

Hubert Huh

Korea



Interviewer: What's your country of origin? And what does it mean to you?

Hubert: I was born in Korea, which is about 6000 miles west of where we are right now. Of course I'm from South Korea, North Korea is communist. So Korea divided into two Koreas in 1948. After 36 years occupation by Japanese, Korea became free but North Korea was occupied by the Russian influence.

Interviewer: When did you end up moving from Korea?

Hubert: Well, I first moved to New York City when I was young, and I went to school in New York City in 1985. I worked and went to school at the same time. And then I joined the U.S. Army as a soldier. So I went back to Korea in 1992. I worked there in Korea as a soldier. Then the Uncle Sam, the U.S. Army, sent me back to America. So I was stationed upstate New York. But now in Utah, I've been here since January 2016, with my whole family here.

Interviewer: Have you traveled a lot?

Hubert: Yes, I enjoy traveling because traveling is a very good opportunity for you to discover different cultures and become friends with people from other parts of the world. So far, I've traveled to New Zealand, Canada, Okinawa, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Diego Garcia (a small tiny island in the middle of the Indian Ocean), China, Hong Kong. But, I want to travel more, including Afghanistan, Nepal, Ghana, Kenya in Africa.

Interviewer: What possessions does your family treasure?

Hubert: Well, that's a good question. Like, I hope I understood your question correctly. So the family should be the center of everything. I highly value the importance of family, because when we talk about family, it's not only your biological father and mother or your siblings, children, brothers or sisters. I always think family is like our whole society. We are sitting here at the same table—we are a family! You could have been my niece, my sister, my daughter, and my brother. Because a family is the basic unit of our society, our community. So if you apply that concept to everything, the world will be much better and safer place. For example, when you see somebody on the street—that could be your uncle! And how could you be rude to your uncle, right?

Interviewer: You've brought a few things here, why did you bring these? Why do you treasure this one?

Hubert: I was asked by Joseph [New American & Refugee Liaison of the Salt Lake County Mayor's Office for New Americans] to come here and meet you guys. And he asked me about something that I could bring that I would like to share with you. So these are shoes. So in the old days, before we had modern, nice, long-lasting shoes, people in Korea, they used to make a shoes out of the straw. After you harvest the rice, they use this to make the shoes. And, of course, these shoes are only good for the dry days. And actually, my father, who deceased about 20 years ago, he made this for me, so that I could remember the Korean traditions and the Korean old ways of living. I still treasure these, so no matter where I travel, I carry, I safeguard them. And

this one is a bowl. So we Koreans, we eat a lot of rice, you know, three meals a day- breakfast rice, lunch rice, and dinner rice. All these people put the rice in here. And they eat. So the size of this bowl is big. Now, I don't eat this much rice, about 1/3 of this, and maybe a quarter. But in the old days, the farmer they had no other extra nutrition, but rice, so they had to eat a lot of rice to work in the field. So this actually was used by my mom and dad when I was a small child. Of course in Korea, no one use this size of dishware anymore. It also comes with a cover in case your father, being the head of the household, when he comes home from work, your mom will put the rice inside and will keep the warm with cover on it. This is a Korean musical instrument. I didn't bring the stick. The time of the year when the Koreans celebrate the harvest, farmers will get together, will dance, and will play this instrument. This newspaper is something I used to print here in Utah for the Korean community in Utah. It's called the *Utah Asian Journal*. When I ran for the Draper City Council two years ago, so I put myself on the front page, because I was the editor and the publisher of the newspaper. And this lady standing next to me, she's actually the mayor of Kaysville, and she's also Korean. She was born in Korea, but she was adopted by American family when she was very young, so she's an adoptee. The month of August for Korea is a very special month. August 15th is Korean Independence Day. Like we have a Fourth of July in America. So this is the month of the August issue and I put a lot of Korean flags on the cover, because we celebrate the independence we regained from the Japanese occupation for 36 years during World War II. So my newspaper, my baby. And also I brought another treasure, my actual baby [Huberts is referencing his daughter]. She's a senior at Corner Canyon High School.

Interviewer: How are you and your parents alike and different?

