

## Alternative History of British Embassy in Korea

By Lee Yoon-soo  
Contributing Writer

There is a popular yet unauthentic story that King Kojong and Queen Min of Choson Kingdom, seeing tennis being played within the British consulate compound next door to their palace, asked whether these curious foreigners did not have servants to undertake such strenuous exercise for them.

In a new book exploring the history of British embassies and their buildings in the East from 1859 to the present, Dr. J.E. Hoare, a former British civil servant in the East, presents a study dotted with such colorful stories characterizing the British presence in Korea.

"Embassies in the East," a Curzon book on an overall view of embassies in East Asia from 1859 to the present, ostensibly focuses on the history of the consular buildings in Korea yet often allows a glimpse into a larger picture within the bare framework.

At one point, a Bishop Cooper is said to have noted in 1946, at a time of great turmoil for Korea, that Derwent Kermode, the then British consul, who famously "liked to have a grievance to nurse," arrived to find an embassy with its roof leaking, its radiator burst and the kitchen floor flooded. It was, the bishop wrote, a "good introduction to a Korea where most things [had] deteriorated after six years of neglect and misuse."

The history of the embassy buildings and its inhabitants frequently provides a perspective into British-Korean history. From the signing of a first treaty with Korea in June 1882 in view of trade prospects and concerns over Russian interests in the peninsula, to British participation in the Korean War and the latter-day recognition of Korea's importance in terms of trade and business, the British have maintained a presence in one form or another within Korea.

There were, at first, some misgivings about maintaining a Korean outpost. Attempts to purchase and build a consular office in Seoul were initially questioned by the British Treasury which, Dr. Hoare notes, had grave doubts over building a costly establishment in "this wretched place." Thereafter inadequate buildings, a lack of heating and sanitary problems caused by sewage and waste being poured daily over the walls of the nearby Palace, caused many a problem for the British legation.

Nevertheless, Korea seems to have held an exotic charm for some. One junior resident noted that "Seoul is a glittering prospect of mountains and palaces, with mushroom-roofed cottages on which red pepper laid out to

dry on them presents a delightful Turkish-carpet effect seen from a hill-top, mingled with the blue smoke rising from thousands of kitchen fires pull stop. The whole picture—the molten sunshine and the filtered transparency of the air, the royal tombs, the winding river, the White Buddha, the imposing city gates, and the remnant of the old city wall crawling over Namsan-rich with charm."

Rounding off the Korean portrait, he writes with typical Britishness, "We used to go for a walk of one or two hours nearly every day, except in the summer when we played tennis."

Dr. Hoare's book frequently provides an entertaining

insight into the very British character of the consulate and past legation members. An English-style garden was grown within the compound and Walter Hillier, a consul and a keen gardener, is quaintly noted as having had "some success with his fruit trees."

A superior British-made front door pull and Chubb lock are noted as being features of the consulate buildings.

Furthermore, a medley of typically British eccentrics pass in and out of the history, such as Captain Vyvyan Holt who after catching the mumps is said to have devised a system whereby office papers were left in the middle of his lawn and collected only after the bearer had moved off a safe distance or Mrs. Kermode whose "consumption of gin and cigarettes, already assuring her of a very creditable batting average, sent her soaring into the Guinness Book of Records" (according to Consulate-General De La Mare in 1939). One E.H. Parker, a consul during the late 19th Century, is described simply as being "somewhat odd."

Along with the Salvation Army headquarters at the rear and an Anglican cathedral in the front, the area around the British consulate-general by the 1930s was seen as a small corner of Britain. Today, the much redeveloped British embassy compound, is the only piece of land owned by the British government in Korea.

In viewing the original buildings, Lady Evans, wife of the first ambassador to Korea (appointed in 1957), is recorded by Dr. Hoare as saying that "our massive brick Victorian house might have been that of any prosperous merchant on the outskirts of London or Birmingham." After looking at the compound newly rebuilt in the 1990s, Sir Geoffrey Howe, then the British secretary of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, now Lord Howe, said it reminded him of a Victorian mental hospital. The British, it seems, to this day, continue to lend their own particular color to the Korean landscape.

## Tea Talk With Foreigners' Wives

The Korea Times will feature wives of representatives Korea in interviews or in other forms about their activities of foreign governments and organizations posted in ties in the diplomatic arena and their lifestyle. — ED.

## 'Grandmas Have Closer Ties With Korean Kids'

By Hong Sun-hee  
Staff Reporter

The wife of the head of the Belgian diplomatic mission had hoped the activities of Belgian troops during the Korean War would be better appreciated by local people.

