



Signboard, 1952.

Photo courtesy of Seoul Adventist Hospital Orphanage.

## Seoul Adventist Hospital Orphanage

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The Seoul Adventist Hospital Orphanage was a social welfare institution operated by the Seoul Adventist Hospital under the name Seongyuk-won. Started in 1951 during the Korean War by Mrs. Grace Rue, wife of Dr. George H. Rue, it operated until 1981. Located at 200 Sangbong-ri, Guri-myeon, Yangju-gun, Gyeonggi-do (currently: Sangbong-dong, Jungnang-gu, Seoul), it also operated elementary and middle schools!

## Organization

During the 1950s the Korean Adventist Church officially began social welfare services such as orphanages. Immediately after South Korea's liberation from occupying forces, on September 13, 1945, Hyung-nam Sohn, an Adventist church member, opened an orphanage called Sung Ae-won in Seosomun, Seoul.<sup>2</sup> After that, several other Adventists started social welfare programs. The Korean War had created numerous orphans, widows, and disabled, and the Korean Adventist Church officially began promoting such social services to aid them.

Dr. George H. Rue, director of the Seoul Adventist Hospital, left Jeju Island, which had served as a refuge during the invasion, returned to Seoul in June 1951 and re-established the Seoul Adventist Hospital. His wife, Grace Rue, started an orphanage with 13 children in a room at the hospital. She named it Seongyuk-won and enlisted the aid of such hospital staff members as Geun-eung Kim and Chi-woon Oh. Nurses at Seoul Adventist Hospital had charge of caring for the children. Soon though, specifically designated orphanage buildings became necessary. Seoul Adventist Hospital appointed Ki-jo Han as the general manager of the orphanage and searched for a site and structures. With the support of the Seoul Adventist Hospital, Grace Rue purchased a 3.2 ha (9800 pyeong) site and a 542-square-meter building in Sangbong-ri, Guri-myeon, Yangju-gun in August 1952, and officially opened the orphanage.<sup>3</sup>

## History of the Institute

On September 15, 1952, Seongyuk-won started an educational program for its orphans by operating a branch of Seoul Sahmyook Elementary School. The facility, headed by principal Ki-jo Han and established on the grounds of the orphanage, consisted of 132 students and four teachers. In March 1953, a middle school also opened. The middle school, which began under the name of Seonghye Sahmyook Middle School, had a 6.6 ha (20,000 pyeong) vocational training center, including farm, poultry farm, sock factory, weaving room, sewing room, and a handicraft room, to provide vocational training.<sup>4</sup>

When Seongyuk-won moved to Sangbong-ri during the summer of 1952, the number of orphans it accommodated increased to about 100,<sup>5</sup> then rose to 300 in 1956. During this period, a total of 60 children were adopted to the United States (30) and Korea (30). Meanwhile, through educational projects, some of those who graduated from middle school in 1956 went on to nursing or high school.

In May 1957, Ki-jo Han resigned and Chang-woo Kim became the general manager of Seongyuk-won and principal of Seonghye Sahmyook School. At the end of that year, the orphanage comprised 47 infants and toddlers, 131 elementary school students, 38 middle school students, 23 high school students, 11 faculty members, and 16 additional staff members.<sup>6</sup>

In the April 1964 issue of the Korean *Church Compass* Dr. George H. Rue wrote, "In the 13 years since the establishment of the Seongyuk-won, the number of orphans protected here reached 700. Of them, 266 were

adopted in the United States, and 100 were adopted in Korea. As a result of efforts to educate the students, the Seongyuk-won has sent them to high school (51), college (17), and nursing school (6) over the past 13 years. Six of them graduated from college in 1964. In 1964, the number of orphans currently admitted to the orphanage was 229."<sup>7</sup>

After Dr. George H. Rue and Mrs. Grace Rue retired July 1, 1967, the Korean Union Conference appointed Fay P. Welter as the director of Seongyuk-won.<sup>8</sup> And in September of that year, when Chang-woo Kim accepted the pastorship of a local church, the Korean Union Conference appointed Pastor Myung-hwan Choi as his successor at Seongyuk-won.<sup>9</sup>

Because of changing socio-economic conditions in Korea, the ministry of the orphanage gradually decreased. In particular, the orphanage moved from 200 Sangbong-dong, Dongdaemun-gu to 317 Junghwa-dong, Dongdaemun-gu on April 1, 1970, as church administration sold the site of Seongyook-won to raise funds for the construction of a new Seoul Adventist Hospital.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Seonghye Sahmyook Elementary School and Seonghye Sahmyook Middle School, which were operated under the wing of Seongyuk-won, were also closed. With some of the funds from the sale of the real estate, Seongyuk-won erected four brick buildings in Junghwa-dong to house orphans.

By 1976, the number of Korean orphans had decreased significantly because of the country's improved social conditions. At that time, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs established a policy to close orphanages with less than 30 children under the age of 18. Accordingly, the Korean Union Mission decided to shutter Seongyuk-won.<sup>11</sup> However, some young children remained in the orphanage, so it temporarily operated until they reached maturity. However, on June 1, 1981, when they all turned 18, Seoul Adventist Hospital completely closed the facility.<sup>12</sup>

## Role and Position in the Country

Seongyuk-won was an orphanage operated as an affiliated institution of the Seoul Adventist Hospital and played an important role as a social welfare institution to raise children who had lost their parents during the Korean War. At a time when Korean society faced extreme financial difficulties, the Seoul Adventist Hospital Orphanage took care of approximately 1,000 orphans. As a result, many children grew up well and contributed to the nation's development.

In particular, Seongyuk-won became a representative institution displaying the social role of the Adventist Church in Korean society. Building on its experience with social welfare institutions such as Seongyuk-won, the Korean Adventist Church has operated its General Social Welfare Center since the 1990s. In addition, the Korean Union Conference has established a Legal Association of Social Welfare Corporations to develop its welfare programs.<sup>13</sup>

## List of directors

Directors: Mrs. Grace Rue (1951-1967); Fay Welter (1967-1973); Mrs. Ringer (1973-1976)

Korean Directors: Ki-jo Han (1952-1957); Chang-woo Kim (1957-1967); Myung-hwan Choi (1967-1971); Geun-sun Lee (1972-1976)

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### SOURCES

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*Church Compass*. October 1963; April 1964; August 1967; December 1967.

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Robson, Irene. "Nursing in Korea." *ARH*, July 10, 1952.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975.

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### NOTES

1. The *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* identified the orphanage as Sun Yuk Won, but this article lists it as Sungyuk-won according to the English notation of Korean. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975), 184.
2. *Church Compass*, October 1963, 12.
3. Irene Robson, "Nursing in Korea," *ARH*, July 10, 1952, 19.
4. "A Report of Seongyuk-won," Minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1966), 16.
5. Robson, 19.

6. Jae Shin Kim, *A History of Sahmyook University: 1906-1996* (Seoul: Sahmyook University Press, 1998), 137.
  7. *Church Compass*, April 1964, 11.
  8. *Church Compass*, August 1967, 36.
  9. *Church Compass*, December 1967, 36.
  10. "Resolution number: 70-186," Minutes of the Executive Committee of Seoul Adventist Hospital (Seoul: Seoul Adventist Hospital, 1970).
  11. "Resolution number: 76-216," Minutes of the Executive Committee of Korean Union (Seoul: Seoul Adventist Hospital, 1976).
  12. "Resolution number: 81-38," Minutes of the Executive Committee of Seoul Adventist Hospital (Seoul: Seoul Adventist Hospital, 1981).
  13. [Korean Adventist News Center](#), November 25, 2002.
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