

# James Murray III, AIA, brings Korean family to U. S. a saga:

-----through the thick, deep seas of bureaucratic red-tape to the dry, sunny shores of Hobbs, New Mexico

by:

James Murray III and Kang Chang Hwan

by:

James Murray III

In the spring of 1960, I was dispatched by the U. S. Government to the Land of the Morning Calm, Chosen, or Korea, as more popularly known. Ostensibly, my particular job was to be Commander of the 24th Ordnance Detachment (Explosive Disposal Control), which is normally a Major's job, but to which the Army, in its infinite wisdom, decided to dispatch a rather senior 1st Lieutenant, namely me.

Upon arrival, after various and sundry adventures and experiences in Japan, I discovered that my new command consisted of some twelve (12) Master Sergeants (each of whom had nearly as much time in the Army as I, in my innocent blush of youth, had years), and that I was not only C. O. of the 24th, but also was the Staff E. O. D. (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Officer for Eighth Army, I Corps, 1st Cavalry Division, 7th Infantry Division, and 7th Logistical Command. This put me in direct responsibility for all explosive disposal in Korea, Japan, and several obscure small islands on both sides. Whew!! After a very brief adjustment period, it became apparent that operations would have to be re-organized. I did this, founding what later became known, (though not at Eighth Army, thank God!) as Murray's private Mafia.

This consisted of some 30 to 40 Koreans (I never could count them at one time) who assisted my people in unloading the trucks, stacking stuff in holes, placing explosives, and vanishing. They kept the demolition area exceptionally

clean, and kept outsiders and towns people away from the area, for the simple reason that they were policing up the scrap (after demolition) and selling it. I understand this was quite a good living at this time. We had a rather long list of applicants for membership in this somewhat exclusive group.

"Tommy," my Korean friend, had worked as a hired hand for the 24th for some time. He and another Korean named Ho Bong Cho, ran my Mafia for me. "Tommy" (Kang Chang Hwan) received his nickname because of regulations that prohibited giving Korean nationals *anything*. I began listing him on the morning report and ration report as Thomas Peabody, which was the best I could come up with at the time. We were policing up, rendering safe, and disposing of some 120 tons a month of unserviceable, out-dated, leftover, or flatly forgotten ammunition. Thus, with my twelve people and my Mafia, we were reasonably busy.

There seemed, at that time, to be a conspicuous tendency for anyone who had been in Korea to "forget," immediately upon arrival home, anything said or done in the Hermit Kingdom. Several persons, commanding officers and others, had promised this chap to get him to the States, and then—conveniently—had forgotten.

Tommy, I'm sure, was about to lose faith in the White Foreigner and all his wiles. I did not feel this was right. I took upon myself "the White Man's Burden," and told Tommy I would get him to



A photograph of the Kang family taken in Korea before they came to the United States. Kang Chang Hwan, his wife Chong Cha and son, Ki Man, arrived in Hobbs, N. M. early last year. The Kangs' adopted daughter, Hwang Eun Sil, age 19, is still living and working in Korea. "We are trying three different methods of getting her here—kidnapping, if that should prove necessary."

"I and my family are doing very well. My boy is doing fairly well in school, particularly in Math. He has some trouble with other courses, because of his English. He seems to have lost his manners, though. We have enjoyed it very much here." Kang Chang Hwan.

"We thank you and your country very much, Sir, and I am doing fine and have made many friends." Ki Man.

"Do bard mawiq opda." Chong Cha—"Kitty" (Kitty still doesn't speak much English, but it means, roughly, "I couldn't wish for anything more.")



the States. This was a promise. Little did I dream the ultimate consequences.

Parenthetically, "Tommy" has been with U. S. troops one hell of a long time, as evidenced by a copy of his original resume, which I am enclosing. This is what finally engendered his appearance on these shores.

The original plot was to bring Tommy here as a guest with the hope that red tape could be stretched far enough, given his arrival on these hallowed shores, to insure his citizenship. This was all but accomplished in 1961. Unfortunately, General Chung overthrew the government and took over some three months after I left. Writing off the some \$600-\$800, that I had spent at that point in bribes and "coaxing" money, we began again — our next try was to acquire him as a student.

