He took a deep breath and said "yes." Then, he fasted and prayed and met with the president of Seoul National University to tell him that he would not be at school on Tuesdays. The president said okay—and for several years Elder Lee served in the presidency of the temple, working on Tuesdays and Saturdays. He bore a strong witness that serving in the temple had strengthened (and made deeper and closer) his relationship with his wife, who always accompanied him to serve at the temple.

Elder Ko mentioned that a young sister from the Jeonju stake is serving as a full-time missionary in his ward in Seoul. Just a few days ago, Elder Ko and Sister Kim (Elder Ko's wife) had this sister and her companion to their home for dinner. Elder Ko had to pause because of emotion when he told the story of this sister and her companion entering a restaurant to eat a meal. They were seated and opened their menus. The cheapest item on the menu cost 5,000 Won (about \$4). Quietly, quickly, and with some embarrassment, they exited the restaurant and found a place called "Kimpap Heaven," where they each bought a roll of kimpap for 1,000 Won (80 cents). Missionaries live on 9,300 Won (US\$8) per day for food and transportation. Under most circumstances, a 5,000 Won meal is not affordable.

### **The Doctors and Multi-Zone Conferences**

While we were driving home from Jeonju, the APs were meeting the medical missionaries from Tokyo at the Gimpo airport in Seoul. Elder Smith is a psychologist, and Elder Johnson is a family

practitioner. Both are retired—and are now serving, with their wives, as full-time missionaries with the charge to help the missionaries serving in Japan and Korea. Janet packed a light meal for them to eat on the road. The APs drove them to the only decent hotel in Daejeon, where they are staying because we don't have room for two elderly couples in our mission home.

We held multi-zone conferences in Daejeon on Monday and in Gwangju on Tuesday. Janet gave a talk on “spiritually minded is life eternal” (SMILE). The doctors and their wives spoke to the missionaries. And Dr. Johnson saw lots of our missionaries privately. Only a few missionaries were brave enough to schedule an appointment with Elder Smith, the psychologist, although we kept it all confidential. In 2004, it's still apparently okay to have a physical problem, but not okay to have an emotional problem. I gave my random thoughts in the morning and a talk on following the example of Jesus in the afternoon. The APs gave a good training module on using the honorific “shi” in middle form. And the sisters had a breakout session with the senior missionaries (one of whom is a nurse) to talk girl stuff in the afternoon. It was a good zone conference—and it was delightful to have these wonderful couples with us from Japan.

They are both serving their second mission as senior couples. Elder and Sister Smith served as medical missionaries in Germany before being called to Japan.<sup>39</sup> Elder and Sister Johnson served a mission in Beijing, China before serving in Japan. In China, they were English teachers and were forbidden to teach about the gospel, even if a Chinese citizen asked them to do so. I was impressed by the devotion of the Smiths and Johnsons. They are truly wonderful latter-day saints.

Nine returning missionaries bore their testimonies at the zone conference. We had allowed about five minutes each. The Korean sister spoke for over 20 minutes. The Korean elder spoke for about 15 minutes. So we went over on time. Our Korean missionaries find it very hard to be brief. Without my having said anything, all seven American elders took about five minutes each. I was severely tempted to stop the Korean sister—and I probably should have—but I thought about what a wonderful missionary she had been; how many hard companions I had given her; how she had a gift for getting along with everyone; what a loving missionary she had been, and I decided that she could take as long as she wanted!

After the second conference, one elder confessed a relatively minor sin for which he was sure he would be sent home. He was greatly relieved to learn that he could stay and serve. He really is a fine elder. He is fairly new, but is studying very hard and is doing a good job at the language. The next day, this fine elder sent me the following letter:

Dear President Rife,

I just wanted to take this opportunity to write you a letter to say...Thanks! I feel so much better after our talk yesterday. I actually feel like a whole new person. I want to tell you how much I appreciate you and Sister Rife. You have sacrificed a lot to come out here to be our parents for three years. I'm sad that you will be leaving before my time is up, but I can truly say I have two new 'eternal friends' to add to my list.

You make me feel like I really matter in this work. Thanks for that. I only hope now that I live to the confidence you have in me and become the missionary you think I am. I love this gospel so much! I love my mission. I'm thankful for the Atonement of Christ and the joy that it allows us to have—like what I'm experiencing even as I write this letter.

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<sup>39</sup> I asked if they were only willing to provide medical services to the former Axis powers, but they said they were willing to treat anyone.

This gospel is certainly true! Learn it; live it; and most importantly, love it! Then everything will be good in this life...and in the next. I'm thankful for the opportunity I have to serve with you.

### **Less Active Members Return**

I received this positive news from Elder Anjewierden:

Two weeks ago at English class, a gentleman came up to me, and he knew a lot about our Church. I asked if he were a member—and he said he was. Seventeen years ago, he was baptized and immediately went inactive. He thought he would be successful in life. But now, with no job, and no wife, he has realized that he needs God. So, randomly one day, he decided to become an active member of the Church. He has been active for the past two weeks—and he seems to be doing well. We also visited a sister a while ago who has been less active for about a year. It was as simple as that—she has been out to church every week since. It's been pretty cool to see the miracles the Lord is doing in our Chungjang Ward.

### **Daecheon Branch Conference**

Bright and early this morning, we were off for Daecheon, the smallest branch in our mission. The average attendance is less than 10 people. One Sunday, about a year ago, when my AP Elder Thueson was serving there, he took an investigator to church at 10:00 a.m. The only people who attended church that day were Elder Thueson, his companion, and the investigator. Even the branch president did not attend. Suffice it to say, that was the last they saw of that investigator. Well, because it was branch conference, we had a total of 20 persons in attendance, including several investigators and less-active members and a number of visitors, including the district president, my APs, and myself. I enjoyed the meetings, spoke about the joys of missionary work, and had lunch with the members after church.

### **Mission Conference and BYU-Hawaii Choir Concert**

Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, was a truly interesting and wonderful day. It would have been my mom's 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, so I thought of her (and the great impact for good she had on my life) this day. We had a mission conference from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Prior to the conference, I met Robert Holley at the train station. He came down from Seoul by the new speedy KTX railroad. Robert spoke to the missionaries for an hour about his mission in Korea and some tips on being a great missionary. Thereafter, he took an individual photo with each missionary. The missionaries have what they call their "BRT" book. It's a photo album of their families and friends at home. They show these books at family home evenings and to investigators to "break the ice" and to "build relationships of trust." It will be helpful for each missionary to have a picture with one of Korea's biggest celebrities. They will be able to tell Koreans that Robert Holley is a member of the Church and a bishop in Gwangju.

Janet, with some help from the Daejeon sister missionaries, then fed all 120 missionaries—chili, rolls, chips, carrot sticks, and blonde brownies. What an effort it was. I really appreciate Janet for her service. While the missionaries ate, I took Robert back to the train station, as he had to film a TV show at 3:00 p.m. in Seoul.

After lunch, Janet spoke about this life being the time to repent, serve God, perform our labors, and prepare to meet God. She used slides, in Korean and English, to ensure that the Korean missionaries could understand. I did some training and gave a few spiritual thoughts.

The missionaries had a few free hours before they were to attend the BYU-Hawaii choir concert at Chung Nam University in Daejeon. The Daejeon stake has been preparing to host the BYU-Hawaii choir for many months. An 1800 seat venue had been selected at Chung Nam University. To be honest, I thought this was a mistake. I thought there was no way the Daejeon stake could fill that concert hall. The choir performed the night before in Busan in an 1800-seat hall that was not filled. Busan is three or four times larger than Daejeon and Daegu, which is close by, is twice the size of Daejeon.

Still, I have marveled at the dedication of President Sol Yang Hwan and his committee, as they have worked tirelessly. They gave our missionaries assignments to visit schools and music teachers, and we have done so. The former stake president, Brother Son Yoon Heon, sold about 150 tickets by himself. And yet I still thought there was a real chance that the turnout would be meager. I was glad that I was able to let our missionaries attend and make a memory.

Well, Janet and I attended a VIP dinner before the concert with the BYU-H president, Brother Shumway and his wife, and with all the Daejeon leaders and some VIPs from the Daejeon Board of Education. President Shumway donated over 10 million Won to the Board for scholarships for underprivileged students. In fact, all the profits, whatever they were, were donated to the schools in Daejeon. I was interviewed on camera by someone from BYU-H who is making a documentary about the choir's tour in Asia. We sat by Michael and Kelli Allen, our friends from Orem and Seoul (when we lived in Seoul in the 80s). Michael is a high-level administrator and professor at BYU-H and is accompanying the choir on their tour. It was delightful to spend some time with Michael and Kelli.

Because of traffic, we did not arrive at the concert hall until about 6:50 p.m., just before the 7:00 p.m. start. And there was a huge line of people trying to get tickets for the event. As we entered the building, some of the missionaries told me that they had given up their tickets to investigators and English class members. I asked the ushers to let the missionaries in, whether or not they had a ticket, and then I had to find my seat.

And there's a metaphor in what I'm about to write. It turns out that many of our 120 missionaries gave up their tickets to people who were waiting in line (some of whom were their investigators). When they did so, they fully expected that they would not get to see the concert. They would simply miss out on it and go back to their areas of labor earlier than expected. However, instead of that result, the Daejeon members running the concert opened up a section of seats right in front of the stage, a section that they had not originally planned to use. So, instead of losing the opportunity to see the concert, in fact, they were rewarded with better seats than they originally had. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. I am proud of them for being Christian enough to give up their seats for an event they were looking forward to.

Bottom line—the concert was great! The choir was terrific! It was a thoroughly delightful evening—and 1,750+ people were in attendance. Michael Allen told me privately that the school would have been satisfied with 50% attendance—i.e., 900. I think they were overwhelmed with the response. President Shumway asked me to send an email to Elder Walker in Tokyo to let him know about the smashing success of the concert.

All of the choir's numbers were good, but it was emotional for the crowd (and for me as an honorary Korean) when the choir sang a beautiful rendition of "Arirang" in Korean with flawless pronunciation (even Bruce Grant<sup>40</sup> would have been impressed). As an encore number, the choir sang "Come, Come Ye Saints," and shocked and inspired the Korean saints when they sang the last verse in Korean.

I give a lot of credit to President Sol Yang Hwan and the core Daejeon members, who really made an effort to have a big turnout for the concert. They were very happy. They did a great job.

### **A Mother's Influence**

In his testimony as he was finishing his mission and leaving the country, Elder Zackery Tenney said something profound and moving: "Every Christ-like virtue I possess or am starting to possess I first observed in the life of my mother."

### **Elder Sean Stewart**

Elder Stewart told me that, during his two years as a missionary, he never met a less-active member who was as happy as an active member. He enjoyed helping reactivate a family in Gwangju. Elder Stewart taught a young man who looked and dressed terribly when they first met. As they taught him the gospel, without making any comment about appearance, the young man went from a tee shirt to nicer clothing, to an open collar, and to a full suit, with a missionary hairstyle. Elder Stewart said the appearance change was symbolic of a life-style change going on inside this young man.

### **Sister Kristen Wood**

Sister Wood told me she had learned that you're always happier when you do what the Lord wants you to do. She didn't want to go on mission, but the Lord whispered to her that she should go—and she became happier. It has been my experience that the prophet has called all worthy young men to go on a mission, but that the Lord calls certain young women to serve a mission through the Spirit.

## **June 2004 Journal Entries**

### **From Less-Active Member to Missionary**

On June 2, I drove to the Incheon airport to meet the last new group of missionaries to enter the mission during our tenure—three elders and one sister. One of the elders, Courtney Ward, has an interesting story. In 2002, a full year after I started as mission president, Elder Ward was a member of the Air Force serving on the Gunsan Air Force Base within our mission boundaries. At the time, he was a less-active member of the Church. However, about half way through his one-year tour of duty, he became active in the Church. Thereafter, he served in Iceland—and, while serving in Iceland, he processed his missionary papers. From less-active member to full-time missionary, all within the space of time that I was serving as mission president. What a great story!

