

Sometimes Tears in the Street Are the Best Evangelism

by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle
from the April/May 2007 *Opportunities* newsletter

It is a privilege for us to work with the volunteers who follow Jesus through the works of empty tomb.

One person we've met in this way is Dick Underwood. Until Hyun Ju Lee came on staff, we only knew Dick as a person who helped out and often brought a new joke with him. Hyun Ju provided the information that it was Dick's grandparents, Horace G. Underwood and Dr. Liliias (Horton) Underwood, who were two of the key people used by God to spread Christianity to Korea. Since then, we've spent enjoyable times, asking questions and learning about this powerful movement of God that took place at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

On one recent Friday morning, Dick shared the following story with us. We were so involved-touched-inspired by the story that we wanted more people to hear it. Dick kindly wrote it up at our request. As Dick observed when he told the story, "Sometimes tears in the street are the best evangelism." It's our privilege to share this story with you.

The Queen's Physician and the Pauper

by Richard F. Underwood
from the April/May 2007 *Opportunities* newsletter

In the 1880's the Queen of Korea asked the Presbyterian Mission to find and provide a female physician to care for her. They recruited Liliias Horton M.D., from Chicago, who arrived in Korea in 1886 and immediately waited on the Queen. Dr. Horton also served the public in general, all in the name of her Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

A few years later she married Horace G. Underwood, a pioneer Presbyterian missionary. She continued her medical work. Soon Korea faced a recurrence of the Cholera epidemics which swept the nation from time to time, and Liliias was in the muddy streets of Seoul giving such aid as she could to those ill and dying all around her.

Her heart was torn by grief and frustration as she watched Koreans die all around her, especially one beggar she had been treating and who died in her arms. Overcome, she sat sobbing, still cradling the head of the dead beggar. A passerby from out of town looked on in amazement and confusion. Why on earth would this foreign lady give a hoot whether the bum died or lived, and why be out in the muddy streets to care for anyone—much less a worthless beggar?

He was so puzzled and perplexed that he followed her to her home, and then asked the neighbors who she was. They told her she was married to the teacher of the new religion from overseas and was physician to the queen!

This lofty title caused the man to be even more perplexed, so he waited and then followed the missionary man from his house to the small church where the missionary was conducting services each evening.

To make a long story short, the man was moved to accept Christ as his Lord and immediately set off to return to his home, the first port town west of Seoul on the Han River route to the ocean. This town, Haeng-ju was a truly wild river port with numerous bars and houses of prostitution, whose inhabitants were notorious for miles around as being crooks, thieves, and even kidnappers of women and robbers of livestock—yet so tough that no one dared to go after them.

Our new convert, however, with no Bible, no hymn book and no training was so filled by zeal and the Holy Spirit that he single handedly won over the majority of the town to this Jesus who told them to be kind and loving; to not hurt others. This was a truly revolutionary thought, but enabled by the Spirit the town's people set out to return the livestock they had stolen, to stop cheating the river boat trade, and even to take their kidnapped wives, with their children, back to their original homes—not to return them but to ask for forgiveness!

News of the transformation of this notoriously evil town reached the local magistrate (who, himself, had been afraid to try and enforce law and order there). This caused the magistrate to go to the town to demand an explanation. When

he was told that it all sprang from the teachings of a foreigner in Seoul, he set out on the all day trip to the city to look up this strange man who could transform a town as bad as Haeng-ju. Only when he called on Mr. Underwood and told him the story, did Underwood learn of the miracle change. And only when Underwood himself traveled to Haeng-ju to follow up did he learn that the real reason for the whole miracle was that his wife was so moved by compassion and the love from Jesus Christ as to weep for a dead beggar.

Underwoods for four generations have maintained ties with the thriving church in Haeng-ju, which still serves our Lord, because a woman wept—never knowing she was truly an evangelist without speaking a word!