

KWVA Revisit Program- A Twenty-Two Year History

Tom Clawson-Chairman

For the first time in the almost twenty-two years since the war, the U.S.A. the Korean War Veterans Association (KWVA) has become involved with the Republic of Korea's Revisit Korea Program. Prior to this time the administration of this program was delegated to the Korea Veterans Association (KVA) in Seoul, Korea and was initiated in 1975.

The KVA principal goal has been to invite Korean War veterans and family members to return to Korea, on a subsidized visit, to thank veterans for the sacrifices that saved their country from communism. Thousands of veterans from the Allied countries that participated in the war, 1950-1953, have enjoyed this sojourn to the "Land of the Morning Calm". The Korean Government (KVA) incurs the cost of a hotel for 5 nights and 6 days, meals and in-country tours.

During the early years of this program, KVA was feeling the pangs of administering, tour arrangements, staff, and with some difficulty, publicizing the tour trips in the U.S.A. Since there was no organized Korean War Veterans Group in the U.S.A. from 1975 thru 1985 the KVA had been dealing with Korean Travel Agencies. They had selected contacts in the east, including Cecelias Tours and Travel of New York, in the mid-west with Dearborn Travel Inc. of Chicago, Illinois and on the West coast with Olympus Travel in Los Angeles, California provided the eligible lists of U.S. veterans to return to Korea. During this time period of ten years more than 9000 veterans participated in the Revisit Program mainly by word of mouth and the select travel agencies.

In 1985 the U.S.A. KWVA was organized with Bill Norris at the helm and the Revisit Program came to light. It wasn't until 1987 that

Dick Adams, prior to becoming the KWVA president, went with several charter members of KWVA to Seoul, Korea to discuss the Revisit Program with officials of the KVA where he summarized his findings. The KVA had also been working with the other twenty-one United Nation Countries who served in Korea during the war. So you can see the difficulty of forming patterns of Quotas and travel arrangements outside of Korea and within. A professional tour agency was recommended or participation of a knowledgeable person with travel and tour experience to operate a Revisit Program.

In March of 1990 several KWVA officers flew to Korea-Seoul to meet with KVA officers to discuss the Revisit Program. At that time KVA had little knowledge of the existence of the U.S.A. KWVA. Based on this meeting KWVA President Dick Adams appointed Director Kathleen "Lt. Honey" Wyosnick as coordinator of the Revisit Program trip for U.S.A. KWVA with KVA-Seoul, Korea. Thus the year 1990 marks the "birth" of the Revisit Program for KWVA.

The general format KVA outlines for the Revisit Program consisted of three trips scheduled for each year, during the months of April, June and September. It would include hotel accommodations, all meals, daily tours and an official dinner. Since the KVA is the host and the returning veteran and family member are considered guests the criteria was agreed to and the Official Agreement was approved by KWVA and KVA.

The Revisit trips are for 6 days and 5 nights and on every trip, KVA sponsors a "Formal Banquet" where veterans are presented the "Ambassador of Peace" medal and certificate. This handsome medal is awarded only on a Korea Revisit Trip and given only once.

During the time period, from 1990 thru 1996, when Kathleen Cronan "Lt. Honey" Wyosnick was coordinator of the Revisit Program had processed 2500 veterans for KWVA. Indeed this was a Herculean task and done without staff. The responsibility began with making contact with KVA who after completing their budget for the next years' program, which normally is in January, received dates and allotments or KWVA Quotas for the year. Also in the mix, after a fair share of KWVA, there are three KVA Departments in the U.S.A., East, Mid-West, and West that receive an allotment. In addition, Hawaii and the 1st Marine Division, West Point Military Academy and Chose Few organizations are at different years, given an allotment.

This time period of seven years found several trying problems. The major one is when four to five non-sanctioned travel agencies by ludicrous methods claimed to be the only Revisit Korea sponsored program. They weren't, as KVA determines the official one, KWVA. It is not fair for the KWVA members and administration, and particularly to Kathleen Wyosnick, need to deal with this. Sound reasoning and KWVA officers' decisions determined the process and resolution. This process strengthened the Revisit Program for its members.