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce Grant is a dear friend of mine and a Korean language expert who is notoriously hard on foreigners for their poor Korean language pronunciation.

## **A Rich Heart**

In early June, I received this letter to the president from Elder Kim Jae Man. Elder Kim wrote in English, even though Korean is his native language.

[After expressing how much he enjoys serving in the country town of Hongseong.] One of our investigators is Sister Oh Hwa Ja. She is very nice. Even though she sells fruit on the street, she is poor, but her heart is richer than any other the rich. Every time she saw poor people or other needy people, she tried to help them. I learned a lot from her. I know happiness does not depend on wealth. But, seeing people who are really happy makes me realize that truth once more. I love missionary work.

## **Visit of Sister Menlove and Sister Beck**

We had an interesting experience on June 3. In addition to holding new missionary orientation, we had a visit from Sister Coleen Menlove, General President of the Primary, and Sister Julie Beck, 1<sup>st</sup> counselor in the Young Women General Presidency. Their husbands accompanied them. I met them, along with Elder Min Hye Ki, our area authority seventy, at the train station in the late morning. We had lunch with them at the mission home—along with our new missionaries. I asked them to share their testimonies with the missionaries, which they did beautifully. I translated for Elder Min, who is originally from Busan. It is hard for me to understand him, but I prayed for assistance and believe that I was helped. He gave a beautiful testimony about his conversion, which was based on his reading of the Book of Mormon.

Sister Julie Beck said something interesting as she bore her testimony. She lived in Brazil from ages 4-9 while her father, Elder W. Grant Bangerter, was serving there as mission president. One day Julie said to her mother “Why does everyone here in Brazil have to be so weird?” Her mother, Sister Gerry Bangerter, replied: “Oh, Julie, they’re not weird; they’re just interesting!” It really is attitude that counts!

In the evening, we had dinner with these two couples and the leaders of the Daejeon Stake. Then, the sisters provided training to the auxiliary leaders in the Daejeon stake. Jenny attended so that she could meet Sister Beck. At the end of the meeting, Sister Beck said “I didn’t have enough time to visit with you, Jenny, so please make an appointment with my secretary and visit me in my office in Salt Lake City.” Jenny intends to do this.

## **The Elders Become Real Men**

Today Janet, Jenny, and I went to Jeonju to interview the 20 missionaries serving in that zone. Janet and Jenny had a delicious lunch in the “hole in the wall” restaurant near the university campus. And, they graciously brought me back some kimchi soup for lunch. While I interviewed the missionaries, Janet and Jenny visited with those who were waiting. Janet made the comment that it is interesting to see the differences in maturity level between the elders who are about to go home and those who have just arrived. They are all terrific, but they truly do become real men as they serve their missions.

## **Mission President Pay Day**

*I guess it's common knowledge that mission presidents don't have a pay day in the traditional sense of the word. But, when a mission president receives thanks from a missionary, that's*

*mission president pay day—and it's better than receiving a paycheck. Here at the end of this chapter are just a few examples of the numerous kind expressions of thanks from missionaries that make serving as a mission president a great experience. Note that the missionaries are too effusive in their praise.*

### ***Making Weaknesses into Strengths***

I was deeply moved as I interviewed (separately) Sisters Kang Kyeong Hee and Lee Keun Young. Sister Kang told me that my recent talk on finding our weaknesses and asking God to help us make them our strengths had really inspired her. She has identified a weakness and is systematically working to make it her strength, all the time asking God for His support and any change of heart necessary to accomplish her goal. And Sister Lee told me that the grind of missionary works starts to get her down after a while, but every time she starts to get down, we either have zone conference (at which I speak) or a personal interview. She said that the things I say or the light of Christ that I reflect gives her power and rejuvenates her to be able to go on in the work with excitement and enthusiasm. I note that Sister Lee is one of the very best missionaries in our mission. I never detect any letdown on her part. She is a hard worker; she is bold; and she is an example to all of us.

### ***Missing My Daughter's Wedding***

I received a note from Elder Robert Stewart in Jaecheon that was meaningful to me. He wrote: "I love serving in Korea and right now in Jaecheon. It is so fun, and I am learning a lot and trying to do my best to serve the Lord. I am grateful for your service and sacrifices you make—especially not being able to attend your daughter's wedding. I know that the Lord wants you here serving and will bless you tremendously for your sacrifices! I am grateful for your hard work, and for being my wonderful mission president. Thanks!"

### ***These Were Days Never to Be Forgotten***

One of our wonderful elders is Elder John Vowles; he works hard and always has good companionship relationships. Elder Vowles made me feel so good when he said, "Do you remember at the end of the Pearl of Great Price, in the footnote, where Oliver Cowdery says 'These were days never to be forgotten' about translating the Book of Mormon with Joseph Smith?" I said yes. Elder Vowles said "The other day, when you were in front of us teaching us about humility, I thought "'These are days never to be forgotten' when I get to sit in meetings like these and have my mission president teach me the things I need to know to have a happy life and to grow in the gospel." What a sweet thing to say! What humility on his part! You gotta love this job, no matter the sacrifice involved.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Letter from Elder Curtis Petersen***

This is from Elder Petersen, who is now studying accounting at BYU-Idaho:

President Rife, I just wanted to thank you so much. When I look back upon my mission, I have nothing but the happiest of memories, and I acknowledge that you were a BIG PART of that. I have talked to so many returned missionaries who felt pressured to work hard because their mission president was running the mission like a business. But, that

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<sup>41</sup> This is the kind of love and respect the missionaries show their mission president, whether he deserves it or not.

was not you, President Rife. You motivated us to work hard by encouraging us to work hard to show our love for the Savior. And even more importantly, you showed us how to do that by your example. One of my roommates said that he would have interviews with his mission president once a month. He would sit down, talk about statistics, shake his hand and go back to work. When I think of my interviews with you, I remember talking about funny, random, and personal things—and who could forget the big hug at the end. Thanks for all the charity you taught and showed me, President Rife. Thanks for everything.”

### ***Thank You Note from Sister at End of Her Mission***

I received this note from Sister Kristen Wood, who has been a dear friend to our family, especially Jenny:

Hi, President. I know that everyone says it, but I wanted to say it too—thank you so much for coming to Korea. Thank you for taking care of me and everyone else out here. I don't know how it's possible, but thank you for loving every single one of us. You have taught me so much about love and leadership. I have learned lesson after lesson from you. Thank you!

Thank you for all the interviews and words of wisdom. Thank you for your patience. I don't know if I ever really said it aloud but learning to love missionary work was really, really hard at first, which I'm sure you know, but I wanted to say thank you for pushing us but not too hard and always being so encouraging. Now I can say that I do love missionary work.

Thank you for giving me so many amazing companions and for knowing when I needed a change. Thank you for being a great father figure for me and for taking all of us and making us part of your family. I have no doubt that you were an integral part in the timing of this mission for me. I hope you know how much you are loved and appreciated.

### ***Having Confidence in Church Leaders***

This meant a lot to me. Elder Lester was less active before his mission. He read lots of anti-Mormon literature. He had a poor opinion of our Church leaders. Rebuilding his testimony has been a long process for him. In our last interview, he said that observing the mission president had helped him have a stronger testimony of our living prophets and Church leaders. He said “I assume our prophets and apostles are like you, and if they are, then I can have confidence in them.”

## **CHALLENGES AND “NOT SO POSITIVE” EXPERIENCES—YEAR 3**

### **Baptizing Someone Who Was Not Ready**

And now a somewhat sad and odd tale: For about two years, a young Korean man whose Korean name is Jack has been attending our English class. He has had the discussions at least twice in our mission. He has adopted Sister Parsons as his grandmother. The elders, and more so Sister Parsons, have spent countless hours with Jack in gospel, English, and life discussions. He is from a difficult background. His parents do not love each other. His father is an alcoholic and a gambler. He has not experienced a lot of love in his life. And yet, he is improving. He is doing better. The influence of the elders and Sister Parsons over the past two years has been good for

him. He is growing and progressing. We have looked at him as a long-term project. The first time I heard of him was when in English class he said it was good that the terrorists had knocked down the twin towers in New York. One of the elders that night had wanted to physically assault him, but had held back. Since that time, he has grown and matured a lot.

However, he is not ready to be baptized. He doesn't attend church meetings, just English class. He doesn't have a testimony. He finds the Book of Mormon boring. I spoke with him in the not too distant past and told him that he should not join our Church to make the missionaries happy, but he should only join when he has a testimony.

Well, he left Daejeon to go away to school for a couple of months. Then, he returned and came back to English class. At this point, we received word from another mission in Korea that he had been baptized and confirmed while he was there and that they feared he was now an inactive member. Sister Parsons confronted him—and eventually he admitted it. He had joined the Church while away at college without telling us and without having taken the discussions in the other Korean mission. And, of course, he is an inactive member, as he has never been to church meetings and still is not interested in attending. We were really disappointed. He is not ready to join the Church. We had intentionally not baptized him. Yet, other missionaries in another mission met him at their English class and hurriedly baptized him, apparently without teaching him the discussions, without confirming whether he really had a testimony, and without seeing that he had developed the habit of attending church.

So now he's back in Daejeon—and now he's our less-active member. It's an ironic twist, too. We don't care about baptism statistics in our mission, but there are some missions that do and there are some leaders who do. We invested two years in Jack and did not baptize him, because he was not ready; another mission invested two months in Jack, did not teach him the discussions, missed the fact that he was not ready, but got that "all important" baptismal statistic. Sorry, I'll be positive starting now.

### **An Icy Reception**

Sunday I visited and spoke at a ward in \_\_\_\_\_. There are old people and teenagers and kids and middle-aged people. I enjoyed visiting with the older people. But, the ward leaders were kind of icy towards me. All the other wards I visit make a big fuss over me and provide lunch (even when I don't need it or want it). But this ward's attitude seemed to be, "Well, here you are. Do whatever it is you're going to do." I stayed for all three hours and participated in all the meetings (but wished at one point that I had just spoken at Sacrament Meeting and hit the road). I remembered then that our missionaries who serve in this particular ward are not too excited about it either. Wards are groups of people, and as people have different personalities, so do wards. This ward just isn't that friendly, which is evidenced by the lack of missionary work success.

### **An Easier Mission?**

*I have changed the facts to protect the identity of the elder in question. He did not serve in our mission long, and I don't think anyone will recognize him from this description.*

I spent a lot of time this month with an elder who wants to go home, or at least be re-assigned to an easier mission. He is really a genuinely nice person. He is just not a strong person. He told me that he has basically quit or failed at everything he has tried thus far in his life—as soon as things got hard. For example, he would play sports until practice became hard—and then he would quit the team. This Korean mission experience is hard—language, culture, food, etc.—so he would

like to quit, or be reassigned to an “easier” mission. I have had him call his parents. I have had him talk to his stake president. I have had him fast and pray. I had him consider the situation while watching General Conference. In the end, I convinced him to stay on a mission, but I was unable to convince him to stay on this mission. Strangely, when I was counseling him I kept saying things like “It’s not going to be easier to knock doors in Detroit than it is here. Koreans are nice to us. Large men in Detroit are likely to be way scarier than Koreans.” Every time I said that something would not be easier in the U.S., I just randomly used Detroit as an example. Later on in the month, when I processed a change of mission for him, he was reassigned to the Michigan Detroit Mission.<sup>42</sup> I truly hope he can succeed. I fear, however, that as soon as the Detroit Mission becomes hard, the fallback position will be to return home.

I can’t resist saying one more thing. This has happened more than once. This elder didn’t like Korea, Korean, Korean culture, Korean food, etc. However, when he learned he would be going to the U.S., he just had to go to the city center to shop for souvenirs. It’s strange to me that he (and others like him) would want souvenirs from a mission they did not serve.