"We, the Belgians, are aware of Korea because we have seen our veterans with their uniforms from Korea during National Day. Belgium sent 3,600 soldiers, quite a large contingent for a country with a population of 8 million, and 800 of them died here."

"It's really a pity that Koreans don't properly understand that their country earned their freedom at the sacrifice of many youths from other allied countries aside from the United States."

"It's not their mistake but the fault of the schools and their parents," lamented Maria Nijskens, 58, during an exclusive interview with The Korea Times.

She and her husband, Renier, came to Korea in October of last year from Kenya accompanied by a local chef, who is the son of the Kenyan who cooked for the family for years.

"The seasons are more extreme in Korea than in Kenya - in particular in summer and winter. The spring is more beautiful with more kinds of trees and the autumn foliage is more bright in its tint," she says in comparison.

The most contrasting factor is their residence. While in Nairobi, they lived in Petit Trianon, a scaled-down reproduction of France's Versailles. In Seoul, they live in a residence in Itaewon, a minute's walking distance from the shopping avenue.



Mrs. Maria Nijskens

"We love to loiter in the antique streets of Seoul but have decided not to buy things because our house is already full of our collection from previous posts," she said.

Wherever they are posted, she joins a chorus to become more involved in the local community. She has sung for 45 years and while in Seoul, she is a member of the Seoul International Women's Association (SIWA) chorus.

The Belgian says, "It's great fun to join the Korean ladies. They enjoy the time among themselves while the Europeans are more family oriented. At the same time, Korean mothers are

brave and courageous and do everything to please and serve their children."

As a mother of a daughter and a son, both fully grown, she envies the close ties between Korean children and their grandparents.

In a sidelight, however, she takes issue with the male supremacy which prevails in this country. "I wonder if Korean women feel offended by the way they are treated or not. Such a bias and inequality of women should be changed," the former schoolteacher stressed.

Role sharing is somewhat different in her family. With the Nijskens, the

husband cooks for guests and the wife cooks only for the family.

"For guests, I dress the table, decorate with flowers and wash vegetables while he decides the menu and prepares the food. He is an excellent cook," she boasts.

The ambassador reportedly decides on the menu for luncheons or dinners on the very morning of the occasion, much to the harassment of the kitchen staff.

This year, it's his turn to host the Christmas party held among his own clan every year. "We are not worried about menu but rather about the short time for preparation."

Nijskens said, "We will add a little bit of a Korean touch to the menu. We will serve seaweed, mushrooms, quail eggs and pine needles."

Another thing which occupied much of her time last week was a request from a local newspaper to make arrangements for 50 children aged six to 12 to don the national dress to be photographed for the new millennium edition. She is currently in charge of SIWA's international committee. "As an ex-teacher, I really had a great afternoon with the children."

On the difficult side of her role as a diplomat's wife, she says with a sigh, "Packing and moving once every three years is very unpleasant. I hate that period and I become extremely nervous during the week of saying goodbye and leaving friends."

Her husband has been posted in a number of countries including Tunisia, Iraq, Kuwait and Canada and he has chosen Korea as his ninth post in order to discover the area.

The Korea Times will appreciate tips and recommendations. Phone 724-2350 or write an e-mail at uhuru@koreatimes.co.kr.

## Puppets for New Year's Bash in Times Square

ST. HELENS, Oregon (AP) — In a cavernous warehouse, creatures from different times and cultures lurk under the rafters: floating Balinese hands in delicate dance poses, purple-patterned elephants from India and a Chinese dragon, whose red, silk body shimmers in a breeze.

Crowded in a place that once stored canned drinks, these immense beasts of cloth and metal appear otherworldly. Strapped to the backs of puppeteers — some reaching two stories high — they will enchant and entertain millions.

They are among a herd of creations by Michael Curry, an Oregon artist who is making 160 oversized puppets for what promises to be the biggest New Year's bash ever in Times Square. The puppets will join a cast of thousands to celebrate the world's cultures, time zone by time zone, in an unprecedented, 24-hour countdown to the millennium.

Curry's art has graced theme parks, parades and stage productions, like "The Lion King," around the world. But with a shoestring budget and a deadline that can't be pushed back — this could be his most inspired work yet.

At his workshop, Curry and a crew of 57 painters, engineers and craftspeople

draw from unlikely sources of inspiration. The paper used in Federal Express envelopes makes great fish skin, or dangling jungle vines. Silk, draped over a wire frame, perfectly mimics the movements of a jellyfish. Red feather boas make exquisite legs for a geometric, killer ant.

