

Contents

Preface	ix
Thanks and Recollections	xi
Part One EARLY LIFE	1
1 Abenaki Scalps and a Street Fight in Circleville	3
2 Texas Talk and a Takeshita Takedown	9
3 Fraternities and Philosophy at Williams	15
Part Two INTELLIGENCE	19
4 Jumping Out of an Airplane for the CIA	21
5 The Stunning Young Woman in a Crowded Taxi	25
6 A Glimpse of the Infinite from an Idaho Blue Jay	31
7 Jack Downey's Tragic Mission	35
8 Happy Years in Japan	41
<i>Photo Gallery I</i>	57
9 JFK and Vietnam	65
10 Lurching toward Catastrophe	73
11 Burmese Days	79
12 Searching for a Crippled Boy	93
13 Fort Apache	95
<i>Photo Gallery II</i>	129
14 The Abduction of Kim Dae-jung	135
15 President Park Chung-hee: Too Long in Power	141
16 The Pike Committee and the Carter White House	147
Part Three WHITE HOUSE YEARS	159
17 The White House Years with Reagan and Bush	161
18 Travels with Bush	173

viii Contents

19 Denis Thatcher and the Missing Brassiere	189
<i>Photo Gallery III</i>	195
20 The Puzzling Case of Richard Nixon	203
21 The Finnish Connection	209
Part Four DIPLOMACY AND ATTENDANT TRAVAILS	215
22 Ambassador in Seoul	217
<i>Photo Gallery IV</i>	237
23 Iran-Contra: Snakes in the Cellar for Seven Years	243
24 October Surprise	257
Part Five BACK TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR	261
25 Korea Society Years	263
26 Kids to Korea	271
27 Epiphany in Long Beach	275
28 Six Trips to Pyongyang	279
<i>Photo Gallery V</i>	295
29 Jazz	301
30 A Stint at Goldman Sachs	307
31 The Dangers of Demonization	311
Gratitude	331
Index	325

Korea Society Years

In 1992, Bill Clinton's election as president brought my government career to an end. Had President Bush been reelected, I would have moved on from Seoul to some other position in his administration. I might have been sent to Tokyo as ambassador, a position I would have enjoyed.

As it was, Bill Clinton sent former vice president Walter "Fritz" Mondale to Tokyo. I had gotten to know Mondale when he was vice president and liked him. In 1995, I went to Tokyo on a business trip and ran into Mondale at a meeting. He shook my hand, shook his head, and said, "Don, this job is very heavy lifting."

Japan was in a funk, economically and politically, and constantly searching for consensus on every issue. The Imperial Household Agency in Japan was still a suffocating influence. Being U.S. ambassador to Japan would not have been nearly as interesting as my time in Seoul had been.

Before I left Seoul, I was fortunate enough to be offered a job as head of The Korea Society (TKS), a small nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering better understanding between South Korea and the United States. At the beginning of 1993, TKS was located in New York City in a corner of a large office at the Asia Society. It employed three or four people. Virtually its only activity had been an annual dinner, which raised enough money to keep the organization afloat, but barely. I had been the speaker at one of those dinners held in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria. No expense had been spared in flying Meg and me back to New York from Seoul, and putting us up in an elaborate suite at the Waldorf.

The people offering me the job, a mix of Korean and American

businessmen, gave me the option of setting up the society in Washington, D.C., where they knew I lived, or keeping it in New York. I opted for New York. My goal as ambassador had been to change the U.S.-Korea relationship from a military alliance into an economic and political partnership. I believed I could do more to further that objective in New York than I could in Washington.

I think that that was the right decision in 1993, and today as well. It is easier to attract an audience in Washington than it is in New York, but I believe audiences in New York have more economic clout and stronger overall influence.

I was offered quite a munificent salary, which surprised me. I accepted on condition that The Korea Society would acquire its own, independent office. That was quickly agreed to, and a small suite of four rooms was rented on the eighth floor of a large building at the corner of 3rd Avenue and 57th Street in Manhattan. In 2009, when I cut all active connection with TKS, it had grown in stages to occupy the full 8th floor and had a full-time staff of about twenty people.

Meg and I packed out of Seoul at the end of February 1993, returned to Washington, and moved back into our house on Keokuk Street in Bethesda. Meg stayed there while I went to reconnoiter the situation in New York. The TKS board of about fifteen Koreans and Americans was glad to see me and threw an elaborate and expensive lunch of welcome for themselves and me at the Jockey Club. That event, and my recollection of the Waldorf dinner a year or so before gave me the totally false impression that The Korea Society was in strong financial shape.