Hubert: Like I said, my father passed away a long time ago, and also my mother, but I know that my mom and father, they are looking down and smiling at me at this time while we are getting together. Well, my father, he was very strict. So in that sense, I think I'm different. But, he was so sweet always though. So I guess I am like like him- sweet. One example is when I was a small boy, he will not let me tell a lie or come home with dirty hands. He will always make sure that before I enter the house, he will make sure that I dust off and wash my hands. But now, living in America, I'm a little bit relaxed and I let my daughter exercise her own agency.

Interviewer: Can I ask you about the Korean community in Salt Lake County?

Hubert: Yes, that's a very good question. The Korean community has been here since maybe 1960 or '70. But now, the Korean community is growing rapidly. We estimate there are about 10,000 or 12,000 Koreans living throughout Utah. Some in Provo and some all the way down to St. George. But I guess the biggest Korean committee is in Salt Lake County.

Interviewer: What was immigrating to the U.S. like and what motivated you to immigrate to the U.S.?

Hubert: Even today, we talk about the 'American Dream,' right? And 30 years ago, when I first came to America, we also talked about the American dream. But what is the American Dream? It's the country where we can exercise our freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of

everything. Because the country that we live in, the United States of America, is built on the U.S. Constitution, which allows everyone equal rights. So everyone should enjoy the freedom of speech. So when I was a young boy in Korea, I met American missionary for the first time in my life, the first American in my life. I talked to him, and I learned a lot about America. Of course, I learned about America in the school, but through him I learned a lot about America. Naturally, I came to love America. And so I guess that motivated me a lot to come to America. And when I joined the U.S. Army, the Army motto was like this, 'Be all you can be.' How nice. You guys are young- be all you can be, there's nothing impossible. Everything is possible.

Interviewer: What are you thankful for about America?

Hubert: That's an amazing question. I am grateful for the freedom that we enjoy here. The country where I'm from, Korea, the northern part of Korea is communist, and they don't have any freedom. Anything we take for granted today in America now, somewhere, in other parts of the world, for them that's beyond their imagination. So, I am grateful for the freedom we enjoy, the beautiful nature we enjoy, the wonderful people that we associate with, and the school systems. Of course, there are some areas that we need to make more improvements. That's for the next generation, that's your assignment. But there are so many things that I am grateful for.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you entered the U.S. for the first time?

Hubert: Beautiful, big, and so modern. The size of the height of the buildings, the size of the cities, modern highways, and clean city streets.

Interviewer: What was it like going back to Korea with the army?

Hubert: In Korea, when you reach the age of 18 or 19, all men are supposed to serve in the military, as a kind of duty. So before I moved to America, I already served three years in the Korean army. And now going back to Korea as a soldier, I'm a member of the United States Armed Forces, so I had very great pride in myself, because the U.S. Army is the strongest army in the world. So now, I'm going back to my home country and helping and defending the freedom in my motherland, but I'm now wearing the U.S. military uniforms. So I was very happy, and I was very honored. The people that I knew before I came to America, they welcomed me and they gave me very special treatment. So I enjoyed it. That was one of the best times in my life.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

Hubert: The first time, four years. Then after that, when I got out of the Army, I went back to Korea working for the U.S. government as a contractor.

Interviewer: What did you contract?

Hubert: With the military, the information systems, IT systems.

Interviewer: What was your experience in school in New York like?

Hubert: New York City is very different, it's diverse, people from everywhere- Afghanistan, Africa, Brazil, Korea, etc. We called it the 'melting pot.' But now they tried to call it a 'salad.' In a melting pot, you put everything one and there's no color, but in a salad, every piece of ingredients has different tastes. So New York City, I enjoyed it and I was very happy working with a lot of people from different parts of the world.

Interviewer: What is your favorite holiday food memory?

Hubert: Mashed potato. Yeah, I love potatoes.

Interviewer: What are the differences and similarities between your country and here?

Hubert: I think the weather is similar because Korea has four distinctive seasons and here we do too, even though the summer is kind of long and the winters are long. But, I think the weather is very similar and also the people. The people in Korea are very nice, they are very warm-hearted, and even in Utah, people are very kind.

Interviewer: What does 'welcoming' mean to you?

