Testimonies of former „Comfort Women" from Korea

Content:

Hah Sang suk

I was born in Sosan, South Chungchung Province in 1928. I had one younger brother and one younger sister. My parents made and sold yot(Korean sweet). I was sent to primary school but hated studying. In my third year of primary school, my father contracted pneumonia and died. My family was left with no money and my mother sold the inn she had managed to her sister, remarried, and moved to Yesan. At the age of twelve, I began work taking care of children in Jinnampo. After doing childcare for a year, I went to work in a factory.
One day in 1944, when I was sixteen, I went to play at a neighbouring friend's house and found the older girl wearing nice clothes and makeup. I asked how shed had earned the money, and she answered that she had gone to work in a Japanese factory. I suggested that this time, when she went to Shanghai, we go together. She agreed, and two days later a Korean man came looking for us at home. The man asked whether we wanted to go to China or Japan, and we answered China. My mother said Manchuria was too far and told me not to go, but I insisted on going.
It was sometime in June when I left. The Korean man took us as far as

Kyongsong, and we went to an inn near Jangchungdan. The inn was run by a couple, and there were already five other young women there who were older than me. Later, there was a total of about forty women, most of whom came from Kyongsang Province. The older ones said that women who went away did welcoming calls of “heitai (soldier)“ sang, and made condolence visits. The couple who ran the inn gave me the name “Kimiko“.
I got on a train carrying soldiers and left Kyongsong. I went through Pyongyang and Tenjin and arrived at Nanjing. Because I had had to transfer trains in Tenjin, I slept all night. I spent about two weeks in Nanjing, rode on a boat, and spent another two weeks in Wuhu, before finally going to Wuhan. There were also soldiers on the boat, but all of the civilians were Korean.
It was around December 1944 when I got out at Hankou. After a thirty minute walk, I and the other forty women arrived at Jokgyong village. Twenty of us went into some kind of house, named "Sanserio". The proprietors were from Pyongyang. When we first entered, we were examined by a doctor. We were given medicine, and injections to prevent pregnancy. We were presented to the the military department reponsible for „comfort stations“ and with the permission slip stating that women had to be older than eighteen was presented, my age was raised to eighteen.
The ‘comfort station' had two storeys, and was the third house in Jokgyong village. There were about twenty rooms, all with tatami floors. First, three Japanese soldiers came in, and after that, it was only soldiers. Usually, ten to fifteen soldiers came each day. If the soldiers gave money to me, I gave it to the owners in exchange for condoms and tissue. The amount was about one or two Chinese yuan, and the managers kept record of it in an account book.
On Sundays the soldiers waited in lines outside. Each soldier was alloted about one hour. When I refused to allow a soldier to go twice, I was sometimes beaten. Some soldiers showed up drunk and threatened to kill me. I fought with those who refused to wear a condom. If a soldier was dissatisfied with any of the women, he complained directly to the proprietor who then beat and kicked that woman. Of the military units of the time, I remembers "Sakura unit". There was a bathhouse. After servicing a soldier, I went to the bathhouse and washed with medicated water. Every Monday I went to a hospital in

Jokgyong village and was checked for sexually transmitted diseases. On the day before the examination, the groups of women examined each other with a device that resembled a duck's bill (a speculum). The owner hated it if anyone had contracted a disease so they covered cotton wool with dust and swabbed themselves. This way, even if there was an infection, it was possible to pass the examination. Women who contracted syphilis were hospitalized and treated with the 606 injection. They usually recovered within fifteen days.
There were no rest days, and the women couldn't leave the brothel. Once a month, we went to a bathhouse outside the Jokgyong village's iron gate. We were fed by Chinese people twice a day. The proprietors of the 'comfort station' bought us clothes and makeup but gave us no money. At first, I borrowed money for trainfare and clothing from the Korean man who brought me. He said that it would take three years of work to repay the loan.
Then, one morning, I heard that Japan had lost the war. The Japanese women in the next house were crying. The money I had received from the soldiers became useless and I threw it away. Koreans gathered in Jokgyong village. I could now return to Korea, but wondering what I could do after going back with this body, I decided not to go.
I remained in China, married a Chinese man who already had three children, and became their stepmother. I kept my Korean citizenship and still lives in Muhan, China. I wishes to visit my hometown, but because of citizenship problems it is a difficult process.

Song Shindo

I was born in Nonsan-gun, South Chungchong Province in 1922. I lost my father when I was twelve, and at sixteen, was persuaded by my mother to marry. I hated to marry, so the day of the ceremony, I returned to my natal family with nothing but the clothes I was wearing. However, it was impossible for me to stay with my family, so I took myself to a person I knew in Daejon. In Daejon, I eked out a a living doing embroidery.
In 1938, I was solicited by a middle-aged Korean woman to "go work and earn

money on the battlefield" because "it's not like marriage, and you can live alone". Living alone and not being married-this was exactly what I had in mind, and I followed up on the woman's proposition. At that time I had no idea I would turn out to be a comfort woman. When I went with the Korean woman to Pyongyang, there were a lot of women in their late teens gathered there. And on the way there, even though I asked what kind of work it was, the woman didn't answer.

From Pyongyang I was taken away by a Korean man. We crossed the border and passed through Hankou until I was taken to Wuchang. This was near the end of 1938, just after the Japanese forces had invaded Wuhan. Arriving inWuchang, I was taken to a military 'comfort station' for army use called "World View". The station was an enormous two-storey structure with a tile roof that looked like a remodelled Chinese store. The remodelling had been performed by a soldier who had been a carpenter. The fighting had just finished, and the 'comfort women' were forced to handle dead bodies. I was even had to wash blood stains off the walls. Upon arrival at Wuchang, we were all examined for sexually transmitted diseases. It was at this point that I who had left my home and come so far to work and be independent, first received the inexpressible shock of what I was about to do.

The proprietor of "World View" was a short Korean man. Just above Wuchang, there were some other 'comfort stations' called "Yamato" and "Kotobuki". There were a dozen or so 'comfort women' at "World View" and we were all Korean. We were not allowed to speak Korean, and even speaking familiarly among ourselves was prohibited.

Of all the women, I had the hardest time at "World View" I was so young I had not even begun to menstruate yet. The first time I was forced to service a soldier, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I couldn't stop crying, and I ran out. The first man to come in my room was an officer named Takahashi, and when he saw me run away crying, he didn't do anything and left. That officer reported it, and someone from the office exploded with anger at me. In the 'comfort station' office, I got very frightened. Since I didn't know where I was, I didn't speak the language, I had no money and no idea how to take the train, and the area was surrounded with soldiers, escape was impossible.

Even so, when the soldiers came into my room, horrifying and terrifying me, I cried and tried to run away. The manager slapped my cheek until my nose bled, withheld my food and shut me up in a narrow room. However, complete escape was impossible, and while crying, I became a tool for the sexual appetites of the soldiers.

At the ‘comfort station' I was called by the name “Kaneko“. I was forced to service dozens soldiers every day. Rest was not permitted during menstruation. Especially on Sundays, there were a lot of soldiers, and some of them demanded dominant and barbaric sexual acts. It was truly an unbearable life.

If the ‘comfort women' were too exhausted and tried to refuse the soldiers' demands, they were threatened with knives, beaten, and subjected to all sorts of violence. The scars still remain on my body. I can’t hear out of my right ear. The wounds of my time as a comfort woman are left behind on my body. Amid the growingly desperate soldiers, who wanted to die here as if dying at the hands of an enemy, there were those who demanded that I join them in seppuku. To me, who wanted to live under any circumstances, the orders for seppuku were terrifying.

Among the ‘comfort women' many caught tuberculosis, malaria, and sexually transmitted diseases. Patients were moved to separately prepared small rooms. Inside the rooms were also the dead left by enemy bombing. Some women, beaten by the manager for contracting disease or refusing the demands of the soldiers, out of despair went to the bathroom to commit suicide by drinking undiluted cresol solution. Others hung themselves.

