

A Farewell to the Koreas, With Healing Still a Dream

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan. 24 — American ambassadors here have often been seen as Machiavellian figures in a web of spies and military intrigue, the kind who might approve a coup or authorize a bout of political repression between courses at the banquet table.

James T. Laney, 69, an academic and ordained Methodist minister, does not quite fit that image.

"One day he came into the room with tears in his eyes," recalled his wife, Berta Laney, referring to the time in 1994 when it seemed that the United States and North Korea were coming close to war. "He said all of a sudden it had dawned on him that he was responsible for all the Americans living here.

"He said he felt very burdened, that he would never want any of them hurt, or to make a decision that would endanger their lives. The heaviness of it has been draining."

Now Mr. Laney is leaving that heaviness behind, quitting in early February after more than three tumultuous years as Ambassador here. He leaves as his legacy not only a more human image of American envoys but also a very different policy toward the Korean Peninsula.

When Mr. Laney took up his position in 1993, the United States was generally committed to shunning North Korea. These days, arguably more because of Mr. Laney than anyone else, Washington is broadly committed to engaging North Korea and luring it out of its isolation.

"I think history will see him as the first ambassador to the whole peninsula," rather than just to the southern half, said Stephen W. Linton, an American specialist on Korea.

Ambassadors normally administer policies created in Washington to the country they are posted in, but Mr. Laney ended up helping reshape a policy to another country: North Korea. Officials say this happened in part because the foreign policy es-



Nicholas D. Kristof/The New York Times

After more than three years as Washington's Ambassador in Seoul, urging North Korea out of its isolation, James T. Laney is coming home.

tablishment in Washington was concerned about North Korea but did not have a clear idea how to treat it, while Mr. Laney was a Korea hand who argued forcefully for a particular policy: engagement.

Mr. Laney first came to Korea 50 years ago this month, for a tour as a young Army intelligence officer, and he fell in love with the Korean people. He returned with his wife to spend another five years in Seoul in the late 1950's and early 1960's, teaching at Yonsei University, and Korea remained an important part of his life after he returned to America and rose to become president of Emory University in Atlanta.

"The doughtiness of the Korean spirit just can't be vanquished —

that and the warmth," Mr. Laney said, reflecting on Korea's attractions to him. "There's an outgoingness, an engaging quality about people here that gets to you, becomes a part of you."

Mr. Laney's longtime affection for Korea makes him unusual as an ambassador here, for most of his predecessors have been security specialists or China hands or Japan experts. The embassy says Mr. Laney is the first American Ambassador to Seoul who can speak Korean, and his ability to make occasional speeches in Korean has warmed Korean hearts.

Indeed, Mr. Laney sounds like a Korean when he speaks of the division of the peninsula into North and South Korea as almost a moral af-

front. Mrs. Laney, explaining why her husband took the job as Ambassador, pointed to precisely that issue.

"He really has been saddened over the division, and he thought that maybe, maybe, maybe, he could help bring the two together," Mrs. Laney said. "I think that was his dream."

Some South Koreans suggest that under Mr. Laney the United States is neglecting its friends in Seoul to make a deal with the North. Some critics of the engagement policy have called it appeasement.

Strains between Seoul and Washington grew so sharply last year over policy toward the North and other issues that an American official recently complained that the difference between the Koreas is that "North Korea trusts us."

Yet there has been surprisingly little resentment against Mr. Laney himself, and in public — indeed, mostly in private as well — South Korean and North Korean officials alike speak highly of him.

"He's been one of the most effective American Ambassadors we've had in Korea," said Song Young Shik, a Deputy Foreign Minister here.

As Mr. Laney returns to the United States, with an office at Emory University from which he will continue to follow Korea, what he takes back above all is a vivid impression of the importance in Korea of education — and a wish that Americans might learn from that.

"The thing that is so impressive is the high priority that education has in all Korean families," Mr. Laney said. "Obviously they have ability, but it's also coupled with that determination and that discipline that the family imbues, and I stand in great respect of that. It's such a contrast with the laissez-faire attitude with which most families in the United States approach education."

