

Korea, Land of the Morning Calm

PART 1.

Yoboseyo from Korea!

After a 1am departure from San Francisco International airport, the 12hour flight to Seoul was not too difficult for me; same amount of time as my usual trips back to Paris. I'm so glad that we had emergency row seats for Dad's sake, as his eighty seven year old 6'4" frame would not have done well in another seat. The Korean film crew is so kind and caring, and treat Mum and Dad with such respect, it makes having a camera in your face seemingly non stop, all the more bearable. The 17hour time difference had us all like zombies by the time we stepped off the plane. It was still so dark at 7am, rather smoggy and gray and barren. It seemed like we were on another planet, and we WERE!

The drive from Incheon airport to Seoul was rather depressing, and Mum and I gave each other worried looks as to what lay ahead. The weather, our translator explained, had been beautiful the day before, but this day was unlike anything I had ever experienced, beyond gloomy! As we approached the Han River, which winds through Seoul and is a definite reference point for Dad, he saw nothing else that reminded him of the Seoul he once knew. He kept saying it looked like America and that he did not feel like he was in Korea. I must remind you, that this is his first trip back in 66 years! Off to the right, we saw the tallest skyscraper in Seoul, bridge after bridge of cars and buses taking the now 13 million residents of Seoul from one side to the other, and high-rise apartments on the riverbanks. Am I in Manhattan? Dad reminisces that there were no buildings above four stories in his day, just an occasional car, streetcars up the middle of the road, taxis weaving in and out, bullock carts going down the left side of the road and thousands of bicycles everywhere. Now we're on a freeway. We pass an old cemetery at one point and the documentary director points it out as where Grandfather and Great Grandfather are buried, a soul connection has been made for my Father.

As we wind our way through the metropolis, Dad searches for signs of something he recognizes. The director, we come to see, has chosen a route where we will pass by some historical sights. We

come upon the South Gate and the Seoul Train Station, which is where everyone left Seoul or arrived in Seoul back in the day, and is located across the street from the hospital where Dad was born in 1919, the City Hall, and the Gyeongbok Palace. As Dad put it, "now I feel like I'm in Korea". We eventually arrived at a wonderful hotel in an area called Insadong, around 10am that is surrounded by galleries, curio and antique shops that line the tiny streets of this old section of Seoul. We have a spacious two bedroom residence for our stay over looking the beautiful mountains surrounding Seoul and the King's Palace.

Thankfully we had time to rest before our first filmed adventure out into Seoul that afternoon. At 3pm, we were off to The Seoul Tower, a needle like structure on top of a hill called Nam San. At the time Dad lived here there was no access to this mountain and a Japanese shrine half way up, marked the fact that the Japanese were in control. We went up to the observation deck where you can view Seoul and beyond as far as the eye can see in all directions. I asked Dad to point out the general vicinity of the house my Grandfather had built for my Grandmother in 1923 called Dilkusha, ("Palace of Hearts Delight" in Persian, named after a palace that was used as a fortress by an ancestor of mine during the Indian Mutiny to defend his cavalry against superior forces that he eventually overcame.) Through the provided telescopes, I traced the mountains edge down past the old city wall and over to an area that seemed to match Dad's description. There is a very large Ginkgo tree right by the house so I hoped that would help me locate it, plus the visual I had in my mind from looking at a picture of Dilkusha hundreds of times. I had to consciously steady the telescope as the excitement of a possible sighting made me a little shaky. All of a sudden I had Dilkusha in plain view, what are the chances of that? Hundreds of thousands of buildings, and there it was, sandwiched in between a very tall modern building, a small house, and shaded by an enormous tree. I literally shrieked at the sight of it, and the director and his assistant cameraman came rushing over. What a moment that was! Mum, Dad and I made the 360 degree tour around the deck and Dad pointed out various spots he recognized, with only the mountain range and the River Han to guide him. We were then taken to a fantastic revolving 5 star restaurant a few floors below for a private dinner for the three of us. At nightfall, the crew returned to film the glittering city below and

record Dad's feelings. We all felt like we were in a dream. An Incredible end to a day that seemed three days long. We all fell into bed with excited anticipation of the next day.