At ‘comfort stations' it was a duty to use condoms. However, most of the soldiers didn’t. Because of this, many ‘comfort women' got pregnant. The pregnant women were not allowed a rest period, and some were expelled from the brothel. I got pregnant. I was forced to keep having sex, and my first pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth at seven months. I gave birth alone in my room. It was a difficult labour, and when the baby’s body came out, it was dark purple and already dead.

I lived at the “World View“ for about three years until I was expelled for getting pregnant. At a navy brothel in Hankou, I did chores like laundry and cleaning,

and after the birth, I was moved to Yuezhou. The baby born in Hankou was sent away to a stranger. I continued servicing soldiers in a ‘comfort station' in Yuezhou. In addition, I was taken to work in stations including ones in Anni , Choan, and Hoking.
The ‘comfort women' were increasingly sent closer to the front lines to work at brothels for special units. It was frightening to be brought onto the battlefield, but they had no choice. Particularly in these circumstances, there were no medical officers so the women weren’t examineded for sexually transmitted diseases, and they were always exposed to infection.
As the war got harsher, the lives of the ‘comfort women' also got more difficult. The ‘comfort women' were placed at the scene of the massacre of Chinese prisoners of war by Japanese soldiers. Holes were dug, the prisoners blindfolded, and killed with swords. Right after witnessing such acts of brutality, I had to serve liquor at a party. When the camp was empty and the security got lax, the ‘comfort women' had to do sentry duty as well. No one knew when the Chinese army would be attacking, so they lived quaking with fear.
Beyond being forced to live in such cruel cirsumstances, I the others received next to no payment. In the case of the regiment, there weren’t even nominal “wages“. Even when there was a little income, it was taken away as a “national defense donation“ so in actuality I was left with practically nothing.
Also, after leaving Hankou, I was passed through many ‘comfort stations' and gave birth twice, including the birth in Hankou. I had to leave the second baby with strangers. I had other pregnancies in addition to the two births, but because I was expelled for each pregnancy, I induced early termination with a folk remedy (at eight weeks, refrain from moving and eating for three days and then drink a mixture made from the root of a certain kind of plant). I was completely prevented from giving birth or raising her children.
In August 1945, I learned about Japan’s defeat through the ‘comfort station'. The army didn’t inform the women about it. At about this time, a Japanese soldier from another unit suggested that we leave together. I didn’t know how to get back to Korea and had no means of supporting myself, and because I was completely left on my own by the Japanese military, I decided to go to

Japan with the soldier and get married. However, as soon as we had escaped the hostile territory of China, the soldier abandoned me.
After being abandoned in Japan, I was introduced through a Korean-Japanese man to "H" another Korean-Japanese who owned a restaurant. I began to do kitchen work there. From then until H died, we lived together (although our relationship was never sexual). While H was alive, even though I felt like it was giving him trouble, I kept drinking every night. The battleground scenes never left my dreams. I lived alone after H's death, without any family, and racked with guilt over the two babies I had had to leave behind in China.
As mentioned above, I was with the Japanese military for seven years from age sixteen to twenty-three. As a "comfort woman" I was forced to live as a sex slave, thoroughly deprived of my human and sexual freedom. During that time, my life was continuously threatened, and after the war, I was granted no means to return to Korea. Left on my own, I had no choice but to pursue a life in Japan.

Chung Seo-Woon

I was born into a well-off family in Hadong, Southeastern part of Korea. My father refused to change his name into the Japanese name, when Japan forced all Koreans to do so. Also, when the Japanese authority confiscated all the brassware from each household, he dug the ground and buried them. Because of this, he was dragged by the police and detained.
The village head told me that the only way to save my father was that I went to work in a textile factory in Japan, so I left without hesitation. My mother passed away right after she gave birth to me, and my stepmother had no child of her own. Along with me was the daughter of town chief magistrate, also trapped by the Japanese military. Her father had slapped the chief of the police station and resigned.
Two men, one Korean and one Japanese, took us to Pusan, where we were let to a warehouse. Seemingly a thousand girls were kept there. The warehouse was full of tears. My braid was cut here against my will. I was given rice rolled

with laver, but I couldn't eat because of my worry about my father as well as fear for the future. Still today I cannot eat rice rooted with laver because it reminds me of that time. We stayed in this warehouse for about fifteen days. From Pusan we were sent by a ship to Simonoseki. Then abroad on a much bigger ship, we passed through Kwangdong, Saigon, Bangkok, Singapore and arrived in Jakarta, Indonesia. In Jakarta, all of us about 3,000 girls were sterilized. This was done by the military doctor in the Japanese military. I don't know what he did with the machine put into my private part, but I bled a lot. Later I found out that it was sterilization.

After the sterilization operation, those of us Korean girls were sent to various places in the South Pacific. Departed from the chief magistrate's daughter, I was sent to a Japanese military battalion. The "comfort station" was inside the army, and altogether 20-30 of us were placed there. A big room was for our common usage, and a tiny room fit for one person just to lie down, was given to each of us. I was called by a Japanese name, Kukuko(菊子). On average, about 50 Japanese soldiers came a day, and about 100 on weekends.

When I fainted, the soldier in charge poured water over me. I was also given the morphine shots. In the morning of weekends, shots were given in advance. This was done by force, whether we liked it or not. My upper left arm still has the burn-like scar, and inside is felt something hard, like a stone.

The soldiers used condoms. I was not infected by VDs, but addicted by the drug. We did not receive any money. Instead, military tickets were given, which were never exchanged into money.

The meals were prepared by the soldiers at the army dining room. Rice, miso soup and turnip pickle was all we had.

For the VD check, sometimes we went to the clinic, or sometimes the military doctor came to the "comfort station". We had no freedom to go out of the Station.

I wore a one-piece dress. There was no time to wear panties. The aboriginal people cleansed our place. When it rained for an hour during the day, we bathed with clothes on.

We did not know that Japan lost the war. We knew it only when the Allied Forced marched in. With fellow "comfort girls" I got on a car and went to a

concentration camp in Jakarta. We waited there for about a year, and I was able to return to Pusan in 1946. While in the camp, I found out that the daughter of the chief magistrate of my hometown committed a suicide. The most difficult thing to endure was the continuous rapes. Against this degradation and torment, she protested with killing herself. I thought I should survive for my father, since I was his only child.
When I came back home, I found my father sick in bed. After I had left, he was released form the police cell, but was shocked by the fact that I was taken as a "comfort girl". After 9 years in bed, he died. I was desperate to cut my drug addiction, and I succeeded.
I married a widower, but I couldn't bear any child, of course. I raised two stepsons, both of whom are married. I am independent now, with a separate family register. I earn my living as a middleman in the oriental medicine.

Ahn Jeomsun

Grandmother Ahn was born on January 2, 1928, in Seoul's Mapo district. In Fall, 1942, at age 13, she was abducted by truck in Mapo and taken to China, returning to Seoul in 1946, one year after the defeat of Japan and the liberation of Korea. She never married and lived constantly alone. Now she lives in Suwon City, in Kyeonggi Province, South Korea, with her nephew.

Editor's note:
We first visited Grandmother An's house on the afternoon of Sunday, July 7th, 2002. As at first she told us that she did not want to meet anyone, we feared that she would be unwilling to talk at all. But she greeted us with great warmth, and she began slowly and carefully to relate the story that she had silently kept inside for so long . As Grandmother An lived in a rented basement apartment by a Suwon City railroad track, we constantly heard the sound of trains passing by, in addition to the occasional sound of military planes taking

off from a nearby Air Force base. Grandmother An was clearly used to this noisy environment and didn't concern herself with it.

1.

