

### Harabugi's Biography in a Historical Context

As I've mentioned before, it pains my academic integrity to be writing my final undergraduate essay on the topic of a personal biography. Proper history to me has always meant a mix of geography, politics, war, and national leaders, even social movements and revolutions, but not "getting in touch with one's roots". Of what use is a biography to national history unless that person played a central role in one of these "important historical events"? Fortunately for this account at least, some events are so important that they leave no one unaffected, and everyone who was alive at the time they occurred has a different interpretation of them that is important to him or her, and which can shed new light upon them with human accounts to which any reader can immediately relate. This summarizing essay seeks to place my grandfather's lectures and interviews, which were conducted over three weeks in December to January 2003, in the context of Korean (and some American) history, as well as to justify to myself that this was an academically legitimate project with real relevance and value toward understanding Korean history. Throughout the course of the essay I will describe his experiences in and responses to historical events, referencing books and articles when possible.

An additional qualm in this unrelenting pursuit of appropriate academic formality is the use of anecdotes to recount a history, which in a biography is quite unavoidable even if treating a nation's top leaders. Yet I've taken enough introductory history courses, never once being able to finish all the assigned readings, to know that a certain number of colorful stories is necessary to maintain the interest of any but the most dedicated, perhaps obsessed scholar. Yet the obvious problem with such stories is the problematic possibility of a so-called history falling into a didactic, allegorical gaggle of easily falsified, politicized urban legends--propagandist tools to inculcate the masses, as it is all that the masses will willingly consume. In his book "*Korea's Place in the Sun*", Bruce Cumings seems to find an appropriate, if at times tenuous balance between accessible illustrations and the pure theories and theses they support, yet now knowing his controversiality in the field, I wonder if he doesn't lean too far in the direction of personal opinion and interpretation. Regardless, his anecdotal arsenal is sufficient not to blame him for stubborn, unpopular opinions, and for the sake of using his book as a frequent reference point, I will treat it as a responsibly objective account of national history--in other words, essentially a good textbook. I would and will cite it frequently as a successfully accessible work of history, though perhaps light on biography, due to its expansive breadth.

And biography is *important!* In the sage and justifying words of Anselm Strauss, connecting history and biography (p.5):

Personal histories are biographies: that is, personal identities viewed analytically over time. So when we think of the many possible connections of biographies to histories, we are talking about both the temporal aspects of personal identities and the flow of and the repeated reconstruction of historical events.

One W.N. Mendlicott, writing about “lesser worthies” in Britain, adds to this and raises the biographical study of even those well-outside leadership ranks to an obligation, if one is to understand a collective history: [I]n order to understand an institution or a society it must be broken up into its component parts, and these studied in isolation and then in relation to the whole (p.91). Thus the personal biography is useful to history both for providing a “reconstruction” of national historical events as they shaped or impinged upon an identity and to understand societal institutions to which the individual belongs and relates. In gathering material for such a biography, intended to be tapped for its historical content, Strauss adds (p.6): ...[T]he chief methodological and theoretical challenges are to establish clear connections between our man’s biographical processes, his evolving identity, and the historical events.

“Our man” in this case has conveniently summarized his life in terms of national events and trends in Korea, generally initiated by the United States. With frequency and pride, not enough to drown out his intended irony, he claims that he was a beneficiary of the Korean and Cold Wars, yet a victim of globalization and democratization. Not to cast him somehow as a villain, he sees the most significant historical events in his lifetime as having inverse effects on himself and the Korean nation as well as its people. One could hardly ask for more clarity, but one should not take such generalizations at face value. The Korean War was certainly “just terrible<sup>1</sup>” for both the country and himself at the time, but he admits that had it not happened, he never would have come to America for his education. The Cold War may have been nearly as terrible for the whole world for nearly fifty years, but he notes that his company benefitted greatly from, and might never have gotten started without the financial support of the United States to make a strong, anti-communist South Korea. After so many years of doing well, it was to be the forces of globalization and democratization, movements he himself supports, which would lead him to sell his company, his life’s work, and enter an early retirement (though actually he is still highly active in business today, at age seventy). With more details to come, he sees himself playing neatly into, and perhaps opposite, Korea’s national history.

