

Based on the interview transcript of Dr. Joseph Kim (class of '58, Seoul National University College of Veterinary Medicine), here is his life story written as a personal, narrative-style memoir.

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## **The Geometry of My Path: 30, 30, and 20**

By Dr. Joseph Kim (Hyun-young Kim)

Looking back at my life now as I transition from eighty-six to eighty-seven, I see a distinct geometry to my existence. My eighty-plus years have neatly divided themselves into three chapters: thirty years in Korea, thirty-seven years in the United States, and twenty years connected to Guatemala. When I prepared to share my journey, titled *\*My Way\**, I realized how beautifully interconnected these chapters truly are, held together by a single guiding light.

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### **Part I: The Light in the Shadows of Jongno (Korea)**

For twelve consecutive years, my youth revolved entirely around Jongno 5-ga. I bounced around the neighborhood: attending SNU Middle School in Yongdu-dong, the High School at Euljiro 5-ga, and eventually the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Graduate School of Public Health in Yeongeon-dong.

In those days, walking past the university gates, the Latin phrase emblazoned on the emblem—*\*Veritas Lux Mea\** (Truth is My Light)—was just a motto. I was a student in post-war Korea, a country devastated by the Korean War, with a meager per capita GNP of \$75. It was a time dominated by extreme poverty and a fierce rush toward material success, in which education was merely a tool for acquiring money and power. Yet, somehow, I didn't succumb to that materialism. The spiritual anchor that kept me grounded was the profound philosophy hidden within the university's logo and the living example of my mentor, Dr. Frank W. Schofield.

Dr. Schofield, a Canadian veterinarian and missionary who famously documented the 1919 Jeamri Church massacre during the March 1st Movement, became my ultimate role model. Despite walking with a limp from polio, he had risked his life for Korea. Later in his life, he returned to SNU to teach. He lived out the very essence of *\*Veritas Lux Mea\**, using his light to serve the oppressed. He helped countless students learn English and supported bright minds who lacked funds, including former Prime Minister Un-chan Chung.

Decades later, in 2024, I found myself aboard a cruise ship for the SNU Alumni Association USA convention. While others went out to explore, I purposely stayed behind in my cabin, gazing out at the ocean, deeply studying the history of our school motto. I realized how visionary it was for our early leaders—influenced by Western, Christian concepts from universities like

Oxford and Harvard—to introduce this motto to a society heavily rooted in traditional Eastern paradigms. It was a compass directing Korea toward global civilization.

My deep connection to Dr. Schofield came full circle when I received the proud "Proud SNU Veterinarian Award". I traveled back to Korea, completely hosted by the university at the Hoam Faculty House. Receiving that honor inside the newly built Schofield Hall—and returning six months later to give a memorial lecture titled **"The Spirit of Schofield Spreads to Guatemala"** before university presidents and dignitaries—remains the greatest honor of my life.

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## **Part II: The Microscopic World and the American Dream (USA)**

I moved to the United States a bit later than most, arriving at the age of thirty with my family to study at the University of Georgia. In veterinary medicine, unlike human medicine, which heavily focuses on chronic illnesses like cancer, microbes are the primary enemy. I threw myself into veterinary microbiology, earning my master's degree in two years before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) to specialize in dairy cattle veterinary medicine.

My world expanded drastically at UPenn's New Bolton Center in Kennett Square, a massive 700-acre large-animal research hub. To put that in perspective, an average dairy farm is about 100 acres and holds 100 cows; the New Bolton Center was a staggering empire of global research. Scholars from all over the world, even from communist nations, gathered there.

My days began at 4:00 or 5:00 AM. I would drive out to the fertile lands of Lancaster County, working alongside the Amish communities who had pioneered the local dairy industry. I spent my dawn hours collecting milk samples to study mastitis and mycobacteria, rushing back to the lab to culture pathogens. It was grueling, exhilarating work—the moment I truly became a veterinarian.

After earning my DVM license, I spent thirty-three years as a Veterinary Pathologist for the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System (PADLS), a unique tri-institutional network created by state law involving Penn State, UPenn, and the state lab.

During my tenure, global health crises emerged: Mad Cow Disease (BSE) and the West Nile Virus. To combat these threats, I pioneered and established the **\*\*Immunohistochemistry Lab\*\***. By fusing immunology, histology, and chemistry, we could stain specific tissue cells and watch the color shift under a microscope to instantly flag a pathogen.

