THE HUNGNAM EVACUATION:
THE KOREAN WAR'S DUNKIRK?

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12 **AUTHOR:** Ned Forney

SUBJECT: History

TIME REQUIRED: 2 class periods

OBJECTIVES:
1. Analyze and interpret primary and secondary documents
2. Write a short "history" of the Hungnam evacuation as understand from the given sources
3. Develop an understanding of the impact war has on civilians/refugees
4. Relate the Hungnam evacuation to another episode in history in which civilians either died in the conflict or were rescued

MATERIALS REQUIRED:
- Map of Korea
- Primary and secondary sources (already provided)
- At least one history text on the Korean War

BACKGROUND:
The Hungnam evacuation occurred in 1950, after the heroic but disastrous events of the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. The North Korean and Chinese troops pushed the South Korean and U.S. military, which was led by General Douglas MacArthur and under the umbrella of the United Nations, into a position similar to that of the British and French at Dunkirk during World War II. The only way to avoid being trapped and almost annihilated by the opposing forces was escape by sea.

Under the supervision of Colonel Edward H. Forney, U.S.M.C., who was the officer in charge of the "redeployment," over 105,000 troops and approximately 98,000 refugees were evacuated by ship to the southern area of Korea. The success of the operation saved countless lives, and many sources reveal that the outcome of the war could have changed dramatically if the United States and the United Nations had suffered severe casualties during the evacuation.

What actually happened during this Dunkirk-style operation, and why was it so successful? These are the questions the student must answer after reading numerous primary and secondary sources, looking at pictures from the evacuation, and discussing their ideas with members of their group.

PROCEDURE:
Homework Assignment 1:
Have the class read and write a one-page summary based on the article entitled “Christmas Cargo; A Civilian Remembers the Hungnam Evacuation.”

Class Period 1:
1. Divide class into small groups (4-5 students), and have them discuss what they learned from the articles. Use the following questions as a guide for their discussions:

a. When, where (use the map of Korea) and why did the evacuations take place?
b. How was the decision to evacuate civilians reached, and how, if at all, did this affect the military side of the operation?
c. Who were they key players in the evacuation?
d. How did the operation proceed once it was in motion, and what are some of the problems that could have arisen during the evacuation?
e. Why was the success of the operation so crucial to the outcome of the Korean War?

2. After answering these questions and discussing the different views of what happened at the evacuation, revise your summary of events in Hungnam. Each group must turn in one summary, and it must include the views of all the group members. Try to reach a consensus as to what happened and the overall significance of the event.

3. Each group will assign a recorder to write the summary based on each member's view and also assign a spokesperson for the class discussion.

4. Have each group read their summaries and discuss the results with the class. Critique the positive and negative aspects of each summary with the class. What did the students cover well? What did they neglect to mention? Did the students understand the overall importance of the evacuation? Conclude the discussion by asking the students to think about another event in history that seems similar to Hungnam. Have them begin to brainstorm ideas with members in their groups. Tell them that civilians are frequently involved in war and suffer from the consequences of conflict and turmoil in their countries. Sometimes civilians are the targets of warfare and left homeless and destitute, whereas at other times they are rescued from the horrors of war and are relocated to refugee centers.

5. After 5-10 minutes of brainstorming, have the recorders of each group come to the board and write two or three events with which the group agreed that show the affects of war on civilians. The examples should be specific events in history and not vague generalizations.

Homework Assignment 2:
Have the students research an event on the board (they can do a different one if they get teacher permission), write a one-page summary of it, and be prepared to make a 3-5 minute oral presentation comparing the event to the Hungnam evacuation. The students should attempt to answer the following questions:
a. What are the similarities?
b. What are the differences?
c. How did the military act in each event?
d. Why were civilians involved, and how were they affected by the event?
e. Did the military have a responsibility to help the civilians in both cases? Explain your answer.

Class Period 2:
1. Have the students give their oral presentations to the class. They should also turn in their one-page summaries.

2. After hearing the presentations, discuss the students' ideas and views. Conclude the period with an overview of how the Hungnam evacuation made a significant impact on the outcome of the conflict in Korea and how civilians have played an increasingly active role in 20th century wars.

CHRISTMAS CARGO; A CIVILIAN REMEMBERS THE HUNGNAM EVACUATION

By Bong Hak Hyun

In December 1950, the entire X Corps of the U.S.Army, its equipment, and 100,000 Korean civilian refugees were evacuated by sea from Hungnam, North Korea as Communist troops approached the city. The Hungnam evacuation has been described in many accounts of the Korean War as a successful military operation, since it was no small task to remove 105,000 troops, 17,500 vehicles and 350,000 tons of bulk cargo from hostile territory.

But for the Korean civilians who were transported to safety in the south, it was a miracle. Many of them had already survived the massacres that marked the Communist takeover of local governments in the north over the five years preceding the war; the Americans were their last hope. That the civilian evacuation took place at all was due to MAJ. Gen. Edward M. Almond, Commanding General of the X Corps, who authorized it, and his Deputy Chief of Staff, Col. Edward R. Forney of the U.S. Marines, who was in charge of coordinating the loading of the ships at Hungnam harbor.