At 10am we set off with the crew under sunny skies, in a very comfy van, spacious and great for sightseeing. First stop Yang-hwa-jin, the cemetery where my Grandfather, Albert and Great Grandfather, George are buried. I had seen photos of George's headstone but Dad had only just had Albert's made, as we didn't know that his grave, until now, had been unmarked. We have come to discover that the Koreans were very upset to find out that during all these years, people have been unknowingly walking over the body of the man that did so much to save the lives of Korean patriots during their fight for Independence from the Japanese in 1919. It was a bitter cold, windy morning and we were all sniffing with tears rolling down our cheeks, which was very timely as we were filming a very touching scene in front of the tombstones. It was an incredible moment and Dad was quite choked up. He had completed something my Grandmother, Mary had started when against all odds at the end of WW11 she was able to bring my Grandfather's ashes back to Korea. It was Albert's desire to be buried in his beloved homeland and Mary had kept her promise. I was secretly waiting for the afternoon's adventure with overwhelming excitement.

After lunch, we set off up the side of the old city wall to find our family home "Dilkusha". We reached a bend in the road and the van came to an abrupt stop, the director wanted Dad to walk up the city wall path to a vista point and search for his old home. Seoul has changed so much it was not an easy task. After a short drive down a few narrow streets we stopped again. I felt I knew exactly where I was, as I recognized buildings I had seen through the telescope. Dad was still a bit turned around, but I saw what I thought where branches of the Ginkgo tree reaching out from behind a very tall building. I led him down a steep road and path that wound around various houses, and there it was. I couldn't believe I was seeing the family home. The old faded photos had come to life and here it was, minus the 12-acre park that used to surround it. Right up to the edge of the front stairs of the now dwarfed mansion, and on every side, were buildings of all sizes. The corner stone marked "Dilkusha 1923" was covered up by cans and debris and the once splendid house looked quite

dilapidated. Soon, an elderly Korean woman came out the front door and beckoned us in. We slipped off our shoes at the front door and proceeded inside of the house that has had no restoration since Mary and Albert were forced to leave by the Japanese in 1942. We ventured down an unlit hallway, up a staircase and down a rather foreboding corridor. Under a light at the end, was a smiling lady with her husband peering out at us from behind her. Their two room corner apartment faced the Ginkgo tree and they tell me they have lived there for 40 years. I inquire about the other people living in the house and they tell me there are 17 other families. They are North Korean refugees with nowhere else to go. I'm glad to hear that "The Palace of Hearts Delight" shelters these people from the horrors of North Korea. I have visions of finding them all a better place to live, restoring Dilkusha as a museum and honoring my Grandparents and all they did for Korea.

PART 2.

Dad was born 87 years ago this upcoming February 28th in Severance Hospital here in Seoul. The old hospital has long since gone and a year ago the new hospital opened. We were supposed to leave on this trip two weeks ago but as Dad had some chest congestion and a slight heart fibrillation, our trip had been postponed. Deeply concerned with the health condition of "Mr. Bruce" as they like to call him, the crew here organized an appointment with the top cardiologist in the country. We set off to the hospital where we were greeted with open arms and hearts. We had not expected that this part was to be filmed, but they continued to follow Dad around like he was the King of England. Mum cringed at seeing the lines of people waiting patiently for their appointments and here we were parading right by, cameras in tow, into various rooms for the series of tests. We just had to accept that this was all organized and that they felt that Dad was terribly important. Just an "old crock" as he put it, that they had wrongly assumed had almost one foot in the grave before they actually met him. The final consultation was very good. Dad's health is great except for the fibrillation, helped by an aspirin a day, so I feel at ease now he has had this state of the art check up. We continued on with the visit of the rest of the hospital, which is unlike anything you have ever seen in the hospital department. It is the anti hospital, meaning that it feels like a luxury hotel, gorgeous, open, beautifully designed, cool furniture, awesome artwork, restaurants

and stores. The VIP rooms on the top floor are four room apartments for \$1700 a night. Fabulous, when can I move in? The check-in looks like a cross between an airport and a boutique hotel. We meet with the hospital superintendent who is very honored to meet Dad (I have never seen anyone bow so much), and who showers us with gifts & refreshments. We show him my Grandmother's old photo albums from Seoul, which he peruses with great interest. We meet some very nice American Dr's and employees, who have been in Seoul all their lives. We all become instant friends. I'm fascinated to hear their fluent use of the language; got to put that on my to do list!