Based on the situation that occurred it is noted that Kathleen's driving force to deliver a worthwhile Revisit trip is one of the "services" for members of KWVA. Many of the veterans who have taken a revisit trip have heard Kathleen's remark, "You are my heroes!"

A Revisit report, as directed by National President, Nick Pappas in June of 1996, was sent to officers and members of the Executive Council of the KWVA and detailed the success of the early years of the Revisit Program. More than 2,500 Korean War veterans returned to

Korea. Many benefits were provided and experienced by the Revisit program participants. Also, as a fact during this time, hundreds of new KWVA members were recruited based on eligibility for the Revisit trip.

There always is a point in every program of KWVA that monetary concerns are raised. In the findings of Kathleen's time as coordinator of the Revisit program, she had received no salary for the long hours she volunteered. Kathleen was compensated by a KWVA budgeted amount of \$4000 to \$5000 per year for printing, phone/fax and trip packets expenses. These bills and receipts were forwarded to the KWVA for reimbursement.

There is no doubt that to get off on the right foot it took someone with the desire and fortitude to take on one of the KWVA's most successful programs, the "Revisit Korea". She upheld the challenges, hard work and its rewards to make the KWVA proud of these accomplishments and to continue on to the next chapter. KWVA members who have been on those Revisit trips owe her a thank you for her dedication.

As the KWVA Revisit program became increasingly popular and with the resignation of Kathleen at the end of 1996 it was evident to the 1997 KWVA officers it would be necessary to examine the program and make recommendations for the next step into its future. The big question was "who is going to handle the work load that is required?" A professional tour/travel agency was recommended for the position. Nick Pappas, president of KWVA and his officers tackled the issue and in 1997 appointed Military Historical Tours, headquartered in Arlington Virginia, to operate the Revisit program. MHT was to make contact with

the KVA in Seoul and to continue a smooth transition of the Revisit program from Kathleen to MHT.

This monumental task fell on the shoulders of MHT President Warren Wiedhahn, who was also chairman of the Revisit Program-KWVA. The job required maintaining credibility, providing professional experience need to conduct the Revisit Program. It was a task they accepted. In 1998 National President Harley Coon reappointed MHT to continue the charge to further the mission statement of the Revisit Program. One of the key factors to the program's success was to delegate an official person to enter in discussion with the KVA in Seoul, Korea. At that time determination of the quotas for the upcoming year of the Revisit trips was necessary. As an example, in 1997 the quota for the entire year was only 97 for KWVA. Because of the fluctuating formula the KWVA uses for its determination, several factors must be considered. Number one is the appropriations of millions of Won (dollars) annually to host Korean War veterans of all countries that thru the United Nations (UN) and the combined International Federation of Korean War Veterans Association (IFKWVA) on which the KWVA became a member in 1993 are affected. They have the responsibility of all funds. This requires an audit and management which is controlled by the Director of the Planning and Budget Department of the KVA.

Thus each country, like the USA-KWVA, must account for all necessary supporting information including records and bank accounts. This is to verify by MHT the names of veterans and family members (the computer technology) to receive their quota for each year of participation in the Revisit Program. It is imperative that the Tour Agency (MHT), required to administer the KVA Revisit Program,

understands, negotiates, and conducts an upright professional business.

The outcome of the above procedures will benefit the veterans' honesty and conduct while participating in their revisit trip. It is this summary background that MHT and KWVA have agreed to.

During the years from 1990 to the present many-many key members of the operations were involved with Korea Revisit trips, including KVA-Seoul, IFKWVA, and Allied Korean Government Department and respective country tour agencies that promote and arrange Revisit trips to Korea. It is not a simple task. MHT has stood the test.

Late in 1998 MHT resumed its notifications in The Graybeard. Also at this time the British Korean War Veterans Association requested that KWVA participate in the 1999 International Reunion in London, July 1999. This was also conducted by MHT as a phase of its Revisit experience. The British Korean War Veterans Association (BKWVA) information of this event was published in the Graybeards and was well received. Those who attended this International event found it rewarding and an excellent time to meet and relive their days in Korea. The British were very good hosts and the U.S. veterans were well attended.