To place his biography into a social setting is much messier. As mentioned, his life was not of a political leader, nor that of the working class, of which the Korean movement to glorify is particularly strong. Before leaving processes for specifics, it is worth mentioning this alternative *minjung* movement, which as Grinker notes, calls for the people (*minjung*, “idealized as farmers, peasants, or laborers”) to be “the agents (or subjects) of history (p.200).” But while that would put popular biography squarely in the frame of history, and whether best to define Koreanness this way or not, it would not be of the kind of biography written to describe the interesting life of an individual but rather the kind Garraty criticizes as, “like the Russian [communist] brand, ...intended ‘to convince, enshrine, or inspire.’ [E]ulogistic and didactic..., taken in the broad perspective of history, it is profoundly reactionary.” Rather than this, my grandfather prefers to be seen as very much an individual, proud to look from the outside in at his country’s cultural “brainwashing” and “indoctrination<sup>2</sup>”. So without any further

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, p. 21

<sup>2</sup> Having long used the former, he takes a liking to the latter word on p. 13.

pontification and theorizing, which must obviously be beyond the scope of this project and my own knowledge, we will keep these individual, biographical, sociohistorical issues in mind as we delve into the “temporal matrix...of the past as it impinges on himself (Strauss, p.4)” that has been my grandfather’s life.

The first significant historical connections we can make with his experiences are those which he remembers from his primary schooling, during the last years of Japanese colonial occupation. During these years, he recounts, he was not allowed to speak Korean; punishment for such was to sit on one’s knees for half an hour on the hard, concrete floors. Early mornings in the courtyard, in neat, organized ranks, he and his classmates attended daily praising sessions, during which he sang glorious, Japanese imperial anthems and prayed that the Japanese emperor would live forever. Only Japanese military victories were reported, and after major ones the children were rewarded with rubber playground balls imported from Malaysia. Yet he noted the strangeness of involving even young children in the war effort, cutting and carrying lumber and gathering materials to make lubricant for airplanes. The effects of these early educational experiences would not be lost, as later in America, having considerable difficulty understanding the class lectures of his professors and his textbooks in English, he would resort to frequent consultation not of equivalent versions of Korean textbooks (which did not yet exist) but Japanese.

After narrowly testing into the last of four openings in his province to attend Seoul Middle School, he would stay in the capital, also testing into Seoul High School, until the day the North Koreans invaded. News reports in the South had always ranged from accounts of southern forces “holding their position well” to assurances that they had American support and so “would be okay.” Yet from his shared Seoul apartment on the night of Monday, June 29th, he and his cousin heard cannon fire between 2-3am and decided to follow the crowds trying to run away from the city. Everyone was headed for the Han River Bridge, he recalls, seas of people all carrying something--suitcases, books, their elderly mothers--and then making a massive about-face when they realized the bridge had already been cut. By morning, North Korean tanks were rolling down the streets of Seoul.

After three weeks of North Korean occupation, and increasing pressure to “volunteer” to join the communist army, he walked back home to his family’s farm, some 100 miles from Seoul, in Chungju. He and his cousin made the trip in several days, receiving many a kindly meal along the way and even staying in an inn, probably more accustomed to military occupants by then. While having to avoid the main highway (No. 1) because of American air raids, they faced the danger of encountering North Korean soldiers on their alternate route. While resting in an orchard not far from their destination, they were taken into custody by a northern soldier and eventually put in a small jail at the local police station. While their jailmates were periodically taken out and shot, the two highschoolers waited five days for the soldier to return and let them out, as he had promised. Fortunately a violin teacher who had become a guerrilla policeman recognized them, and only after guaranteeing that they were just students (and not of the southern army), they were permitted to continue walking to Chungju. They reached the family farm only to realize that the family had moved south to escape the northern forces, who were persecuting landowners. The in-laws who were watching over the estate while the family was away agreed to hide the two boys in the attic, while for three