On our trip back to the hotel, I marvel at how much Seoul reminds me of so many different cities. New York for all the high-rise buildings, the River Han reminds me of the Seine in Paris and the Thames in London. It's amazing to think what this country has been through with the Japanese suppression and occupation, and then the Korean War. The fact that they have transformed themselves in such a short period of time is simply amazing. What a resilient people they are. Through all their travails, they have retained such a strong sense of self and of where they are going. I am very impressed and proud of their achievements.

The Underwood family is a very well known foreign family here in Seoul. Rather like my own, they have been connected to Korea for four generations. We meet Peter Underwood, Grandson of a Missionary that was very good friends with my Grandfather. Mum went to school with his twin uncles, when she was here from 1934-1937. (Her father was the British Consul here between 1934-1942, and her Mother, Aline and my Grandmother, Mary were best friends. So the Seoul connection brought my mother and father together.) In fact they are both able to relay numerous stories to Peter about his family he did not know. Mum was a bridesmaid in his Aunts wedding, my Grandfather sold Underwood typewriters at W.W Taylor's Import, Export Company and Curio Shop back in the 20's, among other things. Peter's Great Grandfather started the Yonsei University here, and that is where we first met, in the gardens, in front of a bronze statue of Horace Underwood that had quite a few bullet holes in it from the Korean War. The house where Peter grew up is now a museum about his family, a fascinating place full of old photos and books. His Father has written numerous publications about Korea, all

of which I intend to read. Just before leaving we were approached by a young Korean student who handed Dad a very thick, large hardback book. It was his thesis on the history of foreign families in Seoul, he points out numerous mentions of Albert and Mary Taylor. Everyday unknown layers of their lives unfold before me. Continuing on to the center of the city we pull up to an intersection, right across the street from the Seoul Train Station. We find ourselves at the base of a sky- scraper. This is the site of the old Severance Hospital where Dad was born. If it weren't for the station, Dad would not have had a clue as to where he was. Totally unrecognizable! We venture into the lobby and are introduced to a delightful professor who works at the Seoul Museum. There is a display off to the side that explains the history of the hospital and it's connection to the Korean Independence Movement in 1919 on the night of my Father's birth.

Korean Patriots had chosen March 1st as a day to declare their independence from Japanese rule. It was the day of the funeral of the last Emperor of Korea and they figured the city would be packed with Koreans and therefore a good day to make their declaration. The night before, on February 28th, some patriots gathered in the basement of the hospital, to print their Declaration of Independence. At first, they hid the papers under a cadaver which was in the morgue near by, but when the Japanese got wind of what they were doing and stormed the hospital, the papers made their way into the hands of a nurse who rushed them into the room of my Grandmother, who had just given birth to my Father, Bruce. She shoved the declaration into the bedclothes and continued about her business. The room my Grandmother was in had extraterritoriality and was considered United States property, and therefore the Japanese were forbidden to enter. When my Grandfather Albert came in to view his new son and picked him up, the papers fell out from under him and he quickly put Dad down. He moved to the light of the window for a better read, and realized the importance of what he now held in his hands. As Dad says, he was far more interested in the Independence of the Korean people than in the birth of his own son!

