

A few catch-up notes from '55 classmates: April 2010

From: Jean Craig Rosenstein, jrpt@hot.rr.com. Sorry, I would love to be there, but have some things here I have to attend to. Y'all have a great togetherness. "Craigie"

From: Frances Alexander Campbell, frances.campbell@unc.edu. I am still working at UNC-CH's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, trying to wrap up 30-plus years of research on the benefits of early childhood educational intervention for children born into low-income families. We are currently funded to examine the health of the study participants when they are 30 years of age. To force the issue, I have announced to one and all that I will REALLY be retiring in the middle of this summer. My husband says he'll be glad to have me underfoot all the time, but I fear he may be mistaken. Just think of all the projects I can propose for US to carry out!

From Velma Thomas Howard, velhoward@aol.com. Thanks for the update. I regret that I will be unable to attend good old W C next weekend. My stepdaughter, She will be among the "clan" for a family reunion. Actually I am honored to be included and to have a close relationship with all these "steps." Happy Reunion..

From: Norma Cofer Witherspoon, nspoon@comcast.net Dear Old Friends: (This salutation is a relative term meaning "as compared to new or newer.")

After a very cold and snowy winter, spring is indeed arriving on Signal Mountain! The jonquils are up, the forsythia and japonica are in full bloom, the redbuds are spectacular, the peach and cherry trees are loaded with blossoms, the Bradford pears are waning, and the dogwood are ready to 'take over' the color parade. The azaleas are full of buds and the weeping willows are beginning to show their spring green.

As I drive down the mountain into Chattanooga, the lime green only seen in the springtime can be viewed each day creeping in a band from the Tennessee River up the adjacent mountainside (Elder Mountain) much as a wave flows onto the sand from the ocean. I never cease to be amazed as this process is repeated year after year.

Almost fifty five years ago I am certain the arrival of spring was just as welcomed by all, but I recall a feeling of deep sadness as early June approached. I was very much aware that never again would there be such a unique, caring and wonderful group of my peers sharing our day-to-day experiences. Some of you already had 'jobs', others were continuing your education, and others were marrying. You all seemed to know what you were about. I was going home to try to figure out what to do!

As things have a way of 'doing'—everything worked out! I arrived at the foot of the mountain (Chattanooga) in September 1955 where I lived, worked, married, and had several children before ascending to the mountaintop in early 1961. You know the rest of the story: six children, fifteen grandchildren, and the loss of John in 2004.

Working as a member of the "55 Gift Committee prior to our 50th reunion was a wonderful way of reconnecting with the classmates I so loved and enjoyed while at WC. The Greensboro and Winston-Salem folks that spent so much time in arranging the festivities for us probably were not thank sufficiently for their efforts, but I trust they know how much it meant.

When Trick called a month or so ago regarding my attending the 55th reunion, I had said that I would be there, but I delayed in sending in my reservation. As time has approached, several family plans and obligations have arisen that have made it unadvisable for me to undertake the 7 hour drive to Greensboro. I'll miss being there with you and hope to hear from you of all of the "news"...just omit the parts regarding lines, wrinkles, thinning hair, slower gaits, etc. just the info about the 'brilliant' minds and feisty spirits, please!

Love to all,
Norma C. Witherspoon

From: Betty Jo Harrell Linton, BJEBL154@aol.com

Hi Ellen, We have Apr. birthdays like crazy in our family, so we are tied up that weekend. However, I am sending you a recap of our spur of the moment trip to Korea in an attachment. It was a glorious time, and the best part was that Gene tolerated the trip pretty darn good for an 86 year old. Wish I could see everyone. Best, Betty Jo

Lintons' Trip to Korea

On Feb. 12, 2010 at 8:00 AM, we received a phone call from Gene's sister in law, Betty Linton, wife of Hugh Linton, Gene's brother, a missionary to Korea for 38 years, that the South Korean Government had chosen Gene's father, William Alderman Linton to receive the Patriot Award, posthumously. This is one of the highest awards given to a non military person, and the Government asked that Gene come to Korea and accept the award from the President of Korea, Lee Myung-bak, on March 1, 2010. To us, it was just mind boggling that 50 years after his death, Gene's father had not been forgotten and was being honored with this prestigious award.