very hot summer months northern patrols came through to inspect for young volunteers and the war was waged throughout the country. When they emerged, it was as if they'd crawled out from a hollow log, without a glimpse of sunlight for months. During their time in the attic, everyone else who was in the jail was executed. He later asks himself, "Why did I have to go through this terrible event?" and concludes that his only crime was being born in Korea. His desires to leave the country likely began here.

In early 1951, after his family reunited briefly in Chungju, they returned to a house in Pusan to which they had fled earlier. My great uncle worked as a military interpreter, with the status and transportation that came with it, and suggested to his younger brother (who was still too young to be drafted) that he learn English and become an interpreter as well. After memorizing a composition in English ("so they wouldn't get around to asking any hard questions"), his interviewers gave him a job on the spot, and he spent three weeks confusedly accompanying the soldiers as a translator, barely understanding a word they said. After quitting that out of sheer frustration, a fellow interpreter found him a position as a kitchen prep cook working with American GI's, and he was able to learn a lot of English four-letter words, which would prove highly useful when he was ready to try translating again. A few months later he would do so, having been promoted to an interpreter's assistant, accompanying a "replacement battalion" for half a year.

In the period following this he was all but oblivious to national events, busy cramming for college entrance exams. He describes his daily, regimented learning routine: awake daily before six, then studied college math, algebra, differential equations, physics and chemistry until eight a.m. when school started. After school, if he finished his homework he would get a jump on the next morning's cramming, with a goal of sleeping before ten, if studies permitted. In March 1952 he tested into the textile engineering program at Seoul National University, also gaining draft deferment status. It did not hurt that the war had likely decimated the number of qualified applicants, as a full third of his high school classmates never returned.

In two years at SNU he realized that even he could not concentrate on his studies, given the national upheaval going on in the country. He decides that he must finish his education in either Japan or America. He notes that while it would have been much less difficult to have gone to Japan, under Rhee's government a lack of diplomatic relations between the countries meant there was no legal way to go there. His brother suggested the legal, but dauntingly complicated American option, and thus the decision was as good as made (he later regrets always having done what people told him, but there was never any other choice, he insists). He copied a successful letter of inquiry from a friend, put his own name on it, and applied to a full thirty American colleges. They all accepted him, most notably such names as Dartmouth and Swarthmore, some offering full scholarships. However, they all had accepted him on the condition that he start out as a first year student--his two years at SNU would not count for anything.

Despite assurances that SNU was easily among Korea's best colleges, he could only convince one school to let him enroll as a junior: Tri-State University in Angola, IN (which always seems perfectly random to me). In order to leave the country, the American Embassy required that he have a sponsor who was an American citizen with an American bank account, and this requirement nearly kept him from leaving. Some of his friends had gone using the sponsorship of their father's friends among American

advisors to the Korean government. Less well-connected, my grandfather, after putting out feelers through his whole family network and waiting many frustrating weeks, found his sponsor in an American businessman who was a friend of a friend of his father, who had to be promised that sponsorship was only a legal formality and that no one was asking for money.

He left Korea for the first time in August 1954, not to return for eight tumultuous, all-american years. His first impressions of America were full of culture shock, and he remembers many vivid firsts upon his arrival: first meal in a cafeteria, first Coca-cola, first 3D movie, and so on. Young people and women were radically different than in Korea. He was shocked to see sons smoking at the table with their fathers, women went around “almost naked” and quite unlike his homeland, did most of the talking and were a big distraction. The wife in his host family in Cleveland, in particular, was “always talking and criticizing.”