I used to live in Seoul. In the Mapo district, on a street named Boksagol, my mother had a small shop. It was so small I don’t even know if I should call it a shop—it wasn’t even large enough to provide a living for the whole family. As my father died when I was young, my mother suffered a lot in raising us alone. Mother was married at twelve years of age, and at seventeen she gave birth to my older brother. Then I was born, and my younger sister, and at twenty-nine my mother became a widow.

My big brother was five years older than me. My sister was born in the Year of the Rooster, five years after me, and was very beautiful. Whether she's dead or alive, during the commotion of the Korean War we lost contact. I've been living without knowing for so long now.

I was born in 1928, in the Year of the Dragon, on the second day of the last month of the lunar year. The year came when I turned eight years old, and I was old enough to go to school. Following my mother's orders I went to Mapo Elementary School, but they told me that I was too young and had to wait another year. But when I went back after one year, they told me that I was too old and they couldn't accept me. So I had no choice but to go back home.[ii] After that I couldn't even cross the threshold of a school. So until the present, I've had to understand everything for myself, and I'm only somewhat able to read simple writing. But I never even thought of wanting to go to school, of wanting to study more, because I thought that I had to work in order to help my mother.

From that time forward, I worked as a domestic servant, looked after other people’s children and ran their errands, trying to make some money so that I could buy a little food or even barley (Editor’s Note: Barley, which was cheaper than rice, was often used in its place or mixed in with the white grains of rice to make what was called ‘barley rice'. Since my mother worked all the time at her shop, I had to do the house work as well. But at that time, I didn't know the meaning of suffering, and we all lived in such a difficult manner, so it's no

wonder that I thought of it as the way things had to be.
Now, too, sitting here quietly, I can just see our house on Boksagol Street in the Mapo district, even though it’s probably changed completely. Our house was in a mountain valley, with Mapo Elementary School on the left, not far away. And on the right was the Mapo prison.
At that time youth were dragged off for labor, dragged off by the Japanese military, you know. My older brother was almost dragged off that way. But my mother had decided to make sure that he was not taken away, so my brother was registered in the census as independent and without parents, as if he was the head of his own household, living alone.
And as we daughters also faced the threat of being dragged off for the "cheongsindae" (“volunteer labor corps“ my mother decided that my younger sister and I should be taken off our father’s family register and put on our maternal family’s. I think a lot of other families did likewise. So as my mother was named Mrs. Seok, we took the name Seok as well.ii
Even though we changed things in this way, our elder brother still lived with us in our mother's home. Fearful that it might be discovered that our brother was still living with us we hid him under our blankets, we hid his shoes, we brought him food, and took his excrement out of the house—I remember all of that vividly. Whether it was due to our efforts to hide him or not, anyway our brother was not dragged off. After liberation when I came back to the house he was still living with my mother and sister in this way.

2.
The year came when I turned thirteen, and it was fall. At that time the Pacific War had been going on for a while. It was 1942. The head of the neighborhood organization made an anouncement over the loudspeaker, asking all unmarried girls from one age to another (I can't remember precisely) to meet in front of the Boksagol neighborhood rice mill.
Mother heard the announcement, and suggested we go together to see what it was all about. In the Mapo district, Gongdeok neighborhood, on Boksagol Street there was a large rice processing factory. And in front of that rice plant there was a huge scale for weighing rice sacks. When I came, a little late,

different girls were already standing in a line with more girls and their families packed all around them. Besides the neighborhood people, there were Japanese soldiers in uniform, Japanese in civilian clothes, and other Koreans. Those girls were all being weighed on the rice scale one by one. Tall girls and healthy ones were being put in a truck. Japanese soldiers were putting the girls in the truck, lifting them up.

My turn came. I went up on the scale and I weighed in around fifty-five or sixty kilograms. From when I was very young I had a heavy frame, so even now I'm a little over sixty-two kilograms, and so then, at the age of fourteen, I was sixty kilograms. So those damned soldiers put me in the truck.

No matter how much I struggled, I wasn't able to resist the strength of the soldiers. As my mother cried and screamed “why are you taking my daughter, where are you taking her,“ she clung to the truck along with other mothers, fighting with the fury of demons. But it was no use. With our mothers crying and crying without end behind the truck, in this way I was forcibly carried away from Boksagol Street. The truck we had boarded started off after pulling the flaps down. For a good while as we drove we could hear the sound of our mothers crying as they followed the truck. There were about ten girls who were carried away with me from Boksagol Street. Together with us in the back of the truck were two Japanese soldiers with guns who guarded us, and there was another soldier in the passenger seat by the driver.

Although I'm not sure where it was, we later stopped for a moment and another group of girls boarded; we drove again, stopped, and another group boarded. In this way the truck was filled up with young girls. At that time I was thirteen, an age when you don't know anything. My heart was racing. I was scared, and I had no idea what I should do. I couldn't think. Living my whole life under my mother’s care, I had no idea what to do when I was suddenly faced with such a catastrophe, the tears wouldn’t even come out. In that dark, thrashing tent in the back of the truck, I had no idea where I was, and I became incredibly nauseous...

I’m not sure how far we went, but after a long time they put down the tent and told us to get off because we had to switch to a train. So we got off, and I found myself in a place that I had never seen before in my life. I couldn't read,

so I couldn't tell which train station we had come to, and there was no one to tell me. The Japanese didn't tell us either. So there was no way for me to tell, especially since I was so young, to know where we were.
Then we boarded a train and crossed a huge bridge, just like the one over the Han River. It was absurdly long. I don't know whether that bridge was in Chosun or in China, but when we arrived we were in China. As we exited the train at the station we transferred to a truck, and we traveled again for a long while, and then were let out. But where was this place?

3.
My god, I'd never seen such a place in my life. There were no mountains, no trees, no water, just covered with yellow sand like a complete desert. So it was a Siberian plain, or something like it. Water was very precious and there was nothing but sandy shoals. I really thought I must be in hell. Sometimes I saw houses made of tarp; sometimes, going out, I saw some rough-looking Chinese houses few and far between, shabby houses that looked like hobgoblins would come out of them.
The Japanese soldiers took us to an imposing house in the middle of that desert. I heard that the house had been inhabited by Chinese who had been forced to leave. It was a house made of clay, and the floors were not even tatami (Japanese straw mat flooring) or ondol (Korean style heated floors) but rather simply bare earth.
The Japanese soldiers assigned one girl to each room. That house, before we arrived, had been completely empty with no one living there but later after us more people also came.
For meals we were given balls made of rice, and, of course, there were no side dishes to go with it; we just ate the plain rice balls that they gave us. As I think about it now I can't seem to recall any taste. I don't remember anything other than being hungry everyday.ii
There was no water, just sand. So we were unable to clean or wash properly, and we couldn’t wash even wash our faces, not to mention our bodies. Well, you’d have to say our life was pretty pathetic. Sometimes the Japanese soldiers would bring us some piped water they had hauled in with a truck, and

then we would use a dish or whatever we could find to scoop out the water and wash ourselves. So you see, we couldn’t even wash our faces everyday but would go several days without washing at all.
In the comfort station the Japanese soldiers called me by a Japanese name, Yashita-san. Amongst ourselves there was no need to call each other by name either: if our ages were similar we called each other ‘friend' and if someone was older we called her unni (big sister). We had not much in the way of clothing, no underwear; we just given one-piece dresses that could be easily removed and only had a couple of buttons on top that opened and closed easily. At that comfort station there were no civilians, and all activities were carried out by Japanese soldiers: the preparation of food, the division and distribution of clothing, everything.
The first girls who went there were not kept together. Girls were sent to different places, and new ones would arrive. So the numbers would increase and decrease. So while at first there were six women who were let off there, later about ten women lived there constantly together.
While in the area surrounding that house we could find no civilians, the soldiers also did not live there constantly. The soldiers would go out to fight and come in waves to see us, constantly rotating.
We didn't stay constantly in that same house. We were rotated around, sometimes staying in places with only tents, sometimes in other shabby houses, and sometimes in bunkers deep in the mountains. As the war progressed, we had to follow the Japanese soldiers wherever they went.