With the advent of having a Professional Tour Agency on board with KWVA officers requested an update of procedures and information which could be posted in "The Graybeard". This gave credibility and fair processing of KWVA applicants for the Revisit Program. Many of the considerations included a statement of veteran's account, tour itinerary, special sites, passport/visa, health and travel

shots, domestic air reservations and additional travel information. This was done diligently by MHT.

The Revisit trips in early 2000 progressed in a stable format, with meeting quotas and providing veterans an excellent experience. In 2004 the KWVA officers felt that certain procedures should be explained by MHT. This included the services of the MHT. A service charge or deposit of \$300 was assessed each participant. This flat fee covered the work, made the airline reservations, provided insurance and maintained continued service to the veteran. Since KWVA was the sponsor and MHT acted as its employee they conducted working negotiations with the KVA. Officers of KWVA had to look at the facts and present a solution.

In a Korea Revisit Update by Warren Wiedhahn (The Graybeard-May-June issue 2004 page 80) he related that he had just returned from Seoul, Korea where he had met with officials at both the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) the equivalent of the U.S.A. Veterans Affairs Department and the Korean Veterans Association (KVA). Secondly MHT was notified that the ROK Government would continue the Revisit Korea Program into the future. The third consideration was that the 2004 quota of 220 had been filled and the 2005 program quota increased. Several other issues were considered including dates of eligibility from July 27, 1953 through July 27, 1954 and if the definition of direct descendants would allow adopted children, live-in spouses, and grandparents to accompany the veteran as well as widows and children of those killed in action.

With this positive track record by the KWVA it was noteworthy that President-KWVA Lou Dechert, who was attending the IFKWVA

meeting at the same time, discussed and thanked the ROK for both supporting IFKWVA and the Revisit Korea program KVA and also acknowledged the good job MHT had been accomplishing.

To keep the program on an even keel and to continue the Revisit program, based on the information given for both KWVA and MHT, a mutual change in the operation of the Revisit Program was made on September 15, 2004. This working agreement was moved forward with KWVA President Lou Dechert appointing Tom Clawson chairman of the Revisit Program and Warren Weidhahn (MHT) as Revisit coordinator. Duties and responsibilities were outlined in an appointment letter. MHT was to continue the day by day operation since it had a very competent staff of more than 12 employees. To oversee policies and direction of the Revisit Program, Tom Clawson will provide insight and beneficial suggestions to keep the increase of tour interest at the forefront. Stability in the operation is key to the KWVA.

The KWVA-Revisit program has progressed at an increased level to provide invaluable service to the veteran while in Korea. An annual report of the Revisit Program was given to the officers and members of KWVA in 2005 by Tom Clawson, chairman who summed up the Revisit Program as follows: "There were two significant changes in the program. First, the government of Korea has recognized the value of these Revisit programs, not only to thank the veterans that fought there, but to continue the positive benefits of public relations and alliance building benefit between our two countries. In keeping with this theme, the ROK government has announced that the Revisit Program will continue indefinitely."

In 2005, when President-KWVA Lou Deckert again visited Korea in June for the commemoration of the start of the war-1950, much head way occurred when he pointed out, to the officials of both MPVA and KVA, that more veterans should be included in the quotas since they are all getting older. He also requested that a significant monetary increase of 2006 funds be considered. The mid-point of the KWVA Revisit Program recognized the effort that MHT accomplished through coordinating and management of complicated Revisit Korea Program. The administrative key for KWVA is that the program is run "on a not-for-profit" basis and since there is no "markup" on these tours, it is fair and equitable to the veterans served.

Throughout the years the program has been in operation, MHT has given to the Revisit participants the opportunity to consider the Post Tour to China for 6 days at their own expense. Many have taken this trip. Also there have been post trips planned and offered to battlefield areas for the veterans at their own expense.

As the Revisit Program expanded into a very popular experience, several eligibility concerns were outlined in 2007. Widows and children of veterans killed during the war are eligible to participate. There has been a constant quota from 2005-2009 of more than 200-300 participants going on the May, June, September and early November trips.

During the year 2008 a number of policy changes occurred. In the KWVA it was time for election of officers. The duly elected President of KWVA in July 2008 was William "Bill" Mac Swain, who had the big job to regroup and proceed with the transition of staff and programs. Tom Clawson, Chairman KWVA Revisit Program and Warren Wiedhahn

(MHT) were both reappointed to move forward with the Revisit Program.