### **Must Baptize to Get Promoted**

Elder Sexton, whom I interviewed in Gwangju on Thursday, told me that he had received a letter from his friend who is serving as a missionary in Brazil. His friend is discouraged because he has not been able to “go senior.” In his mission, the mission president requires a missionary to baptize 10 consecutive weeks before he can go senior. This elder has baptized a lot, but not 10 weeks in a row. Elder Sexton, who has his head on straight, told me that he thought this was ridiculous. I agreed with him. Elder Holland taught the mission presidents that the missionaries’ purpose is “to invite people to come unto Christ.” Some mission presidents, who are business- and numbers-focused, don’t seem to internalize this principle.

### **A Hard Saturday**

Todd, Michael, and I had decided to go to Seoul today to shop at Itaewon and to have lunch at Schlotsky’s Deli there. But, last night, on the way home from the Halloween party, we were all coughing and sniffing and complaining of sore throats—so we decided to be wise and stay home and rest. It would be my first chance to do so for some time.

As it turned out, the phone calls started coming in before 7:00 a.m. And an elder called to say that he needed to see me urgently. He came over and confessed some serious sins that occurred before his mission and that were not confessed to his priesthood leaders. I spent quite a while with him, and then I had to write emails to the Area Presidency and to the Missionary Department advising them and giving my recommendation. All of this took up a big chunk of the day—so I don’t consider it as a day off.

Because of a variety of factors—e.g., the elder was not even active in the Church when the sins occurred; he is the only active member in his family; and this elder has been a model missionary for well over a year—I recommended that he be allowed to complete his repentance process here in Korea rather than being sent home.

A few days later, I received a call from Brother Pincock of the Missionary Department approving my recommendation. I am so happy that this wonderful elder can stay and finish his mission. I prepared some terms of probation, removed this elder from his leadership position, and gave him

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<sup>42</sup> I changed the name of the mission to protect the identity of the person involved.

some things to do, including writing his stake president and bishop to apologize to them. I also called his stake president to make sure he was okay with my decision (as approved by the Missionary Department). As is always the case, the stake president was a great guy and supported me 100%. He agreed with me that helping this elder have a success experience was important. It truly is a joy to make a phone call to a stake president. They truly are great men.

### **Belated Confession**

I received a confession from a sister who had some unconfessed moral problems before her mission. They were not of a sufficiently serious nature that I felt compelled to involve the Area Presidency and the Missionary Department, so I asked her to write her bishop and stake president and then to put the matter behind her.

### **Another Inappropriate Phone Call**

One of the Church leaders in another mission in Korea called me this past month. His daughter, who shall remain nameless, serves in my mission. Apparently, she was betrothed to a young man before her mission. They were not formally engaged, but there was some sort of understanding reached between the young people and their parents that was made known publicly. Now, the sister, in letters home, has indicated that she does not want to marry the young man and instead wants to study abroad. Her father called to tell me that I needed to tell her to marry the young man. He said that if she does not, he will lose face and will have to resign from his Church calling. My mind was in a whirl during this conversation. I was glad that I did not have the complexity of being Korean. When an American goes on a mission, he or she expects that his or her girlfriend or boyfriend will not wait. Also, I thought it was highly inappropriate for him to call me to try to influence his daughter. She is my missionary, and I ought to help her have a good mission, but it's not my job to tell her to marry some guy she may not love so that her father won't lose face. I thought about openly debating the issue with him and telling him that he was out of line, but then I thought "I don't need that kind of trouble." So, I just said "nae, nae" (yes, yes) many, many times, and told him I hoped things worked out all right. No way I'm going to interfere in a thing like that!

### **Flirting**

Early that morning, however, I had to call an elder on the telephone and warn him, in strong terms, to stop flirting with girls and proselyting almost exclusively to girls and young women. I was blunt, giving him examples of missionaries who had had problems in this regard. I told him that I did not want anything bad to happen to him, the girl(s) in question, or the Church. He "took it like a man," and I felt good about the conversation in the end. One of our kids, however, was passing by the den in the mission home at the time and then said to Janet, "Wow, dad's really mad at one of the missionaries." "How do you know?" Janet asked. The response: "I heard him say 'what the hell were you thinking, elder?'"

### **Four Sisters Come to the Mission Office**

After church, I had four sisters (living in the same apartment) come from a far-away city to see me at the mission office. Janet reminded me that sometimes Mohammed has to come to the mountain; the mountain does not always go to him. These sisters were fighting with one another, so they decided they needed to clear their heads by leaving their area and traveling to a beach and walking along the beach and listening to the waves hit—in other words, they needed nature. That would be fine. I might even have let them do it, if they had asked me, which they had not.

Eventually, I learned about it, and I called them in to say “I am disappointed in you,” especially since three of you are experienced missionaries and one of you is in her first transfer period. “Thanks,” I told the older missionaries sarcastically, “for showing our new missionary that when you have a problem, you just break the rules.”

One of the sisters was more upset that I found out, and how I found out, which I did not reveal, than that she had broken the rules. I shut her down quickly, saying “hey, I’m the one who is disappointed here, not you. If you hadn’t broken the rules, we would not be having a problem right now.”

Anyway, we ended on a positive and edifying note. As a mission president, you can’t let the missionaries think they can get away with anything, or they will spin out of control. Some missionaries are constant problems for me. They lack social skills and cannot get along with any companions. I have to labor for hours each transfer planning trying to figure out who can put up with them for a transfer period. I’d hate to be that kind of missionary. I’ve had frank discussions with them, but I’ve found that I have little success in reshaping a personality that has been defined over 20+ years, not counting the pre-existence.

This reminds me of a call I received from an awesome branch president in a district that reports to me. He told me that there is a sister in his branch who really wants to serve a mission. She is not morally worthy right now, but could become so in a relatively short period of time. However, this president told me the thing he really worries about is that this sister cannot get along with anyone. And, she gets angry constantly, and when she’s angry she’s really angry. He said “I would hate to be her mission president, and I would hate to be her companion.” So I said “let’s not recommend her for missionary service.” She is old enough that it’s now or never, so he’s going to recommend alternative forms of service in the Church. Over the course of my service as a mission president, I have had to labor with some (not too many) missionaries who should never have come on a mission. I would have greatly appreciated their leaders having had the courage to say “you don’t qualify.”

### **Road Rage**

We had a weird experience with a Korean driver on the way home from the airport with the new missionaries. Koreans are aggressive drivers and swerve in and out of lanes and cut each other off. Sometimes they duel each other on the highway if they think they have been wronged. I was just driving in my lane; I had not swerved in or out or cut anyone off. I think the driver of the car in question must have mistaken us for another van (there are many similar Hyundai vans on the road). He started tailgating us, and then passing us and cutting in front of us, and then slowing down, almost slamming on the brakes. It was really weird. He would not leave us alone. This went on for some time. I did not flash him; I simply tried to avoid him. I must admit that if we had not had two new missionaries in the van, I may have pulled over and let Elder Sparrow, a star football player at 6’4” and 210 pounds, have a go at the guy. But, I didn’t want that to be the new missionaries’ first memory of Korea. Finally, I moved right behind a huge truck and stayed tight to his bumper in the right lane. The guy could not cut in front of me, so he finally gave up and moved on. I know that road rage is alive and well in the U.S. It’s alive and well in Korea, where the drivers are, to be quite honest, really terrible—and really inexperienced.

### **Wanting to Go Home**

Tuesday, in the morning, I read the documents relating to our four new Korean elders. I met with their trainers and “trained the trainers.” At noon, the four trainers and I went to the Daejeon train

station to meet the new elders who were coming from the K-MTC. We had lunch and orientation with the new missionaries. Three of them are terrific. They are well prepared and have bright and cheerful countenances. However, one of them is convinced that he has a mental illness. I have already received a call relating to him from the K-MTC president and from the elder's mother. I am arranging for him to meet with a psychiatrist who is a member of the Church in Daejeon. We will see if he can stay on his mission. I also got a call today from an American elder who said he wanted to go home. He has been here a year and does not feel he is making sufficiently rapid progress. We talked a while; I asked him to sleep on it; and he felt better the next day. He's going to be all right, I think.

### **Mother with Cancer**

Just before I left for \_\_\_\_\_ today, I learned that the mother of one of the elders in that zone has been diagnosed with cancer. The family was worried that he would learn about it from a third person, so I met with him and broke the news. He really cried. It was so hard. After he had calmed down, I had him call his mom. After speaking with her, he felt better. She is brave and hopeful. She will receive treatment at a great cancer institute. She has a good chance. She asked that he and his missionary friends pray for her. We will fast for her as a mission next Fast Sunday.<sup>43</sup>

## **HUMOROUS INCIDENTS—YEAR 3**

### **Godfather**

On a less inspirational note, the Iksan missionaries told me that a female English class member who saw me said that I look like a Mafia godfather. I said to a Korean missionary "I'm not sure I want to look like a Mafia godfather. I don't want to be wicked." The missionary responded that it's not a matter of wicked or not—Koreans just think Mafia godfathers are good-looking. I'll have to think through whether he was being sincere or just trying to be kind.

### **My Mother Loves You, But...**

I should mention one thing about the Church meetings. I noticed that Elder Greg Anjewierden, a wonderful missionary from Salt Lake City, played the piano, without advanced warning, for two hymns in Priesthood Meeting, two hymns in Sunday School (Koreans sing hymns in every meeting), and four hymns in Sacrament Meeting. He played beautifully. After church, I said, "Hey, Elder Anjewierden, did your mom make you practice the piano?" He responded, "Yes, she made me practice the piano so I could accompany the hymns on my mission." The next day, when I got back to the office, I wrote Sister Anjewierden a nice letter telling her about her son and thanking her for "making him practice." I photocopied the letter and sent Elder Anjewierden a copy. When I next saw him, I asked if his mom had received my letter. He replied: "Oh, yes, my mom received the letter; she put it on our refrigerator. My mother loves you....and my little brothers hate you!"

### **Tongan Burger**

For months now, Elder Farley has been telling us about a missionary concoction called a "Tongan Burger." Here are the ingredients: ramen noodles are blanched just until they are soft; then they are fried with egg on the outside, like French toast. In the middle of the noodles are put hot ham

<sup>43</sup> I am glad to report that she beat cancer.

and melted cheese. Then, on the bottom slice of bread is a layer of strawberry jam and on the top slice of bread is a layer of mayonnaise. It sounds terrible—but it actually tastes good. Of course, it is heavier than a rock. I only ate half a “burger,” and I felt terrible the rest of the day. But, it actually tasted good going down. I never cease to be amazed by the imagination of missionaries.

### **The Saga of the New Car**

I got my new car today. My old car was almost four years' old and had lots of miles (kilometers) on it, so the Church decided to get a new one. I need to report on the saga of the new car.

A month or so ago, Brother \_\_\_\_ of the Presiding Bishop's Office in Seoul called and asked what kind of car I wanted. I said I want an EQUUS. That's the most expensive car in Korea. I was just kidding. He responded, “Okay, we'll get you one and will deliver it next July (after I'm released).” That's a pretty good comeback for a Korean (not known for their sarcasm).

I then said “What are my choices?” He said a Samsung SM520 or a Hyundai Sonata. I asked which one he wanted me to pick. He said the Church is trying to standardize on Hyundai. So I said fine. I told a few people over the next few days, and all of them said “You're crazy! The SM520 is way better.” So I called Brother \_\_\_\_ and reported that to him. He said “Still, we'd rather you get the Hyundai.” I said, “Fine; it's not my car; it's the Church's car; get whatever one you want.”

By then, I was resigned to the Sonata—and I actually compared the two and thought the Sonata looked sleeker and nicer. The next day, Brother \_\_\_\_ called and said “We had a facilities meeting today and were told that if President Rife wants an SM520 he should get an SM520.” I said that I really didn't care. And he said “It's too late; I already ordered you an SM520.” So I said “okay.”

