

## Appendix A: Excerpts from Testimonies by POWs

These excerpts are a portion of the testimonies by escaped South Korean POWs that are available to the Korean POW Affairs Committee. POW's names are listed family name, followed by given names when disclosed. Some of the names are withheld to protect the victim and their family members who remain in North Korea. More detailed information, including audio recordings of testimonies will be available to an investigation.

### Victim 1. Kim, Won Jae

Kim was born in 1931 and joined the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA; South Korean) in 1952. He was wounded, and subsequently captured by People Volunteer Army (PVA; Chinese) forces. After being treated in a PVA hospital, he was sent to the *Onsung* prisoner camp in 1953. He passed away in North Korea, but his daughter, who defected to South Korea, gave testimony about the persecution her father suffered as a POW.

From 1954 until his death, Kim was forced to work in the *Onsung* coal mine, located in North *Hamkyung* Province. Every winter he had to endure blistering cold weather without any warm clothing. He witnessed South Korean POWs get shot when they asked to be returned home, so Kim did not mention his wish to be repatriated. He eventually married a woman in *Onsung* and had 5 children. However, his family suffered from constant poverty and hunger. Since 1994, they barely received any rations from the government and Kim passed away due to malnutrition.

### Victim 2. Kim

Kim joined the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA; South Korean) in the winter of 1950. In July, 1953, Kim was listed as killed in action. However, a South Korean POW who was repatriated during the prisoner exchange in September, 1953, testified that Kim was alive in North Korea. Also, another POW who escaped from North Korea in 1998 testified that Kim was still alive in North Korea and had been forced to work in the *Ah-oh-ji* coal mine.

For over 8 years, Kim's daughter has been trying to get in contact with her father. In 2002, a broker gave her a 57 word letter from Kim. He wrote that he was very happy to hear from her. He also wrote that he was in poor health from years of malnutrition and hard labor, but he promised her that someday he would return to his homeland. Later, a broker told Kim's daughter that Kim was under special surveillance in North Korea. It is unclear whether Kim is still alive.

### **Victim 3. Kim**

On July 14th, 1953, Kim was taken prisoner near *Kumhwa*, *Kangwon* Province by People's Volunteer Army (PVA; Chinese) forces. Kim was moved to the *Sepo* POW Camp in *Kangwon* Province, and then moved to the *Kangdong* POW Camp in South *Pyongan* Province. Later, he was forced to work in the *Hakpo* coal mine.

### **Victim 4. Kang**

Kang was taken prisoner around Nov of 1950 by People's Volunteer Army (PVA; Chinese) forces. He currently lives in South Korea after escaping from North Korea.

Kang was incorporated into the Korean People's Army (KPA; North Korean) 16th Regiment where he worked in rear services. After the Armistice, he was assigned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs 103rd Construction Brigade, 1st Battalion and performed various post-war reconstruction duties. He was discharged in November of 1957 and then sent to work in the *Kocham* coal mine in *Myoungcheon-kun* of North *Hamkyung* Province.

Kang worked in the mine for 50 years. He testified that he was classified as "number 49" and kept under close surveillance. "Number 49's" were considered to be enemy spies and treated as a lower caste than even other South Korean POWs.

### **Victim 5. Nam, So Yeol**

Nam was taken prisoner in *Kumhwa*, *Kangwon* Province, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1953 by People's Volunteer Army (PVA; Chinese) forces.

He was sent to the *Cheonma* mineral mine and the *Hakpo* coal mine. Nam said that when he was working, he barely have enough time to sleep. His commute to and from the mines typically took 3 to 4 hours, and then he had to work for 8 hours. After work, he was given a 2 hour political lecture before commuting home.

At one point, Nam contracted tuberculosis and had to be hospitalized. At another point, he also injured his back. He had a small fracture but did not have the money to get proper treatment and fully recover. He went to the hospital after work and was treated by both western medical doctors and oriental medical doctors. The doctors never cleared him to go back to work in the mines but he could not afford to stop working. He kept working in the coal mines as a electrical switch repairman for 3 years with an injured back.

