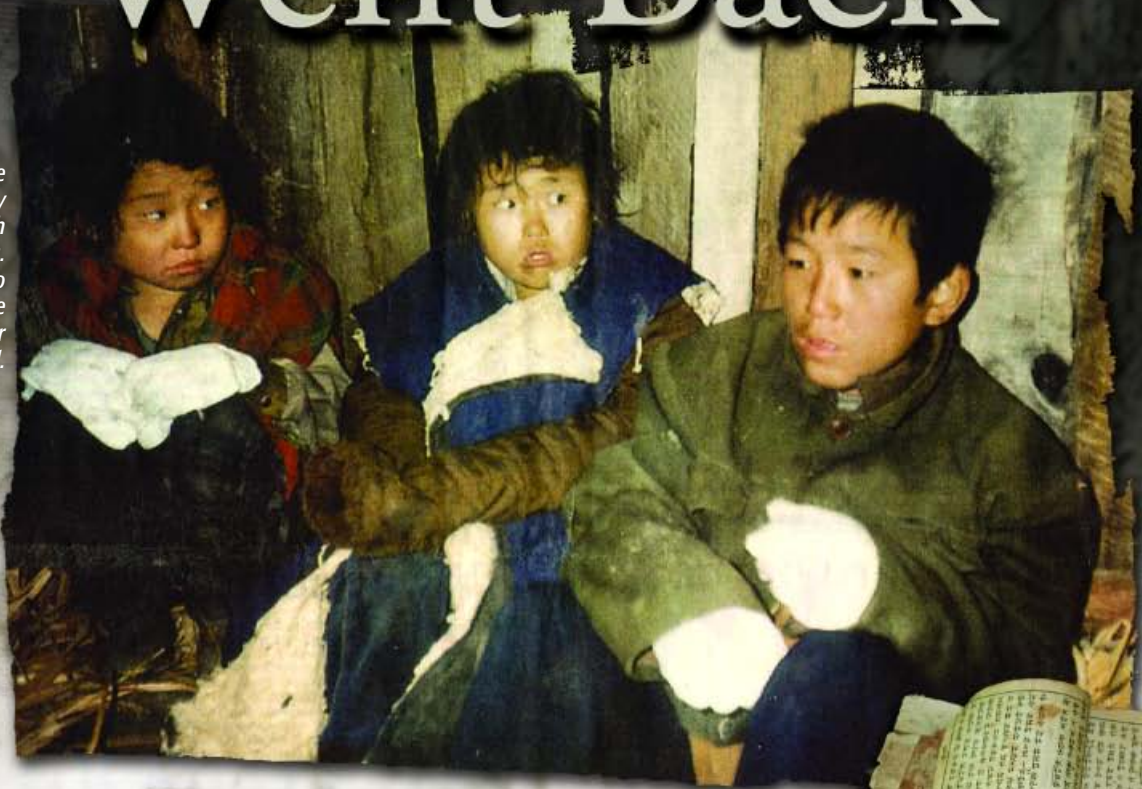


They All Went Back

Young boys like these cross every day from North Korea into China. Some will go back, taking the gospel to their homeland.



By P. Todd Nettleton

A Pencil in the Hands of the Master

The four North Korean young men chose the names Pencil, Eraser, Pen and Paper Clip; the Korean equivalent of Bob, John or Tom wouldn't do for these creative teenagers. "Andrew," a Christian worker in China, provided food, shelter and encouragement for them. It was his idea they use false names, in case Chinese police or North Korean agents discovered them. As he began to share the gospel and disciple the young men, three of them showed enthusiasm and potential. But the one called Pencil never paid attention. When Andrew was trying to teach, Pencil was sketching on a paper or staring off into space. After several months of discipleship, Andrew presented three of the young men with the idea of going back to North Korea, carrying the gospel message to their countrymen. But Andrew didn't think Pencil was ready for such a mission, and didn't ask him.



A Bible, apparently stained with blood, found along the border.

Pants found along the North Korean border, dropped by a fleeing young person.

However, the three weren't going anywhere without their friend. Together, the four crossed the Tumen River back into North Korea. Before they left, Andrew told them, "No matter what you do, or what trouble you're in, you can come back here and I'll try to help you." Months passed and Andrew wondered if they had safely crossed the river.