A few days passed, and Brother \_\_\_\_ called again. He said “What color do you want?” I said “white.” He said “The Church doesn't usually buy white, but if you explain why you want white, the Church will buy a white one.” I wrote an explanation—i.e., white is easy to see and thus safe and actually stays cleaner than a dark car. A few days passed, and Brother \_\_\_\_ called again: “Tokyo has rejected your request for a white car because white cars are not dignified enough for a mission president. You can have a blue one or a gray one.” I said “Why do you ask me what I want if I can't have it? Why don't you just pick out a car and bring it down here and tell me here's your new car?” I said “How about black? The temple president has a black SM520, and it's very pretty and very dignified.” He said, “No, you can only have blue or gray.” I guess a mission president is too dignified for a white car, but not dignified enough to have a black car like a temple president. In the end, I chose blue, totally frustrated and highly amused at the same time. Well, the blue car came on Monday—and it is absolutely beautiful. So there you have it.

### **Witch? I Don't Think So**

On Sunday morning of the conference, I saw a little six-year-old girl with her mother. I said hi to her. She did not respond. So, her mother told her to say hi to the nice mission president. She said hi. I said “You are so pretty. I'll bet everyone tells you that you are pretty, don't they?” To which she responded, and I kid you not, “Somebody told me I was a witch.” Well, I didn't really have a comeback for that. But, when the moment had passed, and they were gone, I had a good laugh about it. That's just not a response I had expected.

### **Santa Claus?**

Before the Hongseong District Conference in December, I walked around the corner and almost bumped into a little Korean boy who exclaimed “Hey, mom, it’s Santa Claus!” And I don’t even have a beard!

### **Christmas Conference**

We had a very funny moment during the White Elephant Game played at each Christmas zone conference in December. Sister Joo happily opened her white elephant gift. First, Christmas lights fell out, and Sister Joo was so excited. She said “This is just what we need to decorate our apartment for Christmas.” Then a small Christmas tree came out, and Sister Joo was even happier. Finally, a toy snake (really lifelike, though) fell out of the box, and Sister Joo screamed and literally came close to hitting the ceiling. There was a brief silence, and then the room exploded in laughter. We laughed and laughed. It was truly a funny moment.

### **Funnier in English?**

When Elder Walker (general authority) was visiting, I was giving a talk, and the Korean saints were laughing. From behind me, I heard Janet say to Elder Walker: “We think he must be funnier in Korean than he is in English.” I take umbrage to that comment, but I’ll leave it at that.

### **I Can’t Eat that Stuff for Breakfast/Americanized**

Koreans eat the same thing for all three meals—rice, kimchee, soup, fish or other meat, and vegetables. So, when Elder Lee Chang Yup, a native Korean, transferred from New Jersey to Korea to serve the second year of his mission, the three American elders thought they would do something nice for him. They arose early and made a complete Korean breakfast. When Elder Lee arose at 6:30 a.m. and saw the breakfast, he said “Sorry, dudes, I can’t eat that stuff for breakfast.” He then got out a bowl, poured cold cereal and milk in it, and ate his “American” breakfast. Meanwhile, the three American elders ate the Korean breakfast of rice, kimchee, soup, etc.

### **A Chinese Character**

Since the moment he arrived, Elder Cedric Chun has been the biggest “character” in our mission. And since he is of Chinese descent, I like to think of him as a “Chinese character.” In any event, he has been a lot of fun, and he has been diligent. The time flew by fast for Elder Chun. He feels like he gave it his best. He learned that it is a hard thing to put your personality into another language. As he departed the country, I thanked him for making his “pres letters” entertaining for me.

I will never forget one incident regarding Elder Chun. On New Year’s Day he appeared on TV with his senior companion, Elder Ryan Russell. Elder Russell spoke Korean beautifully and handled the questions brilliantly. However, Elder Chun had only been in the country a few months and, understandably, could not really understand what was going on. At one point in the TV program, the host looked at Elder Chun and asked “On this New Year’s Day, what do you think we as Koreans could do to make Korea a better place?” Elder Chun looked like a deer in the headlights. It was obvious he had no idea what the question was. He paused—and finally said, “We teach free English.” The host looked puzzled and then said, “Well, okay, thanks a lot.”

### **April Fool's Day Joke Victim**

My April Fool's Day joke for this year was—that I didn't do one. However, we were the victims of a most cruel joke. When I arrived home this evening, there was an email from our eldest daughter, Laura, with a cute announcement that her son Connor was going to have a little brother. I was really excited for about 30 seconds—until it dawned on me that it was April 1<sup>st</sup>. Then, of course, I was suspicious. And it turned out to be an April Fool's joke. Earlier in the day, Janet and Jenny had read the email, had momentarily rejoiced, had become suspicious, had called Laura, and had learned that it was a prank. But, graciously, they let me go through the entire process in the evening. Still, it was a proud moment for me—to be the victim of an April Fool's Day joke played by my eldest child. I could not have been prouder.

### **Of Mushrooms and Manners**

One night in April Janet and I had dinner together at a Korean restaurant just down the street from the mission home. It's our favorite Korean restaurant—and we go there about twice a month. Janet noticed that they did not give us mushrooms. Usually, among the many side dishes, they give us delicious mushrooms. She said "Rich, ask them for some mushrooms." So, I did—or at least I intended to. Somehow between my brain and my mouth, I had a mix-up. The Korean word for mushroom is "beoseot." The Korean word for "manners" is "beoreut." I said to the young man who had been waiting on us, "Do you have any manners?" He looked confused. So I repeated "Do you have manners?" He was speechless. I continued. "Usually when we eat here, you have manners." I think he was really wondering what he had done wrong. Finally, it dawned on me, in a moment of clarity, that I was not saying "Do you have any mushrooms?" We were all relieved, especially our waiter, when I got the right vocabulary word for the task at hand. And he brought us lots of mushrooms!

### **An Odd Tasting Drink**

Elder Matthew Griffith told me that he had a funny experience while teaching a discussion to an elderly woman at the old folks' home in Chungju. He and Elder Berry were teaching a discussion to one elderly lady, when a second elderly lady burst into the room with a beverage of some sort and insisted that the first lady give the elders something to drink—which she did. The drink tasted absolutely awful. But, Elders Griffith and Berry dutifully drank it, for the following reasons: (1) Koreans eat and drink a lot of things that seem unusual to us; (2) the elders did not want to be rude to the ladies; and (3) the elders would do anything for the Lord, even drink something gross. Just after they choked down this bad-tasting drink, a third elderly lady burst in the room claiming that someone had stolen her medicine. Yes, you guessed it—the elders had drunk the elderly woman's medicine, which had been mistakenly served to them as a beverage. I give the elders great credit for trying to be polite—and I hope the medicine helps them avoid any geriatric health problems that they might be experiencing.

### **1,000 Won Store**

One day, Janet accompanied me to Jeonju where I was interviewing the zone. While I interviewed, she visited with the interviewee's companion. After a while, she decided to wander across the street and look in a store. Janet can read Korean, but she doesn't know what most of the words mean or how to put them into a sentence. She can barter well in Korean, though, and she knows the numbers very well. She was surprised that none of the items in the store had a pricetag, so from time to time, she picked up an item, showed it to the clerk, and asked how much

it was. Each time, with a strange look on her face, the clerk would say “1,000 Won,” which is about 1 US dollar. Finally, it dawned on Janet that she was in the Korean equivalent of a dollar store.

### **Your Talks Are Funny, But...**

Janet gave a talk at stake conference, and I interpreted for her. Later in the meeting, I gave a talk. After the meeting, a sweet Korean sister said this to me: “President Rife, your talks are funny, but Sister Rife’s talks are very meaningful.” Okay, then.

### **Mentally Challenged Friend**

Elder Greg Hatch was one of our best missionaries. He was our first AP, our transition AP. He spoke Korean very well. But, Koreans are tough critics. One day he called the home of a member. She was not home, but her nonmember mother was home, so he left a message. Later, when the member returned home, her mother said, “Oh, I almost forgot, but your mentally challenged friend called earlier.” The member responded that she did not have a mentally challenged friend. Finally, she figured out that it was Elder Hatch who had called. Her mother had not known he was an American. She assumed he was a mentally challenged Korean.

### **I am an Idiot**

Elder Porter Nielsen was one of our best and most delightful missionaries, but he was the victim of a cruel joke the first week he was in the country. The word for idiot in Korean is “pabo.” But, his trainer told him that “pabo” meant “new missionary.” So, Elder Nielsen spent his first week introducing himself and telling everyone he met that he was a “pabo.”

## Chapter 6     Winding Up

*It's a hard thing to see your favorite Church calling ever coming to an end. But, having not had a real vacation or day off for three years, there does come a time when the mission president calling must come to an end. The following entries relate to the end of our mission president experience.*

### **Only the First Half of the Year**

I had an office day on January 16, and so spent almost the entire day writing stake conference talks for the first half of 2004. Since I won't be mission president the second half of 2004, this is my last round of stake and district conferences.

### **Call from Our Successors**

On Saturday (in March), we had a two-hour phone call with our successors, Norm and Cindy Nemrow, who will take over as mission president on July 1. We were happy to learn recently that Norm would be the new mission president. He and I served in Korea at about the same time. Norm is a great guy and a popular professor at BYU. He will do a great job. I was so glad to hear that he would take over here, as I know the missionaries will be in good hands. Janet and I are committed to helping Norm and Cindy make a smooth transition.

### **Getting Tired**

Today (mid March of final year), Elder Thueson and I arrived back in Daejeon from Gwangju at about 8:30 p.m. I cannot recall ever having felt more tired than I did at that moment. I think the three years of nonstop service without a vacation are catching up to me. Elder Min, our area authority seventy (and a former mission president), warned me that he was very tired during his third year as mission president. I was not tired six months ago when he warned me, but I am starting to feel it now.

### **How to Tell a Third Year Mission President**

I guess third year mission presidents are not as teachable as they were during their first year. I heard that President Packer once said: "You can always tell a third year mission president—but, you can't tell him much."

### **Last Stake Conference in Jeonju**

At our last stake conference in Jeonju, the bishop of the Jungang Ward in Jeonju gave me an envelope with a number of pictures and messages from the Primary children in his ward. Here are some of the things they wrote to me, after saying "Dear President Rife:"

You came from America. Thank you very much for serving in Korea. Be healthy.

President Rife, you are very popular.

Thank you for visiting our ward last September. Please visit again before you go home.

This is a picture of my cat. My cat likes the mission president, and so do I.

Who said that you have to go home to America? Who? Who? Who?

I love you.

I like you the best. Thanks for visiting us and for giving us candy. I am sad that you are going back to America.

Thank you for coming to Korea. I love you.

I'm sad that it's already time for you to go home.

My name is Chang Joon Ho. I love you. Please bring candy.

Thanks for loving us so much.

Very touching, and very much appreciated!

### **Farewell Lunch with Brother Min and Sister Yoon**

Our family had lunch with Brother Min Dong Gun and his wife, Sister Yoon, at TGI Friday's. It was so cute when they asked us. They said "Three years ago, when you came to Korea, we took your family out for Chinese food. We could tell that your children did not like the Chinese food, even though they tried to be polite. So, we know they'll like TGI Fridays, so we want to take them there. And it really was good. We enjoyed being with this wonderful couple. Brother Min is the stake patriarch. His wife, Sister Yoon, is an artist. I spent Christmas Eve 1972 in their home when I was a new missionary in Korea.

### **Farewell Fireside in Suncheon**

Saturday I had a great (and painful) experience. Janet and I were invited to give a farewell fireside in Suncheon, three hours to the south. The fireside started at 6:30 p.m., but we were asked to be there by 5:00 p.m. to have dinner with the district and branch leadership. We left at 2:00 p.m. and arrived just on time. We were taken to a nearby restaurant for pork kalbi. Janet was the only woman. The other eleven diners were district and branch presidency members. I think she is getting used to being the only woman at dinner. Anyway, we sat on the floor for over an hour. I'm not the best at sitting on the floor any more. When it was time to get up, I leaned on my right knee—all of a sudden I felt a sharp (and I mean excruciatingly sharp) pain start on the inside of my right knee and shoot up to my groin. It hurt—and it hurt badly. I thought I had herniated myself—again. But, later, I started to think that I had pulled a muscle or ligament. Sufficeth to say, I do not feel like I have a hernia, but my leg and groin area are sore. As I write this, it's been five days—and I am still very, very sore.

