

# Grandson reveals 'untold story' of Hungnam Evacuation

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Ned Forney, lower left, visits the Hungnam Memorial on Geoje Island with Hungnam refugees and descendants in May 2017. Photo courtesy of Ned Forney

By Jon Dunbar

In late 1950, U.N. allied forces overran most of North Korea. But when China entered the war, they found themselves cut off from the South. Thus began the Hungnam Evacuation, codenamed Christmas Cargo, from Dec. 15 to 24.

“It was not simply another Dunkirk,” said Ned Forney, grandson of Edward H. Forney, a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps who served as evacuation control officer during the evacuation.

A fleet of ships transferred 105,000 soldiers from the North Korean port city of Hungnam to safety down south. The military leaders were persuaded to help the desperate North Korean refugees there, evacuating an additional 100,000 civilians facing certain death.

One Merchant Marine ship, the SS Meredith Victory designed to carry less than 60 people, managed to carry 14,000 all at once, a Guinness World Record. There was barely room to sit, but some women needed to lie down so they could give birth, increasing the head count by five during the three-day voyage to Geoje Island.

The younger Forney has immersed himself in research on the evacuation for the past two and a half years. He's interviewed 30 survivors with the support of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) and the Hungnam Evacuation Memorial Committee. He is working on a book on the subject, titled "The Better Angels."

"In my book, there are no heroes. There are just good people doing the right thing for the right reasons in difficult situations," he told The Korea Society during a lecture in New York, Dec. 14, the 67th anniversary of the start of the evacuation.

There are an estimated 1 million descendants of the Hungnam evacuees now living in freedom in South Korea, the United States, and throughout the world. This includes Korean President Moon Jae-in, who was born to refugees on Geoje Island a few years after the evacuation.

Forney will present his research on the Hungnam Evacuation for the RASKB next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the second-floor lounge of the Somerset Palace in downtown Seoul. All are welcome; nonmembers pay a 10,000 won fee, or students pay 5,000 won. Visit [raskb.com](http://raskb.com) or [nedforney.com](http://nedforney.com) for more information.