

## In the Spotlight – Seoul

(Special Edition for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hashing in South Korea)

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Korea was referred to as the Hermit Kingdom in its early history, for its isolationist ideology. While North Korea continues in this way, South Korea has emerged on the world stage over the past century, and is now (depending on which list you look at) one of the top 10 largest economies in the world. According to the [World Fact Book](#), the first kingdom on the Korean Peninsula dates back to 2300 BC. There have been a number of dynasties in the region since then, with the longest being the Chosin Dynasty from 1392-1910, of which Seoul was the capital. Japan ruled the peninsula from 1910 to 1945, until Korean independence was restored at the end of World War II. Although technically still under armistice since 1953, as a resulting of the North Korean invasion in 1950, South Korea enjoys a robust and open society.

Seoul continues to be the capital, and is located roughly 30 miles south of the DMZ, and 125 miles south-east of Pyongyang, the capitol of North Korea. As far as anyone knows, there has never been a hash in North Korea, but there certainly has been hashing all over the southern half of the Korean Peninsula for the past 50 years. There have been as many as 27 hash clubs at different times since 1972, when the Seoul H3 was founded by Ian Young.

Back when I was a member of the Seoul H3 (1997-2000), Ian Young was commonly known as the founder, but no one on the hash at that time had ever met him, or knew who or where he was. Last year when I was once again reviewing the history of hashing in Seoul for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (being held today here in Seoul), I reached out to some of my Seoul Bruddas to see if I could dig up any new details. My request got circulated around by a few of the old hashers, and I was surprised when one of the responses I received included an email address for Ian Young. This led to a very interesting email discussion, and my eventual booking of a flight to Costa Rica in March, to meet Ian Young and get his story. There just happened to be an event being held during my visit, and I ended up meeting Ian on a hash run with the San Jose H3. The trail was commemorating the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of [hashing in Costa Rica](#), Ian founded the first hash club there as well. After chatting at the hash, we agreed to meet for lunch a couple days later to discuss his journey through the world of hashing.



Hazukashii and Ian Young, 5 March 2022

Looking at his early days, Ian was born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland, and would start his career with Pfizer. First assigned to Hong Kong in the 1960s, he was in sales and had the opportunity to travel all over the Far East. During our lunch, Ian regaled me with many great stories about his life, his trips to Vietnam (during the war), Japan, Australia, and others. One day in late February 1970, while reading the local paper, Ian saw an article on a new running club called the Hong Kong Hash House Harriers. Being a fit fellow, playing rugby and running, he turned up for run number 2 which would have been the first week of March 1970. He took to hashing right away, and became a regular.



The first SH3 T-shirt circa 1973

Only a year later, Ian was transferred to Seoul where after a few months of getting settled, he decided to start a new hash club with the assistance of Robbie Douglas and Tony Parry. The first trail of the Seoul H3 was on 11 Jun 1972, and 4 brave souls turned up for that first run. Although, once the word started getting out, it was not long before the circle began to grow. Ian explained that . . .



The pack gathers for start of trail, circa 1973

*The first hash was on Namsan Hill with post hash libation at my apartment. For expatriates, living and working in Korea was not easy in the early 70s and the camaraderie and enthusiasm of the Hash meant that, beyond its contribution to physical and mental health, the Hash was also an important support group. It was where vital intelligence was exchanged - such as how to gain entry on to the military bases, the only place where many of the basics of life - bread, butter, bacon, decent beer etc.*

*could be acquired. Claiming to work for the World Bank and acquiring a library card were popular ruses. Having a girlfriend who worked in the PX usually worked. In the early 70s there was very little development south of the Han River, which made it ideal hashing country. However, there were potential dangers such as overzealous villagers on the lookout for North Korean infiltrators and shiggy pits - uncovered septic holes in the ground. When the Seoul Club opened its country club (as I recall, about 45 minutes down the Seoul/Pusan highway), the Club and surrounding area became a popular hashing venue. The Seoul Wanderers rugby club was an offshoot of the Hash and I recall a successful Hash Ball at the Seoul Club - quite the social event of the year.*



Greater Seoul region, courtesy of Google Maps

When I ran with the Seoul Men's Hash (as it was referred to at that time) back in the late 1990s, we ran on Wednesday evenings in the summer and Saturday afternoons in the winter. Due to shifting interests over more recent years, and many of the long-time hashers retiring and moving away, the numbers have dwindled and they run on Saturday afternoons year-round now, but hashing is still vibrant and steady in Seoul.