4.
At that time, they treated us like we were animals, not human beings. From the very first day, they wouldn’t leave me alone. As soon as I got there, they threw around all kinds of curses and were doing that horrible, unspeakable thing. That…you know. How was I supposed to know anything? All those bastards who were there then are probably dead by now. Ah, actually, if they’re around the same age as me, they might still be alive.
It was the afternoon of the first day that I arrived. An officer with two studs on his sleeve came by. Then he came over to me but he only observed and left.

However, at night that officer came back with a long sword and demanded that I do a strange thing with him. But when I rejected him, he pulled out that long sword, demanding that I do as he said and making a huge uproar about killing me if I didn't. I was ever so scared. I was so frightened that I panicked and ran away.

The house where I hid only had a floor heater, not even a fire hole, and there was only a little hole in the wall just big enough for people to go in and out. Even though I wondered how the people living there could live under those conditions, that was still the one and only place that I could hide after I ran away. If I had been taken by that officer, I probably would have died that night.

As I was crying the next morning, one onni came over to me and said that I have to do as people like that officer tell me. That's the only way to stay alive, she said. She had been there before I arrived. But still, I really didn't want to do that act. So I resisted a lot and ran away a lot too.

As soon as the Japanese soldiers finished their breakfast, they would begin to descend upon us. There was no night and day for us. Saturday and Sunday were resting days, so the weekends were especially worse. I think I had to deal with about ten soldiers per day on the weekdays but more than that on the weekends.

When regular soldiers came they couldn't just stay as long as they wanted to. Instead, I think that the time they were allowed to stay was regulated and that I was supposed to serve a certain number of people . For that reason, those bastards were in a hurry and without even taking off their clothes, some of them would just put out that thing, their penis, and go off by themselves. There were others, though, who couldn't even take off their pants when they saw me and just left.

The sound of gunfire, the booming of cannons, the sound of airplanes being bombarded in the air—in the midst of all this, there was no way to relax or comfortably have relations with them. Also, this was something that could never happen.

There were some good Japanese soldiers, too, though. I can't remember their names now, but there was one Japanese soldier who would always hold my

hand, telling me how sorry he was for me. In Japanese, it was “kawaiiso, kawaiiso?(“you poor thing, you poor thing?. He didn’t try to sleep with me but would just sit. Sometimes officers would also come to sleep with me.
Even though the Japanese soldiers would curse and swear at us and do that horrible thing to us, too, there wasn’t any really excessive violence or anything like that. Since the officers were standing guard outside. Also, it was always so crowded with soldiers swarming all around that one couldn’t make a big fuss. The only thing was that if you didn’t do as they demanded, they would hit you with their fists.
Below, I was torn, turned inside out, bleeding...
Oh, just thinking about it?
When my flesh was turned inside out and I was bleeding from the wounds, the soldiers would take me to the hospital. However, what they called treatment was nothing but putting a little red “akajinkkeu?(betadaine). Having applied the “akajinkkeu,”” I would also get stains from the red “akajinkkeu?liquid all over my buttocks and dress. In spite of calling it a hospital, too, it was nothing more than a makeshift tent, and with the exception of one or two female nurses, everyone there was a man.
I think it was about half a year after I arrived at that place. I must have been about 15 years old. By then I had suffered so much at the hands of those jerks that I was torn up below to the extent that I was a complete wreck. I had caught a venereal disease. That disease was a really nasty one. I really suffered a lot. Because of that disease.
Venereal disease, we called it “baitoko?(“syphilis?in Japanese), here, below, many bumps that looked kind of like sesame seeds appeared, surrounding the entire genital area like a gate made of branches and twigs. It was itchy to the point of agony. After I followed the soldiers to the hospital to get treated, it hurt below so I touched it and discovered that it had been tied up with something like a thread. After a while, it just fell off by itself.
I also got shots. It was called #606; I did indeed get a lot of #606. Even after liberation when I was living in Daegu, I went to the hospital because I wasn’t cured yet, and they told me that I had to get #606 to be cured. So I also received #606 then.

Additionally, while I was at the comfort station, a huge tumor formed on my leg. Because of it, I almost died. I was at a loss—and there was such a fuss—because we thought that it was going to go all the way into my leg and affect my bone too. For this, too, there was no other treatment. They just spread akajinkkeu on it and then sprinkled it with some yellow powder—that was the entire "treatment.?Well, I'm not really sure why that appeared. (Editor's Note: According to a specialist, this type of symptom can arise when one has been infected with syphilis.)

I never even saw a 'satku?(condom). Also, where's the time to use it? When I think about it, that was why I couldn't help but be infected with so many diseases.

Before I was taken I didn't have my period. After I went there, it must have been when I was sixteen. I began menstruating, you see. But the bastards kept coming even during my period. That didn't stop them but they would get so insanely mad and curse, but would still do it.

Since I cried a lot because it was so hard for me, that onni who had been there before me came up one day and giving me a cigarette, told me to try smoking. If I did, she said it would be a lot better? That's how I started smoking, and even now, I can't quit. Now, cigarettes have become husband and children to me.

She was also the one who let me try opium. Instead of blowing it out right away, you're supposed to hold the opium smoke in a little after you've inhaled. I tried it that way, then: my heart started throbbing; I seemed to lose all my senses; I didn't know whether I was awake or asleep; and I didn't have any feelings. So after smoking opium about three times, I didn't smoke it again.

I think that girl had probably been there from a much earlier date than I had. I would see her snap back at the Japanese soldiers when they said things to her. Also, even though I don't know how, she must have had connections with the Chinese people outside the comfort station since she would get cigarettes and opium.

I think I saw around two pregnant women. However, I never saw anyone give birth. I think I heard that they did something with them at the hospital.

There was no separately set aside resting time, but when there weren't any

soldiers, you would know to rest on your own. There wasn't really anything that we could or would do while resting, though. There were some women who cried, some who just stared at the heavens worrying, and people like that. It was in this way that I spent three years at the comfort station.

5.

It was when I was seventeen that the war ended but at first we didn't even realize it. We could never meet people like civilians; Japanese soldiers made up our entire world.

However, I did see Chinese people attacking and killing Japanese soldiers with their fists and knives. We were almost killed by the Chinese, too, but thankfully they realized that we weren't Japanese women but Chosun women who had been forcefully taken to those camps to serve as comfort women. Because of that, the Chinese people actually helped us instead of attacking us. For that reason, several over women and I were able to walk out of there with the help of the Chinese.

On the way, I would sleep in empty houses andeat the food that I could get from others. In that way I walked for a little over one week and finally came to Beijing. It was there that I met a man in the Independence Army, a Mr. Yoon from Chuncheong Province. Upon hearing about my situation, Mr. Yoon and his wife said how pitiable it was and said that from then on I should travel with them.

Thereafter, I lived with Mr. Yoon and his wife for about eight months in Beijing. I would wash the laundry, clean the house, and cook; Mr. Yoon and his wive really treated me well. There were a lot of other people from the Independence Army who would visit Mr. Yoon's house in Beijing, and they had many meetings and discussions amongst themselves.

Liberation came around April of the following year, and I left Beijing with Mr. Yoon and his wife for Chunjin, where we waited for a boat to take us back to Chosun. In that place, also, I saw a lot of Japanese who were killed when they were discovered by Chinese people.