### **Victim 6. Park, Jun Kil**

Park was born in South *Chungcheong* Province and joined the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA; South Korean) in 1949. Park was a member of the ROKA 2d Division, 16th Regiment. He was taken prisoner by People's Volunteer Army (PVA; Chinese) forces on Dec 12, 1950 during the battle of *Hoengsung*, in *Kangwon* Province. Park was captured with the commander of the ROKA 2d Division, General Song Won Sung.

He was detained in North Korea for about 50 years. He escaped in 2000 and was reunited with his wife in South Korea whom he had married when he was 17 years old, before the Korean War. However he has another family (including a wife and children) who remain in North Korea.

Park testified that he had never been asked whether he wished to go back to South Korea. Park faced discrimination in North Korea since South Korean POWs were the lowest caste in North Korean society. His wife in North Korea was also from a low caste and they could not afford a wedding when they married. They lived in a small room.

He was restricted in his employment and residence, and his family lived in poverty. After the Korean War, he worked in a cement plant in *Pyongyang*, but he was expelled to a rural area when authorities realized he was a South Korea POW. After being forced to move to North *Hamkyung* Province, he did repair work on remote mountain roads. He tried to apply for college many times, but was denied. Park testified that South Korean POWs were treated as "useful work animals." State Security agents spied on him routinely and he suffered physical abuse as well. He says he still has nightmares about the torture he suffered from State Security agents.

### **Victim 7. Song, Young Cheol**

After being detained and sent to the *Sepo* and *Kangdong* POW camps, he assigned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs Construction Brigade 1706. He was sent to the *Cheonma* mine and was later the *Hamyon* coal mine. In both mines, he was forced to work hard under poor conditions and little food or medical help.

Song also testified about the discrimination suffered by his children. His children were denied opportunities for education, restricted from serving in the military or joining the Communist Party, and therefore they were denied all practical ways they could improve their lot in North Korean society. Song testified his son, who was denied admission into higher education, was extremely bitter about the discrimination he suffered.

**Victim 8. Shin, Dong Kil**

Shin was taken prisoner on July 18, 1953, during the battle of *Kumhwa*, in *Kangwon* Province.

He was assigned to work in the *Holdong* mine, in *Hwanghae* Province, and then sent to the *Kangdong* Prisoner Camp. Later he was assigned to Ministry of Internal Affairs Construction Brigade 1709 and then sent to work in coal mines. He worked in the *Shinchang* mine in South *Hamkyung* Province, the *Hoeryung* and *Kokeonwon* mines in North *Hamkyung* Province. There were other South Korean POWs in the mines as well. Several times gas explosions killed miners, including many South Korean POWs.

He suffered serious injuries when a coal mine caved in during construction around 1960. He was forced to work in three shifts almost immediately after he was discharged from the hospital.

**Victim 9. Shin, Ho Sik**

Shin was taken prisoner during the Battle of *Kumhwa*. Currently he resides in South Korea after successfully escaping from North Korea in 2004.

After the armistice of 1953, he was assigned to hard labor in mines, such as the *Holdong* and *Kumduck*. Shin testified that children of POWs were also suffered discrimination in terms of education and career opportunities. He had serious conflicts with his children when his children complained to him about the inequality they suffered. Shin testified that he tried to commit suicide because he felt so guilty to his children.

**Victim 10. Oh, Jin Sang**

Oh was taken prisoner on June 13, 1953 during battle in *Kumhwa*, *Kangwon* Province by PVA(People's Volunteer Army; Chinese) forces.

He was assigned to work in the *Holdong* mine, the *Kangdong* POW camp, and the *Hwapyong* POW camp near *Kangkye*, *Jagang* Province. He was assigned to Ministry of Internal Affairs Construction Brigade 1707 and worked at a monazite mine in *Cheolsan*, North *Pyongan* Province. Later he worked in the *Yongyang* mines in North *Hamkyung* Province. He was forced to work in mines his entire life.