Six months after crossing, Eraser, Pen and Paper Clip were arrested by North Korean police. Pencil hid and watched their arrest, frozen in fear as his friends were

beaten for sharing Christ. Police threw them into vehicles and drove out of sight. Pencil ran. He heard later his friends were taken to a concentration camp, but he never saw them again.

Pencil was afraid police were looking for him, so he lived in fear as a beggar. Pencil thought a lot about how his friends had shared the gospel. They would speak of Christ at every opportunity and share how He had brought hope into their lives. But when Pencil tried to share about Jesus, his mouth became dry, his hands shook and he couldn't seem to get the words out. Even when other beggars noticed, "You look different. You don't even look like a North Korean," Pencil was unable to tell them that the difference came from inside of him, where Christ lived.

One day Pencil remembered Andrew's words: "You can come back here and I'll try to help you." But would he? Pencil had spent most of the time ignoring the Christian's training. He decided to cross the river back into China and seek out Andrew. It had been eight months since the four young men crossed the Tumen River; now only one was left to retrace their steps.

With tears in his eyes, Pencil told Andrew the fate of his three friends. He shared how they had been bold witnesses for Christ and how he had hid in fear as his best friends were taken away.

"What do you want to do with the rest of your life?"

Andrew asked the teen.

"I want to learn how to be brave like my friends and unafraid to share Jesus."

Andrew spent two months intensely discipling Pencil. He could see the young man's faith growing and commitment deepening as they studied and prayed together. The boy whose mind always seemed to wander was now a young man completely committed to Christ. When Pencil was ready to return to North Korea, Andrew asked him "What more do you need?" Pencil looked into the eyes of his friend and mentor and said, "I need nothing more."

Andrew helped Pencil connect with a Christian couple inside North Korea, and the three of them began to share the gospel with the poorest of the poor.

"Where did you get this mysterious story?" some asked. One beggar came up to Pencil and confided that he also was a Christian. Others pleaded with him to tell more of the story, or to start at the beginning and tell it again. For five months they continued, planting seeds and then

watering, praying and watering again.

One day, the three Christians were sharing with a small group of beggars and gave them some tracts and a Bible. One of the young beggars went home and proudly showed the Bible to his mother, telling her about the kind people who had given it to him.

The mother knew this book was a religious book and that it had to be illegal. Was someone trying to frame her son? Would the whole family be arrested? She grabbed the book and headed to the police station. The police listened to her story; then questioned her son. Pencil was arrested, and later the Christian couple was also.

At the police station, the questions quickly turned into interrogation, then torture. The police demanded to know where Pencil had gotten the Bible. They offered to let him walk out the door if he would renounce Jesus. Pencil steadfastly refused.

"I have invited Jesus into my heart," he told them. "I cannot deny Him."

He told the police about Pen, Eraser and Paper Clip— their witness for Christ, the fearless way they followed Him.

"There was a time when I couldn't be like them," he said. "I was too afraid. But now I can be, since Jesus is with me."

Wanting to break the teenager, and insulted by his lack of fear, the police beat him severely. The beating didn't change his stand for Christ.

"We are big sinners here in North Korea because we do not believe in God," Pencil told them. "If you kill me, someday you will become a Christian."

This made the police even more enraged. One by one, they pulled out Pencil's fingernails. Beaten, bleeding and barely alive, the young man was sent to a labor camp. Orders were given that Pencil not be allowed any food, yet his labor quota was the same as other prisoners.

Each day, Pencil told the other prisoners, and even the guards, "Jesus is the reason I am able to go on." Because of his endurance and the way he shared the love of Jesus, many in the camp turned to Christ.

After two months in the camp, Pencil died. He never saw his 20th birthday. His body was removed from the camp, but the fruit of his short ministry there lived on.



Pencil stands with other Christians. The two covered faces belong to Christians currently in North Korean prison camps. The woman on the left has been martyred.

A Torturer Repents

Shortly after Pencil's death, the Christian couple was sent to the same prison camp. They were surprised to find



The prison camp officer gathered his own family, along with other prison guards, to hear the gospel message.



believers there who told them of Pencil's death. They were there only a few days when the camp's top officer, "Rhee," ordered their release.

Back home a few days later, the couple heard knocking on their door. It was the prison officer, Rhee. He wanted to talk to them further. "I have tortured and killed many people," he told them, "but since the death of this young man I have been troubled." Rhee told them the story of their friend's courage and cheerful spirit, even as his body was failing.