He remembers very clearly every quarter at Tri-State and can name all his classes and grades at the drop of a hat. Classroom lectures had very little in common with GI chefs in Pusan, and his determination to get “straight A’s” collided head on into a language barrier. He remembers a particular quiz on which he scored an *unthinkable* zero, and despite never going to sleep before four a.m., he could still complete only 70-80% of his assignments because every page of every textbook “had 10-20 words he didn’t know.” While professors appreciated his effort, his first quarter was a “disaster”, and his (lack of) sleep pattern would not improve much in the two years he was there.

He and the few other Koreans at the college would stick very closely together, working, studying, eating, and carousing all as a group, seen often cruising the neighboring farms to fulfill their dietary routine of “ten dozen eggs per week, every week.” During the summer they worked as dishwashers and housepainters, staying in a small brick house which quickly became a brick oven. For entertainment they made weekend trips to Chicago, looking for strip shows, often unsuccessfully and settling for a movie instead, occasionally sleeping overnight in theaters to save on hotel bills. In his second summer in the states he found a job in a Chicago shipyard, making big pay (\$1.75/hr.) loading lumber into a furnace. Though he was working with people “all much bigger” than him and he would end every day dripping with sweat and dead tired, he always volunteered for overtime because the pay was so good. The boss invited him back for a full-time job after he graduated, and my grandfather seriously considered it.

The remainder of college went more smoothly, with steadily improving grades, and he applied, as his friends did, to graduate school with the same success and acceptance. Yet while he was still determined to get a Ph.D. in chemistry, he saw no feasible means to fund it and besides, he was eager to get job experience in the field. So immediately after graduation he packed up, borrowed some money, and took the bus to Terre Haute, IN, where he’d managed to get a job with the Chemical Solvents corporation. He adds, firmly, that Chemical solvents at that time was the only company in the world producing nitro-paraffin, using a process discovered in 1930 (and the remainder of his lectures focus heavily on chemical and business details, despite his admitted attempts to stay out of such technical territory).

Despite serious communication issues, usually being able to understand people face to face, but having no clue on office telephones no matter how many times his coworkers repeated themselves, he would work three times as hard as his American

colleagues, advancing to the top researching position only to get bored. "I was only happy when I was learning," he recalls, "Once I was as far as I could go, training the new employees, there was no challenge." He was, after years of work, barely ever getting out of town, suddenly disillusioned with his working life, lonely, and bored.

There were two major pieces missing from his Korean-American dream: the shiny new car and a girlfriend. Following the order of operations, owning a new car would surely lead to the other goal. So in the spring of 1957, at the suggestion of his older American coworker who knew a good dealer, he put \$1000 down on a '57 Chevy, and after practicing for a week earned his license to drive it. Now he was free to make weekend roadtrips up to Chicago and back to Tri-State, where many of his friends were still studying, and for a time he was quite content. "But I slowly came to realize," he confesses, that after getting comfortable with a steady job and a new car, "what I really wanted was a girlfriend." With the help of his older and more sociable friends, he was introduced to many "nice, Korean girls" whom he dated each a few times before deciding against any further relationship. Some were too old, others too young, and yet others were disappointed that he had no plans to return to Korea.

My grandmother helps him recall his long list of potential suitors, as he grew accustomed to "American ways of dating." From waitresses who commented on his teeth to art students who "painted horses", he found it all very exciting and once a little too intense. They recall one student named Sylvia at Indiana State's teachers college whom he dated a few times, until she invited him to a graduation dance party and asked that he buy her a \$20 orchid. His landlady explained to him the implied significance of this request, and without warning he skipped town to Chicago for a time, "pretty much ending that relationship."