March 1st is celebrated in Korea as Independence Day because it is the anniversary of a peaceful uprising by the Korean People against the Japanese who ruled the country at that time. The uprising was on March 1, 1919, and the Japanese were brutal in their putdown.

As a graduate from Georgia Tech in Electrical Engineering, Gene's father had gone to Korea as a 21 year old missionary in 1912, and he stayed (off and on because of the war years) until just a few months prior to his death in 1960. He married Gene's mother, Charlotte Bell, 10 years after first arriving in Korea. She was born in Korea to missionary parents, Rev. and Mrs. Eugene Bell. She joined Gene's father in missionary work. They loved Korea and its people and Gene's father immersed himself in the Korean culture, becoming very proficient in the Korean language and its culture. He and Charlotte had 4 boys who all grew up in Korea, Gene being the next to the oldest. The boys received much love and support from their parents and the Korean people and they agree that they had an ideal childhood in Korea, until the unrest associated with WWII started. Gene and his entire family and all the missionaries were evacuated from Korea, China and Japan in Nov. of 1940 before the start of WWII on Dec. 7, 1941. Two of Gene's brothers Dwight and Hugh returned to Korea in 1954 after their college and seminary education in the States, and were missionaries to Korea. Gene became a physician and practiced in the United States, his brother William Alderman Linton Jr. became an engineer and later worked and lived in Switzerland.

After checking to see if our pass ports were current and getting Gene's Cardiologists to examine him and clear him for this long and strenuous trip, we were on our way for the trip of a life time, a real Mountain Top Experience. We left on Feb. 24, and returned on Mar. 3.

After boarding United Airways Wed. evening, Feb. 24 around 6:00 PM in Greensboro, we landed in Chicago where we met up with Betty Linton and her son Andy and then boarded Asiani Airlines (first class) for our 14 hour trip to Seoul. We were delayed because of weather, as the plane had to be deiced, but we arrived safe and sound on Korean soil at around 7:30 AM Korean time on Feb. 26, 2010. We were met by a team of Koreans and Gene's physician nephew, Dr. Johnny Linton, who is Chairman of the Dept. of Family Practice at Younsae Medical School in Seoul, Korea. A van was ready to transport us down to the southern part of South Korea to Sunchun, Korea where Gene's brother and his wife Betty lived and worked and where Hugh is buried. We spent 2 nights in Betty's home. The TB Sanitarium (which Betty started and headed for years) has kept her home intact for her to come and go any time she is in Korea. As soon as we arrived there, the CBS, a Christian Broadcasting outfit, came and interviewed Gene for well over an hour, with Gene's nephews Andy and James translating. We then met with Mr. Park, now director of the Sanitarium, and he helped us package the gift we bought for the Korean President, which was a Korean Bible owned by Gene's father and mother. Mr. Park printed a beautiful book mark with pertinent information concerning the history of the Bible and the date of its presentation to the Republic of South Korean's President Lee. The gift was from the entire Linton Family, and we were told that it would be very meaningful because President Lee is an elder in the Presbyterian Church. We then ate a good meal prepared by Korean Friends of Betty's and got some sleep.

The next day was a very special and meaningful day for Gene as we were met by the National Park Service and were taken to the top of Chiri-San, the mountain where Gene had spent all the summers of his youth. What an emotional time for us all!! As we started up the mountain it was extremely foggy, cold and damp, but about 1000 feet from the summit, we broke out of the clouds into sunshine and there they were, Sunset Peak, Lion's Head (a large rock out-cropping), and other sites. Of course none of the buildings had survived the years, but the ruins of the old hotel were there and interviews were done at that site. Gene reveled in many good memories and loved the fact that the mountain is now a National Park. As a youth, all of the missionaries went up from the valley for the summer in order to escape the heat and disease that was prevalent in the valley due to the rainy weather, etc. At that time, there were no roads up the mountain and everything had to be taken up by hand. The children rode up on "pa-jiggies" which were baskets fitted on the backs of the Koreans who were taking them up the mountain to their summer home. Over and over, Gene told everyone how happy he was that he could see Chiri-San again and he exclaimed that he would not have missed the entire trip for anything in the world!!!

