

Ill-Fated Cadets? The history of Young Cadets Who Became Soldiers Fighting on the Frontline of Battle during the Korean War¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to introduce readers to some of the most important events in the history of the Korea Military Academy. The 539 KMA cadets fought the early battles of the Korean War, and nearly one-third of them were killed in action. In earlier days, such unprecedented sacrifices made by the young cadets had been recognized, but not enough information was available to carry the story on to the next generation. Knowing nothing is worse than knowing a little. In the course of time, the story of these young cadets' earlier battles has been into oblivion. The result was a bitter legacy of resentment and anger amongst many cadet-veterans who believed that their devotions to the country have been so easily by the KMA alumni and the Army. The paper therefore collects the stories of the KMA cadets' battles during the Korean war, and see what the circumstances were in which the cadets entered the war. The paper takes an issue with the biased term "ill-fated cadets," which has long been used to describe those young cadet-veterans, is inappropriate, and explores if this re-examination tells us anything about how their untold history has formed the background and context for the development of the KMA.

Keywords: The Korea Military Academy, the Korean War, cadets' battles, General James A. Van Fleet.

1. Introduction

I intend to use the following quotation from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* as a vehicle for approaching the topic in this paper.

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitude:
Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done. (*Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.145-150)²

When I met Captain (Ret.) Monika Stoy and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Timothy Stoy from Outpost International of the Society of the 3rd Infantry Division at the Korea Military Academy (KMA) on June 9, 2017, I was invited to participate in the Korean War Historical Seminar. I was happy and yet I was not sure what I, as a literary scholar, could do for a Korean War seminar. Nevertheless, when the president of the society—whom I knew through a series of email exchanges, Kakao messenger talks, and then a couple of meetings afterward—insisted that I should come for joining the seminar, I could not but give my consent gladly to the invitation. Given that I had previously worked on the English translation of the histories of British, Ethiopian and South African forces in the Korean War, the topic is not totally alien to me. No doubt, rewinding time to (re)discover "good deeds past" of the Kagnew Battalion, the South African Airmen, and the Gloucester Battalion, "devour'd" by a "great-sized monster of ingratitude" had been profoundly meaningful to me. But I have to say that personally, the preparation for the Korean War seminar is truly one of the greatest experience of my life, because I could learn so much about my own Academy's past untold. It is also a saddening experience, because there are not many historical documents and now less than fifty veterans left to tell us the story of themselves which has long been nearly missing for a half century.

During my time at the KMA, people have often questioned why the KMA cadets were sent into battle without the proper training and equipment at the beginning of the Korean War. There is still disagreement on what the best decision was or should have been. In such a climate, the KMA had been uncomfortable dealing with and discussing it for a long time. As a result, what we knew about them was only a few sentences to explain as seen from Brigadier General Lee Dongh-Hee's remarks in *O Hwarangdae* (1982):

The South Chosen National Defense Academy (the ancestor of today's Korea Military Academy) was founded on May 1st, 1946, replacing the old military language school. The Academy had produced around 1,800 officers from its 1st to 7th class. After being renamed the Korea Military Academy, it had trained over two hundred thousand officers, but they were given very short period of basic training and education (i.e. 46 days to 22-23 weeks). In 1949, the KMA had an

¹ This paper has been modified from the version presented at the 2nd Korean War Historical Seminar held in Hilton Springfield, Virginia, USA. This study has been funded by the Hwarangdae Research Institute's 2017 Research Project.

² The quotation used in this paper comes from William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

enrollment of the *first regular class* of 262 cadets (later registered as 10th class) for a two-year program, and in 1950 the second class of 333. These *ill-fated* cadets could not finish their military education and were then forced to enter battles because of the outbreak of the Korean War.¹ (my translation)

General Lee's book, written while the author was Dean of the KMA Academic Board, tends to idealize and even romanticize the history of the 11th class of the KMA (the first four-year regular class of the KMA which reopened at Jinhae rein 1951 at the height of the Korean War). Under the influence of this tradition, not surprisingly the story of "*ill-fated cadets*"—the author's immediate senior classes—easily sank into oblivion. As the quotation from General Lee's book well illustrates the selectiveness and fickleness of human memory, it gives its title to this presentation.