Apart from being a mining engineer, Albert was also a journalist and photographer for the Associated Press. He quickly left the hospital with the papers, and made his way to his office. The Japanese

followed him as his quick departure from the hospital raised their suspicions. He hid the papers in a vase and even though they thoroughly searched his office this hiding place eluded them. He then gave the information to my Great Uncle Bill who left Korea immediately for Japan with the documents in the heel of his shoe. Once in Japan he cabled the news to the AP and the world became aware that Korea had declared their independence from the Japanese. Once Albert had confirmation that the news was out, he returned to the streets of Seoul and beyond to record the massacre and torture by the Japanese of Korean Patriots. Albert would be involved numerous times in reporting these events to the outside world, and therefore helped in reducing the number of Koreans that were being killed at the hands of savage Japanese soldiers.

What a day that was for all of us, and it wasn't over. We left the hotel on foot through the streets of Insadong to meet Peter Underwood for a typical Korean dinner. We were happy to meet up with him again, but not so happy at the prospect of trying kimchi, a spicy pickled cabbage that we all consider awful. My Grandmother didn't like it and neither do we. I guess they wanted to get on film us NOT enjoying Korean food. We do agree that their rice cakes and Korean pears are delicious though!

Part 3.

Participating in this documentary is such an incredible experience for us all. We're having a filmed, all expenses paid tour of Seoul, with organized visits to every site, palace and museum related to our family's local history. The production company has researched everything thoroughly, so they know more about our families past than we do. This adventure is something we could never have put together on our own.

It has been amazing to see Mum and Dad on the go from morning until night with a nonstop filming schedule, quite grueling for someone of any age, let alone at 87 and 82 respectively. Into the van, out of the van, in and out of buildings and interview after interview all the while being bundled up and prepared for the bitter cold. It is very chilly and all the uneven pavement and stone pathways make for tricky walking. I'm worried about them slipping, but Mum keeps Dad upright or both of us do.

On Friday the 3rd, we had a welcome morning off. Mum and I decided to go out on a walk around the little shops near the hotel, while Dad rested in the room. It was far colder than we had anticipated, so we made our tour quick and ducked into of all things, a Starbucks, for a soy chai latte. We had to laugh at ourselves sitting there in an American coffee shop with Frank Sinatra music in the background, looking out onto the streets of Seoul.

We were running a little late before our afternoon rendezvous with the crew, so I went on ahead from our hotel room to the 1st floor restaurant to order our lunch. It was the first time I had not been with Mum and Dad since we had departed from San Francisco. I sat down at the table and waited...and waited. I was just starting to wonder what could possibly be taking them so long, when one of the hotel staff came rushing in and announced that my Mum had fallen. I practically took the tablecloth and everything on it with me as I jumped up to follow the young man out. "Where did she fall, is she OK?" I asked, as I turned the corner into the lobby. She was sitting on a couch, with a pathetic looking first aid kit spread out before her, void of all necessary bandages. Another employee was sort of frozen in front of her doing nothing. Mum was trying to put flimsy band aids on the back of her right arm that was red with blood and looked like the skin had been peeled off. She has very thin skin, and has easily injured herself in the past, but this was really shocking. In her typical "I'm fine, I don't need a Doctor" stiff upper lip British self, she proclaimed she was all right. I looked down into to her Ugg boots (thank God she was wearing those), and I could see the state of the front of her legs. At that moment the director arrived, and we quickly made the decision to go to Severance Hospital. Having just met the entire staff the day before, it was definitely a wise choice.

Our hotel has multiple elevators. One is a staff elevator that everyone uses to go to the floor where the restaurant is, as it's closer. Mum and Dad got into that elevator, but evidently pushed B1 instead of 1 and ended up in the basement. Then Mum got confused as to where she was, opened an unmarked door, and stepped right out into a hole, and tumbled down a flight of black granite stairs headfirst.

Thank goodness the American doctor was on duty in the foreign

department of the hospital, and had Mum in a room with two other doctors cutting off her pants and irrigating her wounds within minutes. I don't do well with blood but managed a glance at her legs. One had a huge gash, and the other was even worse. My heart sank and ached with the distress of the pain she must be experiencing. She had also hit her head and had a lump the size of an egg. Her ribs were hurting too. Realizing the extent of her wounds, the doctor called in a plastic surgeon. He took her upstairs to his department and proceeded to sew her up. I stood at edge of her room to eavesdrop on anything said that wasn't Korean. I heard the words "skin grafts" and "you can't walk for ten days", and to think she hadn't even wanted to see a doctor! Mum ended up staying the night in the hospital and Dad and I continued on with the rest of the schedule at her insistence.

