



**Honoring a Hero: Korean War Veteran H.J. Burley Smith Awarded
Korea's "Ambassador of Peace" Medal
While Retracing History on a Cruise Stop to Busan, South Korea**



Photo Release

Busan / Geoje, South Korea, June 30, 2018 — During a Memorial Ceremony organized by the *Korean Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA)*, Brigadier General (retired) and MPVA Director General Kim Kwang-woo (left) presents Korean War Veteran H.J. "Burley" Smith (right) with Korea's "Ambassador of Peace" Medal. Smith and his travel group, who were visiting Korea on a Windstar cruise to retrace history, were invited by President Moon Jae-in of South Korea to the Geoje-do Monument to the *SS Meredith Victory*, whose crew of American merchant seamen became famous for saving 14,000 Korean refugees in December 1950 during the Hungnam evacuation.



In December 1950, Junior Third Mate Burley Smith was on his first service trip aboard the 7,600-ton SS *Meredith Victory*, when the ship and staff performed a historic rescue of 14,000 Korean refugees early in the Korean War. Later dubbed the “ship of miracles,” the vessel was designed to carry just 12 passengers and 47 crew, including Burley Smith a recent U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduate.

Amongst the rescued refugees were the parents of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who participated in a wreath laying ceremony during his June 2017 visit to the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Reported to be the largest humanitarian rescue operation by a single ship in a single trip, the ship captain and crew were awarded war hero status by Korea and decorated as American heroes. No lives were lost and five babies were born on the now legendary journey through mine fields, darkness and enemy fire, the experience inspired the captain to become a monk.



The Welcome Ceremony was held at the *Refugee Meredith Victory Memorial* at Geoje City, South Korea which commemorates the site where the refugees were rescued in 1950. A delegation led by Brigadier General Kim and other representatives from a special Presidential envoy participated in a moving ceremony and luncheon to celebrate Mr. Burley Smith. Along with his wife Travel Agent Mrs. Barbara Hacker, Smith and their Kendale Lakes Travel Group of Miami, Florida chose the Windstar’s *Star Legend* itinerary, because of its first time, overnight call to Busan, South Korea on April 5 and 6.



In addition, Timothy Ryan (above right photo, far right) of the Rotary Club of Miami presented an American Flag that was flown over the United States Capitol in honor of the rescue mission and the Korean people, along with a letter of special recognition from U.S. Senator Marco Rubio that stated, "We hope you will fly it at the Meredith Victory Memorial in recognition of the bond that unites our two countries and in memory of the "Ship of Miracles" that saved so many lives."

The return visit, and day tour to Geoje City were specially arranged to allow Mr. Smith and his travel companions to retrace the path of the historic voyage and attend the memorial ceremony events planned by the MPVA at the *SS Meredith Victory* Monument. Cruise guests on Windstar's [Splendors of Japan & Korea](#) sailing were given a presentation by Ned Forney, author, historian and grandson of U.S. Marine Colonel Ed Forney who had a major role in the organization of the evacuation; Mr. Forney and Mr. Smith also participated in a question and answer session with Mr. D.H. Won, who resides in Korean and was a teenage refugee who was evacuated on the *Meredith Victory* in 1954.



Prior to the Memorial Ceremony at the *Refugee Meredith Victory Memorial*, the MPVA delegation enjoyed a tour and breakfast reception aboard *Star Legend* while alongside in the Port of Busan. The 7,600 ton merchant marine vessel *SS Meredith Victory* that performed the historic rescue was near in size to the 9,975 gross registered ton, 212-passenger *MV Star Legend* which Mr. Smith and his travel group sailed on to retrace the path of the historic voyage.

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For hi-res photos and video of the Welcome Ceremony at Geoje City , South Korea, or for further information or interview requests contact:

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