There were three boats among which the people were divided, and I got put on the third boat together with Mr. Yoon. Instead of getting off as soon as we got

to Incheon, though, we had to stay on the boat for another week. I heard that there was an epidemic going around Chosun. Also, when I got off the boat, they sprinkled white DDT powder all over my body.
After getting off the boat, I was separated from Mr. Yoon and his wife. I couldn't express my thanks or even say goodbye properly.
While getting off the boat, everybody who got off in front of the boat received something like 800 won or 700 won. Adults got 1000 won, children 700 won, and I think I might have gotten 800 won. After receiving that, I got on a train going from Incheon to Seoul and was able to finally find my house by asking and asking different people how to get to Boksagol Street in Gongduk, Mapo. By asking people along the way and finding myself back in the Mapo area of Seoul, I also met my mother on her way back from the river's edge in Mapo, where she had gone early every morning with rice cakes to pray that I could somehow make it back home.
It was around 3 or 4 in the morning then. You can't imagine how happy we were?Looking back now, I believe it was because of my mother's prayers that I was able to meet Mr. Yoon, receive his help, and safely return to my hometown in the midst of all of the hardship and especially confusion at the end.

6.

Coming from Chunjin to Chosun, I also threw up a lot on the boat, and when I came home, perhaps because I could finally relax at home, I was ill and laid in bed for three months. They said it was malaria: one day my whole body would feel as if it was on fire; another day I wouldn't hurt at all and would be fine. At that time, my whole family thought that I was going to die. Since there was no special kind of medicine back then, I barely recovered after eating all different kinds medicinal herbs that my mother got for me.
Also, from then on I began to work hard in order to eat and live again. I helped out at other people's stores, worked as a maid in wealthy people's homes, and lived in that way.
Because when I came back from the comfort station I was still only seventeen years old, I was still pretty young. Although I heard constantly that I should get married I hated the thought of marriage or men. A woman in my

neighborhood kept nagging me so once I finally went out to meet the son of the family that ran our neighborhood Western-style clothing store; I guess he fell for me because he would wait in front of my house every day. But I really hated seeing him. If you just said the word "man",I would shudder. All I had to do was see a man to be reminded of the comfort station, and it disgusted me. That's way I hated the very idea of marriage or men, and I was always running away from him.

As I was deceived into doing that terrible work and forced to do such terrible things, of course I couldn't marry. Also, after going through such suffering, how could I turn my life into some rosy, picture perfect movie by getting married? However, when I see other people married, living together so happily with their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, together in harmony, I really envy them. My insides ache. Because of that terrible time, the springtime of my youth was lost.

Then the Korean War broke out. Trying to escape from the confusion of the war, I left for a shelter in Oaegwang, Taegu City, North Kyeongsang Province, where there was an American military base, a supply base, which supplied rice and blankets, a base involved in transporting food to the front lines at the height of the war. I passed the war washing laundry for the American soldiers in exchange for food, chocolate and candies. When the war ended I got a job in a friend's store in Kangwon Province, made some money, and moved down once more to Taegu at around thirty years of age, where I lived alone and had a restaurant. And then about ten years ago I came up here to Suwon and am living here. But now the government provides me with money for living and housing, so my life has become so much more comfortable...

If I think of my suffered at the hands of those bastards, my chest still trembles in this way.¡¡Because of those bastards I was robbed of the springtime of my life. To this day I was unable to marry; I caught anything you could call a disease; I am growing old without a family of my own; and I have to live depending on my maternal nephews.

Well, I wasn't going to say anything because what kind of a good thing is this to tell, but Japanese government continues to tell so many lies. Until now they haven't come forward with an apology or reparations, and because I'm

exasperated, I've decided to come forward with this testimony.

Gang Duk-Gyung

Gang Duk-gyung was born in 1929 in Jinju, South Gyungsang province, and lived with her grandparents after her father died and her mother remarried. Her grandparents were well off, and she was sent to elementary school. In 1944, when she was 16 (in Korean age) and in the first year of high school, she was sent to Japan with the first group of the Women's Volunteer Corps to an airplane plant in Hujiko in Japan.

The Women's Volunteer Labour Corps

I was born in February 1929 in Sujung ward, Jinju, South Gyungsang province. My father died when I was young, and my mother remarried, so I was brought up mostly by her parents. My grandparents were comfortably off. Bongnae Elementary School was not far from where I lived, but I was sent to Yoshino Elementary School, now known as the Jungang Elementary School. I am one of those who graduated in the thirty-first year of the school's existence. After six years of education, I stayed at home and did nothing. My mother didn't think this was gook, and sent me to a new secondary school. The school was founded the same year I began to attend, and it had only a single class of about 60 pupils.
In June 1944, when I was still in the first year of classes, I joined the first Women's Volunteer Labour Corps and was packed off to Japan. My teacher was Japanese, and he came to me and told me to join the Corps, saying I would be able to continue my study and earn money at the same time. My mother was strongly against it, and wept and pleaded with me not to go, but I had made up my mind. Two girls from my class, the head girl and I, went. The head girl was the brightest of all of us, and came from a wealthy family. Fifty girls from Jinju were gathered to join the Corps. Fifty more boarded our train at Masan, and there were 50 more waiting when we arrived at the port of Busan, making

150 in total. Before we left, we all trooped to the county office. A farewell ceremony was held in the yard which the county head attended. My friend read the Corps?statement of allegiance. We didn’t have any ceremony when we left Jinju. We left by ferry the following morning. As we boarded the ship we began to weep. Two army ships and a number of planes formed our escort. Our ship had three decks, and we were stationed in the very bowels.
We arrived at Shimonoseki, boarded a train and were taken to an airplane plant in Fujiko City, Toyama prefecture. We were greeted by a middle-aged couple as we arrived. They showed us round the plant, and demonstrated how to work a lathe. The place was huge : it looked larger than the whole town of Jinju at that time. And there were many, many workers there. It was surrounded by walls, and guards were posted on the gates. We reached the plant by walking from our dormitory. We were given brownish uniforms and caps. The jackets had Women’s volunteer Corps sewn on them. We wore clothes we had brought with us in the dormitory, but we had to wear uniforms in the plant. We also had to don caps whenever we worked.iiOne girl who did not wear her cap caught her hair in the machine, and she was dragged in and killed.
Our dormitory was near the main gate. The supervisor was a man, but we had a few female supervisors who helped instruct us. Before we started work, they took us on and outing to the coast near the border of Shinminato and Fusiki where many Koreans lived. We went to a village to get water, and were welcomed by Koreans, who asked if we had come from the homeland. We were delighted to meet them and there were hugs all round. The food in the plant was too bland for us, with no seasoning, so we asked the Koreas for salt. We also noted where the village was in case we ever got the chance to return.
We worked twelve-hour shifts, switching from days to nights every week. Our job was to cut components on the lathes. We had to do this with great care. Sometimes the material was so hard that the bit burned, and we would have to wait around for the machine to be repaired. All of us from Jinju used lathes, while the girls from Julla cut steel. Once, I found some of the steel so attractive that I took it back with me to the dormitory. But a supervisor took it from me, saying I could be arrested as a spy. I remember hearing that our

wages would be saved, but we never saw any savings books. The work was hard and we couldn't tolerate the hunger. We were given cooked rice, soya bean soup and pickled radish, but in tiny quantities. We would sometimes count each grain of rice so that we could savour it, or we sometimes gobbled the whole lot in just three spoonfuls. Some girls saved some of the rice to eat later. For lunch we would get three small slices of soya bean cake, tabu, which we often ate before lunch because of our ever-present hunger. When we were on night shifts we got breakfast after work then nothing until the evening. We were on night shifts we got breakfast after work then nothing until the evening. We were so hungry we sometimes stole food meant for different rooms. We little thought that the girls in other rooms might starve because of us. I was so hungry I sent my grandparents a postcard asking for food. They sent salt and beans, which temporarily appeased the hunger. I regretted the fact that in childhood I had often worried my grandmother by refusing to eat properly.

There were three older Japanese women who worked in the plant. They commuted from their homes and brought packed lunches. Sometimes I sent a postcard asking my grandmother to send washing soap, and exchanged this with the Japanese women for rice or salt. Because of hunger and overwork, one of the girls from Julla went crazy and was sent back home. Later, another girl pretended to by mad, rolling about on the road, but we are only soya bean cake rations meant for our tea. We would cry ourselves to sleep, crouched around the stove.