Well, that was the painful part of the night. Now back to the great part of the night. I hobbled back to the chapel and pretended that I had not just suffered a severe groin injury as a result of an athletic event (i.e., standing up). Janet and I spoke to the congregation—Janet on spirituality and I on "what I've learned on my mission." Throughout the course of the evening, we received the following gifts and tributes:

- Janet and I were given flowers to wear during the evening.
- Janet was given a beautiful arrangement of flowers.

- I was given a beautiful wall hanging that says “The Family is Heaven on Earth” in Chinese characters (it also says “in appreciation to President Richard C. Rife for his service from 2001 to 2004” and it has the names of all the district leaders).
- The members showed a video presentation (which I was later given) in which most of the families in the district bade me farewell, saying such things as “thank you for your love and service;” “thank you for making us laugh;” “thank you for giving us candy;” “thank you for showing us how the gospel can make us happy,” etc.
- The members showed a picture history of my life (Elder Schmuhl had emailed my personal history photos to them in advance).
- The Primary gave us sandwiches to eat on the way home.
- Sister Jeong Soon Ee gave us a box of fruit and vegetables.
- Sister Yi Jeong Hee’s older sister gave me a gift for helping her family.
- Brother An and Sister Lee In Hyeong (I baptized Sister Lee in 1974) gave me a book.

Every time I think of this evening with the Suncheon saints, I want to cry (and only a small part of the reason is related to the groin pull). It really reminded me that the law of the harvest works in favor of the foreign giver in Korea. I gave a little—and I received a boatload of love from the Korean saints. Stated otherwise, “never get involved in a gift-giving contest with a Korean, for there is no way you can win.” I really love these Korean saints.

We got home from Suncheon about midnight, thanks to the expert driving of Elder Jonathan Schmuhl of American Fork, Utah. I was in the back seat of the van alternating between snoring and moaning because of my leg.

### **Blessing of the Mission**

Elder Kikuchi encouraged me to bless the mission periodically. I did it once at our Christmas conference in 2002. And I felt impressed to do it again at our final mission conference as Janet and I prepare to finish our service here. I wrote the blessing in advance and had it translated into Korean. I passed out a Korean translation to the Korean missionaries before I delivered it. Here is the blessing:

Our Dear Father in Heaven,

As Sister Rife and I come to the end of our three years of service, we thank thee for thy many blessings so graciously given to us and to our family. We thank thee for the privilege of serving in the Korea Daejeon Mission with our current and returned missionaries.

We are grateful to be here today in one room as a mission. As we are together, I desire to pronounce a blessing upon this mission and the missionaries. Before doing so, however, I wish to express our sincere appreciation, and the appreciation of our missionaries, for thy bounteous blessings.

We thank thee for the birth, life, and atonement of thy Son, the Holy One of Israel. We thank thee that he condescended from his throne on high to live here on earth as one of us so that he could understand us—and comfort us—and redeem us. We love him and are so grateful for his incomprehensible suffering on our behalf.

We are grateful for the restoration of the gospel in the latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We are grateful for his faithfulness amid relentless persecution. We are so thankful that we can see thee through the lens of the restoration. As we learn of thee, we come to understand who we are and who we can become.

We thank thee for the Book of Mormon and the other latter-day scriptures in which are contained the fullness of the everlasting gospel.

We thank thee, dear Father, for our wonderful parents, family members, and friends, who love and support us as we serve thee.

We are grateful for the opportunity of serving in the Republic of Korea. We love the Korean people, dear Father, and we express appreciation for their kindness shown to us as we live and work among them. Thou hast said “And he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money, shall in nowise lose his reward.” (D&C 84:90) The Korean people—members and nonmembers alike—feed and clothe us, give us money, provide transportation, and otherwise assist us in our labors. I call forth a blessing from heaven upon all the wonderful Korean people who extend their love and support to us.

We express appreciation for our good health and strength. And we are grateful for the necessities of life—shelter from the elements, food to eat, and clothing to wear.

We are thankful for the privilege of serving thee full time for this brief period of our lives.

We are grateful for the thousands of faithful saints who pray for us daily in the 118 temples that dot the earth.

And now, Father, I desire to leave a blessing upon the missionaries and the mission prior to our departure. I do it through thy Holy Priesthood and through the keys of presidency that I hold that were given me by the laying on of hands by one of thy Twelve Apostles. As I give this blessing, my heart is full of love for these wonderful missionaries who have sacrificed two years or 18 months of their lives to serve thee.

I bless you, my dear elders and sisters, with the joy and peace that can only come through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As you strive to do the Lord's will, I bless you with a firm testimony of the atonement of Jesus Christ and of the restoration of the gospel.

I bless you with an increased desire to be obedient to the commandments and mission rules. As you choose to show your love to the Lord by your exact obedience, I promise you the blessing of his Spirit to be with you. I bless you that the Holy Ghost will guide, inspire, teach, protect, and comfort you, and carry your teachings to the hearts of the people.

I bless you with a strong work ethic that will abide with you on your mission and thereafter. I bless you to be diligent. You need not run faster than you have strength and means, but you must be diligent in all things. (See Mosiah 4:27; D&C 10:4)

I bless you with the desire to be humble. Inasmuch as you are humble, you will “be made strong, and blessed from on high and receive knowledge from time to time.” (D&C 1:28)

I bless you to be effective and successful in your missionary work. To the foreign missionaries, I bless you that you will be able to learn the Korean language sufficiently to be able to teach the gospel in plainness and simplicity. This blessing is conditional upon your doing your best to treasure up in your minds the words, grammar forms, sentence patterns, and doctrines contained in the missionary discussions.

I bless you with the ability to declare the message of the Restoration in boldness, but without “overbearance.” (Alma 38:12) And, to you who are shy by nature, I bless you with the ability to be more outgoing, to be able to talk to strangers and introduce the gospel.

I bless you to be filled with love for the Korean people—that same love that God bestows upon all who are true followers of Christ (see Moroni 7:48).

I pray with all my heart that the Lord will bless your families who support you. May they have good health and protection from harm. May the Spirit of the Lord abide in their homes. May the unbelieving families gain an increased understanding and tolerance for the Church and for your participation in it. I call upon thee, O Lord, to soften their hearts and give them warm feelings toward the restored gospel.

I bless you, my fellow missionaries, with safety, health and protection as you serve in this mission.

I express appreciation for the recent increase in our opportunities to teach the gospel and baptize prepared persons. As you are diligent in your missionary labors, I bless you with the ability to find—or to be found by—those precious prepared souls who are ready to hear and accept the gospel.

The gospel has always been preached with some sacrifice and suffering on the part of the Lord's servants. When you are discouraged, get down on your knees and in humility access the power and comfort of heaven. As you do so, I bless you that you will “suffer no manner of afflictions, save they [will be] swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” (See Alma 31:38)

As you seriously study the scriptures on your mission, I bless you with increased gospel knowledge and an increased desire to be a follower and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I bless you to understand the law of the harvest and to apply it in your mission and in your life. As you sow, so shall you reap. (D&C 6:33) That which you do send out will return and be restored unto you. (Alma 41:15) As you lose yourself in the Lord's service, you shall find yourself. (See Matthew 16:25) Yield your heart to God and he will make more of you than you could make of yourself.

To the extent that you make a sincere effort on your mission, I bless you that your mission will be a springboard to a bright post-mission future—including college, marriage, parenthood, career, and future Church service. I bless you that your mission experience will be a “school of the prophets” for you; that it will be, in essence, the “MTC” for the rest of your life.

Following your mission, I bless you that your testimony will remain strong and vibrant as you pay your tithes and offerings, keep the Sabbath day holy, study the scriptures and pray daily, and magnify the callings that come to you along the way.

Finally, I bless you that, as you put your trust in the Lord and strive to be his disciple, you will be “encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.” (2 Nephi 1:15)

Once again, dear Father, we thank thee again, for our many blessings. Help us to be submissive to thy will. We plead with thee in faith for many, many more opportunities to teach and share thy gospel.

We now come to the end of our mission conference. As we do so, I pray that our missionaries may return to their various fields of labor in peace and safety. I pray that each of us will go forth with a greater desire to lose himself (or herself) in the work and truly become thy humble servant.

I pronounce all of these blessings upon our mission, the missionaries, the members and others mentioned above, by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood and in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **My Legacy: Switch Flipping?**

This entry requires an explanation of switch flipping. I asked the APs to tell me what my legacy as a mission president would be—what would I be remembered for. I asked them to be honest, I took notes, and I’ll find the paper and will record more fully what they said, but one of the things they said is that all the missionaries refer to the president’s flipping the switch. They mean that I am talking about something spiritual and then flip the switch and talk about something funny and then flip the switch back to spiritual. I did not know there is a mission term for this. But apparently, I will be remembered for “flipping the switch” between funny and spiritual throughout my talks and presentations.<sup>44</sup>

### **My Legacy as Mission President**

When he visited us last October, Elder Walker said that when we receive a Church calling we should decide in advance what we would like our legacy to be. In early June, I asked the APs to tell me what my legacy would be. I told them they could feel free to be negative, but of course, being kind, they were not. Here is what they said:

- I am not “statistics-driven.” I do not run the mission as a business. My talks and interviews are uplifting and edifying. I care about missionaries; I am not a coach who wants to win the game too badly. I really understand young people ages 19-25.
- What I want and expect from the missionaries is to obey, try hard, and have fun.
- Each missionary’s personal conversion is important to me.
- I allow each missionary to have his or her own style, within limits.
- And yes, of course, “the switch”—flip it and you get spirituality; flip it again and you get humor. It goes back and forth many times in any given talk or presentation.

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<sup>44</sup> A common question among the missionaries was “how was the president’s talk the other day in zone conference—did he flip the switch a lot?”

### **PMPD and Family Home Evening with Stake President's Family**

On June 7, I interviewed the 19 missionaries in the \_\_\_\_\_ zone. Several of the sisters are having companionship problems (I won't miss that!). Most of the missionaries are doing a great job. I took a break mid-morning to visit with Mark and Randy Peterson and their two daughters, Laurel and Joy, who are in Korea with a BYU study group. Mark served as Busan mission president in the late 80s. He told me that he really felt out of his element for at least nine months after finishing his mission. It really is hard to give up the best church calling of one's life.<sup>45</sup>

That night, we had a delightful family home evening in Cheongju with the family of President Jung Tae Gul, the Cheongju stake president. His wife, Sister Kim, worked most of the afternoon preparing the food—a typical Korean meal and very delicious. President Jung asked me to share a thought. I talked about the good example he and his wife are to the missionaries. President Jung then did an activity in which he had his children paired up with ours. It was really creative. His kids speak a bit of English, so it all worked out. It was a delightful evening.

### **Exit Interview**

June 12, we were at home with the family in the morning. In the afternoon, Janet and I drove to Seoul for our exit interview with Elder Kikuchi. We met at the Seoul West Mission office. Elder Kikuchi was there to interview President and Sister Bangerter of the Seoul West Mission, who are also completing their service at the end of June. The Bangerters have become our dear friends through this experience. We had a very spiritual interview with Elder Kikuchi. After that, we went to the home of Elder Ko Won Yong who hosted a dinner for the Bangerters and the stake presidents and wives with whom they had served. After dinner, each stake president said something nice about the Bangerters, and it was clear that they have done a great job in Seoul as mission president.