Still with the entire film crew, we went directly to a Chinese restaurant south of the Han River, in a very chic area of Seoul to meet with the CEO of the production company and the executive producer for dinner. The evening happened to coincide with a movie premier of the producer's latest movie, which happened to be a vampire movie, and we were to attend that after dinner. You can imagine by the type of movie, that I didn't think it would exactly be Dad's cup of tea, a horror/thriller for 18-25 year old Koreans. But he insisted on going to "honor our new friend's achievement, and to see just what it is he does". Boy did we find out. It starred one of Korea's most famous comedians, and was actually quite entertaining, blood and all. Even though it was in Korean with no subtitles, it was an easy story line to follow. I couldn't believe Dad didn't fall asleep, as he was four times the age of most of the audience. It was quite a sight seeing him walk down the "red carpet", side by side with all the Korean stars and screaming fans.

From our hotel room looking North to the glorious mountains surrounding Seoul, we can see both "The Green House", which is the Presidents home, and in the foreground, the Gyeongbok Palace a spectacular place that once housed the Emperors of Korea. The front is guarded by soldiers in centuries old garb, long bright red flowing robes and large fur hats, some carry flags, others bows and arrows. They all have Fu Man Chu moustaches, some obviously glued on. On our visit we saw the changing of the guard, which was a brilliant,

colorful display of marching, drums and fancy flag work. The museum was a fascinating array of court documents, royal attire, instruments, and furniture. The curator announced he was most interested and honored to meet Dad, the son of A.W.Taylor, which made me feel so proud. Everyone seems so grateful for what Granddad did, seem very surprised, and want to know why a westerner was so intent on helping the Koreans secure their independence. I reiterate to the curator as I have to others, that Albert considered himself a Korean. He was a “sayunsaram” (foreigner) but walked in his shoes as a Korean. He never wanted to live anywhere else, and only did so when it was imposed on him by illness or expulsion by the Japanese. The late afternoon brought a visit to an exquisite ancient teahouse, where Dad and I sat in a sitting room, furnished similarly to the way his home Dilkusha had been, a beautiful Korean/Western mix. We sipped Chrysanthemum tea and listened to a recording of a Korean woman singing the song of the “Exiles” called Arirang. This is a song my Grandmother mentioned hearing in the mountains of Northern Korea sung by Koreans that had fled there to escape from the Japanese. It was a wonderful moment in time there with Dad, the sunlight streaming through the windows, listening to his stories as he was being interviewed. I feel so lucky to have those unforgettable memories of him.

We set out from there through the streets of Insadong, which are lined with galleries and curio shops. Would any of these places be similar to The Taylor Curio Shop that Great Uncle Bill and Albert owned? We made our way in and out of them, searching for antiques that Dad might recognize, but the quality we found was of no comparison to what used to line the shelves and floors of the family store across the street from The Chosen Hotel. Visiting that site was the next morning’s adventure. Arm in arm we slowly made our way down the crowded street, excited to recount the day’s adventures to Mum who was waiting for us to pick her up at the hospital.

PART 4.

The following morning noticing the temperature was quickly dropping, Dad and I decided it was a day for furry bomber hats, scarves, gloves and multiple layers of clothing. Mum was safely in our hotel room,