Towards this endeavor several educational institutions contributed, but to no avail. Next, we attempted the gambit of getting him here as a guest — through me, personally, the Hobbs Rotary Club, the Seoul Rotary Club, and other reasonably recognized institutions—but again to no avail. The next avenue of approach was through Senator Joseph Montoya—who made quite sporadic efforts for some five (5) years. My next attempt (as you know, I'm rather stubborn) was with Congressman Harold Runnels, who took the trouble to *personally* read the file (quite lengthy at this point, i.e. 1½" thick with paperwork from sundry diplomatic types) and took this on, I think, as a real personal project. At any rate, an awful lot of red tape seemed to be slashed forthwith. There was one small boggle with a seemingly officious female dip-

lomat in Seoul, but Tommy tells me that once she received Harold's letter, there was a really miraculous change in her attitude.

All in all, it really has been a fairly arduous twelve (12) year process, but Tommy *and Wife and Kid* have arrived safe, sound, sober, and certainly far from sorry. Tommy is employed here, Ki Man (the Kid) is in school and doing quite well. We still have a problem in getting his adopted daughter here, but we're working on it.

If I may philosophize for a moment: some individuals are sometimes exceptionally fortunate—in that they are really able to be the instrument of help for other people or persons. I feel, certainly without any wish for aggrandizement or praise, privileged to be one of those people.

—J. M. III

Typical Correspondence:

24TH ORDNANCE  
DETACHMENT (EDC)  
APO 301

San Francisco, California

24 October 1962

Mr. James M. Murray  
204 E. Mesa Dr.  
Hobbs, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Murray

The weather is now turning cold as winter approaches. Our work, as you know, is slowing down with the cold weather. We are buttoning up before the snow arrives.

It is going to take longer than I expected to get my papers in order, before I can come over. But I will not give up. When I was younger it was just a dream. But now with your help my dream is coming true. I have been told that a letter saying that you have the proper financial backing to support me, while on my "visit" will be needed. One of the men in the unit called this a credit reference. I hope this does not offend you in any way. But it is part of my getting permission to leave the country.

I am eager to meet your family and await each piece of news of my departure. I know that once I enter the United States, everything will turn out fine.

Once again I can't express my deep appreciation for all your help and encouragement in the things that means so much to me.

I hope that all is well with you and your family. Give my re-

gards to them, in fact, to all Americans and tell them I hope to meet them in person as soon as possible. Until then I will await your next letter.

Your friend,



P.S. Papasan and Korky say hello

... and nine years later.

October 6, 1971

Honorable Harold Runnels  
1127 Longworth Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Harold:

A heart rending case has been brought to my attention by Jim Murray III, of Hobbs, in which he has literally tried to turn the world around and sent considerable money in an attempt to get a young Korean National to the United States.

Mr. Kang Chang Hwan, who was first adopted as a mascot by the 707th Ordnance Battalion of the 7th Infantry Division in Seoul, Korea in 1947. He was handed from one outfit to another as mascot for five years, at which time he received employment as a switchboard operator with the 226th Signal Detachment in 1952. Except for a brief holiday in this service he has been working for the United States government and still is to my knowledge with the 83rd Ordnance Battalion Ammo.

The reason for this short holiday in working for the government was his voluntarily quitting

his job in order to get severance pay to obtain a visa. This failed and he subsequently regained employment through assistance of loyal friends in the armed services in Korea.

His original application for passport and visa is shown to be October 26, 1960, and he has spent a small fortune in bribes and fees attempting to obtain authority for his coming to the United States.

After reading over the very voluminous file that Jim III has furnished one thing comes strongly to my mind as a possibility in which we may help. It was noted on several instances in the correspondence that an alien, after fifteen years of service on U. S. government payroll can be cleared on a non-quota basis to come to the United States with the help of his employer.

Please investigate these possibilities and any other possible avenue that Jim Murray III may be able to assist Mr. Kang in his untiring efforts to come to the United States.

Yours very truly,



Jim Denison  
Resident Congressional Aide

P.S. Harold, I am certain that Jim III will be able to furnish you with any substantiation of the case as well as his personal recommendation for this young Korean.



**EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA  
SEOUL, KOREA**

Mr. Kang Chang Hwan  
#96 7 Tong 3 Bon  
Young Dong Po Ku  
Sihung Dong  
Seoul, Korea

13 July 1972

Dear Mr. Kang:

Reference is made to your application for special immigrant status under the provisions of Section 101(a)(27)(E) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

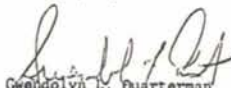
When the United States Congress created this special status, it was not intended to be conferred on employees or former employees of the United States Government merely as a recognition of fifteen years of service. The law specifically states that some portion of that service must have been rendered under "exceptional circumstances." Accordingly, there must be a showing of some special services performed during the qualifying fifteen year period which sets the employee apart from his colleagues. Examples of such special service could include employees who have fulfilled responsibilities beyond the call of duty such as: prevention of a physical attack on an American citizen; high quality work performance over an extended period of time or by the rendering of unusual service and assistance to the American community aside from his official duties.

Your documents have been carefully reviewed, and although the United States Government appreciates your long and faithful service, no portion of that

service can be considered to have been rendered under "exceptional circumstances." We have no alternative, therefore, but to deny your application. Your documents are returned for your records.

If you can submit concrete evidence of service rendered under "exceptional circumstances," we will be happy to review your application.

Sincerely yours,

  
Gwendolyn L. Quarterman  
American Vice Consul

**CONGRESS OF THE  
UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
20515**

July 24, 1972

The Honorable  
Gwendolyn L. Quarterman  
American Vice Consul  
United States Embassy  
Seoul, Korea

Re: Kang Chang Hwan

Dear Ms. Quarterman:

Mr. Kang has forwarded to me a copy of your July 13, 1972 letter to him.

In view of the reference to Mr. Kang's service under "exceptional circumstances," it occurred to me that perhaps the Embassy does not have on file a number of letters of recommendation and commendation certificates Mr. Kang has received.

Specifically, I refer to the following:

1. Florence I. Bloomberg, letter of December 2, 1971.
2. Stephen C. Zakrzewski, letter of December 1, 1971.
3. Walter W. Hudobenko, letter of November 29, 1971.
4. Harvey R. McDonald, letter of December 9, 1971.
5. Joseph A. Fields, letter of December 7, 1971.
6. Floyd A. Kittle, letter of December 1, 1971.
7. David L. Sims, letter of June 11, 1971.
8. John F. Coleman, letter of January 23, 1969.
9. Performance Award Certificates dated August 28, 1961; November 12, 1965; September 19, 1966; and November 14, 1968.

In addition, I am advised by Mr. Kang that this is not a complete list of his outstanding performance record.

It would appear that his service has been exceptional and this, coupled with the hazardous duty he performs as an Explosive Operator, would qualify him under the "high quality work performance over an extended period of time" contained in your letter.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, I would appreciate knowing the basis of the Embassy's decision that Mr. Kang does not qualify for special immigrant status under the fifteen years' service provision.

Sincerely,

  
HAROLD RUNNELS, M. C.

**AND BY:**

**MR. KANG CHANG HWAN**

I was born December 6, 1938 in a village in North Korea. The name of the village I can no longer remember.

When I was very young my father left my mother and went to another village where he took another wife.

Until my mother died, she was the sole support for my elder brother and myself, my father had never returned to our village. When I was nine years old my mother died and it was necessary for my brother and I to go to my father's second wife's house so that we could be taken care of. Food was scarce in those times so my brother left home to look for a job since he was old enough to work. As for myself, I was too young to leave home, so I had to cut wood for the fire and help around the house every day.

My stepmother always found enough work for me to do, so I never got to go to school. Home life was a very unhappy period for me

since I had to work hard and still was not given enough to eat. My stepmother often incited my father into beating me and general maltreatment after I would leave home to go out and beg for food since I was given little or nothing to eat for days.

Early in 1948 I heard that my brother had crossed into South Korea to look for work and better living conditions. During this time anyone who crossed into South Korea, or tried to, was shot, but my brother had made it. By the time summer arrived I decided that I could no longer bear to live with my father and stepmother and the only person I could turn to for help was my brother, who at this time was said to be in Seoul.