In the late fall and early 2008 there had been discussions and negotiations between KVA, IFKWVA, MHT and president-KWVA on major eligibility of KWVA participants. Several of the issues were misunderstood and some discord prevailed. The new president of KWVA Bill Mac Swain had to rectify with the agencies involved and guidance of MHT Warren Wiedhahn. The major contact in KVA- Seoul was General Jeong, Kook-Bohn Director General of the KVA International Affairs Department. During this timeframe the Director Jeong also requested information concerning the Korean War Veteran in U.S.A. as follows; Total number of participating people in the Korean War; Among that total number, the number of veterans surviving as of today and the number of veterans who have passed away; among that number of veterans who survive, the number of veterans who have not joined the Korea Revisit Program before; among that number, the number of veterans who have not joined the Korea Revisit program and the number of veterans who are not able to join the Korea Revisit Program due to health problems.

As you grasp this request MHT and Warren Wiedhahn had to prevail on patience, diplomacy, staff involvement to calculate the numbers requested by KVA. This was needed to receive the KWVA quota for 2009. This was accomplished by MHT and forwarded to KVA. It has been this cooperative work and agreements that have formed a partnership between KVA and KWVA.

The 2008 Revisit schedule and quotas were increased to four trips planned with a quota of over 250 participants with MHT tour leader

John Powell. Also an extra trip was planned for June 20th through June 26, 2008. MHT had received a request for a Revisit trip from Reverend So, Kang-Suk, who is pastor of Sae Eden Presbyterian Church in Seoul Korea one of the very large churches and congregations in Seoul. They subsidized this Revisit trip and arranged this program to express their gratitude and to honor the veterans' sacrifices during the war. This Revisit trip included tours to the Sae Eden Presbyterian Church for a special commemoration service, bus ride to the DMZ and Panmunjom, and a tour of the Old Ministers Cemetery, site of one of the battles to regain Seoul in 1950. It was well received and tour leader Jaime Wiedhahn orchestrated both the churches' Revisit concept and the principals of a MHT-KWVA Revisit trip.

During the May 2009 Revisit trip an untimely situation occurred. One of the participants, Victor Veith, Portland, Oregon fell down a flight of stairs at the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) at Panmunjom and died. Victor served in 1952-53 with the 45th Infantry Division. His wife was with him and cooperation between the KVA and other agencies within the ROK government and the U.S. Embassy considered the proper process to support the Veith family and getting Mr. Veith's body back to the U.S. One of the MHT experienced tour leaders; William (Bill) McCulloch was on site and coordinated the difficult situation. Both the KVA and MPVA responded in very supportive roles. MHT President-Warren Wiedhahn directed a memo to KWVA President Bill Mac Swain and all KWVA officers on May 31, 2009 with this message; "Despite the untimely and unfortunate death of Victor, the love that the Korean Community has shown for all Korean War Veterans has been a beauty to behold."

In early part 2010 a number of changes occurred within the Revisit Program at the Korean Governmental level. The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) was appointed to administer and lead the Revisit Program. This was done basically for the 60th Anniversary of the start of the Korean War in 1950. Also MPVA is responsible for the in-house National Korean ceremonies, events and coordination with KVA to provide the best Revisit experience for returning veterans. The major concern to KWVA and MHT was a surprising increase of the KWVA quota to 1000 participants and with a slot of six trips planned. This was quite a shock and challenge for MHT and through a timed promotion by MHT in The Graybeard and MHT mailings the 2010 Revisit Program was put into action. Another factor was the new incentive when MPVA proposed that 50% of the Air Flight tickets would be in force with 30% Air Flight ticket for the veteran's companion, a significant benefit for KWVA veterans considering a Revisit trip.

Another addition was the initiation of the Peace Camps for Youth Program. An application and eligibility requirement was established. Any grandchild of a veteran that KWVA and MHT recommended would be received regardless of whether they were attending universities or colleges. Approximately twenty-five candidates would be the quota and met, by screening by MHT. This Peace Camps for Youth was very well received and is an excellent example of continuing the spirit of American youth within the youth of South Korea.