with a delightful Filipino nurse to take care of her, so Dad and I set out together for the long day ahead. I was thrilled to be going outside of Seoul for the first time later in the day, and very interested to see what lay beyond the miles of skyscrapers within the city. The streets of Seoul were beginning to feel somewhat familiar and so as we drove along with the mountains for a guide, I found Pulpit Rock, a craggy peak just behind Dilkusha. It was a favorite destination for daily walks for both sets of my Grandparents. With an old family photo album in hand we try to recognize the streets that will lead us to the old site of W.W. Taylor and Co., Importers and Exporters and proprietors of Ye Olde Curio Shoppe. The address had simply been TAYLOR BUILDING, OPPOSITE CHOSEN HOTEL. The business had been established in 1898, but they broke ground to build at this location in the late 1920's. We found The Chosen Hotel, now with the Korean spelling, which is a luxury Westin. We stood facing the opposite side of the street where the building had been and what is now a parking lot. Dad pointed out the route he used to take on his bicycle to make the three or so mile ride from Dilkusha to his Dad's office, dogs in tow. He said the location had been ideal across from the hotel. Tourists would come in droves to look over the curios and antiques on the ground floor and upstairs were a string of offices where Taylor & Co. conducted a variety of businesses from A to Z. They were agents for all kinds of insurance, the American International Underwriters, First National Pictures, Lyon and Healy Inc., 20th Century Fox, Montgomery Ward and Co. Vacuum Oil Co. Frigidaire, Universal Pictures, Underwood typewriters, Firestone Tires, and a slew of other companies, as well as being the authorized GMC distributor in Korea and Okinawa. This is one of the properties that was taken from our family by the Japanese government with no compensation. Judging from the location, it is a very expensive piece of property in today's Seoul. The beautiful old Temple of Heaven is adjacent to the Chosen Hotel, which was a familiar sight to Dad as was the City Hall a few blocks down. I wish there were more of the old buildings still standing, so that I could get a better sense of the old Seoul.

The freeway leading out of Seoul to the South, is lined with never ending rows of tall apartment buildings, an additional 7 million people live around the outside of the city. The stark winter landscape does not add to the drab visual I am getting from the window of our van. An

hour and a half into our drive we reach a turn off to Jeam-ri. We have an appointment with Pastor Shin to visit a museum that stands on the sight of an old church where a group of Korean Christians lost their lives at the hands of Japanese soldiers. The Jeam-ri March 1st Movement Martyrdom Hall is at this location. The site and my Grandfather's involvement here had all been unknown to us until the documentary crew's research uncovered it. We proceeded inside to a large, dramatically lit room. The history of the events were spelled out on the wall, accompanied with photos and eye-witness testimony. The director had not informed us about what he had discovered, so an element of surprise came over us when we started to see Grandad's name everywhere. Even that had taken us awhile to notice, as we were reading the story so intently. Evidently the Japanese had rounded up a group of local Jeam-ri villagers that were actively participating in the national resistance movement. They then forced them into the church and opened fire at them through the windows while they were trapped inside, simultaneously killing and setting them on fire. My Grandfather heard reports from some missionaries in Seoul that a massacre was taking place and quickly headed out into the country with his car and Chinese driver to investigate, accompanied by Horace Underwood and the American Vice Consul. Albert took photos that now line the museum walls and wired reports to the Associated Press. The outside pressure following his reporting resulted in a cessation of other savage, torturous killings. The remains of the men killed, were not uncovered until 1982, when an "apology committee" from Japan came to help create this monument and express their regrets. Some of the wives of these men were still alive at that time, and the pain still present in their eyes some 63 years later in a series of displayed photos was heart wrenching. I tried to imagine what it would have been like for my Grandfather to discover the brutal massacre of a people he loved so much. Needless to say the drive back to the hotel was somewhat somber. I still have a vision of what happened on that day in April, of 1919 running through my mind, reel to reel.

I have always found participating in a ceremony where someone you know is being awarded a medal, plaque or certificate by a government official to be quite a unique experience. The protocol, and formality is something we are quite unaccustomed to in today's day-to-day life. Dad was to receive an honorary citizenship award

from the Mayor of Seoul at a ceremony in City Hall. Mum came in a wheelchair determined to participate. I so wanted her to be there with Dad for this event and I was glad she felt up to it. Dad presented the Mayor with a panoramic photo of Seoul that his Father had taken in the 30's. What a drastic change. Dilkusha stands out as one of the largest, tallest buildings, whereas today it is dwarfed and hidden. He also contributed a book compiled of old photos taken by my Grandfather of various historical events and buildings which will now be relegated to some dusty shelf in the City Hall archives. It was a filmed event for local television, and we were surrounded by a crowd of photographers and reporters. Dad received a huge medal, which hung from a thick ribbon once it had been placed around his neck. I know he felt honored, but in his modest way, he made sure everyone realized that he was there because of the actions of his parents, and he was accepting on their behalf. I was told that the mayor is serving the end of his term as mayor now, as he is very well positioned to become the next President of South Korea. He gave me his card and casually said to give him a call next time I'm in Korea, and I plan to!

