

- 2 -

THE STORY OF KOREA'S FIRST CHRISTMAS SEAL

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The Story of Korea's First Christmas Seal would not have been possible if it had not been for the efforts of Christmas Seal pioneers in other lands. A timid, bashful girl made her way to the Philadelphia office of one of America's leading newspapers, "The North American." She quivered with fear and only her high resolve kept her from retracing her steps.

An office boy respectfully knocked at the door of Leigh Mitchell Hodges, Editor of the "North American," and announced that there was a young lady who insisted on seeing him personally. Mr. Hodges looked up from a big pile of papers before him and paused a moment to ask:

"Is she pretty? If she is, show her in."

The answer was fortunately in the affirmative and the young lady was ushered into the presence of Leigh Mitchell Hodges. For a moment she was speechless with embarrassment but Mr. Hodges' friendly smile soon put her at her ease and he helped and encouraged her to tell her story:—

"Near her home town was a small struggling Tuberculosis Sanatorium which was suffering sorely for lack of funds and was daily obliged to turn away patients, many of them from the

Philadelphia area. The Sanatorium had not been able to attract the interest and help of large donors, and friends of the Sanatorium were growing discouraged.

Just at this time she had heard Jacob Riis tell about a humble postal clerk in Denmark who had observed how both rich and poor bought postage stamps and, though the value of each stamp was not large, yet the income derived from the sale of these postage stamps was considerable. There was a children's tuberculous sanatorium in Denmark which somehow could not raise sufficient funds to help the many who badly needed treatment, and so he wondered if a stamp could not be issued whereby rich and poor alike might take an active part in helping this deserving institution. These stamps would cost so little that men, women, and little children could all be working partners in the fight against tuberculosis by their purchase.

After considerable effort permission was granted for these stamps to be issued for sale at Christmas and New Year time. With the spirit of Christmas in people's hearts the seals were widely sold so that the struggling sanatorium was put on its feet financially. The idea worked so well that it was gradually enlarged in scope so that all tuberculosis sufferers in Denmark benefited through the sale of these Health Stamps.

- 3 -

Since hearing Jacob Riis tell about these the young lady could hardly sleep at nights, and she had repeatedly tried to interest her friends in the idea, but they were skeptical and did not think it would work in the United States. Anyway, they said, that it would have to be done by some large organization or group. She had approached the National Tuberculosis Association, but they did not think the idea suitable to raising large amounts of money and they did not care to sponsor it. The Red Cross Committee were somewhat encouraging; but it seemed impossible to get any group to initiate the enterprise, and in the meantime her beloved tuberculosis sanatorium, near Wilmington, was suffering with no apparent hope in sight. She had heard that the "North American" had often sponsored worthy causes and she wondered if it would not help her sanatorium by sponsoring the sale of these health stamps or seals."

Mr. Hodge's expression had changed from that of sympathy to that of admiration for the plucky girl before him, and as a newspaper man he could see that with proper publicity the Christmas Seal idea though new, had possibilities, and he promised the young lady, who was Miss Emily P. Bissell of Wilmington, Delaware, to see what he could do.

The success of the First Christmas Seal, and how the little Wilmington Sanatorium was enlarg-

- 4 -

ed, and enabled to render increased and better service as a result, is now a matter of history. The Christmas Seal idea grew by leaps and bounds and it was not long before the National Tuberculosis Association was glad to take it over. It is now its chief source of income, yielding over five million dollars annually. Since the inception of the Christmas Seals in 1907 their sales have been the means of raising over sixty million dollars and have been the greatest single factor of the remarkable record in reducing tuberculosis in the U. S. A.

This is the only campaign that has not suffered materially by the present "depression" and though the tendency would be for tuberculosis to increase at this time, due to a lower standard of living conditions, the work has been so well supported that the United States is still showing a steady decrease in T. B.

