

## After Teaching

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You arrived to teach and you are ready but there is one more thing to overcome. Schedules used to have you teach where you live but you must now travel back and forth many miles between classes somewhat like a hamster running in his little exercise wheel. Then, it became worse as the Air Force ceased providing housing. I taught responsibly until 9:30 in the evenings but we could not just walk to our quarters. As some of the return rides took a couple hours it meant that we would be riding the last trains before the multiple lines shut down between Yokosuka and Camp Zama in Japan. If anything went awry it meant a night spent on a cold bench in an empty train station. I can tell you from experience that it is not restful. Taxis are not a late-night option in Japan as the taxi drivers fear giving a ride to a dead spirit. It will be a long cold night unless you are lucky to find one of the few bars open all night, your only warm refuge from the chill night winds.

I remember well spending several hours perched atop a slowly cooling radiator in the dark, unheated, empty Taegu Korea train station until taxis began their first runs of the day on a frigid January morning at 4 AM. It was solitary misery. So why not drive avoiding the problems of scheduling? Driving in Korea was lethal, three of us died driving in Korea in the early 90's: Autumn fog was dense one night as I drove home to Suwon, the idiot driver closely following my taillights kept his lights on high beam blinding me so, I turned my head and taillights off and sped up using my parking lights to follow the center stripe in the road. Alone at last I resumed using my lights still following the paint stripe home. When the stripe ended in a large intersection, I was lost but I wandered across the intersection and found the stripe again for the last mile home.

As I drove home from Camp Humphries one 1990 night, a car ahead of me was weaving badly, going 10 mph. There was no traffic, so I got him to stop off the road. I explained that he had drunk too much to drive safely and that he should stay there and sleep until he felt better. He kissed my hand in gratitude and promised that he would not drive until he had rested, and it was safe to drive. He spoke no English and I spoke extremely little Korean, but it was enough.

One cold November night one of the cars I drove in Korea sprung a radiator leak. Adding just water would invite disaster and antifreeze was not available at night but soju was for sale, so I bought a magnum of soju (Korean gin) for the radiator. It worked for the 100-mile trip home for radiator repair and anti-freeze, but the stench was strong and incredible as the engine smelled like a very big drunk. Another year a fanbelt broke and with no available fanbelt, my wife's panty hose served as a fanbelt replacement for the 2-hour trip home.

Koreans have the saying that "old cars go to the American bases to die." With no stigma attached to operating them, we only had to keep them running. I bought a Korean car and doubting it would run, I painted flames on it. The problem was that it ran another 3 years. The car was a zombie. One afternoon I shortened it several inches backing into the commander's

flagpole (the pole was ok). I stretched the car back to its old size by tying it to a shed and driving away tightening the rope and hammering on the bumps where metal had bulged up.

Driving north at night from Osan in a construction zone there was a bang and my Korean car stopped. It had hit the large concrete pipe for a manhole sticking up out of the road. The car was bent and the manhole was broken. The broken manhole was paved over and forgotten. The car went to a nearby junk yard. After that, I drove my spare car, a Datsun.

At night, driving in rain, I ran down an unseen mid-road concrete pillar that traffic cops would stand on. After that, one front wheel pointed right but the other aimed straight ahead. I repaired the car the following morning by straightening its bent tie rod. As bad as the cheap cars were, they carried me to and from class unless a truck smashed them. A few years later an oncoming truck passed an oncoming bus on a blind curve and my Datsun ended its life in a head on collision with the truck. There was no escape as a police roadblock occupied the shoulder so I cut it as close as I could. I was untouched but the Datsun's left front wheel ended up between my legs. The truck exited my car in the center of my door and hit a van following behind me. My car went its last 100 feet to a junkyard, and I took a bus home. I would not drive small cars in Korea after that but drove a full-sized van for a year before returning to the USA where driving is predictable. Korea is the only place that I saw a bus balanced straight up in the air on its nose after a wreck. (1977) There aren't many other places one can see a bus upside down with the top smashed down flat to the bottom of its windows for its full length. (1990)

One must reduce risk whenever possible. Any airplane frightens me; I was employed by Boeing as a design engineer. To ride with the Air Force we filled out forms. Usually without thinking much. I noticed a question that asked who you wanted notified if the airplane crashed killing you. I thought a moment, smiled and wrote, "Ronald Regan, White House". I may be obscure but my accidental death by the Air Force would not be. The clerk gasped "you can't write that" but he accepted the form as it was. It was probably an extra safe MAC flight that afternoon. Beloved area director Larry Hepinstall wrote that I was a living legend. If we survived with imagination and persevered staying on, we were legends. It was entertainment.