After lunch that day, I met the small TKS staff at and took my first look at its financial status. Its net worth was about \$200,000, and the Jockey Club lunch had taken a significant bite out of that sum. The only good news was that the Korea Foundation had agreed to an exponential increase in its annual support to society, in an effort to raise it to a higher level of significance. It was only on the basis of that increase that I was offered the job.

It dawned on me at about that time that the high salary I had accepted would take an inordinately large proportion of the society's cash flow—it was larger than the current net worth of the Society.

So I cut my own salary by 40 percent before I received my first paycheck.

I'd had visions of the nonprofit world as a domain peopled by philanthropists looking for new opportunities to give, and by rich and generous widows with bulging bank accounts. I found it instead to be a tough world and quickly saw I had missed the golden age of philanthropy toward Asian issues and organizations, a great deal of which had flowed into the Asia Society and other worthy organizations in the 1950s and '60's.

I had two rather embarrassing rejections by the Ford Foundation (three years apart) and the best oral pitch I ever made, to a world-famous philanthropist from a renowned family, resulted in *le grande zero*. Korea was neither a place nor a subject that excited the urge to give among the well-heeled, traditional givers in New York. I remember more than once walking rather dejectedly along a New York sidewalk, wondering if TKS, or I, would ever have much of an impact in that great, seemingly indifferent city.

The best managerial move I ever made at TKS was to hire Fred Carriere as my deputy, with the title of executive vice president. Fluent in Korean, Fred had spent more than twenty years in Korea, the last ten as executive director of the Fulbright Commission. Fred has an unequalled ability to understand and relate to Koreans, both in the North and the South. Two wonderful Korean women, Yong Jin Choi and Sophia Kang, helped me greatly from the time I arrived and continue to work at The Korea Society, fostering educational exchanges, and program development.

In mid-1993, Meg and I found a cozy apartment in New York, at the corner of 61st Street and Lexington Avenue. We lived there for two years, really getting to know the city. In 1995, following the death of Meg's parents, we moved into her childhood home in Armonk, New York, where we continue to live very happily.

With Fred Carriere doing most of the managing of TKS, my life centered on fundraising, writing articles, making speeches, attending conferences, and travel. Between 1993 and 2010, I made fifty-one trips to Korea, which included visits to China, Japan, and North Korea.

It was a full and busy life, particularly during the presidencies of Kim Dae-jung, 1997–2002, and Roh Moo Hyun, 2002–2007. Both

presidents pursued “the sunshine policy” toward North Korea, resulting in improved relations with Pyongyang and North-South summit meetings held in 2000 and 2007. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Kim Dae-jung in December 2000 brought great satisfaction to me.

My saddest trip came in 2009, when I was part of the U.S. delegation attending Kim’s funeral. Madeleine Albright headed our group. As the funeral procession approached the reviewing stand, I noted a visibly limping male figure laboriously walking near the late president’s casket, and asked who it was. I was told it was Kim Dae-jung’s son, who had been crippled by KCIA torture. I remember thinking that at least President Kim had been spared that terrible indignity.

In 2013, while visiting Seoul, I called on Lee Hee Ho, Kim’s widow, to present my compliments. She remembered that I had come to the hospital to visit her dying husband. She said to me: “Had he known you had come, he would have jumped out of bed to greet you.” I can only hope that with the passage of time, President Kim’s contributions to North-South reconciliation will be more fully recognized and celebrated by the people of South Korea.

The Korea Society staff eventually grew to about twenty full-time professionals, with many outstanding young people serving for two or three years before going on to graduate work or other more lucrative positions. The society put on highly successful annual dinners and other events in New York, for fundraising and general public relations purposes.

Around 1995, former President Gerald Ford did us the honor of speaking at one of the society’s annual dinners. His staff had indicated to me that some suggestions on his speech would be welcomed, and so I did a bit of research on him.

It became clear that before meeting his wife Betty, Gerald Ford had had a powerful relationship with a beautiful model that lasted for several years. When Ford came to New York to make his speech, he invited me to accompany him to one or two other appointments he had made in the city. As we rode around together, I found him completely open and a delightful conversationalist.

