

# My, but that's a big missile you have there, North Korea

Thanks to the many readers who gave me positive feedback on my four-part column relating to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Newark Rebellion/Riot. I have many longtime readers, such as Virginia Williams and Edna, both from Irvington, who always keep me inspired with their kind words about various columns.

Thanks also to Jim from South Orange, who read my column in the News-Record of Maplewood & South Orange and sent me an encouraging email. Finally, a very heartfelt thank you to Worrall Media, which publishes my column in their various newspapers throughout Essex and Union counties. I have written columns for Worrall for 24 years — more about that in a future column.

Staying on an international flavor, this column is on a subject most Americans and the world have serious concerns regarding: North Korea. The following information was taken from various sources, including Encyclopedia.com, Fact Retriever and Wikipedia. As always, space does not allow me to provide all the facts I have obtained.

When Japan lost World War II in 1945, it also lost Korea, which had been annexed into the Japanese empire in 1910. The United Nations divided administration of the peninsula between two of the victorious Allied powers. The USSR, aka Russia, took control of the north, while the United States moved in to administer the southern half.

The USSR fostered a pro-Soviet communist government. North Korea's leader, Kim Il-sung, wanted to invade South Korea, but Joseph Stalin refused to support the idea. By 1950, China's Mao Tse Tung agreed to send military support if North Korea invaded the capitalist-supported South Korea. The Soviets also gave Kim Il-sung a green light for the invasion.

On June 25, 1950, North Korea launched

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

BY HARRY PADEN

a ferocious artillery barrage across the border into South Korea, soon followed by 230,000 troops. Two days after the Korean War began, President Harry S. Truman ordered American armed forces to come to the aid of the South Korean military.

The U.N. Security Council approved member-state assistance to South Korea and 12 more nations joined the United States and South Korea in the U.N. coalition. North Korea captured nearly the entire peninsula within the first two months of fighting.

The North Korean army was not able to break through the Pusan Perimeter, however, and slowly the tide began to turn against North Korea. In September and October 1950, South Korea and U.N. forces pushed the North Koreans all of the way back across the 38th Parallel and north to the Chinese border.

After three years of bitter fighting and some 4 million soldiers and civilians killed, the Korean War ended in a stalemate, with the July 27, 1953, ceasefire agreement. The two sides have never signed a peace treaty: They remain separated by a 2.5-mile wide demilitarized zone.

OK, enough History-101; let's advance to how did we get to North Korea 2017? The official name of North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The founder of North Korea and its first president, Kim Il-sung, the current leader's grandfather, created the country's policy of "Juche" or self-reliance, which has essentially cut off North Korea economically and, even more importantly, diplomatically from the rest of the civilized world, even in times of great famine in the country.

Here are some additional facts regarding this isolated country:

- The border between North and South Korea is one of the most militarized in the world.
- Electric power largely shuts down at night.
- North Korea has an estimated 24 million citizens.
- Nearly all property belongs to the state. A modern independent judicial system does not exist nor does religious freedom.
- North Korea has a network of informants who monitor and report fellow citizens they suspect of criminal or subversive behavior.
- North Korea is the last Stalinist state on Earth.

A single family has governed North Korea for its entire existence. Kim Il-sung remained in office until his death in 1994. He was succeeded by his son Kim Jong-il — although it took him three years to become duly elected — and he who ruled until his death in 2011.

That brings us to the current leader — Kim Jong-un, Kim Jong-il's third youngest son. I suggest you do research on how his third youngest son managed to beat out two older brothers to become North Korea's leader. Let's just say it's the stuff soap operas are made of. By the way, coincidentally, Kim Jong-un's mother was an opera singer.

Historians, such as myself, are not surprised by Kim Jong-un's passions for nuclear acquisition. Despite the fact that North Korea is an extremely poor and isolated nation, it has been pursuing nuclear research for decades, beginning with Kim Il-sung's reign.

