

## To Predict the Future, You Must Know the Past

By Christopher Lee

Both of my parents are originally from South Korea. My father immigrated to the United States when he was about 18 and immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army. He fought in Vietnam for two years and was granted U.S. citizenship. Upon coming back from the military, he enrolled at Pasadena City College and then transferred to USC, where he received a degree in business management. My mother came to the United States when she was older. She was schooled in Korea all throughout college, then decided to come to America and marry my father. She was approximately 25 years old. They decided to settle in and start a family. They wanted to raise their children in a safe environment, unlike the war-ridden, poverty-stricken surroundings that they had grown up around throughout their childhoods in Korea. My mother gave birth to me on December 25, 1982 in Van Nuys, California. I was actually born while my father was still going to school, so I was raised on the campus of USC. After graduating, however, we moved to Hacienda Heights, California, about 30 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. All of my childhood and teenage years were spent in Hacienda Heights, and it is all I know. We still live in the same house that my father purchased when he decided to start a family.

As I become older, the things that used to be important to me are irrelevant now. I am starting to realize that a person's upbringing and family history is the most important factor in predicting how that person will become when he is older. Young adolescents and teenagers all want to be independent and venture out into the real world. They want

to pave their own way and grow up faster than they are supposed to. I was the exact same way while I was growing up. I wanted to be a man and paid little attention to my family's historical background. Now, at 23 years of age, I am a man. By no means am I considered to be a teenager anymore. Ironically, as soon as people started considering me to be a grown young man, I came to the realization that I am still a kid. I am still immature and I am not ready to take on a man's responsibilities. I also realize now that my family is all that I have. They say that in order to predict the future, you must know the past. I could not agree more with this statement.

The Korean War affected millions of lives. My parents saw firsthand the kinds of effects that a major war can have. When they decided to immigrate to America, I doubt they knew they were not only changing history, but changing the future at the same time. Their decision to come to the United States has affected my life tremendously. Their decision to come here will also affect my children's lives, my grandchildren's lives, my great-grandchildren's lives, etc. Although I did not see the war directly with my own eyes, I am still directly affected by it. I am directly affected by my family's history. Now that I am a young man, it is very important for me to know my family's background and know what kinds of struggles that my ancestors had to live through. When I was a teenager, I did not care whatsoever about my family's history. As a man, I also realize that my parents are living their lives through me and vice versa. Because their childhood experiences were traumatizing, they wanted to re-live a more pleasant childhood through me. It brought them happiness to see their children happy. I am also living my life through my parents because I know everything that they went through, and it is my job to

make sure that my children and grandchildren know as well. When I see my parents happy, it makes me happy. That is one of the main reasons why I am here at UCLA, because it is important for me to make my parents happy.

The discovery of the intersection of my life with history is “in many ways a terrible lesson” because it breaks my heart to learn what kinds of things that my parents and grandparents had to go through. Ignorance is bliss, and sometimes I wish I never was told some of my family’s stories. However, the intersection of my life with history is “in many ways a magnificent one” because what does not kill you only makes you stronger. My entire family is extremely tight-knit. My uncles and aunts and cousins are all close to each other. My cousins are like my brothers and sisters. It has been that way my entire life, so it is awkward for me to see other families who are not as tight-knit. All of the struggles that my grandparents went through to raise my father and his siblings is the sole reason why my entire family is so close. It definitely made us stronger.

It is very important for me to make sure that my family’s future generations are as close as we are right now. In order for that to happen, we must know our history and be aware of where we come from. As long as we know our past, our future looks bright. We can learn from our mistakes and build upon what my mother and father started when they first immigrated here.