President's Notes

By Peter M. Beck

Where to begin? Like the Korea Stamp Society, I have faced several challenges since my last notes many moons ago. The demands of work and family prevented me from being an active member of KSS, and for the hobby we all love. Fortunately, ours is a hobby (and hopefully society) that patiently waits for the day when our schedules are less full. The ever-vigilant Harry Penn has maintained our website through thick and thin, and our valiant treasurer, John Talmage, has kept our society running smoothly. Our wonderful editor, Gary McLean, has faced his share of challenges, but recently informed me that he is ready to publish the next two issues of *Korean Philately*. Great news!

I am just finishing a nine-month research fellowship at Stanford University's Asia-Pacific Research Center, where I have been conducting research on the impact of foreign radio broadcasting (like Voice of America and Radio Free Asia) on North Korean society (**Figure 1**). In mid-June, I will take my family to Seoul where I will teach summer school at Ewha Women's University, then I will begin a year of fellowships at Keio University in Tokyo and the East-West Center in Honolulu. In a word, I am a wandering scholar (otherwise known in Korean as "Kim Sat-gat") or wandering *samurai* (a *ronin*, as the Japanese would say). With a little luck, I will be able to settle down again by the end of my fellowships. I have also been teaching a class on the two Koreas at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey. It is the best class I have ever taught, and the setting could not be more beautiful. North Korea keeps me busier than ever. The North's sinking of the Cheonan has plunged the Korean Peninsula into yet another crisis. We are presently on a collision course, but I remain hopeful we can get back on the path of peace in the coming months.

Figure 1

Member Encounters: I have given several lectures on the West Coast this spring and had the good fortune of getting to briefly meet with our member Ross King at the University of British Columbia. Of course, I was able to incorporate the stamps shown here in my notes into my presentation!

Figure 2: 40th Anniversary of the Capture of the U.S.S. Pueblo

On a more somber note, I was saddened to learn of the passing of two of our founding members, Jim Kerr and Harry Anderson. Michael Rogers was kind enough to relate his last visits with Jim before he passed. I have wonderful memories of my encounters with Jim. I learned so much from him. We also lost founding member Harry Anderson. I was never able to meet him, but his estate was kind enough to send me the original copies of the first nine volumes of KP. The January 1952 issue (Vol. 1, No. 4) was published on the thinnest of typing paper and states on Page 2, "We are still looking for an EDITOR for KOREAN PHILATELY. Someone with just a LITTLE time, a typewriter and access to a mimeograph machine. No pay….but a lot of fun." Indeed.

KP Feedback: KP has had its struggles, but I am always amazed by the articles when an issue does arrive. Robert Collins wrote a fascinating article about "Turncoat Covers" in Vol. 52 No. 2. I had no idea about there were 21 American POWs who chose not to be repatriated to the United States. I recently had a chance to see the moving "Crossing the Line," a documentary about the handful of Americans who defected to the North in the 1960s—a fascinating movie. I have also enjoyed Kenneth Clark's articles on Japanese military mail. I would like to issue an appeal to all of our members, both old and the wave of new members who have joined us, to write for Korean Philately, even if it is only a paragraph or two! Share your collecting interests and insights with us!!!

Publications of Note: I wanted to mention several articles for so long. Hopefully it is not too late to do so now. I was pleased to see a spate of articles about Korea in *Linn's Stamp News* in 2008, but I must confess I was quite surprised to see several articles urging readers to buy Scott 579a (President Park's 1967 inaugural) the ubiquitous 582-84 (which includes the sika deer), and workhorses C32-4. I realize these stamps are not common in pristine condition, but are prices really going up? Our society received a great plug in a Collector's Forum. A Stamp Identifier column featured North Korean wallpaper with no English. I always enjoy reading Michel Rogers' Korea-related columns, and found his one about a 1935 missionary cover especially fascinating (2 February 2009).

I also wanted to bring to our member's attention that in 2008 Culpepper County, Virginia recognized its own "Korean Village" as a result of the old "Korea, VA" post office that was in operation from 1899 until the 1930s. The post office is long gone, but there is still a Korea Rd. in Culpepper. The 23 April 2008 edition of the *Korea Daily* (Virginia

edition) insists that this is the only place in the United States to adopt the name of an East Asian country. I have about a ten covers cancelled at this post office.

Finally, I have found a great book for my "someday" shelf: I just happened to spot *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* by Jack Child (2008) on sale at the American University bookstore last year. I would like to write a similar book about Korean stamps someday…

Philatelic Finds: I must confess that I have not had any new philatelic finds in some time, but I didn't have a chance to report that I obtained my first pacquet boat cover (seonbak woopyeon) with a 24 May 1953 cancel from Pusan, and a "SHIPS MAIL" auxiliary marking as well. My collection of early used Korean commemoratives is almost complete now that I have Syngman Rhee's first inauguration (Scott 90/ KPS C22) with a foreign mail cancel. I also found the second general election (C36) with a 10W Daehanminguk surcharge that was originally used on the liberation postal card (UPC 1) to create the "revised postal card." Is this a legitimate surcharge???

A Final Plea: The Korea Stamp Society needs your help! In addition to the need for KP articles I mentioned above, I believe it is time for a new blood in the KSS leadership. I would like to urge our members to consider running to be the next president of KSS. It is a title I have truly cherished, but I just have not been able to give the society the time it needs and deserves, and it will most likely be at least another year until I can do so. Our treasurer should be calling for elections soon. Step up and serve our society! An article in the October 2008 issue of *American Philately* gave me encouragement. It was entitled, "You CAN Come Home Again." The hobby of kings is always waiting patiently for us.