### **Victim 11. Yang, Soon Yong (? 珣容)**

Yang was born in *Hamyang*, South *Kyongsang* Province. He was taken prisoner in 1953 during the battle of *Kumsung*, in *Kangwon* Province. He escaped from North Korea in Dec 1997 at the age of 72. He was the second POW to successfully do so, after Cho, Chang Ho(see Victim 22). Yang declined the \$2000 award that the South Korean government offered him, and news of his actions lead to comprehensive legislative reform in South Korea regarding its POWs. Yang revealed the names of 100 POWs held in North Korea. Among them, 60 were believed to be still alive. Yang who had worked in the infamous *Ah-Oh-Ji* coal mine for most his life, tried to locate the South Korean families of his fellow POWs who also worked in the mine. Yang passed away in 2001 in a fatal car accident.

Yang testified that the *Ah-Oh-Ji* coal mine where he had worked was known to North Koreans as "hell on earth." The whole time he was forced to do hard labor, and he suffered from inadequate food, and abuse, torture, and constant surveillance at the hands of North Korean security personnel.

### **Victim 12. Yang**

Yang was taken prisoner on June 30, 1950 by Korean People's Army (KPA; North Korean) forces. While he was held at the *Hoeryung* POW camp, he became severely ill. When the North Koreans were moving the POWs from the camp, they abandoned Yang who was barely alive, with other corpses. However, he was rescued by North Korean civilians and received treatment at the *Kungsim* coal mine hospital. After recovering from his illness, he was forced to work in the coal mine.

Yang's account is notable in that he was captured early in the war. Most of the South Korean POWs who were detained in North Korea after the Armistice were captured later in the war. He revealed that some of the early POWs who were ill or injured were sent to POW camps in the rear areas and then assigned to work in coal mines and not repatriated.

After the Armistice, Yang was assigned to a Ministry of Internal Affairs Construction Brigade and worked in the *Yusung* coal mine. He testified the *Yusung* mine was particularly dangerous because of large amounts of gas that formed in the mine. Many people, including POWs, died because of gas explosions. Every time a gas explosion occurred, at least 20 to 30 people died, he said. Because of these horrible working conditions, most workers worked in constant fear for their lives.

Although the mine regulations specified 8 hour shifts, most workers spent over 12 hours working and commuting. The work was so exhausting that once he got home,

all he could do was sleep. Also, Yang testified that children of POWs could not apply to college or serve in the military. This denied his children any practical opportunity to attain wealth or a good career in North Korea. Even when children of POWs were allowed to serve in the North Korean military, they would be assigned to work as laborers. After their 10 years of conscription, they would be sent back home to work in labor or construction.

**Victim 13. Yoo, Jong Ho**

On July 14, 1953, Yoo was taken prisoner by People's Volunteer Army(PVA; Chinese) forces. Currently he lives in South Korea after escaping from North Korea in 2005.

Yoo was held at the *Sepo* and *Kangdong* POW camps, and then assigned to Ministry of Internal Affairs Construction Brigade 1708. He was forced to work in the *Cheolsan* monazite mines, and the mines at *Kumduck*, and *Musan* in North *Hamkyung* Province.

**Victim 14. Yoo, Young Bok**

Yoo was born in *Icheon*, *Kyunggi* Province. He escaped from North Korea in 2000 after the first North-South Korean Summit Meeting was held in *Pyongyang*. He decided to escape from North Korea on his own because there was no mention of South Korean POWs as himself at the Summit. He concluded the South Korean government had given up rescuing the POWs and was angry that the South Korean President was participating in a Summit with North Korean leaders without getting the POWs out first. Recently he published a memoir of life as a POW in North Korea.

Yoo was sent to work in the *Ah-Oh-Ji* coal mine. He testified that summary executions of POWs who were working in the mine were common. "There were countless injustices that we POWs suffered. North Koreans worked the POWs in the *Ah-Oh-Ji* mine until we died. I lost track of the number of times I saw with my own eyes my comrades being shot to death."

**Victim 15. Lee, Tae Joon (pseudonym)**

Lee was born in 1931, in *Kuryong*, South *Kyongsang* Province and joined the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA; South Korean) in 1949. When the Korean War broke out, he was only 18 years old and a member of the 2d Division, 16th Regiment. Lee was serving as a regiment courier when he was taken prisoner in *Kumhwa*, *Kangwon* Province. Lee passed away in North Korea, but his son, who escaped to South Korea testified about his father. Currently 7 of Lee's children survive in North Korea.