As Civil Affairs Advisor to Gen. Almond, I was able to play a part in the civilian evacuation of Hamhung, my home town, and the subsequent withdrawal from Hungnam. My account of these events is a personal reminiscence rather than a historical analysis, but I hope that students of the Korean War will find my story of some value.

"'Doctor, this is war, and in war the military comes first, ··· that port facility in Hungnam is damn small ··· Don't ask for the impossible."

I met Gen. Almond and Col. Forney in mid-October 1950, a few weeks after the General launched the landing at Inchon and the subsequent recapture of Seoul. Gen. Almond was visiting the Republic of Korea (ROK) Marines for an inspection of the troops in Kosong, a small town north of the 38th Parallel on the eastern coast, near the Diamond Mountains. Attached to the ROK Marines as a civilian interpreter of Gen. Hyun Joon Shin, the Commanding General, and Col. Sung Eun Kim, the Chief of Staff, I translated during the inspection and the meeting that followed.

Gen. Almond was surprised by my fluency in English, and asked where I had studied it. The military was having trouble finding competent interpreters; few Koreans had been able to learn much English because the Japanese, who ruled Korea until the end of World War II, had forbidden the study of enemy languages for nearly 10 years. I explained that I had completed my graduate studies in pathology in Richmond, Virginia for two years, returning to Korea three months before the war began.

The general had smiled at the mention of Virginia. "I am from Luray, which is not too far from Richmond," he said. "It's wonderful to find someone in Korea who went to school in my home state. You must have been at the Medical College of Virginia."

Loading of refugees at Hungnam onto LST

"Yes sir, that's right," I replied. Gen. Almond asked me a few more questions, and seemed particularly interested when I told him I had grown up in Hamhung, where the X Corps was headquartered. Col. Forney also asked questions about the region, and said he wanted to see more of the Diamond Mountains, which were famous throughout Korea as the scenic setting for several fairy tales. Before Gen. Almond left, he invited Gen. Shin and me to Hamhung the following week for a ceremony celebrating the liberation of Ham Gyung Province.

I was delighted when Gen. Shin accepted the invitation because I was eager to see my hometown again. Hamhung, the capital of Ham Gyung Province in the northeast, was known as the birthplace of Yi, Taejo, the founder of the Yi Dynasty. It was a beautiful city, with pagodas and temples dating back to the 14th century, and just to the north was the pinecovered Banryong Mountain. Food had been plentiful while I was growing up; local farmers sold their produce - rice, corn, soybeans, potatoes, apples, peaches, pears ··· - and seafood was brought in from Hungnam, a port city about 10 miles to the southeast, and Sohojin, a prosperous fishing village nearby. Hamhung was the political, cultural, educational, and commercial center of the province, and aside from Pyongyang (now the capital of North Korea), it was the most Westernized city in the north.

Christianity was one of the strongest Western influences in Hamhung. The Canadian Presbyterian Mission had its Korean headquarters there, establishing churches, clinics, a Western-style hospital, and several mission schools. My father has graduated from one of the misson schools, Young-sang High School. He later became an influential Presbyterian minister and a teacher at Young-sang Girls' High School until his death from cancer in 1937.

My family fled from Hamhung to Seoul in December 1945 as the Communists took over local governments in the north. When the war started on June 25, 1950, two of my brothers, Younghak and Peter, were studying in New York City, and another, Sihak, was a Lt. Commander in the ROK Navy. Ik, the youngest brother, had died of tuberculosis six weeks earlier. My mother and my sister, Soon.

stayed in Seoul, and survived the three-month North Korean occupation, which had begun on June 28. On that day, unable to reach home from the hospital of the Severance Union Medical College where I had been working, I became one of the' thousands of refugees escaping south on foot as Seoul fell to the North Korean People's Army. After a brief period of helping to care for the wounded in various hospitals, I joined the ROK marines, who needed interpreters even more than they needed doctors.

Korean Navy LST loaded with refugees at Hungnam.

Although Hamhung hadn't been damaged much by the war, it was in a state of turmoil. Many of the people had left the city ; some, like my family, had fled the Communists, who, in turn, had run from the U.N. forces, taking with them scarce supplies, medicines, even doctors and nurses. Public institutions were in complete disarray, since their administrations had been replaced with each change in the local government over the past five years.

I was given the chance to help rebuild Hamhung- although briefly-when Gen. Almond arranged for my transfer to the X Corps as his Civil Affairs Advisor. As Commanding General of the X Corps, General Almond was also military governor of much of the northeast, which his troops had just captured from the North Korean People's Army. Schools, hospitals and local governments had to be reorganized, and the General needed someone familiar with the area to advise him on dealing with civilians.

Part of my job was to sift through the credentials of the many local politicians who wanted to run for election in the new government. I already knew many of the community and church leaders, since some had been friends of my mother, a well known Christian leader in her own right, and my late father. I also assisted churches and public organizations such as schools and hospitals, and acted as liaison between Korean civilians and the X Corps.