Asked if he intends, on his return to Atlanta, to crack a whip over his own 15 grandchildren, Mr. Laney smiled benignly.

"I have that in mind," he said.



James Laney reflects on his role as ambassador and the growing tensions with North Korea



Alice M. Smith
Communications Council

Some aspects of an ambassadorship the Rev. James T. Laney expected when he left the presidency of Emory University last year to become the U.S. ambassador to South Korea.

What he didn't anticipate, said Laney on a brief visit to the U.S., "was the enormous and all-consuming pressure that the situation in the north places on us. I eat, sleep and work North Korea. It is never out of my mind."

North Korea's refusal to allow a full inspection of its nuclear facilities to allay fears it is producing a nuclear bomb has created a situation so volatile some fear the eruption of a second Korean War. That, Laney said, is what he and others are working feverishly to prevent.

"We're doing all we can to avoid violence. That would be catastrophic for both Koreas, for the peninsula. At the same time there are certain things North Korea really must do, and that is prove their good faith in terms of not having a nuclear program. That can only be proven by letting the International Atomic Energy Agency come in and inspect."

North Korea's belligerence has also derailed hopes for the reunification of North and South Korea, Laney said. "Several years ago there was an exchange

The Rev. James T. Laney, U.S. ambassador to South Korea and former president of Emory University, returned home briefly to deliver the May 9 Emory commencement address.

While in Atlanta, he talked with Alice Smith about his work and the search for peace on the volatile Korean peninsula.

of officials for visits, even some army people, on both sides. There was a good feeling and a lot of talk of unification. Then we got hung up on this nuclear business, and it's been downhill ever since."

By allowing the inspections, Laney pointed out, North Korea would benefit enormously beyond the stability it would bring to the Korean peninsula. "Then a lot of steps would be taken..(so that) North Korea could wind up as a full member of the family of nations and eventually enjoy the economic and political benefits of that. But that's down the road. First they must satisfy the world community they're not doing mischief with atomic weapons."

On the Laney's visit to the U.S. last week, he gave the commencement speech at Emory's graduation May 9 and then flew to Washington to consult with U.S. officials before returning to Korea. Both he and his wife, Berta, were presented honorary degrees; his was a doctor of divinity and hers a doctor of humane letters for her work in founding and directing a pastoral care training program for lay people.

Coming back to Emory after being gone the full academic year was "bittersweet," he said. "It was great to see the beauty of the campus and see my friends and the students I know. It was also strange because I realized I was gone."

Laney, a United Methodist minister who was also dean of the Candler School

of Theology, served as president of the university for 16 years during a time of unprecedented growth in its endowment, number of faculty and national standing. He is also widely regarded for his belief that education must include a moral and ethical undergirding as well as the imparting of knowledge.

His speech to the graduating students reflected that view. He encouraged them to utilize their education and leadership abilities to help shape a world in need of a "broader vision and larger purpose" since there is an increasing trend toward polarization both within the U.S. and other societies.

Such an outlook and lifestyle won't be easy because "the world is fraught-with exploiters of difference, where no shared interests are allowed," he said. "But the public good and the goal of a "peaceful, prosperous world...(is) worth working for and living for, and if necessary, suffering for."

In some ways, Laney said, there are similarities between serving as the university's president and an ambassador.

"Many of the representational functions are the same--representing the university or representing the United States in various formal settings. The biggest difference is that in the university...you work with your deans and officers and run it. You report to the board of trustees, but you have a lot of latitude in what you do. You draw up your plans and set your priorities."

As ambassador, he doesn't set policy--that's the prerogative of the Clinton Administration--although he has input into what that policy should be. "It's a difficult job, because you have to represent that policy faithfully and accurately and not just talk anything," he said. "You're circumscribed in your latitude, in your range of freedom to act and to talk."