I don't think I am betraying any secrets here, so let me give you a rare glimpse inside the Seoul Men's Hash from my own experience. We would meet at many different locations throughout the city, but my favorites were those remote areas up to the north, between the city and the DMZ. Due to the heavy traffic, it could often take us over an hour to drive just 15-20 miles on Wednesday evenings, but it was well worth it. Getting away from the hustle and bustle of downtown Seoul was a blessing, if only for a few hours every week. Normally only one hare was required to set the trail, occasionally two, but usually not more than that.



Circle around the fire at the Seoul H3 2500th Run, October 2018



Davey Crotchit appearing to levitate as he makes his way over the water

Most trails were pre-laid, but a few of us still strapped on the old flour bag, and with a 12-15 minute head start would take off into the rice paddies or up the side of a mountain to lead the pack on an 8-12 Km trail. On the Seoul Hash, the HonSec is the heavy, the man with the say-so. He keeps the rosters, signs up the hares, collects the money, writes the hash trash, and most importantly . . . names all hashers. The GM and JM are figure heads that lead the circle, which were always conducted around a fire, both in the summer and winter. The mismanagement also included the positions of Procure Hare (Haberdasher) and Hash Horn, that carried the bugle

out on trail to call to the pack once checks had been broken, and trail was found. There were no whistles allowed, and no marking of checks, it was each man for himself outside of the horn or the call of On-On. As you can see from the photos, Orange is the color of the Seoul H3.

Much ado has been made about male only hashes in recent years, but not having the unmentionables around can be a much more relaxing and entertaining circle. Hash circles as we know them today probably stemmed from Jakarta, but the Seoul H3 may also lay a claim.

Due to the extreme temperatures of Korea, a fire was essential while at the end of trail where the pack would gather round with a cold beer, and keep their backside warm (that is how traditions begin). Speaking of the circle, after eating whatever the hare brought for us in the hash tin, we gathered 'round the fire with one of a wide selection of imported beers in hand, and awaited the pronouncement of the GM (or the JM only in his absence). Around the circle, only the GM may speak freely, if a hasher wanted to speak, he must first raise his mug over his head to



Former GM, Lifa, chats with Animal on the way to the run site

be acknowledged by the GM. Depending on the number of hashers present, each one would be brought up one at a time for a splash (down-down) from the honored bed pan, which was inscribed with the names of all former GMs.

Each hasher would be required to entertain the assembled pack with a song or a joke. I learned many songs, and also introduced a few new songs of my own in those circles. To start the circle, first up would be the hare, to record comments about the trail and also to identify who the 'Wingee' (FRB) was for the day's trail. Next would be the Wingee, and then the rest of the pack would be called on based on the GM's discretion.



Former GM, Rawhide, holds the pan, ready to receive his splash

After an hour or so, or whatever length of time it took to satisfy the GM that all had been heard, he would call on a hasher to ask what direction they would like to go, which led into the final song of the night . . . and it was NOT swing low. After the hash, many of us would often reassemble at the Mug Club in Itaewon for another beer or two before heading home.



Former GMs, Shitonya and Capt Marvel singing in circle

As previously mentioned, there have been at least 27 various hash clubs founded on the Korean Peninsula over the past 50 years, with 10 of them in Seoul. Ironically, just a couple months ago while I was hosting OUTERHASH in Trinidad, I met Barbara 'Mistress' Ewart, the founder of the second hash club in Seoul, the Seoul Hen House Hash Harriers. She explained to me that "Living in Seoul [in 1981], where my then husband worked for GEC Marconi. We had previously spent two years in Pusan in a remote compound, so the 'upgrade' to the capital was a welcome move. Needless to say, the expat wives were hopelessly bored."



Mistress, still hashing 40 years later

Mistress went on to explain that although Seoul was better than Pusan, the wives stayed home while their husbands were out enjoying the hash, and they soon began to revolt. She continued "as with all suppression, there was an uprising. I do remember the ladies were invited to a family Hash. This proved the catalyst for a group of us women to say . . . what about us?"

As for how it all started, she said . . .

