

**Ret. Col. Augusto S. Flores**  
*14th Battalion Combat Team (BCT)*

---

I would like to thank the School of Social Studies of Ateneo de Manila, particularly the director of the Korean studies program for inviting me to your 3<sup>rd</sup> Ateneo Korean Studies Conference.

The creation of the Korean Studies Program is a welcome development in our country where our people generally lack a sense of historical consciousness and therefore fail to report and preserve for posterity, important events that contribute towards developing pride in our national identity and enhancing patriotism and love of country.

**ARRIVAL IN BUSAN**

I was barely 21 years old when our unit landed in Busan South Korea in March 1953.

Upon arrival, we were given one day to acquaint ourselves with the locals and enjoy the Korean food and hospitality.

We found the people in South Korea friendly and very accommodating and the Korean troops treated us like big brothers.

**ON THE WAY TO FRONTLINE**

The next day, our unit was brought up front to replace the 19<sup>th</sup> BCT in their defensive positions. However, while still in the rear area, the unit suffered enemy barrages resulting in the killing of 2LT Dominado, an enlisted man whose name I cannot now recall, and the wounding of 1Lt Feliciano Mirabite.

This only shows that being in the rear doesn't guarantee safety as rear units were more susceptible to harm since they were located in open areas while the front line troopers were well entrenched in their bunkers.

The above incident prompted our battalion commander to request the Division Commander where the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT was attached, to immediately assign our unit to the frontlines, which was granted.

#### RELIEF COMPLETED

After completion of relief operations, the 19<sup>th</sup> BCT was sent back to the Philippines. As what usually happens during relief operations, the communists tried to break through our defensive positions, but were successfully repulsed.

They also conducted intermittent attacks, both foot troops and mortar and artillery fires.

#### CHRISTMAS HILL STORY

The real big battle where the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT was involved was in an operation by the US 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry division code-named "Christmas Hill." Christmas Hill is one of the prominent hills in Korea where a fierce battle was fought. When the 20<sup>th</sup> ROK division was penetrated by the communists, the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT was deployed as the blocking force at the foot of Christmas hill.

The attacking force showed their dominance in terms of numbers but their attack was unsuccessful.

#### ARMISTICE

On July 27, 1953, at Pan Mun Jom, Korea, the Armistice agreement was signed. At the stroke of 10 in the morning of

that day, the weary troops on both sides came out from their trenches and foxholes, jumping for joy, waving their hands in celebration and relief from the rigor of war.

How life was like in the war zone?

Despite the anxiety, concern for safety, and the red alerts due to an impending and imminent danger of enemy attack, there were also light moments. To boost the morale of the troops, there were:

1. Entertainers by famous American artists and celebrities;
2. The “PI calling Korea” RADIO program of Deli Magpayo aired over DZRH (once a week, during Sundays) where soldiers were allowed to talk with their loved ones in the Philippines for five minutes so that other soldiers will also have their turn.
3. There were also rest and recuperation (R&R) either three days in Seoul and five days in Tokyo, Japan where the troops could relax and enjoy and be recharged before going back to the war front.
4. Meritorious and deserving soldiers who have made significant accomplishments for the organization and the people they have sworn to help and defend were either promoted, given awards and decorations for heroic combat achievements or given plaques of appreciation/commendation.
5. And of course, the visit of the then Secretary of National Defense, Oscar Castelo.

## RELEVANCE OF UN AND PEFTOK

I volunteered for overseas duty in the war-torn South Korea because of frustration.

It was a choice between dying for a cause and dying of frustration. Now I realized I made the right decision and I am proud to be a participant in the change that took place in South Korea and the bounty it is enjoying today.

Since the Armistice agreement is still being enforced up to date, and peace is being maintained in the area, the UN has proven that it is a potent force in making peace for the enjoyment of the peoples of the world.

## PEFTOK AND ITS BENEFITS

The PEFTOK Veterans Association Incorporated continues to receive assistance and support from the South Korean government and people as a gesture of appreciation and gratitude.

The government of South Korea, through its Ambassador in the Philippines, has been conducting a “Korea-Revisit Program” where PEFTOK Veterans and a loved one can enjoy a seven-day visit to Korea—all expenses paid.

It is also maintaining a youth camp program where the young Filipinos and South Koreans, including children from other nations that helped during the Korean War, come together in a peace camp to discuss matters relevant to the times, promote their respective culture, and to ensure the continued cooperation and support to enhance the existing special relations between their countries.

Moreover, for 30 years now, the government and civic organizations of South Korea have been supporting a scholarship program for descendants of PEFTOK Veterans and the nice thing is, there is no limit to the number of descendants of Korean Veterans who can avail of these benefits.

As of this date, there are 246 high school graduates, 350 college graduates and 18 vocational graduates.

The Korean government has provided the PEFTOK Veteran Association through the Philippine Veterans Affairs office, for almost two decades now, a building to house the auditorium, museum, and administration office as well as a four-storey building for whatever purposes PVAI intends to do.

The Korean Ambassador sees to it that important events considered by PVAI are supported logistically especially during Christmas, anniversary, and other relevant occasions.

## CLOSURE

At first I was not aware of the significance of our participation in the Korean War. It is only now I realize that it is not only a matter of fighting for freedom and democracy. What is important is for the nation to rise above the ashes of war and become very successful economically.

To what South Korea is today, I am proud to have been a part of the armed forces that intervened in her behalf.

And so, it is where my story ends, where historians begin.