The South Korea of today is dramatically different from the country where he lived from 1959-64 when he taught at Yonsei University. Then the land was devastated and impoverished as a result of the Korean War.

■ See LANEY, page 9

James Laney has found strong Christian influence in South Korean society

■ Cont'd from page 3

"Today Korea is the 13th largest economy in the world, larger than most countries in Europe," Laney said. "It had the fastest-growing economy in the whole world in the latter part of the 80s...and is one of the powerhouses of Asia."

Since Korea has few natural resources, he attributes its remarkable recovery to the "industriousness, hard work and enterprise of the people. They're wonderful people with an indomitable spirit."

Korea is one-third Christian and the most Christian nation in Asia "by a long shot." What's more, the church is growing rapidly, with Presbyterians being the largest group and Methodists second.

When they're not away tending to their diplomatic duties, the Laney's attend Chung Dong Methodist Church, which is just across the street from their residence. It was the first Methodist church to be established in Korea in 1886, after the first missionaries arrived a year earlier.

"I took Sen. Nunn (Sam Nunn of Georgia) and Sen. Lugar (Richard Lugar of Indiana), both Methodists, to Chung Dong Church in January," Laney said. "I introduced them, and Sen. Nunn gave a lovely greeting as Methodist to Methodist."

The Christian influence is much stronger than its numerical stand-

ing would indicate, he said. "Most of the leaders have been trained in Christian schools, and many of them are Christian. The president of the country is a Presbyterian elder, and his wife is a devout Christian. The new unification minister is a graduate of Emory College who Ma Barton helped when he was an undergraduate in the 1950s." (Etta P. Barton and her husband, the Rev. J. Hamby Barton, both now deceased, assisted international students in their education through a trust fund they established in 1952.)

Laney often encounters students he taught at Yonsei. "I was at a Bank of Korea luncheon the other day," he said, "and the guy sitting next to me said he was a student in a Bible class I taught in 1962."

From those days he has a lot of contacts who are now in positions of leadership in government and business as well as the church. More importantly, he said, his work as a missionary gives him credibility with the Korean people who feel he truly cares about them. The years teaching at Yonsei were actually his second stint in Korea. In 1947-48, Laney was stationed in Korea in the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence--and came home predicting war would break out on the peninsula.

Now his considerable influence and experience may be the key that keeps a lid on the Korean powder keg.



Ambassador: Korean situation 'volatile'

Former Korean missionary says North Korea's pressure on South Korea is 'enormous'

By ALICE M. SMITH
United Methodist News Service

Some aspects of the job were expected by the Rev. James T. Laney when he left the presidency of Emory University in Atlanta last year to become the U.S. ambassador to South Korea.

What he didn't anticipate, he said during a brief visit to the United States in early May, was "enormous and all-consuming pressure" from the north.

"I eat, sleep and work North Korea," he said. "It is never out of my mind."

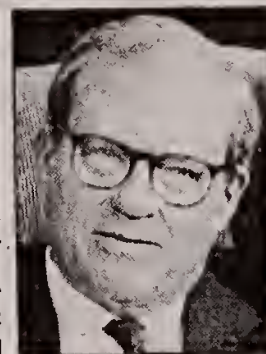
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Dr. Laney gave the commencement speech at Emory's graduation exercises, where he and his wife, Berta, received honorary degrees. She was cited for her work in founding and directing a pastoral-care training program for laypeople.

Dr. Laney, a United Methodist clergyman, was dean of United Methodist-related Candler School of Theology at Emory and served 16 years as the university's president.

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Dr. Laney said he frequently encounters students he taught decades ago. He attributes his work as a missionary with giving him credibility with the Korean people who feel he truly cares about them.