It was not until 1996 that when the class of 1950 (the KMA 2nd class) received a certificate of honorary graduate of the KMA, their story began to circulate. This is, I guess, somewhat related to the birth of the civil



Figure 1. The early KMA cadets' weapons training before the Korean War

* KMA, *The 50-years History of KMA* (1996)

government of the Kim Yong-Sam administration in the 1990s.² And then, on June 19, 2000, then the Statue of Korea War Veteran Cadets was dedicated to commemorate the cadets who entered into the Korea War as a cadet and memory their fallen classmate. More recently, on May 1, 2013, the 2nd class as a group received the KMA distinguished Alumni Award. Despite these, the story of the KMA cadets' battles in its early stage surprisingly is an untold area of scholarly investigation.³ This presentation aims to see what the circumstances were in which the KMA cadets entered the war, and to see if these tell us anything about how their untold history has formed the background and context for the development of the KMA.

2. The Battle in Bupyeongri

It was a Sunday morning on June 25, 1950 when everything was out of ordinary for the young cadets, who spent the time in the barracks, washing their clothes and catching up in their studies. That morning the cadets were ordered not to leave the campus and then assemble on the drill ground in full battle gear.⁴

While the cadets did not know how their fates were suddenly changed, the Korean People's Army (KPA)'s 3rd Division came from the left down Pocheon despite the ROK 7th Division's die-hard resistance. The cities of Uijongbu and Pocheon fell into the hands of North Korean army were matter of time, and this meant that Seoul was left with its northeastern flank exposed and in great danger of being surrounded. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Army Chief of Staff General Chae Byeong-Deok wanted to dispatch KMA cadets to Pocheon without delay. COL Jang Chang-Kuk, ROKA Headquarters G-3, strongly opposed the idea of direct participation in combat by the young cadets who had not even finished military training, saying that even the Japanese army did not sent its cadets who did not even graduated to the frontline on the edge of defeat. But General Chae did not give up his order. ROKA Headquarters thus summoned the duty officer at KMA Major Lee Jun-Hak at 13:00 on June 25 and ordered him to send the KMA cadets to Bupyeongri, 13km south from Pocheon and ready to fight.⁵ According to this order, the cadets would "move and occupy Hill 330 and Hill 372; and defend the terrain with a police battalion dispatched to them; and stop the enemy's advance toward south."⁶

¹ Dong-Hee Lee, *O Hwarangdae* (Seoul: Daehak. 1982) 10-11. The article in *Dong-A Daily* (1982) reads "General Lee Dong-Hee in his book *O Hwarangdae* beautifully describes thirty years of the dreams and gallantry of the cadets of the Korea Military Academy from the very first regular class (11th class) to the present." Quoted in *Dong-A Daily*, October 21, 1982.

² The roles of graduates of the 7th to 10th class of the KMA under the leadership of President Park Chung-Hee in shaping modern nation from 1960s to 1980s has been well documented, but the 2nd class who did not graduate from the KMA was not considered the alumni.

³ For the history of early KMA cadets' battles in the Korean war, MND-Institute for Military History's *The History of the Korean War* (1968) was the first academic research of this topic. Jang-Seon Nam's memoir, *The Witness to Immortality* (Seoul, 1978) provides us with substantial amount of records from the veterans, but much remain to be proved. This article relies substantially on the most recent study of Jong-Nam Na's "A Study on Korea Military Academy Cadets' Combat Experience during the Early Stage of the Korean War," *Military History* 87 (2013): 129-169. Unfortunately, the scanty historical records still provide us only with fragmented and incomplete picture of the early KMA cadets.

⁴ Bo-Hi Pak, *Messiah, My Testimony to Rev. Sun Myung Moon*, trans., Timothy Elder (Lanham, University Press of America, 2000) 50.

⁵ This order was issued at 02:00 the next morning as an order no. 90. See Jong-Nam Na, "A Study on Korea Military Academy Cadets' Combat Experience" 138.

⁶ MND-Institute for Military History, *6.25 War History*, vol. 2 (2005) 386-387.