The Americans were received enthusiastically by the civilians especially the Christians, since most were grateful for their liberation, first from the Japanese, then later from the Communists. For thousands of Christians, Western-educated intellectuals and civic leaders, Communism had meant imprisonment, torture, and death.

In late November, the X Corps received disturbing reports that Chinese Communist Forces had crossed the border, and were moving south. I soon realized the U.N. forces were retreating, and within a few days, it also became apparent to the civilians, as long lines of soldiers, trucks, tanks and equipment went through Hamhung heading south toward Hungnam.

The Christians, local government leaders and people working for the U.N. Forces would almost certainly be executed if the Communists returned. I would be leaving with the X Corps, but many of my friends, most of whom were Christians, would have to stay behind.

It didn't seem fair to me that those who had risked Communist retaliation by cooperating with the Americans should be abandoned so readily. It was obvious to me they had to be evacuated, so I met with Col. Moore, Chief of the Civil Affairs Section, to see if transportation could be arranged. Col. Moore, an officer who did everything strictly by the book, listened to my request without saying a word.

"Colonel, they'll be tortured and massacred by the Communists if you leave them behind," I said. I received only a cold stare in response. "People are in danger, particularly those who helped us," I said. "It's cruel to do nothing."

I had hoped to move the Colonel, but succeeded only in annoying him. "Doctor, this is war, and in war the military comes first," he snapped. "That port facility in Hungnam is damn small ··· We don't even know whether the military personnel can be evacuated. Don't ask for the impossible."

I decided my only hope was to bypass Col. Moore, and speak directly to Gen. Almond. Fortunately, Col. Forney was sympathetic to my cause; by then he had developed friendedships among the Koreans he worked with, including me. After the war he returned to Korea as Chief of the Korea Military Advisory Group, Korean Marine Corps. Col. Forney promised to discuss the matter with Gen. Almond, and arranged a meeting for me. "Doc, it's going to be difficult, but let's give it a try," he said.

I must have looked worried because he added, "Napoleon didn't find the word 'impossible' in his dictionary."

On Nov. 30, the Colonel and I were able to see Gen. Almond. "You have people here who really believe in democracy, sir," I said to the General. " They've fought against the Communists for the past five years. You must help them, sir." "Sir, they have risked their lives by cooperating with us," said Col. Forney.

"And what about the people who've been working for the U.N. troops?" I went on. They shouldn't be abandoned just for military convenience. "Agreed. But at this point, I'm not even sure our own troops can be evacuated," Gen. Almond explained.

Enemy forces were approaching Hamhung and Wonsan, and there were seven divisions of U.N. Forces, with over 100,000 troops to move out. The port facilities at Hungnam were inadequate, and the time was running out.

In addition, he was concerned about spies being among refugees. The most Colonel Forney and I were able to get from the General was his assurance that he would get in touch with GHQ in Tokyo.

On December 4, the headquarters of the X Corps was moved from Hamhung to Hungnam, whose factories and port facilities had been built for military purposes by the Japanese. Industrial waste from the city had caused the trees on the surrounding moutains to turn yellow. It was in this depressing setting that we learned Pyongyang was abandoned by the Eighth Army on December 5. I visited General Almond several times, pestering him about the civilian evacuation. Colonel Forney and Major James Short, Chief of the Historical Section, argued for it as well. None of us could tell what the

General was thinking.

One day some members of a Protestant church in Hamhung came to see me.

"You know what happen to us after the Americans leave," one of them said. "Please save us!"

They had already made several visits to Chaplain Harold Voelkel, a Protestant chaplain of the X Corps, who told them he lacked the authority to have them evacuated. Since Chaplain Voelkel often seemed irritated by their visits, they turned to me in desperation. I wasn't sure I would be able to help either, but meeting these people convinced me to keep pushing for the evacuation. I promised to do my best, and with youthful optimism, I told them to have faith in the U.S. and South Korean military - they would come through in the end.

"And pray!" I added.

As the days went by, scores of people came to ask me for help; most were Christians, and some were friends, such as Hyung Chul Choi, a youth group leader of the Hamhung YMCA. Still no word from General Almond. On December 9, the U.S. Army announced it would be unable to evacuate its Korean civilian employees. I was beginning to feel as helpless as those who were coming to see me, and almost as desperate.

On December 13, I met Father Patrick Cleary, a Maryknoll missionary to Korea assigned as a Catholic chaplain to the X Corps, who was accompanied by an American offcier. They were waiting impatiently for Colonel Moore to return to his offcie so they could ask him about finding transportation out of the city for their Korean friends. As I spoke with Chaplain Cleary, I was deeply touched by his kindness, compassion and determination to get the members of his congregation to a safer place. Together we went to ROK Marine headquaters and talked to General Shin, who promised to send a radiogram to Pusan and other southern ports requesting that boats of any kind be sent to Hungnam.