He met my grandmother in 1958 when she answered the door at a college party in Terre Haute, and six months later they went on a movie date, to see "The Brothers Karamazov." Eventually he would pick her up on Fridays after work, and they were swept up in "fun times, going around and around like crazy." He lists my grandmother's qualities with a grin and his inimitable bellylaugh: she was "independent, smart, subtle...and hot!" Most importantly, perhaps, she was taken with his Koreanness and was very open and interested in learning the language and culture. They dated for 11 months and were married in February, 1959, after having to drive to Detroit to apply for a migration visa, which required him to keep his job. He speaks very reluctantly, only with repeated prodding, about his father's response to marrying an American. "He didn't approve. He talked about taking me out of the family, like I'm no longer his son." After the fact, his father even offered to send some Korean girls to the states "for me to pick." My dad was born later that year, smoothing over the reaction of his own father to the marriage, and both parents went back to working towards citizenship and earning a living.

One particular business trip worth mentioning was a lone drive to Louisiana. It was apparently too long a drive, and my grandfather fell asleep at the wheel, "woke up on the wrong side of the road going 60mph." After checking into a hotel, he went to his convention to discuss his research on nitro-paraffin and was confused by the laws of segregation. Most people there had never seen an oriental person before, and he "wasn't sure if I was white or colored." Outside a restroom, this made for some tense moments, before a passerby tried to comfort him, assuring him that he was not

“colored.” Everyone, especially waitresses at the hotel, was wary of him, so he made sure to leave big tips.

Two more years brought two more children, and growing discontent at his job. After gaining U.S. citizenship in 1962, he decided that his future at Chemical Solvents, where he had been getting yearly raises and a promotion to vice president of research, would not be exciting enough. He returned to Korea in 1962, feeling greater responsibility to help his family there, who seemed to be bouncing from industry to industry, from aluminum to shoes to construction with such setbacks as having their factory bombed in the Korean War. His American friends, most of whom were in graduate school, thought he was crazy to return to the still-impooverished country, but while he'd been distracted by American life for a while, it had always been his intention to use his education to help his family and his country.

When he does return he finds a whole new language barrier, even among his family. Everyone spoke a new, adult language with him that he'd never learned, and he often felt like a foreigner in his own country. It took him four years to understand the “grown-up” Korean language, which was nothing like the direct confrontation he'd grown accustomed to in America. After running experiments and helping domestic companies do chemical research, his family proposed to collaborate and buy a small factory for \$100,000, with the promise that the government would give his new chemical company, Shin-A, a lot of aid as part of the import substitution plans of the time. Once the factory was up and running, able to produce twenty tons of his mysterious, all-important “product”, he had a lot of trouble marketing it because even domestic companies didn't trust the quality of domestically-produced materials. He had to give long speeches, explaining the chemical formulas behind his process to potential customers, and still they were reluctant to test it out. Finally his uncles, who were the main investors in this fledgling company, talked my grandfather into taking some executives out for a drink and giving them an envelope full of cash to establish a business relationship. He remembers his hand shaking badly as he gave them the money, trying to act casually with a twinging conscience. But the next day there was a large order, and they were “on first base”, having gained a major partner in the production of vinyl wiring.

After that his business really started to take off, and the hardest part became finding loans and foreign capital to expand the operation. Fortunately he was able to use his U.S. passport to go to Japan and negotiate loans and deals not available to wholly domestic firms. He would constantly be researching for new products, finding new funds and new customers, starting a new life of business that would leave little time for anything else. Almost as an afterthought, he mentions their fourth child was born in Korea in 1964. Researching new processes would take him repeatedly to Japan and to Europe to learn about marketable compounds which sound different every time he says them. Eventually he perfects his own processes and licenses them around the world for considerable fees.

While in Japan, an American representative of Allied Chemical in New York City offered him a position to help in their “aggressive expansion.” Since his own company was well on its way, he accepted the job and left his uncles in charge of operations at Shin-A. So in 1967 this family of six (who had apparently been with him the whole time, while my grandmother taught at a military school) packed twenty-two suitcases and moved to New Jersey. Since there were still no direct flights to America, they first had

to go to Tokyo, then to Honolulu, stopping in Disneyland in LA before resting awhile with my grandmother's family in IN. There they bought a gigantic stationwagon which somehow managed to fit all of them and their twenty-two suitcases for the long drive to Ridgewood, NJ. The whole experience must have been nothing short of traumatic for them, but everyone speaks nostalgically of it now.