KWVA veterans who participated in the 2010 Revisit program received many excellent benefits such as free lodging in the beautiful Lotte Hotel in Seoul, tours and meals while in Korea. In a memo January 2010 from MPVA the Co-Director Kim, Young-Woon summed up the

working arrangements in Korea, "The MPVA has decided to run this years' program with the KVA, by organizing a TFT between the MPVA and the KVA with MHT, will benefit the KWVA and their members." Notices that went out to the members listed the Revisit trips and dates. Themes of these trips were determined by MPVA and listed the 2010 ROK Recognition Dates were; June-start of the war, September- Pusan Perimeter, Inchon Landing (September 15th), Liberation of Seoul, October- Special "Air Force Appreciation Week" and November- Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir.

Again the KWVA and MHT policy of "First come-First Served" applies to all Revisit Korea applicants who are registered and who have submitted the down payment fees are given the opportunity to select the dates that they choose to return. The 2010 Revisit Program was initiated with major changes and was exceedingly successful. Thanks were expressed by KWVA to MHT for its professional touch and operation.

The 2011 Revisit Korea dates were given in May, June and September with a quota of approximately 300 for the year. It was all business with MHT to process. The eligibility remained the same as in 2010. The same 50% air coverage for veterans and 30% off air coverage tickets for companions prevailed by MPVA. Also the Peace Camps for Youth was continued as administered in 2010. With the additions of new insurance requirements as well as the ROK government paying for part of the airfare, a positive approach to the KWVA Revisit Program was realized. Several issues were also resolved such as health concerns. MHT insured every veteran and his or her companion. It also provided a health certificate that the tour leaders can take with them in the event that they need hospitalization or lose their medicine. Also KWVA and

MHT are very appreciative to the Korean nurses who ride the buses as well as the young Korean boys and girls who assist the veterans on long stairs or climbing hills. As MHT pronounced, "This is another positive deed of a grateful nation!"

The KWA Revisit Program, from its initial start in 1990, to the end of 2011 season estimates that 9364 Korean War Veterans and family members of KWVA have toured the "Land of the Morning Calm". What an amazing pronouncement by the people of Korea, who have invited the Korean War Veterans back to Korea thru their subsidized Revisit Korea Program. This is to thank them for their sacrifices in saving them from the ravages of communism in the early 1950s. As indicated in many MHT updates and printed in "The Graybeards" the KWVA-USA has expressed its thanks and resplendent response to the Korean people.

To administer the Revisit program for American veterans and their families, more than one person has been responsible to keep the Revisit Program alive. Do not forget the KWVA presidents and officers, Kathleen Wysonick, MHT Warren Wiedhahn and staff who spearheaded the successful story "Revisit Korea" for the KWVA members.

Thomas (Tom) Franklin Clawson

March 15, 1930—March 2, 2013



Tom was drafted into the United States Army and received his basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma in May of 1951. He served in the 1st Cavalry, 5th Cav. Regiment, B Company. After he finished basic training, he was deployed to South Korea and later Japan for a year and a half. He was active in combat and fought faithfully for his country. He earned the Korean Service Medal with 3 Bronze Service Stars, a Combat Infantry Badge, United Nations Service Medal, and Army Occupation Medal (Japan). He then served in the Army Reserves from April 1953-1958.

Tom was very active in the Minnesota Korean War Veteran Association (MKWVA). He was a past President of the Minnesota Korean War Veterans Association. Tom was also named Veteran of the Year by the MKWVA. He was also named Veteran of the Month by WCCO Radio. Tom was instrumental in the creation and dedication of the Korean War Memorial on the State Capitol Mall. Tom was also Commander of the West Saint Paul VFW.

Tom was very active with the National Korean War Veterans Association serving as 1st Vice President from 1994 to 1998. Tom had been Chair of the KWVA "Revisit Korea" program since September 2004. Tom revisited Korea five times including twice with his wife Sue, once with his son Tim, once with the "Revisit Korea" program, and once to represent the United States of America at the International Korean War Veterans Congress. Tom was also involved in the National Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., and attended the dedication of the memorial with his wife, Sue, and son, Tim.

Tom Clawson completed the attached report in January 2013.