About seven decades have passed, it has long been argued that General Chae's order was problematic, since out of the cadets who ordered to fight were the 1st class of KMA cadets, who nearly completed their one year education and awaited only three weeks before their graduation and commissioning (see Figure 1). They were busy preparing for the final field training and during weekend most of them left the academy to buy personal items for the training or to relax. And the rest were the 2nd class cadets, who had been at KMA just twenty-five days after their enrollment. Obviously, Superintendent Brigadier General Lee Jun-Sik resented being ordered to permit his untrained young cadets to fight in combat, but he believed that he had no option but to follow.¹ Existing records speak with one voice, whether or not they were ready to fight once making a pledge to dedicate themselves to the defense of their country, the cadets made their minds to fight courageously.²

After a preparation order was issued, the cadets were organized into a battalion consisting of 262 cadets from the 1st class and 277 from the 2nd class.³ The 1st class cadets having a year of training experience were designated as leaders of platoons and squads, vice squad leaders, team leaders, and automatic riflemen, and the 2nd class were placed as riflemen or radio operators within platoons and squads. However, their weapons and equipment were in poor conditions and completely ineffective fighting the enemy, because those available to them were limited number of training mortars, light-machine guns, and automatic rifles. There was also a lack of ammunition (i.e. 61mm and 81 mm mortars were provided only with a total of 50 rounds of ammunition; allowable ammunition for M1 carbine was about 56 rounds for each). Upon receiving an order to move from the superintendent, the KMA cadets boarded trucks and headed for Bupyeongri. Immediately arriving there at 20:00, the cadets occupied the Hill 372 which gave excellent observation for defense. Along with the cadet battalion, police battalion made defensive positions around the Hill 330. Road no. 326 (runs between Seoul and Pocheon, currently no. 325) and road no. 391 (runs between Seoul and Hyunri, currently no. 47) diverged in Bupyeongri and made a Y-shape appearance (see Figure 2).

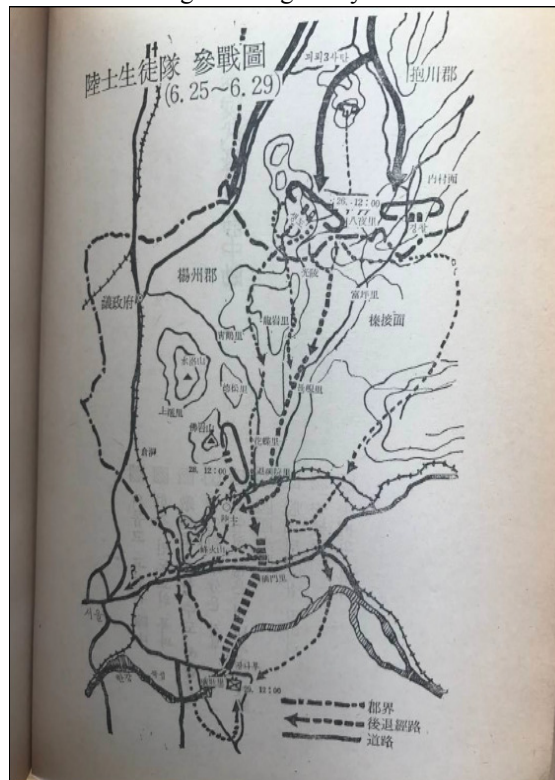


Figure 2. The KMA Cadets' Battles (June 25 ~ June 29, 1950)

*Sketch from Jang-Seon Nam's *The Witness to Immortality* (Seoul, 1978)

The Battalion CP was deployed on the top of Hill 372; 1st Company was on the left, 2nd Company was on the middle; 3rd Company was on the right; and Weapons Company was in the rear of the Hill with mortar positions. A forward security element was then sent to Naeri, 1km to the front of the battalion defense, and prepared for the night battle. There was not an engagement or battle on that night. It was in the next morning (06:00, June 26th) that one police battalion from Seoul Police Corps arrived at the defense area and was deployed to defend the Hill 330 (across the road the Hill 372 where the cadets were deployed) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Cho Am, cadet battalion commander. When LTC Cho realized how poorly the policemen were equipped (Their equipment was far poorer than that of the cadets. Each had a type 99 carbine rifle and 10 to 20 rounds of ammunition), he allocated one machine gun section from the cadet battalion to the police battalion to reinforce their defense by providing interlocking fire over the enemy avenue of approach.⁴ In addition, LTC Cho ordered the weapons company commander to cover the front slope of Hill 330 with mortar fire, and prepared alternate and supplementary positions to enhance hastily-built defensive positions. In addition, anti-personnel mines were laid on the enemy avenues of approach, adding to anti-tank positions dug on the Y shaped road.

¹ The task organization, in its chain of command, as follows: The Cadet Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Cho Am (Deputy Commander: Major Son Kwan); 1st Company, Captain Song In-Yul; 2nd Company, Captain Park Eung-Ku; 3rd Company, Captain Lee Won-Yeop; Weapons Company, Park Jeon-Seo

² See Pak, *Messiah*, 51.