### **Farewell Fireside in Jeonju**

On Sunday, June 13, Janet and I spoke at the Seonhwa Ward in Daejeon. We then drove to Jeonju and gave a farewell fireside for the Jeonju Stake. They asked Janet to speak for 30 minutes and me to speak for an hour. There are four sisters in the Jeonju stake who speak English beautifully. But, the stake would not let them translate. The stake president said “We want you to translate, because you are funnier than our translators!” So, I basically stood and spoke for about 90 minutes—and was tired at the end. Before the talks, one brother said “This time don't do any spiritual stuff; just tell jokes for an hour.” So, I did lots of jokes and funny stories, but the main thrust was spiritual. The stake gave us a beautiful oriental fan—and the stake president's wife, Sister Hwang Hae Soon, gave Janet a beautiful box that she had made. Janet loved it! The Korean members are so generous and so kind!

### **Brother Yoon and Sister Yoo**

On Monday, June 14, I interviewed missionaries in Gwangju. In the evening, we enjoyed a delicious Chinese dinner with Brother Yoon Hwa Joong, the first district president of the Church in Daejeon. Brother Yoon is in his mid-70s and is in perfect health. His wife is Sister Yoo Byung

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<sup>45</sup> Since returning home, I have coined the acronym “PMPD” to describe how it feels to have lost one's favorite Church calling—post mission president depression!

Hee. Both Brother Yoon and Sister Yoo speak some English. It was kind of them to take us out to dinner before our departure.

### **Farewell Fireside in Gwangju**

June 19, Saturday, we drove south to Gwangju and gave a farewell fireside. It was a nice experience. They gave us gifts—and the best gift of all was when they all stood and sang for us the hymn “Each life that touches ours for good.”

### **Final Multi-Zone Conferences**

The week of June 21 we held our final three multi-zone conferences in Cheongju, Daejeon, and Gwangju. Janet gave the talk she usually gives to departing missionaries—in which she provides their new “white handbook,” the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet. I gave the talk I usually give to departing missionaries. The APs gave a good presentation on analogies that can be used in teaching the discussions. The departing missionaries bore their testimonies. There was a lot of picture taking after the meeting. It was a tender time, as this is the last time we will see most of the missionaries during our time in Korea.

### **Visiting Jai Lee in Seoul**

June 23 was an interesting day. I have a friend named Jai Lee who is a lawyer in Seoul. He and I worked at Novell together. He is first counselor in the Seoul Mission presidency and is a truly great latter-day saint. We wanted to have lunch together once before I left Korea. So, Wednesday being preparation day, I left the office at 10:30 a.m., rode the speedy KTX train to Seoul (it takes 53 minutes), had a leisurely and enjoyable lunch with Jai, and was sitting at my desk at the mission office at 2:30 p.m. I think that is truly remarkable, given that it takes about two and one-half hours one-way to drive to Seoul.

### **Mission Home Renovations**

From June 16 to 23, we were out of the mission home for renovations—new wood floor, new carpeting, new wallpaper, new shower in the bathroom, etc. We stayed at a hotel in the Yuseong area (far away from the mission home), because the ones near the mission home have pornography in the lobby. There are no good hotels in Daejeon. We stayed in the best. It was okay (we didn't suffer like the pioneers). However, almost all Korean hotels shut off the air conditioning in the middle of the night, causing Americans (at least) to wake up sweating. Eventually, we took a fan to the hotel so that we could at least have air blowing on us during the night.

Friday, June 25 the construction was completed, but the mission home was filthy. So, all day Janet, Jenny, the elders, and the Samseong sisters cleaned the mission home. To avoid having someone standing around looking like he didn't know what to do, Janet told me to stay at the mission office and answer Korean telephone calls. I also wrote 103 letters, an individualized letter to each of our 102 missionaries and Elder and Sister Scheepsma, our office couple. After the cleaning—and letter writing—Janet, the APs, and I planned the July 14<sup>th</sup> transfer for President Nemrow. At this point, he does not know the missionaries, and it seemed like the kind thing to do. The APs will go over the proposed transfer with President Nemrow, and he can make whatever changes he deems appropriate.

### **Native Korean Missionary Reunion**

What a wonderful day June 26 was! Forty+ of our returned native Korean missionaries (and their spouses, as applicable) attended a reunion at the mission home and Samseong chapel. They asked that Janet and I speak to them, which we happily did. They sang some hymns for us. They presented us with gifts—a beautiful traditional oriental lamp and a Korean bell that I loved so much I refused to ship it and carried it home with me on the airplane. This is the blessing of serving as a mission president—making friendships with some of the most wonderful people in the world.

### **My Last Sunday as Mission President**

June 27—my last Sunday as a mission president! Elder Keanini and I left early for Suncheon, where I attended the church meetings and spoke at Suncheon Branch Conference. After the meetings, we enjoyed a light meal and then headed north to Daejeon.

The Daejeon Stake had a farewell fireside for us at 6:00 p.m. on June 27. It was probably 85 degrees outside at the time, and the humidity was high. When we walked into the chapel, all the windows were closed, and neither the air conditioning nor the fans were on. It was like walking into a sauna. Most of the Korean men were wearing suit coats and looked as fresh as a daisy. The temperature at which Koreans are hot, and the temperature at which Americans are hot, are not even close. We had the APs run to the office and get a fan to put on the stand blowing on the speaker, so that I would not die of heat prostration—and then we went on with the meeting. And it was wonderful.

The Daejeon members made us a memory book, with each family preparing a page with a picture of their family and an expression of thanks for our service. It was a great gift, something we will always cherish. Janet spoke about reading the scriptures. I spoke about the things I've learned on my mission. Jenny, Janet and some of the sister missionaries sang a hymn. I was deeply touched, at the beginning of the meeting, when President Sol Yang Hwan, the Daejeon stake president, said this:

It's hard to be a latter-day saint. We have so many 'don'ts' and so many 'dos.' Sometimes we are so discouraged and so serious. And then along comes President Rife. He is laughing and joking and cheerful. He tells us that our God is a happy God and that we should be happy too. He shows us that living the gospel can be fun. When I see President Rife, I think of the following scripture from the New Testament which describes him: 'Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice.' (Philippians 4:4)" (Note: The Korean New Testament does not use the word "rejoice;" rather, it uses the word "be happy." So, as President Sol read the scripture it was "Be happy in the Lord always; and again I say, be happy.")

There was a great outpouring of love—and we felt it and appreciated it! We also took lots of pictures.

### **A Few Random Items and Thoughts**

During the last days of our mission, we received lots of letters and little gifts from our missionaries.

June 28 I spent most of the day going through my office, preparing it for President Nemrow, and writing memos that I think will be helpful for him in the future. In the evening, we had dinner with the Daejeon stake president and his family. His wife, Sister Kim Seong Mi, is a real character. We had a delightful evening.

I realized that I have failed to note something about our daughter Jenny. For the past year, whenever I am on the road returning from interviews or Church meetings, I receive a call from Jenny, asking when I will be home and saying "I love you." How sweet is that! What a wonderful daughter she is!

One of the missionaries asked me what the highlight of my mission was, what the biggest miracle I had seen on my mission was. I responded: "It's not one highlight; it's not one miracle. It's the process I observe as each missionary changes, becoming more spiritually mature over the course of his or her mission. The missionaries are perfectly wonderful when they enter the mission. But, if they love others, forget themselves, serve diligently, and strive to be obedient, then the law of the harvest works in their favor and they become a magnificent and spiritually mature person over the course of two years or 18 months."

Being mission president is its own reward. No matter how much love you send out, you get more back from the missionaries and members. No matter how many acts of kindness you try to do, more acts of kindness are directed your way. I will always be grateful for the time I served as a mission president. It has been and will continue to be the source of countless blessings in my life.

### **Saying Goodbye to My 1973 Convert**

On June 29, I did my final missionary interviews. I interviewed the office missionaries in the morning. Along with the Samseong sisters, Sisters Jackman and Lambourne, I visited Sister Jin Ki Shik and took her a watermelon. I baptized Sister Jin and her son, Brother Kim Nam Soo, in 1973 when I served in Daejeon. Sister Jin said she had two favors for me. First, when I am in heaven sitting on my throne and she is in the other place, would I please come and visit her. I told her it was more likely that she would be in heaven on a throne and I would be in the other place—in which case, she should visit me and bring me water. The reason she thinks she is not going to heaven is that she has not led anyone to the Lord. She has, in fact, led people to the Church, but then they have become less active. I spoke to her about agency and about this not being her responsibility.

The second request from Sister Jin was for a blessing. I gave her a blessing. The words came freely. It was truly an honor to give her a blessing. When we were done, she said "I think you are going to be president of the Church." I said "if that's the case then our Church is in big trouble!" I suppose most converts think very highly (too highly) of the missionary who baptized them. I was just a greenie at the time—and my senior companion, Elder Keven Naylor, did most (all?) of the work.

### **Meeting our Replacements**

In the afternoon, Janet and I drove the car, and the APs drove the van, to the Gimpo airport to meet the Nemrows. We met the Bangerter's there—they were there to meet the Ringwoods, the new Seoul West mission president. The Nemrows are just delightful. We had a great time on the ride back to the mission home. I know they are going to love this experience and do a great job.

When we arrived, Jenny had dinner for us (a kind service act and part of earning her Young Women's recognition award). We enjoyed dinner with the Nemrows—and then had the strange experience of leaving them at the mission home (our home!) and going to a hotel for the evening. Actually, we stayed at a “not so good” hotel near the mission home.

It was stifflingly hot—and so, we arose before 6:00 a.m., took cold showers, bought Dunkin' Donuts, and went to the mission office, where we ate breakfast and read our scriptures. At a reasonable hour, we knocked on the door of the mission home (a weird experience, as it has been our home for the past three years), and told the Nemrows we were ready to brief them. I spent much of the day with President Norm Nemrow, going over the mission president transition list. Janet took Cindy Nemrow around the neighborhood, showed her the school (actually, Jenny helped and showed the Nemrow boys the school), introduced her to some of the local merchants, and drove her to some of the bigger shopping areas downtown. We had lunch together—Korean food (for the brave) and Chinese food (for the less adventurous). By 3:00 p.m., we had completed our orientation of the new MP and the new MPW (mission president wife)—and it was time to leave.

As a final act, I formally passed the mission president hand phone (Korean word for cell phone) to President Nemrow while pictures were snapped. Just after I handed him the phone, Elder Scheepsma sneaked into his office and called the hand phone number. President Nemrow looked shocked and tossed the phone to me across the room, so that I could answer it. I remember how frightening it was three years ago to receive the cell phone from President Waddell. I found myself praying that it would not ring.

When it was time to drive away from the mission office, we hugged everyone and said goodbye. I felt fine. I was ready to go. But, Janet and Jenny were teary-eyed and sad. They shed many tears. Later we realized that I had mourned many times during the past month. Every time we had a member meeting or a missionary meeting and they sang “God Be With You Till We Meet Again” or “Each Life That Touches Ours for Good,” I had wept like a baby. Janet and Jenny, on the other hand, had been okay with the idea that we were going home. However, when it came right down to it, they were sad too, and I was all cried out.

This may sound strange, but one of the reasons I was ready to go is that there had been “no dead missionaries on my watch.” I can't tell you how much I prayed and how often I worried that there might be the death of a missionary under my care. In a sense, I felt huge relief that I had finished my tenure without a missionary death.

### **Farewell Letter to the Missionaries**

*Prior to leaving Korea, I sent the following letter to all the missionaries then serving in our mission:*

Dear Elders and Sisters:

As we prepare to finish our Korea Daejeon Mission adventure, I wish to share with you just a few things I have learned (or had reinforced) on my mission:

- God lives and loves us. We are His children. Jesus is the Christ. He is our Savior. The Atonement is real.
- The gospel has been restored in these latter days. Joseph Smith was a prophet. President Hinckley is a prophet. The Book of Mormon is God's word.