The next day I got word from General Shin's office that two LST's (Landing Ship, Tank) would be at the beach the following day to move out Marine equipment; the ships would also be able to carry 4,000 refugees. There would be a problem in getting the refugees from Hamhung to the beach because the road was closed to civilians to keep the military traffic from getting clogged. Still, it was the first encouraging news I had received in a long time, and I was sure some way of getting the civilians to the ships could be found.

I called Father Cleary and told him about the ships, but the next morning, to our great disappointment, there were no LST's on the beach. Frustrated by this latest setback, I tried unsuccessfully to find out where the ships were and when they would reach Hungnam. It was already December 15, and the deadline for the evacuation of Hamhung had been set for 6:00 the next morning. The Chinese troops were now just outside the city, and the Americans were in a rush to pack their belongings.

"I'm still trying with General Shin," I hurriedly told Father Cleary when we passed each other on the street.

That afternoon, General Almond called Colonel Moore and me into his office. Colonel Forney and several other X corps officers were already there, as well as the commanding general, Baik Il Kim, and two other high-ranking officers from the I Corps of the ROK Army. Everyone was waiting for General Almond to speak.

"We'll evacuate 4,000 to 5,000 civilians from Hamhung to Hungnam by train," he finally said, much to my relief.

Wonsan was now in enemy hands, he explained, so evacuation by land to the south was impossible. No planes were available for civilians, which meant the only possible route was by ship from Hungnam harbor. Although there were no ships ready for civilians just then, it was decided the evacuation to Hungnam should be started; we would worry about the ships later.

My job was to tell the civilians to meet in front of the Hamhung railroad station; a train would take them to Hungnam at midnight. After asking Father Cleary to get in touch with the Catholics in Hamhung, I looked for Chaplain Voelkel so we could go to the Protestants. I saw him a few minutes later from a window, which I opened, calling out, "Listen! God has answered our prayers!" Soon we were in his jeep on our way to Hamhung.

It took us nearly two hours to reach the city because of the military traffic moving the opposite way. It was getting dark as we ran into City Hall, where we found many employees of the U.N. forces huddled around wood burners, anxiously waiting for some sort of news. They stared at us in disbelief when we told them about the evacuation. We didn't have time to convince them we weren't joking or spreading false rumors, since we had other stops to make.

"Just get to the railroad station by midnight!" I shouted as we ran out the door.

The next stop was the Central Presbyterian Church, which my family belonged to. When we told the members there the good news, many people cried with relief and happiness. My parents' friends embraced me, saying they had known all along I wouldn't abandon them, but soon I had to cut the conversation short to remind them that they should send for their families so they

The railroad station was packed with more than 50,000 people who wanted to escape. News of the evacuation had spread all over Hamhung; more than half of the city's residents were there.

TO: Bong Hak Hyun

With cordial regards and my thanks for helping me serve General MacArthur in the protection of Republic of Korea

Edward M. Almond 6/22/73

could go as a group to the station.

Chaplain Voelkel then drove us to the Hamhung YMCA headquarters. We didn't find Hyung Chul Choi, but I told the young men who were there about the evacuation.

We went on to Nambu Presbyterian Church, where we found about 50 people praying in the basement. They believed this was the last evening they would be able to pray together, since the Communists were expected by morning. When they learned about the evacuation, they were overjoyed. Someone shouted, "Moses has come to evacuate us!" which the others continued to chant.

On the way to Woonhung-ri Church, I asked Chaplain Voelkel to stop at the home of Jae-In Park, my friend since elementary school. I was particularly eager to get Jae-In out of Hamhung because he and his father had been anti-communist fighters. Well known for his outspoken, anti-communist views, Jae-In's father had been an elder at Woonhung-ri Church, and later escaped to South Korea, where he was assassinated in 1949 by Communist students in Kwangju.

When Jae-In answered the door, I urged him to take his family to the railroad station. For a moment he just looked at me, confused and bewildered, then said, "We can't go anywhere. My wife is almost ready to deliver our baby."

"But the Communist troops are closing in!" I shouted. "If you don't leave now, you won't be able to get out. They'll kill you!"

"But the baby---"

"Just get on the train. We'll deliver the baby on the way if we have to."

Jae-In went into the house to talk with his wife. He came out again a few minutes later and said, "She won't go. We're staying here."

I grabbed his arm, and tried to pull him toward the jeep. "Let's go! You've got to get out here," I shouted.

But Jae-In wouldn't move, and after 10 minutes of arguing, I finally had to give up. Later, while leaving Hungnam on an American ship, I realized Jae- In couldn't have escaped from Hamhung. I kept thinking that somehow I should have forced him and his wife to go, and I cried for having failed him.

As Chaplain Voelkel drove us to the first stop, Woonhung-ri Church, I spotted Hyung Chul Choi among the crowds in the street. After stopping briefly to tell him about the evacuation - I later saw him, his relatives and his friends at the railroad station - we hurried to the church, but found no one there. We decided the congregation must have gone home, having given up hope of an evacuation. By then it was nearly midnight and we had to rush to the train station.