³ See Jong-Nam Na, "A Study on Korea Military Academy Cadets' Combat Experience" 139.

⁴ *6.25 War History*, vol. 2 (2005) 388.

3. The Battle in Taereung

Although the enemy activities were observed in the early morning of 26 June, the battle began late morning of the day. From 10:00 am, 9th Regiment of KPA 3rd Infantry Division directed their artillery fire onto the cadets' defensive positions and a small group of KPA soldiers then appeared on the road between Pocheon and Seoul, marching down towards Seoul. Finding the enemy was getting nearer and nearer to them, the KMA cadets opened fire with their 81 millimeter mortars. The such sudden attack approaching the KPA soldiers dispersed, but soon came back with increased numbers (about a battalion size) and in contact with the cadets. However, when the enemy reacted to the attack, they massed their main efforts not against the cadets against the police forces positioned in the other side of the defensive line. The police forces, unprepared for the enemy attack, were unable to hold on its occupied positions more than 10 minutes and withdrew to the rear. By this short engagement, the KMA cadets suffered a bitter loss, including the death of cadet machine gunners detached to the police battalion.

Then the enemy, having destroyed the police forces, immediately fell on the cadets. Having outflanked the cadets, the enemy charged mercilessly on the front. The cadets carefully controlled the fire of them, because there was not enough ammunition supply for them. The cadets had only 44 (including 12 smokes) rounds of 81 mm and each cadet carried 50 rounds of rifle ammunition. Thus, the cadets allowed the KPA soldiers to approach as near as possible towards their defense line so that they could destroy them at closest possible range. At the time the cadets made a sudden attack from the concealed ground, they had massed heavily in the enemy's front and caused a large number of casualties. Due to the organized preparation for, and controlled execution of, defense for a strong attack, the furious battle between the KMA cadets and the KPA took over about two hours. Without necessary weapons and ammunition, however, the cadets could not prevent defeat. In the heat of battle for the last thirty minutes, the cadets fought hand-to-hand for their lives and suffered many casualties. According to the record of the battle, "it was the first real and long resistance the enemy had met, since the KPA crossed the 38th parallel."¹

Meanwhile, the KMA leadership, expecting the imminent fall of Uijongbu (important to the defense of Seoul) to KPA forces, received a warning order at 18:00, June 26 that the cadet battalion ought to move down the Taereung to construct a second defensive line between Changdong and Bularm Mountain just north of Seoul. At 19:00 the superintendent BG Lee directed the battalion commander LTC Cho to move down to Taereung.² The fighting between the KMA cadets and the KPA forces lulled for a time as both sides drew breath. The cadets, at this moment, received the order to move. Without proper communications amongst the cadets in the trenches, not all cadets heard the order to withdraw. They therefore withdrew in a disorganized manner. While some withdrew alone or in small groups, some remained in the trenches to maintain defensive posture until they were forced to retire under the enemy's heavy attack.

Only after 21:00 the leading cadets arrived at Taereung. The rest of them arrived between midnight and early dawn of 27th. The cadets did not know the exact number of dead and injured, despite the outstanding performance in the first engagement with the enemy. The report on the capture of Uijongbu on 26th indicated that the fall of Seoul was imminent. The superintendent BG Lee immediately ordered the cadet Battalion and 9th Regiment, 7th ROK infantry Division who were pulled out from Uijongbu-Surak Mt. and stayed at KMA to occupy areas between the Bulam Mt. and KMA to build defensive line.³ Then, BG Lee deployed 9th Regiment at the western foot of Bulam Mt. and placed the cadet between the eastern foot of the mountain and the lower hills near KMA. As for the preparation of his defense, the commander of the cadet battalion reorganized themselves into companies and deployed them with 1st company on the left (from Sahmyook Christian University to Gangkiri), 2nd on the right (on the eastern slope of Hill 92), 3rd on the middle (on the western slope of Hill 92), and heavy weapons company behind respectively.⁴ The cadets tried to make sure they could hold their positions by strengthening and consolidating their defensive positions and dispatching patrol groups forward. However, the obvious lack of ammunition as well as the casualties the cadets had in the previous battle weakened their spirits and crippled their will.