In the final days of my Grandparents calling Korea their home, they knew it was only a matter of time before the Japanese would come calling. It was 1941 and Pearl Harbor had just been bombed. The Japanese soldiers gleefully announced upon their arrival at Dilkusha that my Father, an American soldier, had just been annihilated in the attack. With that statement, they took my Grandfather away to be imprisoned at the Methodist Campus across the valley, and kept Mary a prisoner in her own home. She had recounted stories of being able to see Albert exercising in the yard of the campus with twelve other men with the help of a forbidden telescope she kept hidden under a flower box. He in turn could see her movements when she was out on the balcony. In my mind I saw quite a long distance between the two places, but when we visited the campus and I looked out across the valley I could see Dilkusha and the huge Ginkgo tree with my naked eye. My Grandfather was one of the lucky ones to be imprisoned at the school as most men were put in prisons the Japanese had constructed all over the country.

As the sun was setting at the end of another amazing day, we revisited the cemetery. I retrieved some earth from the gravesite to be sprinkled on my Grandmother's grave back in Mendocino. Koreans

have a great reverence for soil and it carries deep spiritual meaning for them. I left Dad to say his goodbyes alone, knowing my visit would not be my last.

We awoke on our last day of filming to find Seoul under a veil of snow. This image was a very familiar winter memory for Dad and I was so glad the weather was obliging us with such a beautiful spectacle. It was a magical drive past many of the places we had visited that were now under a blanket of snow. Our visit to the Independence gate was all the more lovely. Dad and I walked arm in arm through the park, past the gate and up to a granite wall that had the engraved names of all the patriots that had signed the Declaration of Independence. We paused there in the quiet, snowy setting for quite awhile before leaving behind this poignant monument to freedom to visit the West Gate Prison just a short drive down the road. The sudden change in venue gave way to the reality of what it took for Korea to have what to us seems so simple, independence. It was here at the prison that I saw what my Grandfather had escaped, but what so many other's had had to endure. Tiny cells, upright torture boxes like coffins, various kinds of hoods and handcuffs, photos of emaciated bodies, dead and alive, both men and women. It's mind boggling to reflect on how so many people in history have suffered for the freedom of others, their remarkable courage is unforgettable.

My Mum's wish of visiting her childhood home in Seoul was fulfilled today. The British Ambassador flew in from a trip to India the night before our departure, and his driver came to pick us up at the hotel in of course, a Jaguar. The area near the Embassy has remained relatively unchanged and the house still stands as it did when my Mum and her parents left in 1937. The interior of the house built in the 1890's was much the same too, Mum's bedroom, my Grandparents quarters. It was as if time had stood still. A large lovely garden where they must have had numerous stately events was visible from the massive formal sitting room bordered with blazing fireplaces. I imagined Mary and my Mum's Mother, Aline, best friends in Seoul, attending garden parties and formal dinners with their handsome husbands during this time. My Grandfather, Gerald was the British Consul in Seoul from 1934 through 1937 and the friendship between the two families eventually brought my parents

together. So I have a lot to thank Korea for on a personal level. Our last goodbye in Seoul was to be at the foot of the Ginko tree. We hoped the road wouldn't be too snowy to make the short trek up to Dilkusha. I watched Dad from afar for a time and then caught up to him for a last walk around the front of the house. I closed my eyes and saw Dilkusha as it once was, in all it's glory, surrounded by the acres of gardens, Mary on the balcony, Albert walking briskly up the garden path from the gatehouse, their dogs racing up behind him and the Ginkgo tree ablaze with golden autumnal leaves shading the love between these two people and the country that had become their own.