- Because of the Restoration, we know the nature of God and our own potential.
- We are on earth to learn to become more like God, more Christ-like. Humility is the foundational attribute. Without humility, we cannot attain the other Christ-like attributes.
- The MTC (in Provo and Seoul) is the “MTC” for your mission. Your mission is the “MTC” for your life. Your life is the “MTC” for eternity.
- The most important convert you will have on your mission is yourself.
- The agency of man is like a crusty encasement that is hard to crack.
- Missionary work is best done when members and full-time missionaries work closely together.
- The best missionary is a balanced missionary, spending substantial time proselytizing and working with the members.
- The Mormon pioneers who walked across the plains are great examples of courage and faithfulness. There are modern day pioneers among the saints and missionaries who, although they never walked across the plains, are still pioneers in their families and their people.
- The ultimate gift we can give to God is to submit our will to His.
- I have never regretted being too kind. I have almost always regretted being too harsh.
- If we call ourselves Christians, our discipleship ought to be obvious to everyone who sees us.
- You cannot win a gift-giving contest with a Korean!
- I have received more love than I have given.
- Two of the best things about serving a mission are (1) teaching the gospel and (2) making eternal friendships.
- The future of the Church is in good hands—the hands of our current full-time missionaries. Our young missionaries are the greatest young people in the world.

Thank you, dear sisters and elders, for the love you have shown Sister Rife, our children, and me over these past three years. We have felt your love and respect. We have felt strength from your prayers in our behalf. It truly has been an honor and a privilege to serve with you. I cannot express in words how much I love you.

I have known President Nemrow since he was a 19-year-old missionary. He was a great missionary. He is a great man. He is equally yoked with Sister Nemrow. They will do a great job as they preside over this mission. As a last favor, I request that you show them the same love, kindness, courtesy, and respect that you have shown us. Please be especially kind and helpful as they make the transition in their first few months.

May God bless you, my dear friends.

With love,  
President Rife

### **Off to the Airport Hyatt and Home**

We stayed at the Airport Hyatt the night of June 30. In the evening, my Korean father and mother, Bishop Cho Kyu Young and Sister Lee Duk Soo, came out to have dinner with us. They are now in their early to mid 70s, but are still in good health. Their son, Duk Hyun, and his wife (Mi Sun) and family were visiting from San Francisco, so we got to see the whole family. It was delightful.

We had lots of fun and lots of photos and, in the end, lots of tears. Jenny really enjoyed visiting with their three girls, Sun Hee, Ji Hee, and Min Hee. They are such cute girls and are more American than they are Korean (somewhat to the dismay of their grandparents). There were lots of hugs—and the Chos gave Janet a beautiful jewelry box in colors that she really loved.

We had a good night's sleep at the Hyatt—although even there they turned down the air conditioning in the night. On the morning of July 1, we enjoyed breakfast with the Bangerters, rode the shuttle to the airport, and flew to San Francisco. The adults were in business class, and the children (to their chagrin) were in coach class. We made it to SF without incident—but our flight to SLC was delayed and we did not arrive at the SL airport until after 4:00 p.m. on July 1. We had quite a group there to greet us, including to our shock and utter delight, our daughter Laura and our grandson Connor. Laura had us convinced that she would be arriving on July 9, but she came in on June 30 so she could be there upon our arrival. Her husband Alan is in Brazil shooting a commercial. We had other returned missionaries (Elders Featherstone, Thueson, and Song), our family members, some of Janet's friends there to greet us. There were shouting and screaming and welcome home signs—it was wonderful!

And, I got to drive my own car home—and it felt great!

On the airplane, I pondered what I had learned on my mission and what kind of person I wanted to be post-mission. I received this whispering communication from the Spirit as I was thus pondering: (1) Be humble; (2) be non-materialistic; and (3) speak ill of no one. I hope I can live up to this.

### **It's Over!**

Well, that's it. The mission is over. It was a great experience. It's hard for me to see it end. Nothing will ever be quite like it. June can be summed up as a series of farewells and dinners and gifts and thank you notes and tears. I cannot overstate the kindness of the Korean members and of our dear missionaries. We have tried to share our love with the missionaries and the Korean people, but we have received more love than we have given. It has been a great honor and privilege to serve as president of the Korea Daejeon Mission. I am grateful to God for this opportunity in my life.

## Chapter 7 What the Mission President Learned from the Missionaries

*The mission president is supposed to be the mentor of the missionaries—and I tried very hard to be a good mentor. As a returned mission president, I feel it my continuing duty to be the mentor of our returned missionaries. Still, even though I was 30 years older than the missionaries and their leader, I learned much from their excellent examples. This is a talk I gave several times to various groups in Korea to share with them the things I had learned from my missionaries.*

When I was a missionary, a lifetime ago, I occasionally joked around. One day, while riding on a city bus in Seoul, I said to the money-takers (in a loud voice, so as to share the joke with all the riders): “I’m going to Busan. I don’t speak Korean. And I’m tired, so I’m going to sleep. So, please wake me up when we get to Busan.” The other riders began to laugh, and the young girl who was the money-taker began to explain: “This is a city bus. It stays in the city of Seoul. It does not go to Busan.” To which I responded: “Yes, that’s it. Busan. That’s where I’m going. Please wake me when we get there.” Now, more riders laughed. I continued until the money-taker was totally exasperated, and then I said “I know; I was just joking.”

Another time, as we were riding in Seoul, I used this technique to gain a special favor. The place we were going was between bus stops. Either stop was a bit of a hike from our intended destination. When we had about arrived at where we really wanted to get off, I yelled at the bus driver, “Please let me know when we get to Seoul, because I need to get off at Seoul.” The bus driver, acting surprised, since we were in downtown Seoul, said “This is Seoul!” I yelled “Stop!” Which he did, and we got off right in front of our destination, to the delight of the other riders.

Well, that seems like a long time ago. Many years have passed. And now I have nearly completed my service as mission president. As I was contemplating that fact, I realized recently that I may have learned more from the missionaries than they learned from me. I think this concept is related to the law of the harvest, the law of restoration (the Book of Mormon version of the law of the harvest), and the casting of one’s bread upon the waters (see Ecclesiastes 11:1). The more you give, the more you get. And I have received a lot from my association with the missionaries. Let me tell you just some of the things I have learned from the missionaries of the Korea Daejeon Mission.

I cannot imagine that any young man anywhere in the world could be a better missionary than was Elder Jared Peterson from Layton, Utah. Elder Peterson was full of love for all people. I asked how he got that way. He said that every day he prayed to God for the blessing promised in Moroni 7:48, where it reads in relevant part:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ....

God truly answered his prayer. He loved the people, and they felt it. He did great work in the city of Iksan. A woman who had long been inactive came back into the Church through Elder Peterson’s efforts. When I met her, I asked what about Elder Peterson had made him influential in her life. She responded: “I felt that his interest in me was sincere. I felt his love. And it made me want to come back.”

Elder Aaron Anable told me that he thinks of every person in Korea as his literal brother or sister. When he thinks about them in this way, it makes him love them and want to share the gospel with them.

Back momentarily to Elder Jared Peterson. Elder Peterson was known for his diligence and obedience. The previous mission president had to order Elder Peterson to rest on preparation day. The mission president asked him why he worked on preparation day. Elder Peterson responded: "You told me to have fun on preparation day, and what could be more fun than sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ?" Elder Peterson kept every mission rule with exactness (see Alma 57:21). I asked him why. He said: "It is easy to say that I love God with my mouth. But, it is harder to show him by my actions. I am choosing to show Him my love by my obedience."

Sister Kwak Chae Rim was a delightful Korean sister missionary. She appeared to be happy all the time. She had a very positive attitude. And she had real charisma. However, she received no support from her family. In fact, her family opposed her mission and even went to the MTC to try to talk her out of serving a mission. In a letter to the president, Sister Kwak told me that she feels sad sometimes, but that she has realized that Jesus suffered a lot more than she has. When she thinks of Jesus' suffering, and how much greater it is than hers, she decides to put a smile on her face and to choose to be happy. It's true that we can choose our attitude—and Sister Kwak is a great example of a person who chooses to be happy and positive.

One elder, who wishes to remain anonymous, was serving as my AP at Christmastime. Sister Rife and I were keeping track of the Christmas presents, trying to make sure that all the missionaries were remembered and that no one was left out. Dozens of boxes flood the mission office in December, as parents, family members, and friends remember their missionary. One box the Christmas of 2002 cost \$190 in postage.

It came to our attention that this good elder had not received a Christmas present. We asked him why. He dodged the question. I started getting angry at his parents. His father is a doctor. Surely they should send something to their missionary son. Finally, through my lawyer-like questions, I broke down our elder's resolve—and he confessed to me. In late October, he had written his parents and asked them not to send him a present. He requested, instead, that they donate to the poor the value of the present that they would have gotten him, plus the value of the postage saved. In lieu of a gift, he asked for a letter telling him what his parents had done with the money. He received the letter, telling him about the donation his parents had made in his name to the Salvation Army, a soup kitchen, a battered women's shelter, and an orphanage in the Ukraine.

In doing this, our AP was following a family tradition. A number of years ago, his siblings noticed that their father, a charitable man, was not overly happy with the standard father gifts—tie, belt, socks, etc. So, of their own volition, they pooled their money, donated it to a charity, wrote their father a letter telling him what they had done, and placed it on the tree. That year it was the last present opened. When his father read the letter, he sat under the tree and cried like a baby he was so moved. Since that time, the children never give their father a gift; they make a donation in his name.

In a similar vein, Sister Kimberly Baustert received Christmas money from her family. She noticed that her Korean companion needed a coat. However, the Korean sister did not have enough money for a warm coat, so she was trying to get by in the cold Korean winter with a light coat. One day, when they were downtown, Sister Baustert asked her companion to try on coats and pick out one she liked, just for fun. Later, Sister Baustert had the other sisters in the house buy the coat (using Sister Baustert's money) and put the coat in Sister Baustert's companion's closet. Her companion was so surprised and so moved when it was time to go outside the next day and she found her new coat.

Charity needn't be a big thing, either. Each time a missionary has a birthday, Sister Rife sends the missionary a birthday letter (handwritten) and 1,000 Won, enough to buy a birthday treat. She had sent the card and money to Elder Kirk Winegar. One day, when he was teaching a discussion in the chapel, a beggar came into the chapel and asked for money. Elder Winegar didn't have any money; then he remembered the envelope with his birthday money from Sister Rife. He took out the 1,000 Won, got his companion to donate 1,000 Won, and they went across the street and bought some food for the beggar. A small thing can be a big thing (see Alma 37:6).

When I think of patience, long-suffering, self-discipline, and reflecting the light of Christ, I think of Elder Caleb Jones. One evening, Elder Jones was door-knocking in an apartment complex. He came to a door with a cross on it symbolizing that the occupant attends a Christian church. He knocked on the door. A middle-aged woman answered and began to yell at him almost immediately. Not only did she yell, but she used profanity, which is unusual for a Korean woman. She told him how bad our church is and she ordered him to go away, which he did. However, seconds later, he saw the elevator rising from the ground floor. The lady called the security guard to have the elders ejected from the building. Elder Jones was mad, but he did not say anything.

As he was walking away from the apartment complex, his mind was on revenge. He longed to get even with this woman. Several days later, he set upon a plan to do just that. He returned to her apartment, knocked on her door, and said this: "Madam, we fear that we made you angry the other evening when we visited. That was not our intent. We have brought you some flowers, and we would like to apologize to you. Would you please accept our apology?" Well, the woman was dumbfounded. She did not know what to say. Finally, she just invited the elders in. She listened to the first discussion and gave the elders juice and fruit. Although she was not interested in hearing more, she and the elders parted friends. And she apologized to them for being unkind and harsh when they had visited before.

Talk about Christ-like revenge. I am so proud of Elder Jones and his companion!

I learned about having an attitude of service from many of the missionaries, including Elder Tim Glover, one of our first APs. One time he did something that was not expected, and Sister Rife said to him "you didn't have to do that." To which Elder Glover responded, "I came to serve." He always had that attitude.