As we raced past the crowds of refugees, I thought I heard a man yelling my name. I asked Chaplain Voelkel to stop the jeep, which he did with some reluctance. Six young men were running toward me, one of whom I recognized.

"Mr. Kim! I shouted, happy to see him.

Mr. Kim, the head of another local YMCA, was active in the Korean Christian movement. I hadn't seen him for more than six years, but he wasted no time on formal greetings. Speaking quickly while trying to catch his breath, he explained that several dozen Christian refugees from his town had been arrested by American M.P.'s the day before. The Americans had caught these people trying to leave the city, and placed them in Hamhung prison thinking some of them might be North Korean spies.

"Doctor Hyun," said Mr. Kim, "you must go to the prison and have them released so they can get to the station. Otherwise---"

"Chaplain Voelkel, please turn the jeep around, I said. "We have to get to the prison right away".

"We don't have time for that, Doc," he replied.

"For God's sake!" I shouted. "We must save these fellows!"

Chaplain Voelkel obliged, most indignantly, and 10 minutes later we were at the prison, which was guarded by American M. P.'s I explained what had happened to the guards at the main gate, and was led to the lieutenant in charge. By this time I was quite agitated, speaking too quickly, so I was relieved when the lieutenant said he understood and believed my story. He took us to the Christian refugees, who were singing hymns together to keep up their spirits.

To my surprise, I recognized two young men who used to be in my Sunday school class at the Central Presbyterian Church. I didn't remember their names, but I hugged them and told them we would be evacuated. The lieutenant, who seemed genuinely happy at the way things turned out, promised to have the group escorted to the station so they wouldn't be stopped again. Years later, during one of my visits to Seoul, I met one of those young men, who informed me that the entire group-released --- by M.P.'s, as "good prisoners without criminal records"-was evacuated safely from Hungnam to one of the refugee camps on Koje Island. After thanking the lieutenant profusely, I was now ready to go to the station, much to Chaplain Voelkel's relief.

The railroad station was packed with more than 50,000 people who wanted to escape. News of the evacuation had spread all over Hamhung: more than half of the city's residents were there. Despite the freezing weather, the American M.P.'s were sweating as they tried to control the crowd. The Korean political leaders and most of the Christians boarded the train, but many others who should have evacuated were left behind.

As I pushed my way through the crowd, I found a high school classmate, Chang Seung Choi, helping the military keep order among the civilians. Chang Seung, an anti-Communist fighter, was relieved to see me, since he hadn't been sure if he would be allowed to board the train. Before I could say much to him, I was called away to help an American officer.

When I returned, Chang Seung was gone. With a sinking feeling in my stomach, I looked for him as long as I could, but soon had to give up my search because the train was ready to pull out of the station. Chang Seung had probably been chased by the M.P.'s so the overcrowded train could start.

The Korean political leaders and most of the Christians boarded the train, but many others who should have been evacuated were left behind.

The train which finally pulled out at 2:00 A.M., arrived in Hungnam at 5:00 A.M. Many of those who had been unable to board the train tried to walk through frozen rice fields and mountain roads to Hungnam. Of these, more than half were stopped and forced to turn back by the M.P.'S, to keep the roads clear for military vehicles and prevent spies from leaving the area. Despite the M.P.'s, many civilians did reach Hungnam, including refugees from all over the northeast.

The military, which considered the evacuation of

Hamhung a success, was now faced with the urgent problem of feeding and housing the 100,000 people who had poured into Hungnam. Blankets and bags of rice were distributed to the refugees, some of whom were placed in individual homes and unheated school buildings, while the rest were forced to stay outdoors in schoolyards with no heat, water, or cooking facilities. Some people died from the cold; a few women gave birth.

Over the next few days, the refugees watched as the American Marines pulled out, followed by the 7th Infantry Division of the X Corps. Colonel Forney was in charge of the group that coordinated the loading of the ships: somehow the Navy managed to have 11 ships anchored in a port that was meant to accommodate only seven at one time. The military evacuation went on day and night, with sailors continuously repairing damaged port facilities and broken-down tugboats. The temperature dropped to -10° C. The sound of gunfire was getting closer, and still no boats were in sight for the civilians.

As tensions grew, people started to complain about the cold and wondered why there was nothing to eat except rice. Even salt was scarce. I heard some grumble that they should have stayed home because they were sure the Americans were leaving them behind after all. That upset me, because I felt a responsibility towards these people, but I was encouraged by the gratitude expressed by most of the refugees, who were still confident that they would escape the Communists.

Finally, on December 17 or 18, three LST's sent by the ROK Navy arrived at Hungnam, followed by six or seven transports from Japan. The civilian evacuation began on December 19, with thousands of Koreans hurrying on to the ships, many of them pushing to get in front. The LST's, which might normally carry 1,000 passengers, held at least 5,000 refugees(not counting children strapped to their mother's backs), squeezed in between tanks and equipment; one was said to have left with more than 10,000 people on board.