The dormitory rooms were the size of twelve tatami mats, and a dozen or so girls slept in each. We each had three sets of bedding including mats and quilts. The dormitory was so huge we never saw all of it nor knew who slept where. There were no Japanese women, and we Korean were grouped according to our home towns, Jinju, Mans, Chulla province, and so on. Amongst those of us from Jinju, my friend was named captain and I her deputy. I don't remember who gave us these nicknames. I don't remember that we did anything special, except that we wrote the words to a song, which I can still remember. The words were in Japanese and accompanied a military song we had learned earlier in our school:

Ah, across mountains and seas,
We, the Women’s Volunteer corps, have come thousands of miles.
The Korean peninsula, seen far away on the horizon,
Our mothers?faces shine from there.

As the snow fell, we Jinju girls would walk around singing.
Once, the girls in our room staged a strike. We agreed to stay in bed and to refuse to get up one morning. When the supervisor came to wake us, we remained with our eyes closed, pretending to be sleeping. The set hour when we were meant to start work passed and we didn’t go. But we received no food and were heavily reprimanded. About two months after we arrived, we had become so hungry that we tried to run away early one morning. My friend and I ran to a Korean in Shinminato, whom we had met before. However, the supervisors somehow found out where we were and came for us. We were taken back and slapped on the face many times. We were scolded severely, and told we should set a good example not try to run away. Fifty more girls came from Jinju later. Among them, Kang Youngsuk was one year younger than me. I scolded her and told her she should never have volunteered, saying how hard life was. We looked for an opportunity to run away, and after a while my friend and I seized our chance again.

A Comfort Woman

It was night. We sneaked under the barbed wire, and ran in the opposite direction from the one we had taken during our previous escape attempt. We wandered around not far from the plant but were seized by a military policeman. We had promised to stay together whatever befell us and held hands tightly, but I found myself alone when I was thrown into a truck. I was left alone with the policeman and a driver.
My captor had three stars on his red lapel. I didn’t know his name or rank at first, but later found out his name was Coporal Kobayasi Tadeo. He sat with the driver through the journey, but half-way through stopped the vehicle and told

me to get off. It was very dark; nothing was visible. He raped me. I had no experience of sex. So I was too scared even to try resisting. If such a thing happened now, I would kill myself by biting my tongue off. But at that time I was scared and helpless.

We got back on the truck and rode further until we arrived at an army unit. Two guards stood outside, and behind the buildings was a tent. My captor took me there and told me to stay put. There were already five or so women there, who looked at me in a daze and said nothing. Soon, day dawned. The tent was partitioned into five or six cubicles. Mine was the size of one and a half tatami, but had no actual mat. I slept on a simple military bed. Most of the women were older than me, and at first I was scared and not sufficiently composed to talk with them, so I didn't realize what we were there for.

Some three days later, Kobayasi came and had sex with me again. Then, other soldiers began to come. I served about ten a day. No one came during the day, although they would visit on Saturday afternoon.ⅰiNo one stayed overnight except for Kabayasi. He came often. We women generally slept in one place. Our number was less that the number of soldiers, so we couldn't have any days off. I remained scared, and my abdomen hurt a lot, so I didn't get a chance to think about anything else. The soldiers form other units would sometimes take us out. I was called Harue, and if a soldier called one of our names, that particular woman had to follow him, carrying a blanket. We had to serve countless soldiers on the wild mountainside. My abdomen, my womb, throbbed wit pain. I had to serve so many men. Afterwards, I would be unable to walk back to the tent, and the soldier would have to drag me off the mountainside. I can't describe in words the misery I endured.

Kobayasi brought me clothes, and I also had the clothes I had been wearing when I ran away from the plant. Our food came from the army, and I remember balls of cooked rice. We ate on a low table on the ground. Kobayasi sometimes secretly brought me extra balls of rice and dried biscuits. I was scared at first, but later I stopped being afraid of him. I didn't get any medical examination. After some time, the army unit moved. The soldiers boarded a long, khaki vehicle which looked like a posh taxi and three trucks. We women got on one of the trucks with other soldiers. We moved in the dark.

It probably took less than a day to arrive at the next site. As we drove along, I could see a river on one side and mountains on the other. The new site was near water, perhaps a lake or a broad river, and was surrounded by fields and trees. A lot of snow had fallen. The army compound was huge with flat-roofed low buildings built haphazardly. Unlike where we had been before, there were quite a number of private residences. We were taken to a house which also had a flat roof. The entrance led to a corridor off which there were many rooms. Each had a window facing the back yard. Each had tatami mats. There were about 20 of us housed there, in quite crowded conditions. Those who had been there when we arrived often went out, on some days leaving just five or six of us. The unit was large, but not many soldiers came. We served maybe five of six a day. Some stayed overnight. There was no exchange of money or tickets. To the left of the entrance was a large room, and to the right was a row of small rooms. We would usually sit in the large room while the soldiers queued up outside the door then walked in. Each soldier would call out for the woman he wanted, and go whth her into one of the small rooms. Each room was big enough for two people to lie in, leaving just a small space. Each had a mattress, blanket and hot water tin. We were told to place the tin under our feet or to cuddle it when it was cold, but I don't remember a very cold winter when I was there. I had regained my bearings somewhat since the move, and now began to ask questions of one of the women, Boksun, or of Kobayasi. Boksun and I lived in the same building. She said she had been there the longest of all of us, and she certainly looked over 30. I asked her how far we were from Toyama and where exactly we were. She replied that she didn't know Toyama and told me the name of the place where we were, although I can't remember it now. She also said that the civilian bastards who controlled the station kept all the money involved although they were meant to give it to us. She said "Poor you, you were seized by a soldier, yet you don't get paid? I tried to befriend Kobayasi, believing that I might be able to run away if I coaxed him sufficiently. I smiled at him for the first time, and asked if it was far to Toyama. At first, he refused to tell me anything, saying our location was a military secret. But later he told me this was a place prepared for the Emperor to escape to. He said the Emperor would be coming. On some

occasions he refused to say anything, claiming the answer to my question was a military secret, but at the same time he promised to let me go home soon. Once he asked if I had worked at the plant. I think he knew my past. I didn’t speak to any soldiers except Kobayasi. I fell ill and, in my misery, wrote a song with a borrowed pencil.

Ah, crossing from one mountain to another,
I came to the Women’s Volunteer Corps a thousand miles away from home ;
But I was captured by a sergeant
And my body torn asunder.

I set these words to a military tune I had learnt at the plant. One day, I sang it to Kobayasi, but he quickly stopped me. From then on, he didn’t visit me as frequently as before. I don’t think I spoke to anybody except for Kobayasi and Boksun. Whenever I bumped into any of the other women, we would exchange glances and nod. I remember hearing their names, Meiko, Akiko, and so on, when soldiers called for them. I lived in my own world.
I remember several men who wore khaki but no rank badges and who visited the comfort station often. They brought our meals, but we women didn’t eat together. The rice was always short, although we also had soya bean soup and pickled radish. Once in a while they would give us fried plants culled from the mountains. Once. Kobayasi, in a somewhat drunken stupor, brought me sushi. Boksun sometimes went out in the evening, to where I don‘t know, and came back having had a gook supper. When asked by the others where she had been, she would simply say ‘the house over there? Sometimes she brought some garden vegetables back. Kobayasi continued to bring me clothes. I didn’t wear a Japanese kimono, but rather blouses and skirts. I was always ill and wanted to stay in bed, so I hardly ventured outside. I found it difficult to walk straight because of the pains in my abdomen. Boksun sometimes told me that many soldiers would soon come from the south, and I became scared of Saturdays, when most of the men came, more than death. I stopped thinking about anything except running away.