Sam

I knew you'd enjoy

seeing the

Jim Charles work

The education of the heart

Today's colleges seem to teach expertise rather than values and wisdom. But expertise without virtue can be dangerous, observes the president of Emory University. We need a "new wisdom," he says, concerned with purpose and meaning.

by James T. Laney

Until a few decades ago, it was generally agreed that the most important part of the legacy from one generation to another consisted in a kind of wisdom: In what does the good life consist? What is worthy of one's commitment? What is more important than self-gratification? What is good or honorable or true? The second part of that legacy consisted of knowledge and skill: teaching a younger generation how to make a living, how to master a profession, how to become a productive citizen. But through it all, education was seen as a moral endeavor, not because it sought to indoctrinate but because it was a sharing of things that people held to be important. Faculty had authority not only because they were experts in their disciplines, but because they had common commitments and took seriously the important questions and the responsibility of their answers before a younger generation.

All of us are aware that the collegiate tradition in this country grew out of such an understanding of education. In the colleges that were founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was an ethos, an atmosphere of expectation, embodied in ceremonies and traditions as well as in courses, in which all of these things were fused together and passed on. Education was the institutionalization of what we as a people deemed to be important. And through that process, that institutionalization, we sought to prepare oncoming generations for their role and responsibility in society.

The wisdom that underlay such preparation, as we all know, was a distillate of the Bible and of the classical tradition, and it included a strong dose of literature. Through those courses and subjects one encountered life vicariously. Reality was served up not in piecemeal fashion but in and through the larger conflicts and tensions, aspirations and dichotomies, hypocrisies and hopes of the people portrayed in that literature. Virtue had a role—not in a preening self-regarding sense but as the embodiment of certain qualities of life and of their importance for the body politic, qualities such as fidelity, good will, patience, discipline, restraint, promise-keeping. This was a legacy that took precedence over self.

There are some thoughtful testimonies in our own time to the power of that kind of education. Many of us were products of it. Theodore White has written movingly in his *In Search of History* of his first encounter, as a young Harvard student out of a Boston ghetto, with John K. Fairbank. He tells how this gangling North Dakotan—who taught Chinese, of all unlikely subjects—

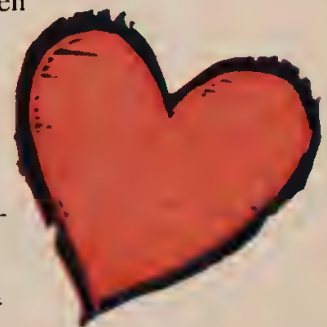
drew him to himself and taught him how to live in the mannered atmosphere of Cambridge. But beyond that, White says that he remembers Fairbank for having sculpted and polished a rough stone into something that was worthwhile. And he was talking about himself. We've all known the impact of that kind of teaching. One doesn't need to be sentimental to acknowledge the role of that wisdom and of that kind of teaching and of that kind of education.

But times have changed. For at least three decades that received wisdom has been under attack. We have lost the confidence to share those dimensions of life, to express those opinions, to give vent to our deepest longings in behalf of others as our own mentors once did.

That wisdom has been under attack because, for one thing, its focus was too exclusive, too parochial. It was too WASPish. It contributed to a disenfranchisement of too many in a full life. And its conventional morality too easily accommodated injustice and hypocrisy. That wisdom has also wilted under the harsh analysis of Marx and Freud, which sees goodness as a cover for imperialism or a mask for self-aggrandizement, placing all virtue and wisdom under suspicion. Within the academic community that wisdom has become embattled because it seems too amateurish, and there is no charge more intimidating for us in the academic world than to be told that we are amateurs. The received wisdom seems too didactic, too preachy. Expertise has now become the necessity.

The result is that authority has retreated to that which is more certain, known and demonstrable. A more comprehensive and holistic view of life has given way to specialization. The shared outlook which that wisdom represented has fragmented. In many of our faculties across the country there has been such a focus upon research and teaching that the interaction with students has become limited to the class-

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room. Today few colleges have shared public events beyond commencement. I'm not talking just about chapel, but about any kind of assembly where the community gathers.

