

## Keeping the KWV Legacy Alive

President / Dr. Jongwoo Han  
KWV Digital Memorial Foundation, Inc.  
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From one of the many benches, I listened closely as Korean War heroes stood up to share their accounts of the bravery of young American soldiers at the 59<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War armistice. That morning of July 27, 2012, the podium was graced by the Ambassador Choi Young-jin of ROK, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, newly elected KWVA President James Ferris of Syracuse, NY, Medal of Honor recipient Ronald Rosser and many other heroes as well. Four aircrafts tore through the sky, evoking memories of the shrieks and cheers of soldiers during the 3-year war, the longest war in the history of twentieth-century battle. Right at that moment, as I was becoming entranced by tales of the Korean War, an important question struck me: what will be remembered 10 or 20 years from now? Who will be at this podium and on these benches in the Memorial Amphitheater of the Arlington National Cemetery, say on July 27, 2022? We need to establish a group, I realized, of KWVs' descendants to fill these seats and take to podium in order to pass along the legacy of the Korean War and the brave Americans who sacrificed their lives to answer the call of the country, of the wounded, of the survivors, and of those still missing in action – we are to serve as caretakers of the KWV Digital Memorial. On December 15, 2011, the KWVDM ([www.kwvdm.org](http://www.kwvdm.org)) was officially founded as a prototype collection of KWVs' interviews and artifacts, and it has now been expanded to include more than 70 recordings of brave soldiers' memories and 2,500 artifacts, providing us with an unprecedented picture of the war from their perspectives.

Since the era of KWVs will eventually pass, I came up with the idea of preserving continuity by passing on the legacy to the KWVs' own family and friends through the KWV Legacy Project. This thought completely enthralled me as I headed to St. Louis, MO to attend the Annual KWVA Convention (October 10-14). With two of my KWV friends – Norman Champagne, who greatly contributed to the birth of the KWVDM, and Keith Fannon, who connected me to two Texas chapters after the convention – I spent two days driving from Syracuse, NY to St. Louis, immersed in brainstorming potential ways to convince our seniors of the power that their youngsters could wield in this era of the Internet. In fact, many KWVs have never talked about their service during the war. How could I motivate them to initiate this intergenerational conversation with their offspring, which seems to be the only way to keep alive the legacy of these brave Americans who answered the call of their country. The challenge was to create critical mass in the KWVs' descendants network – not many were needed but a significant amount of committed youth with knowledge of the Internet and social media networks. How do we measure network power in Internet or online social media, such as Facebook or Twitter or Instagram, when raising millions of dollars for important issues? What is the formula? It's all in the math: the (N-1) factorial. Suppose that we have a KWV network of 5 young students from KWV families: simply apply 5 kids to our formula: (5-1)!, for which the KWV network power can be calculated as  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 = 24$ . However, when we successfully convince one more of our kids to join the KWV network, which means (6-1)!, that equals  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5$ , that produces a network power of 120, which is substantially larger. Our KWV descendants network power can go viral as we add just a small number of our kids to the current KWV network.

We can't expect the public to dig into your attics to tell the stories that have not yet been heard. The success of your effort is going to depend on your own kids and friends. So, talk to your beloved grandsons and granddaughters. Share some pictures with them and tell them where Korea is and what happened to you, to your families, and to Koreans. Ask them to do a little research on East Asia, and find out how critical this region will be to their proud country. Ask them to help you scan your pictures before the chance is lost to share it with other witnesses of the war you observed. Ask them to listen to your interviews and investigate all the different kinds of artifacts that the KWVDM has collected. Ask them to participate in the KWV Legacy Project and contact the KWVDM foundation, newly incorporated in 2012.

I am sure that we can help our own kids to build a community of their own that will fill the gorgeous Memorial Amphitheater on the morning of July 27 in coming years. I can't think of any better way to preserve and pass on the memories and values that our heroes dared to share with people in an unknown land, Korea: "never give up your own men" "be nicer [to your enemies] and give what others want" to avoid another war, and "trade with North Koreans," – views expounded by Col. Stone; the small green Bible filled with notes of his colleagues' names and whereabouts kept intact over Bill Baker's 3-year hell in the prison camp in the estuary of Yalu River, and many other stories that you can't hear without shedding a tear. These real and wise testimonies need to be preserved, and that's the cause to which the KWV Digital Memorial is committed: to continue expanding the oral and artifactual histories of our heroes and to build a community for our descendants who will continue to uphold the torchlight of the unsung heroes – the Korean War Veterans. Your blood, agony, and precious lives have made possible a prospering economy and substantive democracy in the Republic of Korea. Now, it's time to pass that bravery on through our own children, the vanguard party of the KWVs.

Unfortunately, the War has not stopped: my friend Keith Fannon still suffers from those unthinkable memories after we came back from a long journey that gave us unbelievable witnesses and memories from Chapters 270 and 215 in Texas. My prayers go out to heroes like Keith and all the young hands that will carry on the torches of the KWVs and pass them on to their own children. I want to thank all the friends of the Richardson KWV Chapter 270 and the KWVA Walton H. Walker Chapter No. 215 and others who attended the convention for their willingness to commit to this noble cause.

This project would have not been possible without arduous support of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea and generous support from Pantech Group CEO and my good friend, Park Byung-yup. Please do not hesitate to contact me ([jonghan@syr.edu](mailto:jonghan@syr.edu), 315-480-9427) if you have any questions on how your kids can participate in creating and helping the legacy group or regarding the 4-day **KWV Legacy Project** workshop in Washington, DC on July 24-28, 2013, which will be funded by the KWVDM Foundation, Inc. Please refer to the plan included below for details.