Return

One day, it fell strangely quiet. I walked with one of the women to the unit. There were no guards in sight and inside all the soldiers were weeping, crouched on the ground. We couldn't understand what had happened, so walked to the street, where we heard people shouting in jubilation. There was a Korean on a truck, holding a flag, and the street was crowded with people from many places. They seemed to be men drafted by the Japanese. I grabbed another Korean and asked what was going on, where he was going, and pleading with him to take me with him. He reeled back in surprise and asked what I was doing there. I didn't tell him I had been a comfort woman. I just asked him to take me to Toyama, since I thought Koreas lived only in the area around Shinminato. He said he would take me to Osaka, and I rushed back to the station, quickly packed and jumped on his truck. Two or three of the women took the truck together, while the others went their own way. In Osake, the driver gave me some balls of cooked rice and asked someone to take me to Shinminato by truck or train.

I went to Pang, the man who had given me food when I first ran away. He asked me where I'd been and what I'd done, and I told him. He let me stay until I could leave for Korea. I helped cook and launder for four or five months until, in the depths of winter, Pang, his family and I traveled to Osaka. We boarded an unlicensed ship. His wife had died, and he was living with his children. He was dating a Japanese woman in the neighborhood, and she also came with us. It was this woman who noticed I was pregnant, even before I knew it. When I had first been seized by the military police, I had never had a period. I had begun to bleed a little when I was in the second comfort station, and I must have become pregnant almost immediately afterwards. I tried to throw myself off the ship as we crossed the sea to Korea, but this woman sensed what was going on and followed me everywhere, making it impossible for me to take my own life. Pang came from Julla province, and we went to the town of Namwon when we got to Korea. Returnees were put up in the Kuksu guest-house, which had been run by the Japanese during the occupation. The repatriates stayed in one section while the National Defence Corps were

billeted in another. I gave birth in January 1946, and Pang's woman helped with the birth. I stayed on for a few more months. Although the woman loved pang and had willingly come to a foreign country to live with him, she found it difficult to settle down and decided to return to Japan. On her way to Busan to find a ship bound for Japan, she took me to Jinju.

When I got home, my mother told me I couldn't live at home with my son, She was sorry for me, so asked a distant uncle to take me to Busan. He went with me to a large orphanage managed by the Catholics, and I left my child there. He found me work in Pyunghwa restaurant in Choryang. From there I could visit the orphanage to see my son every Sunday. Bt when I got there one day I noticed another child wearing my son's clothes, and discovered that he had died of pneumonia. He was only four years old. I never saw my dead child with my own eyes, so I found his death difficult to accept. I have never married. From then on I did all kinds of work, waiting in restaurants, selling things, helping with housework, keeping a boarding house, and so on. Maybe I am ill-fated, because something would go wrong or I would be taken ill every time I was about to be able to save some money. I don't even have a proper house that I can rent now. I become ill very easily. When I was young, I used to roll around my room with period pains. I had to have injections to relieve the throbbing. And I bled copiously. I went to herbal doctors and to a gynaecological surgery. I would even have danced naked if I could have been relieved from so much suffering. The doctors told me that the lining of my womb and my fallopian tubes were infected. My periods, which had started properly only when I was 18, stopped before I reached 40. Since then, I have had no monthly pain, but I have been hospitalized several times with bladder infections.

The reason I came forward to report to the Council was to pour out my resentment. I have tried to write down my experiences several times, but because I have had to move so often, I kept losing the notes. I am telling my life story so that nobody else will ever have to go through the same things as me. I think we must try to get what we justly deserve from Japan: a proper apology and proper compensation. There are still some who say that what we did is shameful, but they are indeed ignorant people.

Kim, Bok-dong

It was when I was in the fourth grade in elementary school. My mother told me that I had better stay at home since these were uncertain times, so I stopped schooling and was just staying at home. Scared of being drafted by the Japanese, my sisters were married off early and had left away from home.
I remember it was one day in the spring of 1941 when I was fifteen. A Japanese man in yellow clothes visited my house with a village-head and told my mother to send me to "daishin tai" for the empire, since she had no son. Otherwise, he added, my family would be traitors and unable to live here. He also said that "daishin tai" meant to go to work at a workshop producing army uniforms. He forced my mother to sign on the document. Despite my mother's resistance, I ended up being drafted in this way.
I arrived in Guangdong via Taiwan. Until then I still believed I was going to a workshop. However, an army surgeon gave all of the girls an examination for venereal diseases and assigned to the comfort station where I began my nightmarish days. The first night there?The army surgeon who examined us came to my room. I was so scared of his coming that I ran away to the backyard and hid myself into the bushes. He chased me and then hit my face badly. After being beaten for a while, I felt numb on my whole face. In this way my life was ruined. Each room had its own number and we were not allowed to go out. If it was necessary, we could go out only after the soldier's examination. During weekdays I received about 15 soldiers a day, but it seemed more than 50 during weekends.
We moved from Guangdong to Hong Kong, and then to Singapore after about three months. In Singapore sometimes we went on official trips to army bases located in deep valleys. There were so many soldiers rushing in that I could not even stretch my legs at night. After staying in Singapore for several months, we were on the move constantly to Sumatra, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Java to receive soldiers there. Suddenly, the soldiers stopped coming. The war was over. However, we didn't learn of our liberation.
One day the Japanese soldiers took us to the 10th Army Hospital in Singapore and trained us in nursing to disguise us as nurses. After for a while, we stayed

in a US POW camp and then took a ship for Korea to come back home. I left home at 15 and came back at 20; it had been five years.
Shocked when I told her that I could not get married because of being a comfort woman, my mother died of sorrow. She died wishing for me to get married and have children and a happy life. So I followed her wish and got married, but ended up failing in marriage as I could not have a child. I opened my own small store and have had my living.
One day on TV I came to learn of an activity to resolve the "comfort woman" issue and then made my report on January 17th, 1992. Afterward I worked hard telling of the crimes committed by the Japanese army. In June 1993 I went with the Korean Council to the World Human Rights Conference held in Vienna to make a testimony about what I had been through and to demand acknowledgement and compensation from the Japanese government. Reflections and testimonies of my horrible experiences were just as hard and painful as if I were repeating the same experience again right now. However, I wanted to tell of who ruined my life like this. I also wanted to speak out about the comfort women issue that is neither over yet, nor resolved for all the victims who have survived and suffered like this.
It was probably in 1995 that the Japanese government said that it would not compensate, instead, it could give us "Asia Peace Fund for Women". I really felt humiliated. I wondered if my testimony to the world to disclose the Japanese army's crimes was simply regarded as a gesture for some money. When I began to give my testimony and work for the comfort women issue, Japan first dishonored us saying that there was no coercion and we did it out of our own will to make money. Then now they attempt to solve the issue with money while we have demanded they accept legal responsibilities. Therefore, I was opposed to the civil fund.
My body is still covered all over with wounds. I cannot even properly digest a spoonful of rice, so that I have to depend on digestive medicines to eat. I feel sore all over my body as if I am pricked with pins. While other seniors have happy lives full of love from their children and grandchildren, I have had such a lonely life without children. Who made my life such a miserable one?
I don't know when I'll die. Going to bed at night, I wonder if I can really

achieve my wish and smile as I say goodbye to this world. The Japanese government seems to be waiting for us to die. However, it is really an absurd attitude. Shouldn’t it resolve this issue and its wrong past quickly and start a new future with its Asian neighbor countries?