What made the situation worse was that Seoul's northern defense line near Changdong and Miarri collapsed early in the morning of June 27th. This meant that the cadets were now in danger of being attacked from behind. From early morning to until late midnight, the cadets witnessed that an occasional enemy artillery barrage hit their front-line. In the far distance the cadets also witnessed the flashing light and the thunder of the explosion that came from near Cheongnyangni and Hongreung where the ROK Army fought against the KPA, trying to hold Seoul. Although the enemy artillery fired even deep into the cadets' rear areas to hit the KMA headquarters and barracks, there was no sign of the enemy's main attack. On that night, the cadets fired over a small patrol of the KPA's 3rd Division who came down from Toegyewon towards Mangwoori and were now approaching

¹ *The Witness to Immortality*, 57.

² *6.25 War History*, vol. 2 (2005) 391.

³ Korea Military Academy, *The 50-year History of Korea Military Academy* (Seoul, 1996) 24-26.

⁴ *The 50-year History*, 27-28.

towards Hill 92. This attack drew the enemy's attention and a furious attack was made in the direction of the cadets' positions by the large enemy force.

The KMA leadership assessed the situation and feared the cadets would be killed unless they withdrew themselves from the current positions. When the superintendent's order to cross the Han river and move to south delivered, the cadets did not retreat in an orderly fashion for what were given to them were only permission to leave off their positions and a place to reassemble. According to veterans, there was no complete order that specified times, routes, and organization. The signed order was delayed for hours to reach the hands of the cadets. The order to withdraw was signed and issued early dawn of the day, but the cadets on the Hill 92 received it at 10:00. Being frustrated with the confused situation, some cadets were insisting on fighting, remaining in their current positions and some left, moving towards Yangsoori. Given that at Mangwoori—about half way there—the cadets were met with the enemy, they turned towards Gwangjangri to prevent any contact from the enemy. When the cadets arrived at the bank of Han River, they found the bridge destroyed. However, they managed to cross the river on small barges. Unfortunately, those, who headed for Cheongrangri, crossing Jungryang River, became prisoners of war or killed in action. Only a few of them could escape the tragedy and were able to cross the Han River at Ttukseom. The cadets might have been defeated in detail as moving in a disorganized retreat. Nevertheless, if it had not been for platoon and squad leaders taken by the KMA 1st class and their initiative and control of the situation, the cadets could not have withdrawn without further casualties.

After crossing the Han River, the cadets reassembled at Gwangjangri.¹ It was told that 300 or less cadets and policemen stopped and assembled there to receive further direction, and it meant that they suffered over 50 percent casualties during the first three days. The cadets' final destination was Suwon, but the rapid degradation of the situation made it impossible for them to continue to move on. It was Colonel Lee Han Lim, Deputy Superintendent who directed physically and mentally exhausted cadets and polices forces to hastily prepare for defenses there. For example, he ordered the policemen to set up security perimeter for the cadets' construction of defensive positions and obstacles around them. Once the construction was completed, he also directed the cadets to check Seoul citizens who were crossing over the Han River whether they were refugees or North Korean soldiers disguised as refugees.

4. The Battle in Geumgok

On June 30, the cadets had to move towards Suwon for commitment at the decisive time and place but on July 1 stopped again in Geumgok-ri, near Pankyo to build a new defensive line. This decision was made based on the fact that Geumgok was the best enemy avenue of approach towards Suwon after crossing the Han River. The cadet battalion was sent to Hill 110—located on the right of the road that ran between Seoul and Suwon—to deploy its forces, and the commanding post was located at Geumgok-ri. ROK 25th Regiment was deployed on Hill 130—on the left of the road—to defend it. It was not until the cadets and the regiments started to construct their defensive positions, the leading elements of battalion-size enemy were approaching towards Naksang elementary school. However, the enemy, not knowing where the cadets were, rested at the playground without proper security measures. The cadets and the ROK soldiers suddenly opened fire at the enemy and fired around 240 rounds from 60mm mortars, it almost totally destroyed them.² The battle of the next day they fought was totally different. The enemy with massive fire support mercilessly pushed forwards against the cadet defensive line and broke through the cadets' positions. The cadets and the enemy were mixed up together in hand-to-hand fighting for three hours and the cadets could hold their positions. But this battle had cost the cadets much precious blood. The cadets had to abandon their positions and began to retreat the next morning around 08:00 hours. On their way to Suwon, they were ordered to join the reserve forces of the ROK 1st Infantry Division and were then placed on Hill 237, 2.5km southwest of Pungdeokcheon (see Figure 3).³

¹ It is a village located in Dongbu myeon, Gwangcheon-gun, Kyunggi-do. General Kim Hong-II, former KMA superintendent threw earlier, who had served as a senior officer in the Chinese Army and had experience at commanding large combat formation, decided to conducted a dogged defense of the army at the Han River, occupying an area between Sihung and Suown. See Sun-Yup Paik, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Potomac Books, Inc., 1999).