The couple told Rhee he needed to get down on his knees while they told him why Pencil was different. They introduced him to Jesus. When they finished sharing and praying together, Rhee invited them to come home with him.

Inside Rhee's large home, eight family members were gathered, as well as several other soldiers who worked at the prison camp and their families. They listened intently as the young couple presented Jesus' love, his death on the

cross and the gospel plan of salvation. Many of the listeners wept quietly.

Rhee was shocked when his own mother stepped forward and admitted that for 50 years she had been a secret Christian. "I am no longer ashamed of my faith," she said, then turned to the rest of the people gathered in the room. "Who wants to have Jesus in their heart?" she asked. Everyone in the room raised their hand. Each of them was baptized that night.

Roli: "I decided to go back"

Roli, a worker who has made more than 100 visits into North Korea delivering precious jewels of the gospel, has developed an extensive network of house meetings inside the country. In our September 2005 newsletter, we reported on Roli. Here is an update:

"When we gather together, we close all of the windows and all of the blinds," Roli told us. "We don't have curtains over there but somehow we cover up the windows. You cannot gather with many people...maybe three or four.

We pray together, we sing praises, and then we read John 3:16-18. We also read 1st Corinthians 1:18-26. We talk from Genesis.

We say that man was created from dust, so we have to believe in Jesus to go to heaven. I tell them about Noah's ark. I preach from these texts, and I teach them many songs.

"When I teach I do not bring a Bible with me; I use a Bible that we have already smuggled in. We cannot sing freely. We sing quietly. They just love singing hymns. Sometimes they go until sunrise, very early in the morning."



A Christian is baptized and commissioned to go back to North Korea. "If I perish, I perish."

NORTH KOREA — THEY ALL WENT BACK

North Korean Christians hand-copy Scriptures and hide them, sometimes in the walls. Being caught with Scriptures or Bibles can result in a death sentence.



later they were trying to kill him (vs. 29). Today we would question the wisdom of his act, but would our questions cause us not to act? Christians like Roli are the Pauls of today. Her courage is contagious in North Korea.

“People are less afraid. [Christians] are becoming bolder to share the gospel. They know Kim Il Sung is not the one that has saved them and not the one who is feeding them. They are starting to believe in God. Many people are coming to faith.”

Roli witnesses only to people older than 24 years of age. Before sharing in a home, Roli insists the school-age children are sent to play outside. For North Koreans, the risk of sharing the gospel with younger people can seem too great. A slip of the tongue at school, and children could accidentally inform on their own parents. The parents could be arrested, or worse. Parents consider very carefully when their children can be trusted to know they are Christians, traitorous outlaws in the eyes of their own government.

Roli knows the risks are high to share the gospel at all. Four of her Christian friends have been arrested and executed because of their Christian witness. She has also been arrested.

“I once gave one Bible to four people. Later, while I was in prison, one of the four came in and said, ‘You are giving out Bibles.’ I told them, ‘Yes, I am a believer. I brought this book so we could read it together. This is a good book. Everyone in our family reads this book. I brought it so we could read it together.’” The interrogators suspected their prisoner was a foreign spy, and asked her to say the Lord’s Prayer to prove she was a Christian.

“I did a lot of stuttering,” Roli now says. “I made a lot of mistakes. I was a little nervous.” After four days in prison, the officials let Roli go with a warning not to come back.

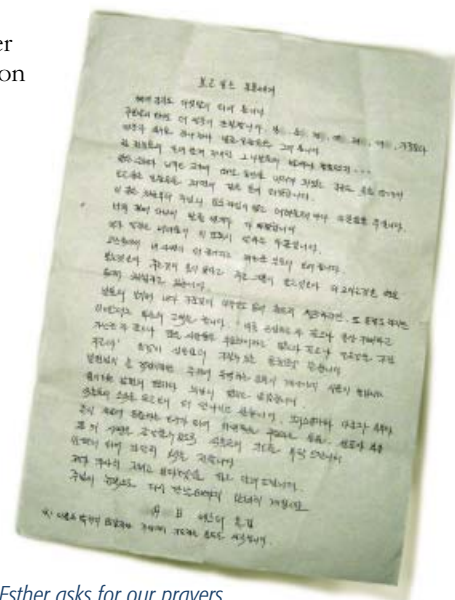
“Now I don’t get afraid. I don’t have fear as I do this work. When I first started this work I was nervous and I would be afraid and when I came back, I would say, ‘This is dangerous work’ and ‘I am not going to do it anymore.’ But when I thought of the people in North Korea I changed my mind and I decided to go back again.”

