

March 20, 1954

Letter, General James A. Van Fleet to Syngman Rhee

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Summary:

General James A. Van Fleet send thank you letter for his birthday present.

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Auburndale, Florida

March 20, 1954

President Syngman Rhee
Republic of Korea
Seoul, Korea

Dear President Rhee:

Mrs. Rhee and you have given me a happy and wonderful birthday. I do not know how to thank both of you adequately for the joy and happiness which came from Korea to Mrs. Van Fleet and me these past few days. We particularly were touched by your beautiful message, which arrived so timely, reading:

"Our thoughts and best wishes are with you and yours on your birthday. Many, many happy returns is our earnest prayer."

Then I received on the 18th a beautiful belt, with gold buckle with inlaid design of the Korean national flower and birds. Today two more beautiful presents arrived from Washington - one for Mrs. Van Fleet from Mrs. Rhee and one for me from you. They are so beautiful, and I love the inscription of the Korea national flag on the front side to me from you, and to Mrs. Van Fleet from Mrs. Rhee.

Yesterday Mrs. Van Fleet and I drove to Palm Beach, stopping at Hobe Sound on Jupiter Island, where we were most fortunate in finding a new and beautiful house right on the sand dunes of the Atlantic ocean. Mrs. Van Fleet talked the owner into leasing it to us from 1 May to 31 December, 1954. It is our first home in many, many years. After that we drove on to Palm Beach, had a birthday dinner with some of Mr. William Zeckendorf's friends, and then drove back during the middle of the night to Auburndale. I left Mrs. Van Fleet at Palm Beach to go on to California by air the next morning so that she may visit her sister in Long Beach during April. She will be back in Florida by 1 May to take possession of the beach home.



President Syngman Rhee

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March 20, 1954

I will be able to spend only a small part of my time at the beach because I'll be busy in central Florida with my properties and a trip each month to New York and other places on business and speaking engagements - and possibly, (I wish with all my heart) a trip to Korea. But Mrs. Van Fleet will have a place that she can call home, and have the children and grandchildren and friends. This will give her an interest and incentive which will keep her busy and I believe it will be good medicine which will engage her active mind and keep her from brooding over the loss of our boy.

She left for California in the happiest mood I have seen her for years, and it was due entirely to your messages as well as the home.

I will write her about the beautiful gift which came this morning from Mrs. Rhee. She also received the box of Chinese tea, so now we can serve it in the new home to our friends as you so often served it to us.

With wishes for your continued health and happiness and with everlasting devotion and affection, I am,

Gratefully,

James A. Van Fleet
General, U. S. Army (Ret.)