The Christmas Seal idea has now spread to many lands. It was introduced to Japan in 1927, realizing Yen 573.93 for the first year and steadily increasing so that it is now over Yen 2,000.00 per year. Believing that the Christmas Seal idea would prove successful in Korea, too, a missionary physician here approached a number of persons interested in the fight against tuberculosis. He met with a similar response to that which Miss Bissell first met the time was not ripe, and the Koreans would not take to the idea, etc., and so

- 5 -

for a time the matter rested, though an application had been filed with the Government for a permit.

Furlough time came and went and the missionary was but strengthened in his belief that in Korea, too, the idea would succeed, so in the autumn of 1932 he undertook to make the experiment with the help of local Koreans, feeling that even though it might be a financial failure the first time, and end in a deficit rather than a balance, yet the effort from the educational standpoint was justified.

In Korea the Governor of the Province of Whanghai took the place of Mr. Hodges, for the missionary told him Miss Bissell's story as he had heard it both from Miss Bissell and Mr. Hodges. This direct message from pioneers in America so impressed the Governor that he called a citizens' meeting which met in the City Hall of Haiju. The Christmas Seal was presented to this gathering of representative citizens who received it enthusiastically and appointed a Christmas Seal Committee with Governor Han as Honorary President and Dr. Sherwood Hall as Chairman.

The committee got busy at once in refining the application for official permission for the Seals and various designs for them were submitted. The first design was rejected, but the second design, which was suggested by Dr. Hall, that of South Gate, Seoul, was approved and accepted by

- 6 -

the Government, and the official permit was finally granted in the late fall of 1932, after extended interviews with various officials both in Haiju and in Seoul.

As the Sanatorium at Haiju cares for patients, not only from Whanghai Province but from all over Korea and Manchukuo, the original idea was that the campaign would be carried out, this first experimental year, for this one institution only, following the example of other countries in this respect. But in Korea history was not to repeat itself, for when other sections heard of it some expressed the opinion that the receipts should be shared by all institutions in Korea doing special tubercular work. To this the committee agreed and voted that, if the Korea Medical Missionary Association would be willing to handle it, they would turn over the proceeds to them to distribute according to the merits of these several institutions.

Korea's first Christmas Seal Campaign was not all smooth sailing as is illustrated by the following incident. The chairman, with anxious face, went to the office of Governor Han just as the campaign was being launched and was told that the Governor was busy and could not grant an interview. However, the request was repeated as the matter to be discussed was important and urgent. When the Governor saw the doctor's

- 7 -

face, he asked "What is the trouble? I trust there has nothing gone wrong with our Christmas Seal Campaign?" "Just that!" was the reply, "We have been held up in our campaign just when time is precious and much delay would spell ruin. It seems that some misunderstanding has arisen about our permit and until it is straightened out we are to suspend all activities."

The Governor replied, "Probably just some technicality. Leave the matter with me, I will attend to it personally. You need have no fear of the outcome for such a worthy cause."

The Governor was as good as his word and saved the day for the campaign. In the meantime the committee had appointed two pastors, three doctors, and two laymen, all free and voluntary workers, to carry the Christmas Seal idea to the thirteen Provinces of Korea.

The first group of four started on December 5th and the last group did not return till January 27th, just after the Korean New Year. They had traveled as far as from Fusan in the south to Songjin in the north, and had told over 9,100 students and 2,800 adults the story of the Christmas Seal and the pertinent facts on tuberculosis and its prevention. It was felt by the committee that its public health and educational value were far more important than just the money raising value of the campaign, and the main emphasis was put on this

- 8 -

aspect throughout, with special attention given to students. Dr. Moon gave his full time to the students as he was our best speaker.

The Chairman was assigned to see the various editors and get articles in the leading newspapers and periodicals throughout the country and to secure the sympathetic cooperation and help of the foreigners resident in Korea. It was thoroughly realized from the first that this small group of workers could not of themselves hope to reach the whole country, except as they could interest and secure other volunteers to carry the Christmas Seal message to remote regions and to other groups, and in this they were eminently successful.