Working a nine-to-five job just off of Wall Street, my grandfather did double or triple duty as a Japanese-Korean-English translator and chemical engineer, sealing contracts for projects of up to \$30 million while complaining about how unfriendly New Yorkers are compared to everyone in Terre Haute. Yet this didn't seem to affect his unrelenting work ethic. Thanks to this, he boasts, one Japanese customer said that transactions went five-to-ten times faster. So naturally, there was no need to stay there for more than a year before other projects began to demand his attention again. In the summer of 1968 they packed up all over again and went back to Korea, where familial business trouble threatened to tear his Shin-A apart.

Back in Korea, having been away less than a year, new competition has reduced Shin-A's market share, and 70% of the workforce had to be laid off. A new product had to be found, or one of his uncles was going to shut down his factory. When he gets into talking about fourth and fifth uncles and the percentage shares in the company that each had, whether they were with him or against him, I get a bit lost. But before spending all of their profits on researching a new product which might never have come, the uncle that owned the factory pulled out of the business, leaving my grandfather to negotiate with his more faithful uncles for an expensive expansion. By 1969 profits began "snowballing" and, in classic family feud style, the fourth uncle, jealous of all the money he could have made, starts to make trouble with the law about some shady importing that the company had been doing.

It was nothing "extraordinarily illegal", he assures me, more of a "gray area". But while vacationing with the family in Taechon in 1969, he had to leave the country, literally in the middle of a leisurely stroll to lay low in Japan for a while. This seems by far the most interesting part of his business life, which would probably be very telling about the Korean connections between family, business, and government, but it's apparently a sore point with my grandfather. It brings up a discussion of "just what is the truth" when my grandmother urges him to tell it, and I really felt like I was prying to go any further. As he sums it up, the company began to suffer again in his absence, going into debt, so "with help from the government" he was able to return to Korea and explain himself, though not for this project, apparently.

Having returned and set things straight, his narrative turns to alternating between pressures of expansion and how to navigate crisis, especially the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. The company made it through both of these, if not unscathed at least intact. But the real threat to the company was still forming in the growing unions. The main events, which he quantifies neatly, were the expansions of the capacity needed to stay competitive and accommodate wage increases. Overall in the 1970's, Shin-A's capacity went from a once-impressive 20 tons to 20-thousand tons of output per year, seeing demand double almost yearly. Supplying for Samsung, among others, he says that the Korean economy "was going crazy." At the new factory in Anyang, they tripled output in as many years from 10 tons/day to 30. Oil crises bankrupted some customers, however, and reduced the demand for a time to only 25% of these burgeoning

capacities. The economy took longer to recover from this second shock, and in the early eighties the company needed another loan, which they received at a special interest rate because of familial relations to Chun Doo Hwan's wife.

When Cumings mentions the industries booming in the industrialization period, the chemical industry is at the end, apparently smaller than the others but still important. As the founder and brains behind a mid-sized chemical company, Harabugi made a mighty tidy living, though under tremendous responsibility that no one else seems able to appreciate. Knowing that countless firms dwarfed my grandfather's (though likely more willing and able to delegate responsibility, not to mention better connected), the massively developed corporate landscape in Korea is all the more mind-boggling.