I was orderd to board the Sergeant Andrew Miller on December 21. From late afternoon until the next morning, I stayed on deck watching the evacuation from a distance. Although loading the ships had started as an orderly process (despite the crush of civilians eager to embark), it was becoming more frantic as people panicked at the thought of being left behind. The enemy seemed to be getting closer, for U.N. guns could be heard along the mountain ridges. At night, the sky was filled with streams of bright yellow light from naval gunfire; if I hadn't known the source, I would have thought it a beautiful sight, like shooting stars falling on the horizon.

On the morning of December 22, Sergeant Andrew Miller left for Pusan, and that evening I could still see and hear gunfire even though we were far from Hungnam. I realized with a start that it was almsot Christmas, practically my first thought unrelated to the evacuation since November. "What a way to spend Christmas," was my initial reaction. But our prayers had been answered, and now thousands of Koreans had a chance for a free life, which was the best Christmas gift of all.

The evacuation was completed on Decemver 24. When Colonel Forney told me that 100,000 Koreans had been taken out of Hungnam, I tried to thank him, but was unable to speak. The X Corps had helped more people than I would ever have thought possible. Soon afterwards, Colonel Forney was transferred to a troop training unit in the United States. I wrote him a letter praising his work in the evacuation, and he responded, "I will never forget the look on your face when you knew that over 100,000 from your own part of the country had been saved. That look was sufficient thanks."

The American military considered the Hungnam evacuation to be a resounding success, and for the most part, I agree. Even so, when the last ship left the harbor, some civilians had to be left behind, and all hope of escape was lost to them when the Navy destroyed the port to render it useless to the Chinese Communists. Life on the ships wasn't easy, either-more babies were delivered, and more people, especially the older ones, died of exposure. The refugees were sent to camps in Pohang, Koje Island, Pusan, and Cheju Island.

I was sent to X Corps headquarters which was now in Kyungju. From January through March 1951, I organized and managed the Korean part of the X Corps' Historical Section, assembling well known Korean artists and historians to document the war. In April, General Almond asked me to go to the refugee settlements to see what living conditions were like, a job I was happy to do since I continued to worry about the refugees after they were relocated.

With the help of the civil assistance command, I went to Koje, the main refugee settlement, where people were housed in tents and supplied with food and clothing. My mother and my sister, refugees themselves since Seoul had fallen to Chinese forces in January 1951, moved to Koje Island to start a refugee camp, "Ilmagwon, house of a millet seed," for the hundreds of children from the north who had been orphaned or separated from their families.

With the help of Yoon Chul Chang, principal of Daegwang High School, they established a branch school at "Ilmagwon" that was accredited by the government. Over the years I have met some of the graduates of the Ilmagwon school, many of them successful and living in the United States including Professor Hyo Keun Kim of Rochester, NY, President of the Korean American Scientists and Engineers Association.

I was able to report to General Almond that, despite the bad living conditions, most of those I spoke to felt they were faring better than they would have in Hungnam. They were confident that General MacArthur would beat the Chinese back to Manchuria, and that eventually they would return home. General Almond promised to do what he could to improve conditions at the camps but in July 1951 he was transferred back to the States. Deciding that I would do best to go back to medicine, I asked to be returned to civilian status, and spent the duration of the war in Pusan as a consultant to the office of the Minister of Health.

Like the refugees in Koje, I was sure that I would see my home again-a belief shared by Colonel Forney, who wrote to me back in January, 1951, "Althogh we will have, as Winston Churchill says, 'blood and tears,' our day will come again; and when it comes, I hope you and I can visit in Hamhung and take a vacation down at Kosong by the 'diamonds of the sea.'"

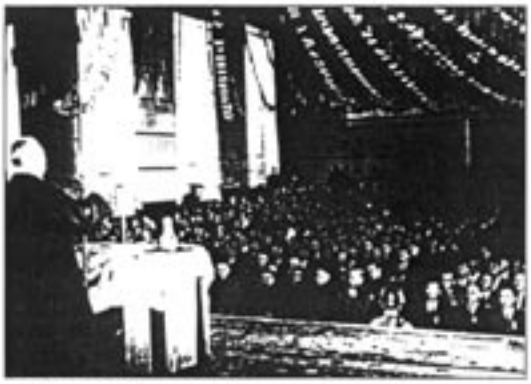
Sadly, I must record that it is a trip we were never able to take. Colonel Forney was later promoted to General, and went on to become an advisor to the Vietnam Marine Corps; he died of lung cancer in 1965. The north remains closed after all these years, but I hope someday my children will be able to make that trip, so they can see what was home to so many of us, the home we had to leave behind.

Loading the refugees onto an LST at Hungnam Harbor (December 20, 1950).

Demolition of Hungnam Harbor facilities after the departure of the last refugee ship (December 24, 1951, Christmas Eve).

Mrs. Ai Kyun Shin Hyun(A) and daughter, Soon Hyun(B) and refugee students from Northeast Korea at Ilmagwon, Koje Island(March, 1953). Mrs. A.K. S. Hyun established a branch of the Dae-Kwang High School at Ilmagwon in April, 1951 so that the refugee students would get high school education.