Hubert: Understanding the person and putting yourself in his or her shoes, and making him or her comfortable. Welcoming them home, even though you're not home but away from home, but you make that individual feel like home. That's why I tried to say a few words you know in their native tongue. I speak Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and a little bit of Malaysian, Russian, and Chinese. So I tried to expand my language skills.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your religious or spiritual beliefs?

Hubert: I'm a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, known as LDS, formerly Mormon, but we don't call 'Mormon' anymore. I believe that God, we call the Heavenly Father, He loves all of us, each and every one of us. And I believe that He wants us to be happy. Because the goal of our life is nothing but to be happy, right? So I'm happy because I'm with you, and you should be happy because you are with me doing this. So that's my belief and faith that we all are equal, we all should love one another. Because when you want to be happy, your neighbor should be happy too. When your neighbor is suffering, how can you be happy? You might be happy, but not 100%. So every morning when I wake up, I pray and in my prayer, I include, 'Father, please help me do something good for my neighbors and people that I meet wherever I go until I come return to my bed.'

Interviewer: What traditions have been passed down in your family?

Hubert: Traditions from my parents to my generation, we visit the graves of my ancestors every year, at least once a year. From my generation to my children's generation, I guess I haven't passed a lot of tradition. I have two boys and one daughter, and I like to encourage my children to keep a journal on a daily basis and pass it down to their next generation. Because I keep my journal every single day. And I've been doing that for 22 years.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community?

Hubert: I want my community, Salt Lake County, and all the citizens within the county, be more like members of the community, and become more involved in the community activities. So when there are events you should come and meet your neighbors, and make new friends. When you don't meet somebody in person, you'll never become close to that person. We have now social media, the phones, but it's not everything. People think that's everything. Actually seeing you in your eyes and shaking hands and hugging and the tapping, doing something together physically, actually, that's the beauty and that's the highlight of everything. I'd like to see more committee members come out and meet. Which will reduce misunderstandings, which will reduce troubles in our communities. Everything happens when you don't know his or her culture, or you don't know his or her personal situations. So if you know somebody personally, there's a lot of things you can help him. Also, your neighbor can help you. We alone cannot do anythings, we must work together. In Chinese, '人' means 'human-human.' See that each line is supported by the other. So we all must support each other. You cannot stand alone, you have to be together.

Interviewer: Why do you keep a journal every day?

Hubert: Yes, number one, journal is your good friend. So when you are stressed out, when you don't have your close friend or somebody who can listen to you, your journal will listen to everything. So use your channel and take advantage of your journal. Write down everything. At the same time, it is also a record of your life. Sometimes you may have bad days, you don't want to record in your journal, but I do my best to record everything, even including my weight changes or the climate temperature, like the first snow in September. Once in a while, I sit back and I go back to my 10 years ago, and I read about what happened to my daughter, or the first day of her school- She was reluctant to go to school, she was crying because she didn't want to be alone without her father. Things like that. I think everyone should keep a journal, whether using a book or device. But that will help you a lot.

Interviewer: So what do you want to be when you grow up?

Hubert: I'm an old man, but I recently made a very important decision to go to law school. So I probably will go to law school next year. So I'm preparing for the law school.

Interviewer: You said you learned to speak Japanese. I know Korea and Japan have a bad history, so why did you decide to learn?

Hubert: Bad history is the past. We should move forward. Let's say that you and I, we had fighting last night. But we shouldn't stay with the past, we should move forward. But, how do we move forward? You know, probably, if I made a mistake to you, I would apologize. You know, 'I'm so sorry.' Or if you did, you will come to me and say 'I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to.' And your mistakes shouldn't be repeated. So I see it this way, I wasn't there when Japan took over Korea for 36 years. They were so mean, they were so nasty. They killed so many Koreans. Whenever I read the history, I cry because a lot of my ancestors were tortured by gas and by

beatings. But, this is a new life, a new world. So younger generations, we should together, holding hand in hand, should move to make Japan, Korea, and the rest of the world a better, safer place. So I want to study more Japanese, I want to learn more about Japanese culture so that when I meet my Japanese friends, I can welcome them by speaking their languages.