I asked him about the model, and whether he knew what had become of her. He laughed and said that “life in Grand Rapids”

was not what she had wanted. He added that she wrote to him periodically and had been divorced more than once.

Ford spoke of his wife, Betty, with great devotion. Emboldened by this bit of conversation, I asked if he'd ever had second thoughts about his pardon of Richard Nixon. His reply was direct and powerful. "I never had regrets about the pardon. The country would have torn itself apart if Nixon had been put on trial. I'm sure it contributed to my defeat in 1976, but I felt I had to do it." President Ford remains clear in my mind as a strong, ethical man whom we were lucky to have as president when we did.

Only once did the Korea Society come close to disaster in putting on a major event. That was in November 1995, when I succumbed to pressure from one of my Korean board members, who meant to put on a concert at Avery Fisher Hall, showcasing the musical talents of some of his friends. He had in mind a local conductor and the conductor's young daughter, who was a gifted violinist.

Avery Fisher Hall has over 2,700 seats and is difficult to fill with anything short of well-known musical performers. As soon as it got out that we were planning a concert featuring local Koreans, we were swamped by calls from proud parents, pushing their children forward with loud assertions that they were far more talented than those chosen by my board member.

We could not solve the parental squabbles—but we put them out of reach of the parents by hiring an established musician whose talents were fully known. He was Earl Wild, then about eighty years old and a noted specialist in Rachmaninoff's piano concertos. The American Symphony Orchestra was to play the entire concert. We launched a vigorous ticket-selling effort, and were encouraged by the response.

But when we assembled our concert performers for a dress rehearsal, three days before the concert, the results were explosive. Earl Wild, after hearing the local conductor's efforts from the podium for only a few minutes, got up from his piano and said he would refuse to play unless a better conductor was hired. What to do?

Earl Wild recommended that we get the late Kenneth Schermerhorn, the highly talented conductor of the Nashville Symphony, and Schermerhorn readily agreed. There followed a tempestuous

scene with the local conductor, who insisted on conducting the opening piece in the concert. We settled for that compromise, and Wild agreed, as he would then in no way be associated with a conductor whom he could not trust.

Schermerhorn was a delightful man. I told him everything that had happened, and we had a good laugh about it. He knew Earl Wild well and was comfortable with conducting the long and very difficult Rachmaninoff concerto Wild had selected to play.

On the night of the concert, Avery Fisher Hall was filled, with hardly an empty seat. The local conductor got through the opening piece without difficulty. All seemed well. Then Wild and Schermerhorn appeared to strong applause and launched into the Rachmaninoff.

Well into the piece, Wild lost track of where he was and stopped playing. Schermerhorn was instantly beside him and signaled where they were. Wild immediately picked up the score and never lost touch with the orchestra. The entire incident was over in a few seconds, and I later spoke to a number of people in the audience who had not noticed anything going awry.

My close friend Sam Koo was in the audience, with his wife, Myung-wha Chung, the renowned cellist. Of course, they had not missed anything, and Myung-wha told me she almost "slid under her seat" at the thought of what would have happened had Schermerhorn not been there to correct the situation.

Wild knew what he was talking about when he refused to play with the local man conducting. Such was our narrow escape, and we never returned to the classical music scene until we encouraged the New York Philharmonic to visit Pyongyang in 2008. That was a total success.

Each year, the Korea Society presented the Van Fleet Award to an outstanding Korean or American who had done much to improve relations between the two countries. Distinguished award recipients and keynote speakers at our major events included three American presidents (Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George H. W. Bush), three Korean presidents, (Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae-jung, and Roh Moo Hyun), U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Colin Powell.

I was indeed fortunate that Buck and Doreen Freeman, whom

I had known—but not well—years ago in Japan, had just retired and were starting their wondrous Freeman Foundation. To my surprise, Buck came to me in 1993, knowing that I was taking on the TKS job and offered his generous financial support, which I was delighted to accept.

Even though Buck and Doreen have now passed on, their work continues to this day through their Freeman Foundation. It remains the most stalwart and generous American supporter of the Korea Society and a wonderfully eclectic group of organizations. Long may it wave.

Lockheed was grateful to me for helping to save the sale of P-3 antisubmarine aircraft to Korea. The company gave TKS a generous three-year grant that was a real blessing.

But what really made the Korea Society a success was what happened in Korea itself. Its economic rise, its increasing political influence in Asia, and its performance as a sterling ally of the United States made it a name that carried the society forward on all fronts.