Kim Jong-il's government carried out the country's first underground nuclear

test in 2006, in violation of an earlier pledge to abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Since then, more detonations have taken place, each one stronger than the last. During the leadership of Kim Jong-un, nuclear weapons testing has continued. North Korea conducted an intercontinental ballistic missile test on Saturday, April 15, which was the birthday of its founder, Kim Il-sung.

On Tuesday, July 4, North Korea successfully conducted its first test of an ICBM named Hwasong, said to be timed intentionally with Independence Day celebrations in America.

OK, enough history for today. It is obvious that the current North Korean leader follows in the mindset of Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden — all madmen who tried to take over the world.

I encourage all readers to communicate with your duly elected officials to stop their infighting and gear up for what could become World War III. Or am I just a fatalist and we should not concern ourselves with the actions of the world's latest despot?

Only time will tell. All I'm saying is there is a reason a Chihuahua is meaner than a Great Dane. Final fact — North Korea's current leader is only 5 feet, 3 inches tall. He wears 4-inch lifts in his shoes to compensate for his short stature.

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# A peek into the lives of others

## LIBRARY MATTERS

BY MARY JEAN GURZENDA

I just can't seem to get enough of other people's lives, so I've been on a biography and memoir binge for the last few months. Did you know there is a difference between the two? A memoir is a first-person recollection of a certain event, or group of events, in a person's life. In other words, it is being told by the person who experienced it. It is not to be confused with a biography, which is usually a chronological account of someone's life. Research is usually required to put the events in a life not only in order, but in context. It can be written in the first person — an autobiography — or by another.

If you're looking for some good memoirs, I have a few suggestions. One of my favorites is "The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit," by Lucette Matalon-Lagnado. The author, who was born in Cairo, Egypt, to Jewish parents, writes beautifully about her father, Leon, a "boulevardier" — I love that word! He is wealthy, fashionable in his custom-made suits and accustomed to a certain lifestyle. Cairo is cosmopolitan and

diverse and easily allows for this kind of life. All of this changes when, after the Suez crisis, anti-Semitism begins to grow and Nasser nationalizes many businesses. For their safety, the Lagnados are forced to leave their home and begin again in America. Leon has a difficult time adjusting and Matalon-Lagnado takes us through this period with details that read like fiction. She continues the story in "The Arrogant Years."

"H is for Hawk" also has its basis in a woman's love for her father. Helen Macdonald, the author, is a research scholar at University of Cambridge in England and is a nature writer. Shortly after the death of her father, a photographer, she is distraught and questioning her world. She throws herself into training a goshawk named Mabel, which is more challenging than she expected. Goshawks, birds of prey, have traditionally been used to aid in

hunting, like falcons. While the author is experienced in falconry, Mabel causes her to doubt her abilities, especially while in such a vulnerable emotional state. As the training process unfolds, Macdonald interjects her narrative with incidents in her life and shows how her father was the inspiration for her life as a naturalist. As she and Mabel learn to trust each other and work in tandem, Macdonald shows the reader how involvement in something meaningful will take you to another level and can help to heal emotional wounds. For more by this author, try "Falcon."

In "The Glass Castle," Jeannette Walls has her parents to thank for a riveting read. Walls' memoir of her childhood is fraught with some of the most heartbreaking stories you can imagine. Raised by a bipolar, alcoholic father and a mother who was a hoarder and also bipolar, "neglect" is not a strong enough word. As the book opens, Walls is a 3-year-old, standing on a chair in front of the family's stove cooking hot dogs. Her dress catches fire and she is burned and then

spends six weeks in the hospital. When her dad gets tired of the doctors treating her, he breaks her out and brings her home where she goes right back to cooking hot dogs. Her mom is pleased that she got "right back in the saddle." That's just the beginning. Walls and her siblings spent their childhood in dire straits, never knowing where their next meal would come from or where they would be moving in the middle of the night to escape a landlord. This memoir is certainly a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. As an adult, Walls became a writer and worked for the NY Daily News and, after writing this memoir, wrote two fiction books based on her childhood. By the way, this memoir is now a motion picture currently playing in theaters.

There are so many memoirs to choose from; no matter your taste, we can help find something to interest you.

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