One very significant result of the Campaign was the interest manifested by the patients at the Sanatorium and their keen desire to help and participate in every way possible. They repeatedly besought the Superintendent for permission to go out and work in the Campaign. When the dangers were pointed out to them they said they did not care about that, for they would die in a good cause (of course this was not allowed). Every one of the patients who was able wrote letters to his friends, others prayed for the success of the Campaign. The patients succeeded in selling seventy Yen's worth of Christmas Seals and secured some special gifts in addition. Though a great many letters were sent out to prominent Koreans

- 9 -

by the committee, except for what the patients themselves sent in, the returns were negligible.

Here are some striking figures of the Campaign:—

9,190 students approximately and 2,800 adults heard the Christmas Seals story and pertinent fact on tuberculosis and its prevention.

3,000 pieces of Christmas Seals literature and letters were sent out. Five leading newspapers and periodicals gave considerable space to the story of the Christmas Seals and wrote editorials so that the reading public were well informed.

Yen 350 was realized, which was considered very good, especially in view of the fact that the campaign was held up by the difficulty in getting the permit, and so had a late start, and also that the idea was brand new to the Koreans.

The Christmas Seals money was turned in to the Korean Medical Missionary Association and was distributed as follows by its reorganized Tuberculosis Committee, composed of representatives of the various Mission bodies doing T. B. work in Korea:—

Pyeongyang: Union Christian Hospital's Tuberculosis Unit received ¥50. Yaju: Church of England Hospital's Tuberculosis Unit received ¥50. Hamheung: United Church of Canada Hospital's Tuberculosis unit received ¥50. Seoul: Tuberculosis Ward of Severance Union Hospital received ¥75. Haiju: School of Hygiene for the Tubercular received ¥75.

- 10 -

Yen 30 was set aside by the committee for getting out Tuberculosis literature and Yen 20 towards research and laboratory work.

While every hospital in Korea does more or less tuberculosis work it was felt by the committee that the Christmas Seals fund should be restricted to those institutions which are specializing in the treatment of this disease. It was also felt that the major portion of this fund should be used for charity work, and for patients who otherwise could not receive treatment; we believe this to be the wish of the donors.

Some interesting facts were brought out by the campaign. Returns by mail from Koreans, except from the Public Health standpoint, were practically negligible. Returns by mail from foreigners were about 60%, though the consulates as a group registered 100% and foreign residents at the gold mines and in business showed a very high average. One Mission Station, which was personally canvassed, showed up by far the best 100% and the per capita average was very high. Only a few follow-up letters were sent out and, yielding as good results as personal interviews, the results were worth while.

Newspaper publicity in itself, without follow up work, leads to practically no sales, though the follow-up work was greatly facilitated by newspaper publicity. Among the various schools, Ewha

- 11 -

took the banner both as to faculty and student subscriptions to the Christmas Seals fund, and the Women's Medical Institute was a close second.

The first edition of Christmas Seals was issued on December 3rd and Rev. H. D. Appenzeller of Paichai Haktang was the first in Korea to buy them. The Koreans preferred to use the Seals for New Year and Korean New Year and therefore more were sold to Koreans after Christmas than before.

No one regrets more than the Committee the delay in getting out the Christmas Seals, due to unforeseen circumstances; but another year there should be no such difficulty. They should be issued in October, in plenty of time for the Christmas mails to the homelands. We also regret that the Japanese residents in Korea were practically not touched, though individuals who heard of it gave generously. It meant getting out literature in Japanese and we were short of funds. We hope in another year that we can give all an opportunity to share in this worthy object.

One result of the Christmas Seals Campaign has been to greatly increase the number of applicants for charity beds at the Haiju Sanatorium, far beyond our present capacity, and also there has been a great demand for literature on tuberculosis, more than we have been able to meet. One of the most interesting facts observed in the cam-

- 12 -

aign was the diversity of the groups thus united in the fight against the common foe, tuberculosis. All religions and nationalities in Korea were represented and Christmas Seals money has come from Japan, Manchoukuo, China, United States, and Canada. Because it was so late only a few Seals were sent abroad; but the returns have been most gratifying and the Seals were welcomed by all. This suggests possibilities for the future.