After leaving home I walked for three days before I came to a bridge which was on the thirty-eighth parallel and my only way of entering South Korea. Crossing the bridge however, would not be a simple matter since there were three guards on the bridge with a machine gun. While they were talking to one another, I pretended to be playing and at the same

time I worked my way across the bridge. I then ran until I was totally exhausted and collapsed on the grass. Later I started asking for directions to Seoul from people who were passing by but they only laughed at me. Eventually I was able to get some directions and even a ride with some friendly people. On my fifth night after leaving home I arrived in Seoul and separated from the people who had given me the ride. Since I did not have any money for food I was told to go to the police station; they might give me some food. I went to the police station and told them who I was and why I had come south to Seoul. The policemen not only gave me some food but also let me sleep in the police station on a bench. In the morning one of the policemen woke me up and gave me some money and directions to No Rang-jin where my brother was said to be working in a watch repair shop. I rode a trolley car part of the way as the policeman had told me and walked part of the way in the direction I had been told. I stopped to buy



a meal of bread near a watch repair shop and as I was eating I saw my brother walking from house to house. I ran to him and after a joyous and tearful reunion he took me home with him.

Although conditions with my brother were better than they were at home with my father and step-mother I had to go out and look for a job since my brother's business was not very profitable. I found a job helping to make candy and selling it. That didn't last very long, since the business wasn't making enough money to pay for my help in room and board. As I was returning to my brother's house I saw my first American Compound. I had never seen an American before so I walked up to the gate and watched a Korean talking to some American GIs. After awhile the Korean man noticed me watching them and came over to me. He asked me where I was from and then how it was that I was there outside the compound. After I had finished my story the man gave me one hundred won. Until that time I had never seen one hundred won, never thinking that one day I would be given that much money. While I was rejoicing the man called me back to the gate and then took me onto the compound and to the mess hall where I was given sweet rolls to eat. Later I was taken to the gate and told to come back to the mess hall in the morning. In the morning I was again at the gate but there was a guard there also. The guard was the same one who had been at the gate the evening before when I was taken onto the post and he gave me an apple to eat. While the guard was talking to a truck driver who was going out of the gate, I walked through the gate and over to the mess hall where I found the man who had given me the food and money. He and his friends were the Korean mess help for the 44th Ordnance Maintenance Company and after stripping me and giving me a bath they said that they would take care of me. After five months how-

ever, the unit was sent to Japan and I had to remain behind.

The 707th Ordnance Battalion took over taking care of me after the 44th left for Japan until they too left for Japan three months later. When the 707th left for Japan three or four of the Americans decided to take me along with them. I was put into a "toko bag" and put on to a baggage truck which was going to the point of debarkation.

At the port I was carried on board the ship while still in the "toko bag." During the voyage, which lasted for three days, I was fed only crackers and water. On the ship I had been let out of the

Regiment. On either the 2nd or 5th of July, 1950, the 34th Infantry Regiment was sent to Korea and again I went with them.

They arrived in Pusan and fought their way to Taejon where their advance was stopped. Taejon was surrounded by the North Korean Army and they were closing in on the city when the Battalion Commander told me to leave the city by train with the wounded and some of the medics. At the train station, while the engine was warming up, four or five North Koreans arrived and started firing on the train wounding some more Americans. The train pulled out of the station while under fire from



bag but was put back in the bag for the train ride to Sindi, Japan. While on the trip I crawled out of the bag and was discovered by the company commanding officer.

The 707th was placed under the 7th Division and I lived with them for about a year. The Sergeant, who had been taking care of me at this time, was transferred to the 24th Infantry Division, 34th Infantry Regiment at Sasabo, Japan and I went with him. While my guardian was with the 34th Infantry Regiment I seem to have become the mascot for the entire

the North Koreans. Some North Korean soldiers ran to place charges on the railroad tracks to halt the train while we were leaving the yard but they were driven off by the fire put out from the train. At the next station we were told that we were the first to make it from Taejon alive. After that I stayed with the medics at the hospital until the Regiment split into the 19th Infantry Division and the 24th Infantry Division which went to Japan. The medics I was staying with were assigned to the 19th Infantry Division, and I stayed



with them until they were relieved by the 40th Division. When the 40th Division took over the area I was taken care of by them until early in 1953. During this time, Sergeant John Solyabe tried to get his parents to adopt me but the Special bill 5060 did not pass through Congress. Finally one of the Chaplains told me to go back behind the lines. After Sergeant Solyabe left Korea, I went south and found a job with the 226th Signal as a telephone operator. I worked there for five months at which time I met my first American Army E.O.D. (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) man and barely avoided being killed. I had been walking around for awhile one day when I saw an unusual looking metal item which I started to pick up. As I was about to touch it I heard a shout and was told not to touch it or it would kill me.