In order to keep expanding, to meet workers' demands for 25% wage increases, the company went public, reaching a combined capacity of 60,000 tons per year. My grandfather speaks of this time as causing him a lot of pain, and he realizes he caused a fair share himself. He claims he had always been a generous, paternal president of the company; he didn't even know proper ways to do business, just doing what he thought was right and truly looking out for his workers' welfare. I find it hard to side with him, but he says that the new freedoms just came too fast, and this made unions unreasonable. In addition they'd already become militant from having to survive under more oppressive administrations, so whenever there was a lull in censorship and military breakups of labor disputes, there would be a new round of demands. And each round managed to grow with the company, so that if conceded, the company would surely go bankrupt. "No business can survive such demands," he asserted often, when on the subject of unions and wage increases. Not surprisingly, his company's union troubles coincide with the bulge in labor disputes reported in the late eighties (in Koo, p.149). According to Koo's graph, between the years 1987-89, the number of unions more than tripled, while the number of labor disputes were between six to fourteen times the number in 1986. When the unions demanded an impossible tenfold wage increase in the early nineties, he was no longer working with sympathetic or even mischievous family members. And when the housewives turned on him, it seemed everyone was out for his blood...

He describes a new national campaign to construct new centers of modern industry, and one of the cities chosen was Anyang, where his factory had been turning out the recurring theme of product without a problem (besides unions) since the early eighties. Within a year, the new construction turned a rice field next door to his factory into a block of highrise apartments. When the apartment owners complained that their property values weren't rising because of my grandfather's factory, the government first sided with industry, maintaining that there was not a serious pollution problem and that the factory was there first. Within days there were protests from hundreds outside the factory, whom my grandfather dismisses as "angry housewives who wanted to see their renting prices go up." But the housewives always win, he laments. The factory, which would have been good for another ten years, "lost 80% of its value" when it was demolished, a huge loss for his company. Yet the unions persisted in their demands for raises, while the company absorbed these losses. His frustrations were only amplified when the other shareholders rejected his resignation from the company. If the current Korean middle class shows some disdain toward the student and worker protests, believing they have accomplished "enough", in this case my grandfather shows similar

soreness toward the middle class.

In a stroke of luck, which my grandfather calls a work of God, a gigantic *chaebol* ten times the size of Shin-A came along, was impressed at its efficiency, and bought the company in 1995. This was most fortunate, to get out of business before the East Asian economic crisis hit Korea, and sure enough the company which bought them out gave the workers the tenfold wage increase and then promptly went bankrupt. Perhaps every Korean businessman's success story is like Cumings' Mr. Han and his bicycles (p.331), but presumably not everyone also juggles time with a large American family as well. I don't think my grandfather's story is as easily anecdotalized to show national trends, not particularly helped by his intentional vagueness in times of "trouble". As most of these episodes are quite condensed<sup>3</sup>, it may be helpful to refer to the interview transcript for clarification and further details.

Since selling the company he's had time to do what he wants, and I myself noticed he'd become much happier, less frighteningly disciplinary. Among the things he's apparently thought about is the issue of national unification, a last attempt to tie into proper historical speculation. His opinions concerning reunification are surprisingly quick to compare to the German model, despite prominent warnings from both sides (Habermas and Paik), not to equate them. Not surprisingly, he focuses on the economic aspects of the German reunification, uses a comparison to domesticated dogs that my brothers and I have heard many times now, and he says that despite a history that has more often than not been separate despite sharing a language and a culture, Korea will be one nation again.

In the end he is reluctant to give firm opinions about events and figures in Korean history, often preferring to preface every statement with the disclaimer "it all depends on how you look at it". Even though he is a Korean at heart, he is officially an American citizen only, an experienced and outspoken individual in both societies. I'm uncertain as to whether his reluctance stems from his view of himself as too far separated from the "average" Korean or whether he just thinks that I nor presumably many others would understand, or more importantly, agree with him. And while his life can neither be characterized as average nor as carrying the whole country on his back, his perspectives on a Korean history heavily clouded by conflicting nationalisms, social movements, and prospects of unification, are at least different for their dogged attempts at objectivity. Were someone to get at his deeper, darker secrets, a fully modern and western biography would interest me both on a personal level and yes, even on a legitimate academic level of scholarly, historic inquiry.

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<sup>3</sup> and at times hurried. Darn.

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