The end result: puppets that are larger than life, but nonthreatening, easy to manipulate and representative of an international audience.

"I didn't want this to be a National Geographic survey of each culture," said Curry, 41. "I wanted to do justice to the richness of the world's cultures, to show the vastness of these cultures with artistry."

The show, which relies on the collective vision of top designers in theater, video, dance, music and theme park entertainment, starts at 6:15 a.m., Dec. 31, before an expected audience of millions.

Every hour, the music, dance and puppetry will change to reflect a particular country or time zone. For example, at 10 p.m., to signal a segment called "rain forest adventure," jungle sounds and samba rhythms will bounce off a surround-sound system in Times

Square. Hundreds of butterfly puppets will "fly" into the space, while cannons launch animal-shaped confetti into the crowd.

To prepare for a production of such magnitude, creative producer Geoff Puckett began recruiting designers years ago. He traveled to outdoor festivals around the world to mine ideas. And he brought in two anthropologists, an ethnographer and a world music expert for feedback.

The biggest challenge he faced was finding a way to communicate without narration. He found that an elaborate soundtrack and live performers help. But he knew the eye-catching, mobile puppets would be critical.

"The advantage of using human-manipulated puppetry is that it allows the imagination to fill in the blanks," said Puckett, founder of EffectDesign Inc., based in San Francisco. "Seeing the people who manipulate these figures gives the audience opportunity to imagine themselves as being part of the entire procession."

Because the show is staged in one of the world's busiest thoroughfares, with little protection from the elements, Curry's puppets must be able to function

under unique conditions. They have to be sturdy, but light enough to move with ease.

"Wind, weight and budget — it's all I think about these days," he joked.

The process of making an oversized puppet can take anywhere from a few days to a few months — depending on the creature's size, shape and complexity.

Take, for example, the Chinese dragon. This 70-foot-long puppet was modeled after a six-inch (15-centimeter) bronze sculpture dating back to the 8th century. (Curry has been itching to model a puppet after the sculpture for years.)

To begin, he sketched a color rendering of how he imagined the puppet would look high above the heads of revelers in the square. Next, engineers used this visual blueprint to sculpt the puppet's basic structure — using wire, carbon-fiber, or some other lightweight material.

Craftspeople gave the puppet shape by adding material that won't catch the wind or dissolve in the rain. Meshes, silks and Lycra help the puppets achieve an ethereal quality that has become Curry's trademark.

### Protestant

**YOUNG NAK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (273-6301): Downtown/International worship in English, Sunday 3 to 5 p.m. in the Mission Chapel. Pastor Bill Majors (290-1472). English/Japanese translation in Korean worship 9:30 a.m. also 11:30 a.m.

**SEOUL UNION CHURCH** (333-7393): Worship with English-speaking community: 9 a.m. Sunday School for all ages: 11 a.m. Located in the spacious Foreigner's Cemetery Park, north of the Yanghwa Bridge.

**SEOUL INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF CHRIST** (697-7488, 601-0645): Undenominational services: Sunday English Worship 9 a.m. Call for weekday Bible class schedules and location of church building.

**LIBERTY CHURCH** (792-4116): International, non-denominational, evangelical church offering services in English. Sunday worship services at 11 a.m. Thursday night Bible study at 6:30 p.m.

**HALLELUJAH CHRISTIAN CHURCH** (570-7007): Inter-denominational and evangelical worship service in English at 9 a.m. Sunday, led by the Rev. Mark H. Senier at the newly-built sanctuary (Rm. 101) in Yatap-dong, Pundang.

**ONNURI CHURCH** (793-9686): Dynamic worship and expository preaching draw 500 English-speaking people into our services each Sunday at 2:00 P.M. Join us if you are looking for a home church while here in Seoul. Youth ministry and Sunday School at 11:30 a.m. We're 15 minutes from Ichon station and South Post Gate 17.

**CHURCH OF CHRIST at Kangnam** (445-4620): Translated English services: Sunday Bible class for children and adults at 10 a.m. and worship 11 a.m.; Wednesday worship 7 p.m.

**SEOUL BIBLE CHURCH** (576-3939): Sunday School at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. English Bible study at 1 p.m. Wednesday prayer meeting and Bible study, 7 p.m. Ten minute walk from Pongchon Station in subway line 2.

**INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY:** English language service for all internationals. Sunday worship at 10 a.m. Hannu Bank Bldg. 2nd floor, Chamwon-dong (Orange Line #28, exit #4). For more info, call Pastor Nee 336-8880.

**MOONCHANG CHURCH** (904-5691): For English speakers call 0351-867-2451: Nondenominational worship service in English 5 p.m. every Sunday. Hansung Bldg. (7th floor) near Chang-dong subway station in Seoul.

**SEOUL INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH** (793-6267): English, family-oriented church located on Yongsan. Worship at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Bible classes with nursery at 9:45 a.m. and 5 p.m. Sunday.

**YONGSAN BAPTIST CHURCH** (796-0284): Independent Baptist church located next to the Crown Hotel, providing English Bible study classes and worship services 9:45 and 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sunday. Midweek Bible study Thursdays 7:30 p.m.

**TORCHLIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH** (541-3374): English language worship service each Sunday at 3 p.m.

**21 MISSION SEUL SUNG RAK CHURCH** (831-0296/0775): Service at 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m. (simultaneous English or French interpretation). International Chapel and Bible Study at 2 p.m. Service for the Chinese, Japanese or Vietnamese available upon request.

**INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** (794-6274): Conducts creative Worship Services in English each Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. A light breakfast is available beginning at 8 a.m. Sunday School and Adult Bible Class begin at 9:45 a.m. (Sept. through May) Nursery care provided. A snack bar is available following the morning activities.

**GERMAN SPEAKING PROTESTANT COMMUNITY** (2281-1610): Services are at 5 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month, in Hannam Church/Oksu-dong.

**ONNURI COMMUNAUTE FRANCOPHONE** (749-7156): French Service, Sunday, 2:30 p.m. #015, Onnuri Church.

## Religious Services

**YONGSAN CHAPEL COMMUNITY:** Protestant Sunday worship services: 1. South Post Chapel at 10:30 a.m. (Gospel Worship) at noon. 2. Memorial Chapel at 8 a.m. 3. Hannam Village Chapel at 11 a.m. 4. Hospital at 9:30 a.m. Catholic Masses: 1. South Post Chapel at 9 a.m. (CCD/Catholic Religious Education) at 10 a.m. Sundays 2. Memorial Chapel at 5 p.m., Saturdays and at noon, Sundays.

**SOMANG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (512-9191): English service, sermon by the Rev. Robert von Oeyen at 2 p.m. in Mission Building. Located in Sinsa-dong, Kangnam-ku near Apjukong Station of Orange Line #3.

**CHOONGHUN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (552-8200): English worship service at 9 a.m. Cana Hall, English speaking Sunday School for all ages at 10:30 a.m., Deacon Bldg. Simultaneous interpretation service in English, Chinese, Japanese at 11 a.m., Main Sanctuary 2nd fl.

**YOIDO FULL GOSPEL CHURCH** (780-5111): Worship services on Sundays at 6:30, 9 and 11 a.m. and 1, 3, 5, and 7 p.m.

**KWANG LIM METHODIST CHURCH** (546-0151): Simultaneously interpreted English/Japanese service at 11 a.m. at main hall, 2nd fl. and Sunday English Bible class at 9:30 a.m. at Sungyo-gwan, basement 1.

**CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF TAEJEON** (042-636-2247): A ministry to the English speaking community of Taejeon at 10:30 a.m. worship service. Sunday school at 9 a.m. Located on the campus of Taejeon Christian International School, Ojeong-dong, Taedok-ku, near the front gate of Hannam University. Pastor: Tony Bland.

**BOONDANG CENTRAL CHURCH** (412-6822): English service for all internationals is held every Sunday at 1 p.m. Located at the opposite side of Hyejo-chon Inkwang Apt., Suhyon-dong, Pung-

dang.

**ANGELICAN CHURCH** (730-6611): English-language service at 9 a.m. every Sunday, at the beautiful Seoul Anglican Cathedral.

**LIVING HOPE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH** for migrant workers in Korea (0343-87-7933): Worship service for all internationals, especially migrant workers in Korea led by your native pastor. 1 p.m. for African, 3 p.m. for Mid-Asian and 5 p.m. for Filipino.

**CHUNG DONG FIRST METHODIST CHURCH** (753-0001): Worship service in English at 9:30 a.m. every Sunday at the church near the City Hall.

**YESU SARANG CHURCH** (Jesus Loves Church) (042-486-2488): in Taejeon. English worship service starts at 7 p.m. on Saturdays. An English Bible study is available at 2:30 p.m.