² *The 50-year History*, 28-30.

³ *The 50-year History*, 28-30. See also, Sung-Moon Kang et al, *Korea Military Academy 50 Years* (Seoul, 1996) 116-118.

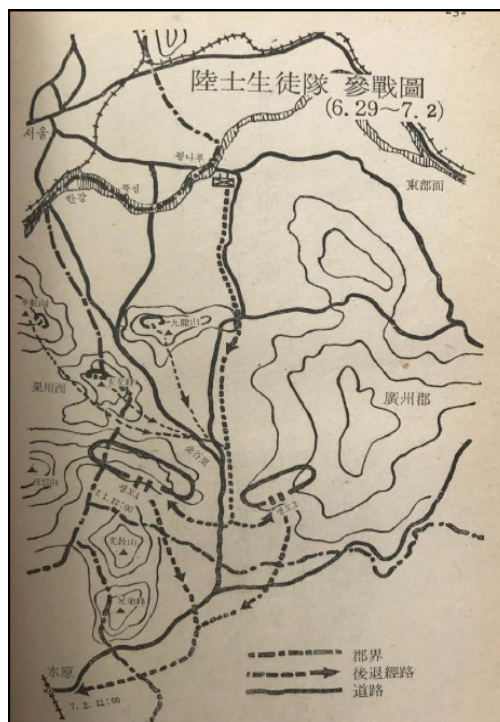


Figure 3. The KMA Cadets' Battles (June 29 ~ July 2, 1950)

The last battle of the cadets took place next day. The 1st Division and the cadets both mounted successful ambushes and blocked the advance of the KPA towards Suwon. However, the attack the enemy and its close-support tanks threw at the soldiers of 1st Division and the cadets were so overwhelming that they were forced to give up positions which they tried to hold at all cost. When the cadets regrouped at Daejeon, they discovered that they would be commissioned officers to fill vacancies occurred during the opening phase of the battle. When the war broke out, ROK Army had a desperate need for officer immediately sent to the frontline, no matter how shortly they were trained. The newly commissioned young officers called themselves “expendables.”¹

According to the statistics, the casualties from the 1st class occurred over about fifteen days between June 25 and July 10 were 108 out of 262 (over 41 percent). As for the 2nd class, 85 were killed in action or missing in action out of 277. There were 55 casualties from the 2nd class, in addition to 85 occurred at the previous battles.² While the surviving cadets from the 1st class were commissioned second lieutenants on July 10, 1951, the 2nd class could not join the officer corps because they had had only three weeks of basic training since their enrollment into Korea Military Academy. Given that the Academy was temporarily closed on July 8 due to the war, it was impossible for the cadets of 2nd class to receive necessary training to become officers. Despite their dissatisfaction, the 2nd class cadets were sent to Korean Military Combined School at Dongnae and became lieutenants with some seven thousand officers in forty-six graduating classes before being reallocated to various units.³

Unless we experience war, we may never find out how inevitable war is in the first place. Seven decades later our debate about the decision to send the young cadets to the frontline was whether reckless courage or bovine obduracy is far from over. While portraying their story as ennobling, the best we can do so far is to feel about the innocent and virtuous cadets' suffering through the embedded inscription in the commemorative monument (see Figure 4):

We,
Finish here where we first start,
After fleeting days in war,
In eternal flaming of fellows' hearts at rest
Sleep forever. (my translation)

We cannot deny that there is still a void in which we need to fill to make the early cadets' story become less a description of personal memories than our history to learn wisdom so as not to their “good deeds past” were devoured by a “great-sized monster of ingratitude.” In this regard, the manga-style illustration book on the early cadets' gallant story (2016) is an important project which allows readers in the age of the image to feel about

¹ Bo-Hi Pak, 59.

² *The 50-year History*, 33.

³ Bo-Hi Pak, 59.

their sufferings, since more powerful and more real than a narrative (re)presentation. Although it must have the potential to provide us with some emotional reaction to this tragic story, but we need to show a marked concern with facilitating contact with what has been untold or undiscovered about the early KMA cadets' battles throughout a variety of activities including interviewing veterans still living and conducting historical research. I hope that my presentation is part of the efforts to remind us of the glorious sacrifice they made to epitomize the honor of the KMA.