Mrs. Ai Kyun Shin Hyun, the author's mother(A) and Soon Hyun(B) at Ilmagwon, a camp for refugee students from Northeast Korea, on Koje Island, building a temporary housing (April, 1951).



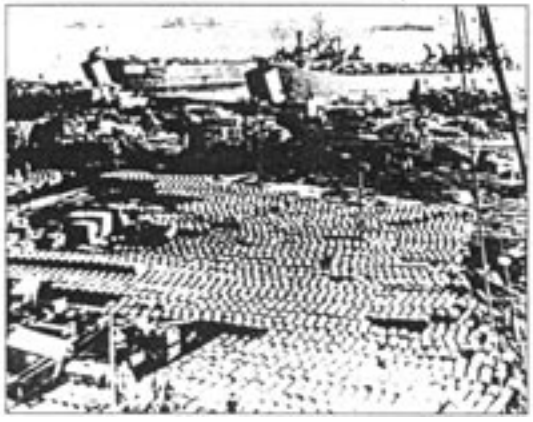
In October 1950 President Syngman Rhee flew to Hamhung and delivered a message for the liberated people of Northeast Korea. Dr. Hyun is seated in the front row-in the center next to an U.S. officer.

Korean Marine Corps senior officers from left; Col. Dong Ha Kim, Brig. Gen. Hyun Joon Shin-Commander, Col. Sung Eun Kim-Chief of Staff of the Korean Marine Corps, Bong Hak Hyun, M.D.

Chaplin Cleary, priest, who evacuated Catholics in Hamhung - Hungnam area

Refugees - Jan. 4, 1951

Military supplies to be loaded on to LST, Hungnam



A-frame is used to carry the refugees' meager worldly possessions.

APPENDIX 1

IN MORTAL COMBAT

KOREA, 1950-1953

by John Toland

William Morrow & Company, Inc.
1350 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dr. Hyun's story in the new book on the Korean War.

p.369-370

US 1st Marine Division broke thru encirclement by the Chinese forces Chosun Reservior, Dec. 1950

Walker was buying time so that Almond's X Corps could evacuate its troops by ship from the port of Hungnam. Since early December, Dr. Hyun Bong-hak, a young Korean civil affairs adviser, had been begging Almond to save the thousands of North Koreans who had been cooperating with the UN forces. If they didn't get out, the Communists would murder them. On the afternoon of December 14, Dr. Hyun was summoned to Almond's office. The area to the south, the general said, was in enemy hands, so evacuation over land was impossible. The only feasible route was by sea from Hungnam. All available ships were needed for the troops, but soon ships would be ready for 4,000 to 5,000 civilians in Hamhung, ten air miles to the north. They

should be brought to Hungnam by train, which would leave Hamhung at midnight.

When Hyun reached the Hamhung railroad station, it was jammed with more than 50,000 people. Sweating despite the freezing weather, MPs tried to control the crowd. Most of the Christians and all of the Korean political leaders boarded the train, but many others who should have been evacuated were left behind. Finally, at two A.M., the train pulled out, arriving at the port city three hours later. Many of those abandoned tried to walk through the rice fields and on mountain roads to Hungnam. More than half were turned back by MPs, but 50,000 civilians did succeed in reaching Hungnam. The refugees assembled in Hungnam, from all parts of northeast Korea, swelled to over 100,000. Although Almond gave orders to feed and house them, most had to stay outdoors with no heat, water or cooking facilities.

At last, on December 19, the civilian evacuation began. LST's normally carrying a thousand passengers were jammed with at least five thousand, not counting babies on mother's backs. As the hours passed, those waiting on the docks grew frantic. They could hear the roar of U.S. guns along the mountain ridges as the enemy drew closer.

Hyun boarded the Sergeant Andrew Miller on December 21 and was stricken by the sight of the multitude still waiting on the docks. Three days later the civilian evacuation was complete. When Hyun learnd from Colonel Edward Forney how many fellow Koreans had been safely taken out of Hungnam, he was unable to speak. "I will never forget the look on your face when you knew that over 100,000 from your own part of the country had been saved," said Forney. "That look is sufficient thanks."

APPENDIX 2

January 24, 1951

Col. E.M. Forney, USMC
Troop Training Unit,
U.S. Naval Amphibious Base
Coronado, San Diego, California

Dear Dr. Hyun:

You and I must have been thinking of each of other upon my return to my country. Your letter of the 16th was mailed the day that I landed in San Diego. Your praise for my work in the evacuation of the civilians from Hungnam was very heartwarming. I feel very proud of the accomplishment of that operation, and, naturally, as this operation recedes in history I find a greater pride in having been there and done my part. I will never forget the look on your face when you knew that over 100,000 from your own part of the country had been saved. That look was sufficient thanks.