I later learned that this item was an American "Butterfly bomb" which either would explode on impact with the ground or when disturbed. The next day a team of E.O.D. men from the 19th Ordnance Detachment (EOD) arrived to take care of these deadly devices which were scattered throughout the area.

The Americans needed an interpreter for two days to work with them and I was picked for the job. At the end of the second day they had finished their job and asked me if I would like to work for them as an interpreter. It was also explained to me that I would have to work with explosives as well as act as an interpreter for them, if I accepted, which I did. I was taught how to handle explosives, various ordnance that was being found and what I wasn't to touch because it was too dangerous. One day a Master Sergeant was killed in another E.O.D. unit but I decided to continue to work with E.O.D. and their ordnance. At the end of the war the 19th Ordnance Detachment (EOD) was disbanded and I went to the 21st Ordnance Detachment (EOD). While I was working for the 21st Ordnance De-

tachment (EOD) I traveled throughout Korea with them disposing of hazardous ammunition and dangerous items.

In 1954 the 21st Ord. Det. (EOD) was disbanded and I was sent to the 15th Ord. Det. (EOD) in Seoul to work for them. I worked for them until the following year when they disbanded. This time I was sent to the 24th Ord. Det. (EODC). Again I was working in and around Seoul but this time with the 24th Ord. Det. (EODC). During the day I worked as an interpreter and in order to make more money I worked at night as the house boy for the 24th Ord. Det. (EODC). Over a period of time the number of people assigned to the 24th increased to the extent that I could make more money by working as a full time house boy than I could by being their interpreter, so I quit my job as interpreter and became a house boy. Whenever I had my work finished I'd usually go out on incidents with one team or another to work with them even though it wasn't part of my job. Later the size of the unit was decreased slowly so that by April of 1957 my job as house boy was no longer paying more than a job as an interpreter so I quit and became an Explosive Operator Junior Grade & Interpreter for the 24th.

Captain James Pew, who was the Commanding Officer for the unit, wanted to take me to the United States with him when he was to return there but while he and I were at our demolition range one day he had an accident. He picked up a 60mm mortar round which had been laying on the ground and started to examine it and then all of a sudden dropped it. The mortar round was filled with White Phosphorous and in picking it up he had opened up a crack in the shell casing which allowed the White Phosphorous to run out on his hand. I moved him away from the smoking W.P. mortar round since due to the size they burn down to their burster rapidly and when this happens they detonate. I gave him first aid as

best I could but he had to be taken to a doctor quickly. I drove him to the nearest Army Hospital, where he was to be a patient for the next two months. From the hospital he was sent to his home in the United States. Captain Pew was still trying to get me to the United States until 1961 when he died of a heart attack.

During 1957 the 24th Ord. Det. responded to about one thousand incidents and I was sent on most of them since I could interpret for them between the Koreans encountered and themselves. That year there were many people killed by ammunition, not only Koreans but also GI's.

In 1962, James Murray, a former Commanding Officer of the 24th Ordnance Detachment (EODC) 1960 invited me to fly to the United States and visit with him if I wanted to. I was delighted at the opportunity to visit with my old friend so I requested a six month leave of absence so that I would have an adequate time to make arrangements for my trip and the visit. After my request for a leave of absence was disapproved I resigned so that I could be free to visit the United States. In order to get a visa I was interviewed by the Consul of the American Embassy and during the course of the interview I was asked if Mr. Murray gave me a job would I be willing to remain in the United States to live. I told him that I would like that very much but the only way that I could live in the United States would be if I could bring my family to the United States too.

Later my request for a visa was denied. When Sergeant Major Hudobenko of the 24th Ord. Det. (EODC) heard about my denial for a visa he asked me to return to the service because he wanted me to help teach Korean soldiers Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance which I had taught many times before. I worked for the 24th until 4 May, 1971, when I was transferred to the newly reactivated 7th Ord. Det. (EOD) in Taejon.

—KCH



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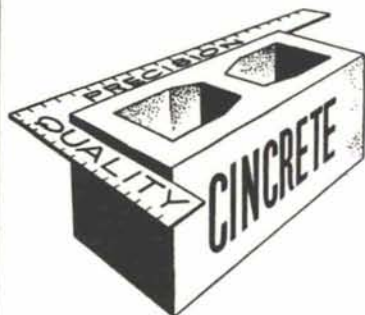
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