In many academic disciplines there has been a retreat from the attempt to relate values and wisdom to what is being taught. Not long ago, Bernard Williams, the noted British philosopher, observed that philosophers have been trying all this century to get rid of the dreadful idea that philosophy ought to be edifying. Philosophers are

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not the only ones to appreciate the force of that statement. Others have written of the shift in the humanities from the life portrayed to emphasis upon methodology.

Obviously in all of this something is missing. Surely we can recall that the events at Berkeley in the Sixties not only introduced us to the notion of free speech, but also taught us that students feel deprived when teachers only teach or, even more tellingly, only do research. The brightest of students want to get inside their professors' minds, not to be indoctrinated but to learn why they think the way they do and how they have arrived at their conclusions. If this seems strange, look at what law students and medical students and other professional stu-

Firmly

I used to think that everyone should change and be a god: intrinsic, permanent, majestic, up and steep, correctly strange, lit clean, stupendously intelligent and talented and daring and diverse, conclusive, darling, thrilling, just, and strong and deft enough to take the universe apart and get the dead out. I was wrong. The only thing we need to do is make excuses for the way we are, and say them firmly. If "I learn from each mistake" won't work, "I thought the gun was empty" may. If someone saw you load it, *this* will do: "I'm not myself these days." It's always true.

—ROBERT LOUTHAN

Robert Louthan's second book of poems is Living in Code (University of Pittsburgh Press). He is writing his first novel, The Great American Movie.

dents remember most vividly from their education: their clerkships with judges and the moments over coffee, or the grand rounds when the doctor begins to tell anecdotes that reveal something of his or her humanity. It is precisely in those moments that values and wisdom are shared.

Not too long ago a magazine commissioned a writer to go back to his college and write an article about undergraduate life. He observed that the only two things he could find that all undergraduates shared were a sense of having to survive and a desire for self-gratification. He is not alone in this observation. Education no longer seems to be the institutionalization of what we think is important to society. Instead, what we are emphasizing today, largely by default, is careerism. We seem to be turning out people who are bent upon exploiting careers for their own ends rather than upon service through their professions for the sake of society.

And that is exactly what we are bound to do if we do not educate the heart. Without virtue, without the education of the heart, expertise and ambition easily become demonic. How can society survive if education does not attend to those qualities which it requires for its very perpetuation? Witness the decline of the sense of service in the field of medicine or law or nursing or even the ministry. To be sure no one, with the possible exception of the Moral Majority, questions the inadequacy of the old, received wisdom. But more and more people are acknowledging now the need for a new wisdom, a wisdom that is compatible with contemporary knowledge and our new pluralism and that grows out of an appreciation of our common heritage. There is a growing realization that we can no longer operate under the popular conceit that the mere aggregation of individual pursuits and successes will somehow redound to the best interests of our commonweal.

To speak of virtue in education does not necessarily entail being ideological or doctrinaire. Nor does it imply being moralistic. But in our concern to avoid these excesses and intrusions we have tended to evacuate the field of value and meaning altogether. And in our understandable honoring of the freedom of others we have allowed our students to conclude that we don't much care.

So it seems to me that we need to permit ourselves to teach more comprehensively, more personally. We need to encourage our institutions to be hospitable to a broader range of discussions concerning purpose and meaning. We in the universities are not only guardians of the pursuit of knowledge but stewards of the tradition in which that knowledge is applied for the good of society—indeed the world. This stewardship cannot be left to chance or to self-appointed moral monitors who would impose their judgments upon us from outside. The problem is ours. I am persuaded that all of us in higher education share these concerns, however much addressing them may complicate our personal careers and our institutional goals. □

James T. Laney is president of Emory University, Atlanta. A former visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School, he is chairman of that school's visiting committee. This essay originated as an address to the directors of the Harvard Alumni Association.

From Academic Frying Pan Into Diplomatic Fire

By Charles Ornstein

AFTER RECEIVING an honorary degree from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland last month, James T. Laney hoped to spend a quiet week with his wife in Ireland.

