

Ted Kloth

- **Service Countr: Korea**
- **Assignment: Teaching English at University and Supreme Court Judicial Training Institute**
- **Service Tours: 1969-71 (3 years)**
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Service Description:

A teacher at my high school decided in 1963 our US and European history classes were fine, but there were a lot of other places around the globe that were peopled and had histories we should learn too, especially since we were at war in one of those places -Vietnam. In 1963-64, I was one of the guinea pigs in the new course. I got hooked on China, following up at Dartmouth. I had my eyes on a teaching or government career and a history major in Hanover.

A senior in fall of 1967 with graduation nearing, I wanted a break from the receiving end of schooling. Disqualified military service as 4F, I had freedom to look around. Failing to find a job in Taiwan or Hong Kong (mainland China was out at the time), I discovered a Peace Corps pamphlet in the careers office and applied for English teaching in Korea (and Malaysia) with their significant Chinese populations. The plan was to study Chinese with these good folk, while teaching Koreans English.

I wound up at a Korean university in the capital for two years with a one-year extension at the Supreme Court Judicial Training Institute, a government school judges and prosecutors had to attend after passing a tough exam. At that time private lawyers were few and came from the ranks of judges and prosecutors who had retired. My college students and the judges and prosecutors were great teachers about their country which I found fascinating.

Our group had perhaps a peculiar PC experience. We had to wear coats and ties - except in summer heat and humidity. No long hair. Korean troops in Vietnam and a large North Korean Army very close by along with murderous NK infiltrators and occasional hijackings of domestic air. We saw ox carts (occasionally) in the cities and Hyundai's first all Korean designed and made cars hit the streets. We saw students fighting the police for democracy, and last year's graduates participate as draftee infantry in a coup by the president seizing his own government. We saw ox carts (occasionally) in the cities and Hyundai's first all Korean designed and made cars hit the streets. PC DC Headquarters kept sending out shrinks because PC/Korea had the highest early out and highest extension rates in world. Crazy to go. Crazy to stay.????

My take: Korea is cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Little heating or air conditioning then. Koreans are very hardworking and intense. You either liked Korea very much or not much at all. You wanted to stay another year. Or you wanted to leave as fast as you could.

I suppose others had tough host country governments. Korea's dictator was, however, laser focused on economic growth. Korean troops were in Vietnam. He and many other Koreans were certainly well aware of the Anti-Vietnam War turmoil on American college campuses and the "risk" of having young Americans come on Korean campuses. BUT he also knew English is the language of trade, so good on us. For those Koreans who didn't want to "make money and be happy" with an. undemocratic leader, there were nosey and nasty (to anyone critical of Himself) police. I wasn't long at university when called to the Dean's office to meet someone new from the local police. "Hello, Mr. Kloth, I am in charge of foreigners in this area. Let me know if you have any problems."

Never saw him again, but we '68s aren't as dumb as we look. I certainly didn't think he'd forgotten me either.

Career and Life Impact:

I never did get to Taiwan, Hong Kong, or China except as a tourist. My interest shifted to Korea and Japan. After graduate school (only 4 in US with Korean studies then) focused on Korean, Japanese and Chinese history, I spent the bulk of my career in the State Department serving in Korea and Japan. My last tour 2006-07 in Iraq was with a Korean general's office down the hall and a female Korean Army major integrated into the US Provincial Reconstruction Team's embassy HQ too. More than that, Korea established its own. PRT which was remarkably successful.

Korea also established its own Peace Corps, a nice reward, I think, for those of us who were Volunteers in the old days. The two organizations have a formal agreement to work together in third countries too. Today's Korea has come, through Koreans hard work. a long way in time and place in the world from the country we flew into on a very cold January night in 1969.

On a very personal level, the big lesson for me from my Volunteer experience was, in my various jobs, to look at the world through other people's eyes first. Being able to work in two different Korean organizations was a unique learning opportunity that Peace Corps provided.

PS: Fellow Korea PCV Chuck Hobbie '67 has a book on Amazon: "Through Grateful Eyes - Living History of PCV '67s," a wonderful collection of diaries. Chuck and I were in the same group K 7/8. (K8 was the smart people with MAs or law degrees. K7 was for us lesser beings.)