Another most encouraging and helpful feature of the campaign has been the wonderful letters received and we wish there were time and space to quote at length from them and share with you the inspiration that they bring. The following are quotations from a few which will serve to illustrate what we mean.

Here is a letter from a Korean written in English:—

"I am informed through newspapers that an Association has lately been formed for the prevention of tuberculosis under the auspices of your Sanatorium and that it has launched a movement of selling Christmas Seals from this year. I am writing you hoping that I may help the great humanitarian cause. You may wonder why I am so much interested in this movement. Well, the simple reason is that I too have had tuberculosis, for I broke down right after I graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary. I am very

- 13 -

grateful I had the privilege of a cure in the Presbyterian Sanatorium at New Mexico. I am now quite well and am teaching school. I talked over the matter with some of my friends of how we may be a help to you. Would you mind sending us some Christmas Seals and we will be very glad to help you in selling them." And he did.

Here is a letter from a Presbyterian missionary:—

"The Christmas Seals were received. That is a good idea. I have sold some to Koreans and can sell more if I have them to sell. If you will send me a lot I will try and get them sold. I do not know how you are getting them to Koreans, but I think I can sell quite a number of new books of them." And he did.

Another letter reads:—

"With all my heart I wish you every success in your splendid undertaking. I hope you will put my name on the list and send some more next Christmas."

A letter from a business firm reads:—

"We have for acknowledgement your favour of recent date enclosing Christmas Seals, and take pleasure in sending to you check for one hundred (¥100.00) in aid of your excellent work."

A letter from a doctor reads:—

- 14 -

"We were very glad to have your two pastors visiting us in the interest of tuberculosis work. We feel that they did not take away with them very much money. However we are sure that interest in the work was developed which will bring fruit as time goes by."

Another letter reads:—

"Many thanks for the Seals. I have long felt the need of such and these are most artistic and emblematic. Enclosed please find check for Yen five for Christmas Seals. Use the extra amount in any way you see fit."

Here are a few letters in another vein:—

"I received the Seals and am enclosing my check for one dollar."

"You will be interested in a story told me by a girl who had sent out Christmas Seals (in the States). A letter came to her from a poor ignorant woman who said she had bought the stamps advertised for use in the fight against tuberculosis, had pasted them on her chest, but they hadn't helped a bit. Therefore she waded her money back!"

We received a letter in Korean which read:

"Please send some of that wonderful Christmas Seal Medicine everybody is talking about. I shall pay you what ever the price is."

And another reads as follows:—

Please send me some of those Christmas Seal tickets for free admission to your Sanatorium. I have a number of friends who want to go."

- 15 -

These letters show the genuine interest there is in this work, for which we are deeply grateful and we believe that the future is bright with hope. Wonderful possibilities for the Christmas and New Year Seals are suggested by the following significant statement from the Post Office:—

"The various post offices in Korea handled over nineteen million New Year greeting cards this year (1933) and the postage revenue amounted to Yen 296,700, showing an increase of Yen 49,000, compared with that of 1932."

We need your help and cooperation more than ever in helping to make popular the Christmas and New Year Seals in Korea and with your help it can be done. Heartfelt thanks are hereby expressed to all who helped make the success of the Christmas Seals campaign possible and who are thus sharing in the great work of conquering tuberculosis.

We believe that last year's experiment has clearly demonstrated the feasibility and the desirability of the Christmas and New Year Seals for Korea and our Committee will be very glad to join forces with the Korea Medical Missionary Association and have this organization conduct the Christmas Seals campaign in the future. The K. M. M. A., through its reorganized Tuberculosis Committee, has agreed to undertake the Campaign for 1933.