Twelve hours after they arrived, their plans changed. President Kim Il Sung of North Korea had died. Mr. Laney, the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, was on the next plane to Seoul.

Such schedule changes are now common for Mr. Laney, who was president of Emory University from 1977 to 1993. His new post has landed him in the middle of a volatile diplomatic crisis.

'NOTHING UNIQUE'

As President Clinton's representative in Seoul, Mr. Laney runs an embassy with hundreds of employees specializing in commerce, trade, security, and intelligence.

High-level diplomacy is new to Mr. Laney, although diplomacy of another sort has been central to his work as a Methodist minister, theology professor, dean, and college president.

"My job is to weigh, sift, ponder, and then recommend," Mr. Laney said from Seoul in a telephone interview last week. "I can imagine a lot of university presidents saying, 'I do that, too.' It's the same thing, nothing unique. It's just how you go about it."

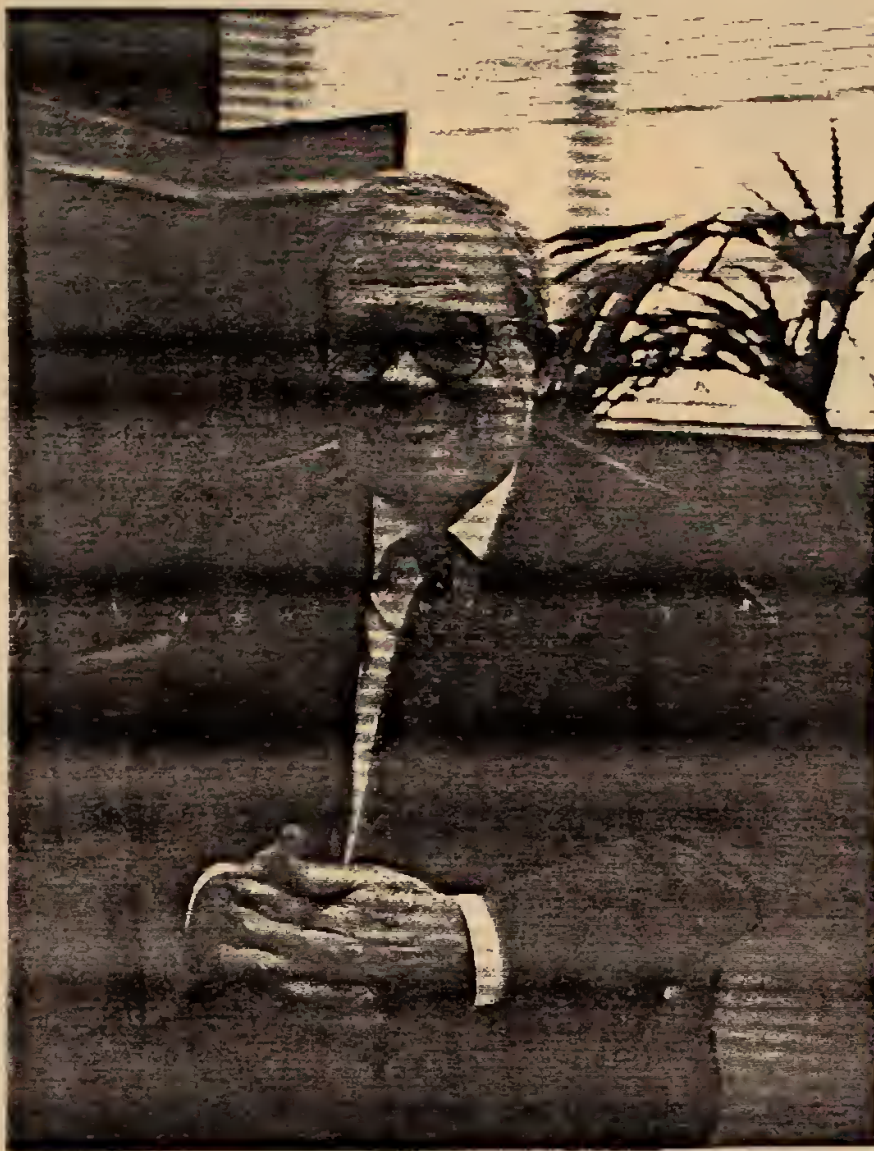
While his job may appear daunting, for Mr. Laney it is a chance to work in his "second home." He first came to South Korea in January 1947 as a member of an Army counterintelligence unit. "It was cold as a bear, and Korea was very destitute," he said.