When the Apostle Paul escaped over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25), he returned as a new believer to the headquarters of the persecutors in Jerusalem. Four verses

Esther: “If I perish, I perish.”

Our contacts met with Esther in an old run-down apartment. Esther is about 40 years old, but looks much older. Both of her parents died of starvation in North Korea. Esther left North Korea for China, and had lived there for seven years when our contacts heard her story.

Esther was an illegal refugee in China. She hid in the mountains, working on a fish farm, but she found out that some of the workers there wanted to sell her. She met a man at the fish farm who was a believer and told him about the plan to sell her,



Esther asks for our prayers in this letter smuggled out of North Korea.



so they ran away together. They had no money, no food and it was very cold in the Chinese winter. Hiding out in a run-down old house, she began to seek the Lord. They asked the man's older sister to bring a Bible. Esther came to know the Lord.

Whenever she met other Koreans, she told them about God. Soon she was leading a group of about 40 people. Many were construction workers. She did not know how to work in construction, but she worked with them and the construction workers were encouraged by this. The number of believers grew, so the group split up and met in different places.

Her heart was very heavy, but she said she was going to share the gospel with her nation, and like Esther from the Bible said, "If I perish, I perish."

One day as Esther was returning on a bus from an errand, she came upon a roadblock where soldiers were conducting random checks. The soldiers knew immediately that she was in China illegally and she was repatriated to North Korea. There, she was beaten and tortured almost to the point of death. After she recovered, she escaped again to China.

Whenever she prayed about North Korea, she received a vision. In the vision, she was in a land of darkness, speaking in front of a large group of people. There was a light coming from heaven and she was speaking as if she were a trumpet. She shared about the vision with a believer who confirmed the vision showed she was to return to North Korea to share the gospel.

The man on this month's cover helped Esther go back across. VOM contacts visited Esther three days before she returned to North Korea. Her heart was very heavy, but she was going to share the gospel with her nation, and like Esther from the Bible said, "If I perish, I perish." Though afraid, Esther was returning out of obedience.

After three months, we received a letter. Esther was doing well, but traveling so much that all 10 of her toenails had fallen off. Like the Apostle Paul, she bore the marks of Christ for her nation. She is grateful to be in North Korea, but said she is in a difficult place. Please pray for Esther.

One of Esther's co-workers matches her spirit. Our contacts call her "Sunflower Girl" because her face is always toward the Son. She escaped North Korea at age 16 and found Christ in China. Earlier this year, she went back to North Korea. Three months later we heard she had been arrested on the crossing and held for a month. Because of her young age, she was released. She now shares the gospel with anyone in her circle.

The Truth Overcomes a Parade of Lies

"Western missionaries eat Korean children...North Korea is an earthly paradise...other nations of the world are worse off than us...Kim Il Sung was a divine being, and his spirit guides the Korean people...Kim Jong Il was born on a holy mountain, and his birth was greeted by rainbows and flowers bursting into bloom."

The North Korean government lies to its own people, and to the rest of the world. For more than 50 years, it has promoted Juche, (Korean for "self reliance") a false trinity consisting of Kim Il Sung, the dead dictator and "father;" his son Kim Jong Il, the current dictator and "son;" and the "holy fire" of the Juche ideology. Yet more and more North Korean people are rejecting the idea of Juche and relying on the salvation promise in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The few church buildings in Pyongyang are show places for tourists and official visitors, but meetings are often only scheduled for foreign visitors. Some visitors have reported that the church choir at the Catholic and Protestant churches is the same choir, a group of



North Korea mobilizes army troops each time they learn of a VOM Scripture Balloon launch.

PENETRATE

professional singers. Known Christians are not even allowed inside the capital city to see the cross-marked structures the government has built. Christians gather secretly in homes under the portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il that are required in every building and home. Many come to know Christ, even under these portraits; others come to know Him when they escape across the border to China.

The courageous believers we work with in North Korea have something in common—many have an opportunity to be free, yet they choose to take true Freedom to others inside the hermit kingdom. We will help believers like Pencil, Esther and Roli go back. Just as Jesus went back to Jerusalem, Paul also went



We have been launching Scriptures into North Korea for nearly 40 years. We first published this photo in 1969.