My crowning scientific achievement involved **\*scrapie\***, a prion disease found in sheep, closely related to mad cow disease. Prion diseases are notoriously difficult to track because they have incredibly long incubation periods before showing any clinical signs. Through immunohistochemistry, I discovered a way to diagnose the disease early using samples from

the animal's tonsils and eyelids, rather than waiting to harvest brain tissue. Publishing these findings in international journals was a moment of immense professional pride.

Simultaneously, our family realized the American Dream. My two sons flourished, both attending Northwestern University. My eldest even bypassed the intense competition to enter their highly selective 7-year combined BS/MD program directly from a public high school. We had built a beautiful, secure life in Pennsylvania. Yet, the spirit of Dr. Schofield and the call of \*Veritas\* continued to whisper to my soul.

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### **Part III: The Triad of Grace—Bread, Gospel, and Healing (Guatemala)**

Every year during my thirty-three years at the state lab, I attended the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) convention. It was there that I crossed paths with \*\*Heifer International\*\*, a livestock relief organization.

In a breathtaking twist of fate, I realized that the very piglets I had helped distribute to poor farmers during my university volunteer days in Cheonan, Korea, had been sent to us decades ago by Heifer International. The seeds sown in my youth had traveled across the globe to find me again.

I joined a fifteen-member specialist evaluation team—composed of white American doctors and professors from institutions like the University of Minnesota—to tour six rural regions in Guatemala to evaluate livestock distribution. When we reached the northern campus of the Universidad de San Carlos (USAC) in Cobán, I felt an undeniable, divine calling: \*This is where you belong\*.

One year later, I stepped away from my secure government career, and my wife and I packed our bags for Guatemala.

I became an unpaid visiting professor at the university, stepping directly into the shoes of Dr. Schofield. Using our own funds, we established a dairy disease diagnostic laboratory at the university. I implemented a formal "Goat 5-Year Extension Program" based on the American university extension model to teach rural communities sustainable animal husbandry. My wife and I provided ESL classes, bible studies, and scholarships.

Soon, our solitary efforts caught the attention of other Korean-American professionals. Experts in community development, medical doctors, and scientists joined us. In 2020, amidst the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we officially founded \*\*GM Net (Guatemala Mission Network)\*\*.

Our impact multiplied exponentially:

\* \*\*The Saemaul Movement:\*\* We sponsored seven Guatemalan university professors and students to travel to Korea for two years to learn the Saemaul (New Village) rural development model. Remarkably, two of those individuals went on to become university presidents, and another became a key professor and pillar of GM Net.

\* \*\*The Maya Medical Clinic:\*\* Partnering with an SNU Medical School alumnus, we raised funds and built a health center in a remote Mayan indigenous village, inaugurating it alongside the Guatemalan Minister of Health and the university president.

\* \*\*Holistic Community Care:\*\* Around the clinic, we introduced "Backyard Poultry" projects, shifting from total charity to a 50/50 co-investment model to grant local families ownership and dignity. We also built ventilated kitchens with proper chimneys to eradicate the chronic respiratory illnesses caused by open-indoor cooking fires.

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## ## Epilogue: The Vision of the Diaspora

Just this past May, we hosted our inaugural GM Net Forum in Atlanta, gathering our core team under the banner: **"Bread, Gospel, and Healing Transformed into Action."** We are currently compiling our presentations into a book to share our holistic team-ministry model with the world.

GM Net is driven by eleven core leaders, seven of whom belong to the Korean diaspora in America. Out of those seven, three of us are SNU alumni—representing Fine Arts, Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine. The artist on our team manages our digital presence, crafting our newsletters and website with a brilliant aesthetic eye. It is beautiful to see how the seed of **\*Veritas Lux Mea\***, planted so long ago in our youth, has blossomed into a unified force for good in the mountains of Central America.

Though I reside physically in Pennsylvania, seventy-five percent of my mind lives permanently in Guatemala. I look at my senior alumnus, who is ninety and still calling me regularly, and I think, **\*I easily have until ninety to keep building this vision\***.

We are living in a digital age, and I am currently championing what I call the **\*\*\*Hybrid Non-Residential \*Here and Now\* Mission\*\*\***. We don't need to physically live in Guatemala year-round to change it. Through digital technology and tools like Zoom, retired Korean-American scientists, engineers, and doctors can host seminars, review data, and exchange ideas instantaneously. We can combine this digital continuity with focused annual visits to train local academics and donate critical laboratory equipment.

My dream is to build a massive, interconnected network of retired scientific and professional minds, using the twilight of our lives to illuminate the dark corners of the world. I am still living entirely in my dreams, fueled by the very same truth and light that found me in the war-torn streets of Jongno so many decades ago.