"The thing that impressed me, though, was the intrepid, doughty spirit of the Korean people and their remarkable resilience and good humor in the face of such adversity. It was so appealing. That's when I got hooked on Korea."

COULDN'T STAY AWAY

By his own admission, he couldn't stay away. In 1959, under the auspices of the Methodist church, he brought his family back and taught theology at Yonsei University for five years. It was then that he became fluent in Korean.

As ambassador, he has already put his experience in Korean education to use, meeting with the presidents of many South Korean colleges. When the current tension eases, Mr. Laney said, he plans to



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visit South Korean campuses to speak to Korean students, many of whom have protested American support for the government in rallies at the U.S. Embassy.

In 1964, Mr. Laney returned to the United States, and his career in academe took off. While he was at Emory, the university secured a \$105-million gift from the Woodruff Foundation and increased its endowment to \$1.76-billion, the eighth largest in the country. Emory also attracted Jimmy Carter's Presidential library.

Those successes made for an agonizing choice when Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher offered him the South Korea post in 1993. "The question was whether I could leave with a sense of honor, having discharged my role there," the Ambassador said. "I would not have left Emory for any other place."

LITTLE RELAXATION

For a man who had planned to retire from Emory this year, his days allow hardly any time for re-

laxation. Beginning at 5 a.m., Korean standard time—4 p.m. the previous day, in Washington—Mr. Laney is on the phone with the State Department.

(Mr. Laney discussed his general activities in the interview, but he declined to talk about the specifics of negotiations with North Korea over its attempts to build a nuclear bomb.)

While he often sets aside time to meet with visiting dignitaries and business leaders, most of his time is spent in policy discussions with five or six of his principal officers. Comparing the talks to meetings at Emory, he said, "The agenda is different, but the process is very much the same."

Unlike at home, however, Mr. Laney now has to answer to upper-level officials.

"As president of a university, you are the principal articulator of the university," he said. "But when you move into a diplomatic post, you are not the spokesperson for foreign policy. There are constraints on your freedom in a way that does not operate as president of a university."

Mr. Laney was instrumental in arranging Mr. Carter's trip to the region in June to ease the tension

between Washington and Pyongyang. Mr. Carter's return from his meeting with Kim Il Sung was particularly poignant, Mr. Laney said.

"Both the President and Mrs. Carter, their eyes welled up with tears," Mr. Laney said, himself choking up a bit retelling the story. "It was an emotional moment on their return, in part because of what they were bringing back with them. It was really impressive." Mr. Carter returned with President Kim's offer that he and President Kim Young Sam of South Korea meet for talks.

James M. Gustafson, a professor of humanities and comparative studies at Emory, and Mr. Laney's dissertation director at Yale in the 1950's, said his former student is ambitious, but never loses sight of his moral and ethical obligations. "He's a person of great personal strengths. He's not a wallflower; never has been. He takes a great deal of joy in exercising responsibility, leadership, and even power in order to achieve the kinds of things he has."

A HECTIC END

Of his latest set of responsibilities, Mr. Laney said: "If I wanted to have a job that fully occupied me when I left Emory, I got it. When I left Emory, I jumped in with both feet."

When he finishes his work in South Korea, he said, he may return to teach a course at Emory or work at the Carter Center, the former President's library and offices in Atlanta. But for now, he joked, the end of his career is proving to be hectic. "Given the situation here, a friend of mine said, 'You've picked the damndest way to retire.'"

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