Lifting Up God's Word in the No-Fly Zone

Brighter than the sun, God's Word is bringing light over North Korea's dismal horizon. In 2006, over 2,000 bright orange North Korea Scripture Balloons are bringing the Son to a land darkened by communism and a one-man dictatorship. The Jesus



Thousands of Scripture Balloons have touched down in North Korea this year with God's message of hope and deliverance.

Story and the Gospel of Mark (printed on the balloons) are piercing hearts over the otherwise virtually impenetrable border of North Korea. Since the 1960s, VOM has been involved in creatively sending the gospel into North Korea, and now we are using cutting-edge technology to increase our balloon efforts. Our goal in the next 12 months is to deliver one million gospel messages to North Korea!

Safe Houses


If a North Korean refugee's first point of contact after escaping over the Chinese border is not a Christian safe house, he or she may be sold into slavery, starve to death or face brutal imprisonment or execution after being caught and sent back to North Korea. That's why VOM works with Chinese Christians



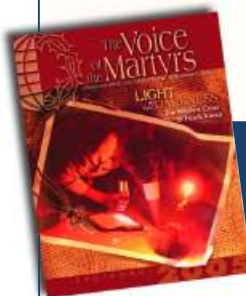
This thank you "receipt" expresses North Koreans' gratitude for VOM's support. It reads, "Teacher Isaac, greetings, thank you."



A satellite view of North Korea at night—a land of literal and spiritual darkness.

back, knowing he would face beatings and even death to bring Freedom to people enslaved in darkness. We are committed and privileged to stand with our brothers and sisters as long as the brutal regime of Kim Jong Il stands against them. As we equip, encourage and support them, we know we will also stand with them in front of the throne in eternity. The recipe for victory in this eternal battle for North Korea will not involve tanks, planes or guns. All that is needed is more Pencils, Rolis and Esthers. 

To discuss this month's feature, go to www.VOMGroups.com and click on the "Newsletter" group.



To read VOM's September 2005 feature on North Korea, visit www.persecution.com. Go to media rooms and enter the passcode "feature" after October 9th.

NORTH KOREA

with God's Love



VOM safe houses, such as this one, provide spiritual and physical healing to hundreds of destitute North Korean refugees.

to set up safe houses along the border. Safe houses offer not only protection, food, medicine and shelter to North Korean refugees, but also the Living Water of God's Word and love. In safe houses, seminary training programs equip brothers and sisters who feel called to go back and secretly evangelize in gospel-starved North Korea.

Riding the Radio Waves with God's Love

VOM is excited to expand our radio broadcasting program to reach North Koreans with God's Word.

Via short-wave frequency programs, we will broadcast 60-minute time slots into this nation that makes every attempt to silence the Word of God. We are currently producing Korean versions of a *He Lived Among Us* radio gospel drama, Bible instruction materials and *Extreme Devotion* to be utilized on the air.



VOM sponsors Christian radio programs in Korean that reach starving ears and hearts across the North Korean border.

Bibles and Christian Literature

Drawing from Isaiah 55:11, we can gain confidence in knowing the Lord indwells our efforts to spread the gospel. This is as true in the spiritually desolate land of North Korea as it is here in America. The Voice of the Martyrs has

been actively printing and distributing Korean Bibles, *He Lived Among Us* Gospel storybooks, New Testaments and *The Triumphant Church*. We will not reveal our methods of distribution for security reasons. As the Word goes out, pray it will produce fruit.

No longer do many North Koreans have to wait years for handwritten copies of the Bible.



Light to North Korea

The Voice of the Martyrs has been active in North Korea for nearly 40 years, since the early days of our mission. One year ago, VOM launched the "Light to North Korea Fund" to increase the work of the gospel in the most closed country on earth. Our article about North Korea last year generated a greater-than-usual number of letters and e-mails. Shocked by the level of persecution, VOM readers wanted to know how they could help. Many, many prayed. We are thankful, and we have seen answers begin. Many donated to the Light to North Korea Fund, and these contributions are even now being put to Kingdom use.

But our work is far from finished. We continue to invade the "hermit kingdom." All the actions featured here, plus more we cannot publish, are penetrating North Korea with the light of God's love. This month, we invite you to send more light by making a special contribution to the "Light to North Korea Fund." (See enclosed gift slip.)



The "Light to North Korea Fund" supports safe houses like the one where Pencil met Andrew. It also funds more books to be printed in the North Korean dialect and supports the launch of thousands of Scripture Balloons.