The following day, Sunday, we did a bit of sight seeing visiting an authentic and very old Korean Village close to Betty's home, and then in the early PM we were driven to our hotel in Chonan. This was the city where the Celebration of Independence Day was held on March 1, 2010, and where the presentations took place. The night we arrived at the hotel in Chonan, we were met by Samuel Cheon, a Yale graduate, and now Chairman of the Divinity School at Hannam University in Taejon, Korea, the University founded by Gene's father, William Alderman Linton. He interviewed us for well over an hour asking about family history and what Gene's father was like. He also told us that he and Hannam University had been instrumental in bringing the nomination of William A. Linton for the award to fruition. They submitted three reasons why the award should go to Gene's father. Samuel then showed us the first of the three which was a copy of an article printed in the Atlanta Journal Newspaper in 1919 of an interview quoting Gene's father about the "revolts without violence" of the Korean people as they were seeking their liberty from the hands of the Japanese government, and he wanted to help tell the world of the plight of the Korean people. The second "proof" according to Samuel, was that Linton had founded one institution (now Hannam University) and was the principal in another, a Boy's School.

These institutions provided education for young people which helped in providing jobs for young Koreans. The third piece of evidence was Gene's father's handling of the Japanese government in their attempts to make his Boy's School accept the Shinto Religion by trying to place Shinto Shrines in the class rooms and forcing the boys to attend the Main Shrine, which the Japanese claimed was only an act of patriotism. Gene's father's response was to close the school. Following our meeting with Samuel, we joined him and the other four recipients and their families for a Korean dinner at the hotel. Samuel issued an invitation to us to come to Taejon to tour the University that Gene's father founded, and he cleared this trip with Johnny Linton and then made the travel arrangements. Johnny accompanied us on this trip and acted as interrupter.

The next day was Monday March 1, 2010 Independence Day and the day of the Awards Presentation, which was held at 11:00 AM, in an outdoor arena with a roof. A practice session was held at 10:00 AM and the recipients met with President Lee privately at 10:40 AM. Gene felt the President was a very warm person, and he was honored to shake his hand and have a few moments of private conversation with him. The ceremony itself was beautiful with the choir dressed in Korean formal dress and a full band accompanying them. The music was outstanding: the choral group sang several selections and the National Anthem was lead by a male and female and two young people all with operatic voices. There was a reading of the Korean Constitution and then the awards were presented, followed by President Lee's speech and other speeches. Everyone was given a Korean flag and cheers and flag waving followed each speech.

After lunch we were driven to Taejon where we met Johnny, and then we were treated royally by several faculty members including Samuel, and the president of Hannam University, President Kim. They showered us with gifts, and then took us outside to show us the statute of Gene's father which had been restored and was mounted on a tall stone stand surrounded by beautiful shrubs and flowering plants. It was a beautiful monument! Afterwards we toured the museum dedicated to Gene's father and his work in Korea. The University had their photographer there and Samuel sent us copies of all the pictures they took at the ceremony and at Hannam. We have printed the pictures and will treasure them. Johnny and a driver then took us back to the Grand Hotel Seoul and we had a wonderful evening with the entire Linton Clan and then a good night's sleep.

On Tues. March 2, we toured the Yonsei University Medical Center where John is on the faculty. What a beautiful and well equipped medical facility!! It would rival any medical center in the world. The hospital is equipped with eight robot surgical machines, and we had the privilege of going into an operating room to watch some of that kind of surgery. After lunch, we were interviewed once again, and this time it was by Lisa Heller, (an American) and a Korean lady, who both work with the US Embassy. Andy Linton helped us with this interview. We were then treated to dinner at Johnny's home with his family. In our talks with Johnny, we learned that this small country of Korea (about the size of our state of Indiana) has almost no crime, and drugs are not a problem, plus they are second to no one in technology. They are a very proud and talented nation with a strong Christian emphasis. Now they are sending their own missionaries to many parts of the world.

The next day March 3, was our date of departure and so we spent the morning packing while Johnny worked his clinic. After lunch at Johnny's home and a final visit with him, he took us to the airport and Asiana Airlines and then we headed home, again in style.

All of the Lintons were treated with kindness and thanksgiving every where we went. It was obvious that the Republic of South Korea and its people will always love and appreciated William Alderman Linton and the other missionaries who dedicated their lives to Korea and the Korean people.