Your indecision concerning staying with the X Corps Civil Affairs Section or going back to your specialty as a laboratory man is very understandable. I trust that you can return to your chosen specialty without too much disturbance to our old friends in the X Corps. I, too, feel that I have a problem. I would also like to be back in your country. However, my orders are to return to training work.

Mrs. Forney and I have the Korean Marine Corps silver prominently displayed in our home. It will always remind me of the spirit you, General Shin, his Marines, our First Marine Division, the Marines in the X Corps, and all of us have in common.

It must be a great satisfacion to know how much of the world is behind the fight for democracy as being carried on in the southern part of Korea. Although we will have, as Churchill says, " blood and tears ", our day will come again; and when it comes, I hope you and I can visit in Hamhung and

Hero of the Hungnam Evacuation, Col. Edward Forney, USMC. He supervised entire evacuation operation at the Hungnam harbor so effeciently that he was able to create time for refugee evacuation.

take a vacation down at Kosong by the "diamonds of the sea."

My very best to you, to Colonel Lee, and to General Shin.

Sincerely yours, Edward H. Forney

40 years later at Shilla Hotel, Seoul. From left: General Sung Eun Kim, General Hyun Joon Shin, Dr. Bong H. Hyun

The marines, who had hacked their way 47 miles, through seven Chinese divisions, to reach Hungnam, left, said of their glorious retreat that they were "just attacking in a different direction." Not to be outdone, the author, above, and his Navy/Marine Corps staff then showed the exhausted Leathernecks how to conduct perhaps the most successful retrograde amphibious operation in history.

The year 1950 started with my assignment as Commander Amphibious Group One on the West Coast. The group's principal mission was training and supporting marines in amphibious operations. (That was an area of personal expertise stemming from my service as Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's plans officer during the Solomon Islands campaign.) In the spring, the group received orders to sail for Japan to fulfill a request by the Commander in Chief Far East (General of the Army Douglas MacArthur) that Army units of his com-

Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy shared the author's concern that the Chinese would enter the war; Army Major General Edward M. Almond urged his troops on to the Yalu; and Marine Colonel Edward H. Forney distinguished himself at the Hungnam evacuation.

mand receive amphibious training. General of the Army Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had recently pronounced amphibious operations no longer possible and joined President Harry S Truman and the Secretary of Defense in trying to eliminate the Marine Corps. But no one wanted to ignore a request from General MacArthur, so a training team headed by Colonel Edward H. Forney, USMC, immediately flew to Japan to begin instruction, pending arrival of the group with the amphibious shipping needed for training exercises.

As fate would have it, during my first evening in Tokyo I attended a reception honoring Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. They were then on a Far East inspection trip. When I told General Bradley why I was in Japan, he looked at Secretary Johnson and sadly shook his head. When Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, General MacArthur's naval component commander, took me to meet his boss the next day, I told the general of the JCS chairman's reaction to my mission. General MacArthur's comment was succinct: "Bradley is a farmer." He then told me what he expected of my amphibious group.

But his desires were never to be, for on 26 June 1950, the morning of the first landing exercise, the North Korean Army moved south across the 38th parallel, and the Korean War was on. My group's ships began ferrying troops and equipment from Japan to South Korea, and the staff commenced planning General MacArthur's counterstroke, the strategic envelopment of the North Korean Army that was the Inchon landing on 15 September. In that operation, I had command of the attack force. Inchon was a complete success; the First Marine Division recaptured Seoul ten days later, and General MacArthur returned the South Korean capital to President Syngman Rhee on 29 September. Immediately following the ceremony, the general gathered his staff and senior commanders and ordered an amphibious landing at Wonsan on North Korea's east coast on 20 October. Joint Task Force 7, which had conducted the Inchon operation, reformed. I again commanded the attack force, and on 8 October the marines began boarding their ships.

This time, events obviated the need for an over-the-beach landing, because South Korean troops had captured Wonsan ten days before our scheduled assault. The land advance possibly saved many Marine Corps and Navy lives, for Wonsan Harbor proved effectively mined with late-model Soviet influence mines. Even with total control of land, sea, and air, it was 26 October before any marines stepped ashore.

The 7th U. S. Infantry Division soon joined the U. S. Marine and Republic of Korea (ROK) divisions ashore, with X Corps under Major General Edward M. Almond, USA, directing the United Nations drive toward the Yalu River, the boundary between North Korea and Manchuria. The 3d U. S. Infantry Division came from Japan to positions in the Wonsan-Hungnam area and awaited orders to combat. Although the main opposition encountered by U.N. forces was the winter cold that flowed from Siberia, the military situation in our portion of North Korea bothered the naval and marine commanders to a degree not exhibited by the X Corps commander or his staff.

It should be noted that in the command ashore, the X Corps was independent of, but coordinated with the Eighth Army, the latter commanded by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, USA. I did not know of any orders from the Eighth Army to the X Corps. At that time, I had in mind the remark made by General MacArthur after Inchon—that he might remove General Walker from his command because of slow movement north. Certainly, Almond did not come under the command of General Walker. Almond openly awaited a third star.