Elder Robert Stewart set a great example of dedication and diligence. He was 100% missionary all the time. He studied very diligently. Unless there was no way out, he ate only Korean food and he sat on the floor, because he had come on a mission to Korea and intended to live like a Korean while he served them. Elder Stewart consecrated himself to the work.

We have two missionaries in the mission who are vying for "happiest missionary." They are Elder Porter Nielsen and Elder Nathan Bennion. They are lively, enthusiastic, and positive. Nothing gets them down. They have a huge impact—on missionaries, members, investigators, and English class participants—wherever they serve. When they are transferred out of a unit, I get complaint calls from the members and English class participants. These elders accept any assignment and any challenge with a positive spirit.

Elder Kim Jae Man is an older Korean missionary. He has already graduated from Seoul National University, the Harvard of Korea. When he was a new senior companion, I sent the APs to visit him and give him some training. He could have taken the attitude that he was older than, and probably smarter than, the APs. Instead, he could not wait for their visit and had a list prepared

of all the things he hoped to learn from the APs. I appreciate Elder Kim's humble heart and desire to learn.

Elder Eric Cragun had one week left on his mission. He was supposed to travel to Cheongju for interviews, which would take most of a day. He called, hesitatingly, to ask if I would interview his companion at zone conference, so that he would not have to make the trip. The last week of his mission was precious to him, and Elder Cragun did not want to "waste" almost a whole day traveling and being interviewed, when he could have been doing missionary work.

In my day, we called it being "trunky." Now the elders call it "being dead." But, I like the attitude of Elder Greg Lowe. The same could be said for many of the elders, including Elder Cragun and Elder Jeffrey Miles. These elders did not get trunky; they did not die early; they worked right down to the very last minute. The last week of their mission was as diligently and excellently performed as every other week. The only difference was that on Monday they packed their bags and came to the mission home. I am so proud of the many missionaries who endure in faithfulness until the end.

Elder Shane Sweat was a quiet, unassuming young man from Heber, Utah. He was a star athlete, but this had not gone to his head. He was not the life of the party. He usually did not know what to say in a social gathering. But, he studied Korean very diligently. And he treasured up the words of eternal life through gospel study (see Doctrine & Covenants 84:85). He told me that whenever he was in a teaching situation, the Lord would open up his mind and pour into it the words he should speak—and these words would flow out of his mouth in fluent Korean. I learned a lot about treasuring up and teaching by the spirit from Elder Shane Sweat.

One day in Sacrament Meeting, the first counselor of the Samseong Ward told of driving home from work at 8:00 p.m. on the coldest night of the year. As he passed by a gas station and convenience store, he saw Elders Jeffrey Miles and Devin Nielsen proselytizing on the street. He thought: "Those great elders ought to be in my house teaching a discussion. I need to find an investigator to refer to them." Another time, on a cold day in January, these two elders were street-boarding with their district. After quite a while, the group decided to go to McDonald's for dinner (and to get warm). Elders Miles and Nielsen said they could not go; they had something else to do. Forty minutes later, when the rest of the district came out of McDonald's, they found Elders Miles and Nielsen street-boarding. What they "had to do" was to continue street-boarding.

Sister Jennifer Andersen had a hard time learning Korean. In fact, at one point, I wondered whether she would ever get it. Towards the end of her mission, after interviews and discussion practice, I asked my assistant, Elder Farley, who had taught the gospel best that day. He replied, without hesitation, "Sister Andersen." He said that she was very good at Korean. Her language was simple, but it was smooth and easy to understand. She was teaching so well in Korean.

Our financial secretary, Elder Parsons, also had a great experience with Sister Andersen. At the end of her mission, Sister Andersen had money left over, so she was able to cover her companion's medical expenses. She also returned to the mission quite a substantial sum of money. When Elder Parsons complimented her, she replied "It's the Lord's money; it's sacred."

One of our best missionaries was Elder John Morris. He has a great enthusiasm for the gospel and for life. He is good with people. He was good with our family. The members loved him. He was a hard working and diligent missionary. One night, after zone conference, he chatted up the manager at Burger King in Gwangju. The man later moved to Canada, but was taught the gospel and baptized there because Elder Morris started with him in Korea. Elder Morris ended his

mission as our AP. Prior to leaving, he visited all the stores in our neighborhood, taught them about the gospel, and gave the owners a copy of the Book of Mormon. He also knocked doors for six hours on his last day—until 9:30 p.m.

Speaking of enthusiasm, I cannot forget Elder Logan Hammer or Elder Ryan Russell. These elders were enthusiasm personified. The members literally hated me whenever I transferred one of them. I have rarely met anyone more willing to serve, more anxious to help than these two great elders.

Sister Ha Hee Sun was a member of another church when she first saw our missionaries street-boarding in Seoul. One of the sisters had such a bright countenance that she looked like an angel to Sister Ha. She wanted to talk to the missionaries that day, but was too shy. However, the next time Sister Ha saw the same set of missionaries, she could not resist. She introduced herself and ultimately joined the Church. Time passed—and Sister Ha became a missionary. On two separate occasions, while Sister Ha was street-boarding, strangers introduced themselves to her and commented that she looked like an angel. From observing an angel to becoming one herself, I'm proud of Sister Ha for having the image of God in her countenance.

Another special missionary was Elder Song Jeong Hoon. When I think of Elder Song, I think of Ammon feeding the king's horses. Elder Song only thinks of others. He is totally service-oriented. He is truly Christ-like in that way. One day, I sent him on an AP visit to the elders serving in Daecheon. For service, these elders help an 84-year-old lady affectionately referred to as the "Daecheon halmoni." While he was visiting her, Elder Song learned that her only clock had broken. He promptly gave her his prized gold watch. He tried to hide this from me, but I learned about his kind act indirectly. I kept asking him what time it was and asking him to check his gold watch.

One preparation day the elders went downtown to shop. Elder Song started talking to an old woman selling something in a cart on the street. She was about to drink a little bottle of yogurt. Elder Song asked what she was doing, and she said she was having her meal. Elder Song disappeared and reappeared moments later with some ramen, crackers and juice for the woman, saying "yogurt isn't a sufficient meal for you." Whenever Elder Song saw Sister Rife carrying anything, he literally bounded to her and carried whatever it was wherever she was going. As I would go out each morning to get into my car to go somewhere in the mission, I would find Elder Song wiping off the car and cleaning the tires, so that everything would look sharp.

I learned a lot about being unselfish and Christ-like from Elder Song Jeong Hoon.

And speaking of being unselfish and Christ-like, Elder Jonathan Schmuhl shined the shoes of his companion and housemates every day of his mission. How could you ever be mad at a companion who serves you like that on a daily basis?

Elder James Farley is a wonderful young man. He is tall and good-looking. He is athletic and intelligent. He comes from a well-to-do family. He could be very proud, but he is not. He has such a pleasant demeanor. He treats everyone nicely. He could be a spoiled brat; instead, he is one of the nicest, most genuine, most kind people you will ever meet. I'm proud of Elder Farley for having every reason to be proud, but for choosing to be humble and kind.

Sister Jeong Eun Ok is a female Elder Farley when it comes to having a great demeanor. Sister Jeong was a delight wherever and with whomever she served. No matter what the personality

dynamics, if Sister Jeong were in the house, things would work because of her love and kindness and patience.

And now I would like to praise some unnamed missionaries. They are elders and sisters who are introverted. It's hard to proselytize when you're an introvert. Sometimes it's hard to proselytize even when you're an extrovert. Yet, these unnamed introverted elders and sisters try hard, hang in there, do hard things, and don't give up. Almost every proselytizing contact is a painful experience, but contact they do. You introverts: I am proud of you for fighting through your personality to open your mouth and share the gospel.

Many of you elders and sisters study Korean very hard. Some of you get up early to study much more than is required or expected. I won't mention any names, but I know who you are. The Lord will bless you because of your diligence.

Well, there is so much more I could say and so many more things I have learned from our missionaries. But, I'll leave it as this. I can't say everything. This is a random sampling of what I have learned. If I have not mentioned a particular missionary's name, it's not because I did not learn anything from that missionary.

One of the main roles of a mission president is teacher. I hope I am a good teacher for the missionaries. But, I am so grateful to my Heavenly Father for the many things the missionaries have taught me.

## **Appendix 1 Average Mission President Schedule**

It's the schedule that's average—not the mission president!

When we served, from 2001-2004, in Asia, our mission was on a five-week cycle.<sup>46</sup> In other words, every transfer period was five weeks in duration. We received new missionaries from the MTC every five weeks, and we sent home missionaries who had completed their term of service every five weeks. Instead of planning our lives on a monthly basis, we planned on a five-weekly basis.

Let me share what our typical schedule was like when we served in Korea. While most missions have preparation day on Monday, we had it on Wednesday, as Tuesday was the day we received missionaries from the MTC. By having Wednesday as our preparation day, the missionaries could use that day to transfer and not “waste” a regular work day. Our missionaries enjoyed having a break in the middle of the week rather than on Monday. They told me that Sunday was such a great day it seemed like a break—and they didn't need another break so soon.

### **Week 1**

- Prepare to receive new missionaries
- Interview departing missionaries
- Hold farewell dinner for departing missionaries
- Take departing missionaries to Seoul temple and to airport
- Greet new missionaries at airport and drive to mission home in Daejeon
- Interview new missionaries
- Hold orientation meeting with new missionaries
- Register new missionaries with Korean government
- Obtain bank account for new missionaries
- Breakfast and lunch with new missionaries
- Select trainers for new missionaries
- Interviews with one zone of missionaries
- Prepare talks for zone conferences

### **Week 2**

Multi-zone conferences, either two or three (travel required)

### **Week 3**

Interview three missionary zones (takes three days); about 16-20 missionaries each

### **Week 4**

Interview three missionary zones

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<sup>46</sup> It is my understanding that all missions are now on a six-week cycle.

## **Week 5**

Meet with all stake and district presidents in the mission  
Plan the transfer for Week 1 (takes many hours and much prayer)  
Prepare talks for stake and district conferences and for zone conferences

## **Every Day**

Field numerous questions and calls from missionaries; address companion, health, and other problems.

## **Every Week**

Read numerous president letters and respond, as necessary  
Handle companion problems, missionary health issues, and other problems that may arise  
Give talks at firesides, stake and district conferences, and other meetings  
Give temple recommend interviews to members of districts

## **Periodically**

Accompany General Authorities on mission tours, mission president conferences, stake and district conferences, and coordinating council meetings.

## **Grueling Schedule**

As a mission president, you never really have a day off. Just when you think you do, that's when a crisis arises that takes all or most of the day to address—a death in a missionary family; companions who can't get along; a missionary illness; a problem in a member district; etc.

I recall now, with some amusement, my attempts to watch the television show “The West Wing” while I was on my mission.<sup>47</sup> It's my favorite show. Amazingly, it was available in rerun in Korea. But every Wednesday night, when our family sat down to watch it, the phone would ring within five or 10 minutes; I would go in the other room to take the call; often the call involved encouraging a discouraged missionary; and I would return to the family room about the time the show ended.

There really is never a day off, but the calling of mission president is truly the hardest job you'll ever love.

There are many late nights and early mornings. Over the course of three years, I drove nearly 80,000 miles; gave more than 530 talks; and conducted about 5,000 interviews. And loved it!

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<sup>47</sup> We did not have the ability to record or “DVR” television programs.

### **About the Author**

I was raised in Springville, Utah, by goodly parents. After graduating from high school, I served a mission in Korea from 1972-1974. I graduated from BYU with a degree in English in 1977 and from BYU Law School in 1980.

During my legal career, I have worked as a law clerk, trial lawyer, international lawyer, and company general counsel.

In the Church, I have served as a young men's president, elders quorum president, bishop's counselor, branch president, bishop (twice), temple sealer, and mission president. I have also loved serving as a teacher and Primary pianist.

Most importantly, I am married to Janet Parsons Rife, and we have six children and five grandchildren.