Bark Young Sim

I was born on December 15, 1921 in Nampo City, and I am the eldest daughter in a family of two girls and two boys. When I was young I lost my mother and was raised by my stepmother. When I was fourteen I was sold to a shop that made Western suits to work as a maid. In 1938, when I was seventeen, I was told by a Japanese police officer that I could work in a factory and make a lot of money. He took me to Pyongyang. From there, I was loaded onto a freight car and then a car with some other women and we were taken to Nanjing. I became a ‘comfort woman?'. I was in a three-story brick building in Nanjing that was at Kinsui- rou ‘comfort station'. There I was called by the Japanese name “Utamaru“. I had to service up to thirty soldiers every day. One day I was really in pain and when I didn’t respond to the demands of one officer, that bastard beat me with his fists, kicked me with his boots, took a long knife and held it up against my throat and asked me how I’d like to try the ‘taste' of the Imperial Army, and he cut me. The blood poured out and soaked my whole body, but that bastard officer went out to satisfy his lust. Other ‘comfort women' who caught diseases and became malnourished were carted out or often dumped in the river to drown. I also saw two Japanese army privates stab a pregnant woman in the belly and kill her. I was there for three years. After that I was taken under the escort of two Japanese army privates by train and boat through Shanghai and Singapore to a ‘comfort station' in Rashio, Burma. I was there for two years and I was called “Wakaharu“ there. The ‘comfort station' was deep in the mountains and nobody lived in the area. The name of the ‘comfort station' in Japanese was “Itkakuro“. During the day I had to service about ten army privates, and at night I had to serve the officers. The privates brought condoms.

In 1944 I was loaded onto a car in Lashio and taken to Lameng, and I stayed there until the end of the war. The comfort station was a converted private house. Every day I had to service between thirty and forty army privates so I was always in real pain. Just after I arrived in Lameng, the Allied bombing began. The ‘comfort women' made rice balls and gave them to the soldiers to eat, and during the bombing when they went into the air-raid shelters, we still had to run out into the fire to carry back rice for them. At first there were between twelve and fifteen ‘comfort women' but after the all the bombing and so on only four were left alive. The soldiers who came most frequently were a soldier called Tani from the accounting department and an officer called Ota Minoru. I heard that soldiers were burning their banners and I thought that Japan had lost. The soldiers didn’t say anything to the ‘comfort women' about what to do and they all just ran away by themselves.

The four ‘comfort women' left were really frightened and we went into an air-raid shelter, but we were discovered by Chinese soldiers and taken out. We were given a trial by an American officer. I had been pregnant when we were discovered by the Chinese soldiers, and I was transported with the other three women in a car to Kunming prisoner of war camp. Just after we were taken to the Kunming camp, I started to bleed between my legs and I was put in the camp hospital. A Chinese doctor did some surgery and aborted the baby and removed my uterus. I spent about a year at the camp.

When I was released from the prisoner of war camp in February 1946 I took a boat to Incheon and then a train through Seoul and Cheongdan, and I returned to my hometown after being gone for nine years. About five or six months after going home I got married but I couldn’t have children so I brought home a baby boy from a foster home and raised him. In 1971 my husband got cancer of the larynx and passed away, so my son supports me. My family now includes my son and his wife, and my grandson and granddaughter. I worked as a supervisor at a factory and retired in 1976. I have heart disease and had a nervous breakdown, and I often suffer nightmares.

Yun Tu-ri

In 1943 when I was sixteen, I was working at a workshop in Pusan producing army uniforms. I could not finish the amount of work done in a day by 6:00 in the evening, so usually I had to continue until 9:00 p.m. and go back home. However, the Japanese manager in the workshop often tried to forcibly take me, so I had to find another workplace. On my way back home, I happened to pass by in front of the Southern Pusan police station. A policeman called me in. Believing that it would not be any problem since I hadn't done anything wrong, I entered the police station and found there were several more girls inside. We were told to stay there and then we would be able to work at a good job. At about 11:00 at night an army vehicle came and two military policemen took all of us on the car. I was first taken by a policeman, but led by soldiers afterward. I asked a soldier where he was taking us, but he just said we would get a good job. Since it was at night, we didn't even know where it was.
After a ride on the military vehicle, we arrived at the first comfort station in Yongdo, Pusan, at night. I begged them to take me back home since I already had a job, but in vain. There were 45 comfort women in that comfort station, all Korean girls.
I resisted and struggled against a soldier who seemed an officer, but ended up being raped there. My lower parts hurt for several days so much that I refused the soldiers coming to me, which got me badly beaten. I had to receive soldiers all day except at mealtimes. I must have had an average of 30-40 soldiers a day. In particular, on the days when a ship came in, there were more soldiers than usual. We had more soldiers during Saturdays and Sundays as well. When there were too many soldiers, I thought I was losing my mind. During busy days I could not even count how many soldiers I received, since one left then the other just came in. Even though I received so many soldiers, neither money nor army tickets were given or shown to me.
I didn't get pregnant at the comfort station, but two of the comfort women got pregnant there. One of them died due to a botched abortion. The other became quite big with child, so she tried to kill herself, but was found by a soldier. She was sent somewhere else. I don't know where she was sent. There

was nobody who had a child at the comfort station.
In our period we were provided with gauze for sanitary napkins. We could use them while we did not receive soldiers. However, we had to receive them even during our periods, so there was no time to use the sanitary napkins. As long as we were alive, we had to receive soldiers, anyway. The disgusting and horrible conditions were certainly beyond description. During our periods, we put cotton rolled with gauze into the vagina and then received soldiers. The ones who got gonorrhea had an injection of the so-called number 606. The injection was as painful as if the arm were removed. I was also infected with gonorrhea at the comfort station. I went to hospital to get injections and had a lot of medicine. Even after leaving the comfort station, however, it recurred whenever I got weak.
Fifteen days after I arrived at the comfort station, I tried to run away from there. Even before getting several feet away, however, I was caught and beaten three times on my behind with a rifle and fell bleeding from my mouth. The beaten wound on my bottom festered and I had such a high fever that I could not even lie on my back. Even with my wound, I was forced to keep receiving soldiers. The flesh on my bottom kept festering and got rotten. Only after that, soldiers took me to hospital and cut the flesh off. I had three days off after the surgery. Three days later when the wound was not even healed and it was so painful that I could not lie down on my back, soldiers came to me. It was the hardest time. My behind was too painful to lie down, but I was forced to receive soldiers. It was so much pain. Every comfort woman in there wanted to run away, but after seeing that I was caught and beaten and suffered from the wounded, everybody just gave it up. Afterwards there was no one who tried to escape.
We did not learn of the liberation. There was a great fuss outside the comfort station, so we went outside and then was told of the liberation. I had no money to go back home. I thought I had to earn some money to go back home. So I worked at a restaurant in front of the comfort station for a month and moved to work at another restaurant for a year. I saved money and then came back home.
My mother died of despair over me when I was twenty seven. Mother told me

that “you were just born in the wrong time, so you could not get married. I am leaving you with a lot of burdens. I cannot say goodbye leaving you unmarried.“ I never wanted to get married, so I have lived by myself. After living in Seoul for a while, I came to my father’s hometown, Ulsan, in 1980. My hometown is Pusan, but it just reminds me of my days of being a comfort woman, so I would not go there. My health condition is very bad now. I am suffering from bad liver, high blood pressure, duodenal ulcer, arthritis, cyst on my right side, hypochondria, neurotic heart disease, etc.

I would like to be reborn as a woman. I would like to be reborn in such a great time as these days, stay with my parents to go to school, and get married to a nice man to have children. Without even getting married, how miserable my life has been! Awake at night, I wonder. Who ruined my life like this? Why did we lose our country? Wondering these questions, I cannot go back to sleep. I still think of them. I never got married and have no children. So whenever I see people walking with their children on the street, my heart aches and I wonder, ‘people out there have children, but why is my life so miserable.? After ruining others?lives like this, Japan still says that it cannot take any responsibility. It does not make sense. How could it not feel any guilt after ruining my life so much that I cannot get married? Until the day I die, I cannot forget what I have been through. Even after I die, I won’t be able to forget. I want to be compensated by the Japanese government for how my life has been ruined.