**TAEJEON ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL** (042-531-6480): communion service in English on Sunday at 5 p.m. The venue is in Sonhwa-dong.

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SERVICE** (02-263-9043): Christian Science Society: Seoul Sunday service (English) at 11 a.m., Wednesday service at 7:30 p.m.

### Catholic

**MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL** (777-0281): Weekday masses in Korean at 6:30 and 7 a.m. and 6 and 6:30 p.m. and Sunday masses at 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 a.m. and 4, 5, 6 and 7 p.m. There will be a mass in English every Sunday at 10 a.m.

**SONGBUK-DONG CATHOLIC CHURCH** (262-4273): English mass every Sunday at 9 a.m. **HYEHWADONG CATHOLIC CHURCH** (765-0870 or 011-317-0143): Tagalog Mass every Sunday at 1:30 p.m. for Filipinos. Perpetual help Novena

and Mass every Wednesday (8:30 p.m.) at the Filipino Catholic Center.

**CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL PARISH OF SEOUL** (793-2070): masses in the Franciscan Chapel at 707 Hannam-dong, across from Hannam Village Apts. English masses by Father Antonio (793-2070) on Sundays at 9 and 11 a.m.; French mass by Father Durand Arnel (903-9275) on Saturday at 6 p.m.; German mass by Father Wilhelm Schulte (739-2070) on Sundays at 10 a.m.; and Italian/Spanish mass on Sunday at noon.

**INCHON CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY** (032-761-6645): Fr. Raymond T. Sabio, M.S.C., Inchon Port Catholic Chaplain celebrates Sunday Holy Mass in English at 4 p.m. in the Catholic Center basement hall.

**CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF PUSAN** (051-261-7397): Fr. Daniel F. Ceniza, M.S.C., celebrates Holy Mass in English on Sunday at 4 p.m. in Chungang Church in Daechong-dong.

**SANGGYE-DONG CATHOLIC CHURCH:** Foreigners are invited to participate in an English mass every Sunday at 2 p.m. For information, call Adam Lasmanias (952-2631).

### Buddhism

**SEOUL INTERNATIONAL ZEN CENTER** (900-43261) at Hwagye-sa Temple in Suyu-dong holds public sessions for meditation and Dharma talk every Sunday at 1 p.m. Daily regular services at 4 a.m. and 6 p.m.

**LOTUS LANTERN INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CENTER** (02-735-5347): An international Buddhist community offers information, classes, activities and books on Buddhism. Meditation meeting for bowing and chanting on Thursdays 7:30 p.m. and Kwan Um 108 Group meeting on Sundays 6:30-8 p.m.

**BUDDHA TEMPLE** (0596-73-7119): An international Buddhist community, offering Zen meditative retreats and lectures (Anapanasati and Milinda sutras) for monks, nuns and lay persons. Daily regular services at 4 a.m. and 6 p.m. For information, ask

for Ven. Maitreya (Miruk) at Pulta-sa in Sanchong-gun, Kyongsang-do.

**THE KASAI BUDDHIST CULTURAL INSTITUTE** (765-9602) operates two regular courses on Buddhist scriptures. Each class starts 7:30 p.m. every Thursday and Friday.

**Orthodox**

**ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KOREA** (365-3744): St. Nicholas Cathedral in Ahyon-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul. Sundays and Feasts. Divine Liturgy in Korean at 10 a.m. St. Maxim Chapel, Divine Liturgy in Slavonic, 1st and 3rd Sunday, at 10 a.m.; 2nd Sunday in English, 4th Sunday in Greek.

### Islam

**THE SEOUL CENTRAL MASJID** (794-7307): Juma Prayers in Korea, Arabic and English at 1 p.m. every Friday, weekdays five times daily, one hour and 20 minutes before sunrise, 1 and 4 p.m. sunset.

### Jewish

**JEWISH** (793-3728): Regular religious service is at the 8th Army South Post Chapel at 7:30 on every Friday. Saturday services are held at 10 a.m., followed by Shabbat lunch.

### Indigenous

**JEUNGSAK-DO** (514-5249): Services at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at five chapters in Seoul: Kangnam (545-8011), Shindaejang (846-0884), Shinchon (363-0113), Tongdaemun (242-3757), Sungin-dong (237-8423).

### Miscellaneous

**THE SRI SATHYA SAI BABA CENTER OF KOREA** (271-1381, 779-0267, 795-9842): Devotional group singing every Thursday at 7-8 p.m. and Sunday at 9:30-10:30 a.m.