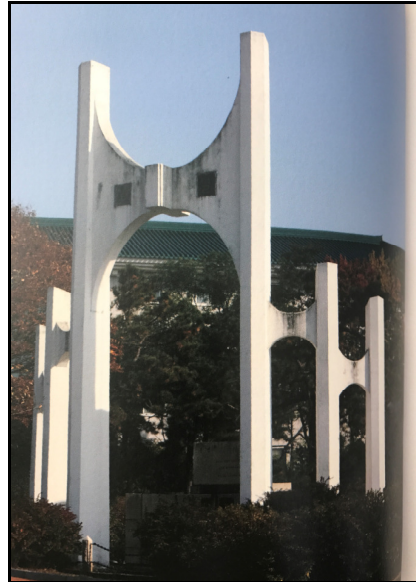


Figure 4. The Monument of Immortality

5. General Van Fleet and the KMA

I would like to conclude this paper by drawing your attention to General James A. Van Fleet. I teach Military



English to junior cadets. Of the chapters we take a look at is one called "The Blood-forged Alliance." In the chapter General Van Fleet is introduced as an exemplary military leader who epitomized noblesse oblige. We all know that General Van Fleet lost his only son Jimmy at the battlefield of Korea, and that his leadership was not disturbed through his son's death, even refusing his staff's proposal of sending out rescue and searching teams for his son's body, because he wanted to focus on his duty. Besides, he is also introduced a man who played a crucial role in the establishment of the KMA, modeled after the USMA at West Point.¹ Even after his retirement, he showed a continuing interest by starting a fund-raising campaign to build a library for the cadets (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Gen. Van Fleet's visit to the KMA in 1961

His unbending love for Korea and the KMA cadets is well expressed in his letter to the KMA cadets written on July 9, 1992, two months before his death:

Every day as I count my blessings my thought travel across the world to a country called Korea. A deep feeling of love for the courageous Korean people and their superb armed forces rekindles a multitude of cherished memories.....The KMA inculcates in the Corps of Cadets a high sense of DUTY to COUNTRY, an unqualified high sense of HONOR, the ability to reason logical conclusions, self-discipline and the WILL TO WIN. The Corps are future leaders of the Armed

¹ KMA Department of English, *Military English II* (Seoul: Bongmyung, 2009) 322. His crucial role in establishing the ROK Army as well as the KMA is well documented in Il-Song Park, "Republic of Korea Army," *The Ashgate research companion to the Korean War*, eds. James I. Matray and Donald W. Boose, Jr. (Abingdon, Routledge, 2016) 241-254. See also Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea KMA in Peace and War*, ed. Walter G. Hermes (Hawaii, University Press of the Pacific, 2005) 79-95.

Forces. There is an honorable profession a noble way to live a life. . . . Everytime a cadet passes my statue I want him to know that I am proud to see him standing tall for what he stand for.

The statue mentioned in his letter stands at the KMA with the following phrase:

General Van Fleet rendered distinguished services commanding the EUSA in 1951 to defeat the communist invasion. His feats were of international significance. General Van Fleet held a deep interest in Korea's welfare, giving his entire efforts and knowledge to revitalizing the civil sector. His love for humanity and undying spirit will live unto the next generations, and his accomplishments in both war and peace decorate the pages of world history (see Figure 6).



I entered the KMA in 1992, and I, everyday passing his statue and occasionally stood in front of it, might be one General Van Fleet felt proud of. I am blessed to work in my current job at KMA to tell the story of General Van Fleet so as not to his “love for humanity and undying spirit will live unto the next generation.”

Two stories I have combined in this paper are different, and yet have a similar journey. Their stories belonged very nearly to the same period—the beginning of the Korean War—and each story left its marks on me during my cadet's years in the 1990s, and now they bring me back to the very beginning of the KMA when the young men from within and without had to fall like flowers that were nipped in the bud before they had a chance to show their beautiful colors. From the beginning, tracing and uncovering the untold and forgotten stories of the cadets during the early history of the KMA have kept asking myself what I would have done, if I find myself in the same situation. So setting out on a quest to find a true answer to this question, I will continue to show what previous generations endures at the cost of their lives through further research in this field, and thus honor those who fought to live up to the KMA values.

Figure 6. Gen. Van Fleet's Statue at the KMA

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