*Our inaugural run was March 1981. Would you believe it; the expat companies did not allow women to drive as they could not be insured at that time. It was claimed that in law, the woman who injured (or worse) a Korean, would result in her being responsible for support of the family from then on. That meant we had 'drivers'. They were our saviours. Not only did they drive us to all the great locations for running around the outskirts of the city, but they loved our little toddlers, who they happily babysat with their colleagues! This they did whilst us girls recced trails, and set runs.*

*The local villagers on our routes had not in those days seen many Ko Jay (big nose) foreigners. The Korean ladies would hide their faces behind their hands and laugh in embarrassment as we ran, revealing our white legs and flushed faces. They could not comprehend why a lady would not want her face to remain porcelain-like. Only peasants having to work outside in the fields had a tan! We'd wave and smile as we ran alongside their paddy fields enjoying our freedom. 'On On' was the cry from the SHHHH!!*

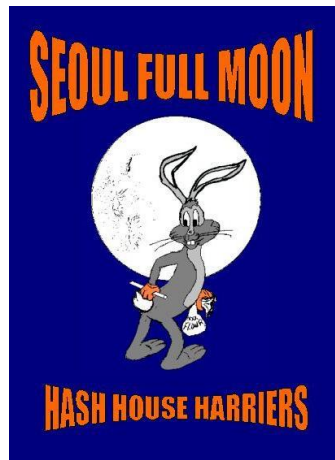
Mistress does not recall how long this first Harriettes' hash lasted, but it was probably not too much longer after her departure. Mistress would go on to be the first Joint Master/Mistress of the Riyadh Sulaymaniyah H3, as well as hash in other places around the world.



Hen's Logo, circa 1981

Other hash clubs founded in Seoul are . . .

- Yongsan Kimchi H3 founded by Dick 'Underlubber' Dugan on 20 Sep 1987
- Seoul Full Moon H3 founded by Ralph 'Pork Grind' Whalers on 1 May 1997
- Korea Mystery H3 founded by Dirk 'Derk Off' Foster on 31 Jul 1998
- Mixed All-Seoul H3 founded by Michael 'Daddy Long Legs' McCorkle on 9 Oct 1999
- Seoul Southside H3 founded by Ed 'Hazukashii' Howell on 4 Dec 1999
- Seoul PMS H3 founded by Dawn 'Free 2 Lay' Cox on 5 Feb 2000
- Seoul Team Delta H3 founded by Rick 'Dodid' Mendonsa on 28 Sep 2001
- English as a Second Language H3 founded by John 'Jizzmopper' Bauer on 30 Apr 2004



In an agreement reached in 2004, US Military forces began moving out of Seoul to bases further south. This has had a major impact on hash clubs in the Seoul area. While some of these hash clubs are resurrected from time to time for special events, the only 3 hash clubs still active on a regular basis are the Seoul H3, the Yongsan Kimchee H3, and the Southside H3.



Seoul PMS H3 logo, circa 2000



## Epilogue

Many thanks to both Ian Young and Barbara 'Mistress' Ewart, for sharing their stories with me. I have had the good fortune to meet and hash with dozens upon dozens of amazing hashers in Korea, including every founder listed above (with the exception of the ESL H3). I would be remiss if I did not name a few other great hashers (in addition to the founders above) I consider friends, such as Kimchi Marine, The Wolf, Over There, True Blue Hugh, Mouse, Double Orange, Shitonya (who would often recite . . . "As Hashers, we owe no allegiance to any Kings, Queens, Popes, potentates, or any other futhermucker, only to ourselves ... TO THE HASH!"), Lifa, Rawhide, Virginia Slim, Boob-a-lube, Davey Crotchit, Twin Cheeks, Farty Breath, Prune Gas, Lepercon, Blank Space, Ultraman, Fuk-a-duck, Anal Farmer, HHIT, Nut&Bone, Finger Bang Bang Bang, Running Bare, Animal, Ammo, Excellent Choice, Longthroat, Captain Marvel, Marco Smegma, Aston Martin, my ROK Marine brother OB-Won, as well as many others that slip my feeble mind. I owe them all a debt of gratitude for their part in maintaining the hash here, and/or making my stay in Korea a most enjoyable experience, with so many fabulous memories.

There is certainly a great deal more that can be said about hashing in South Korea, and more specifically, in Seoul. I encourage you visit this amazing country for yourself, and get your own first-hand experience.

That's all you're going to get folks, if you want more, you will have to buy me a beer and get the details in person. On-On. You can get more information in the lineage for [hashing in Seoul and throughout South Korea](#). You can also see links and details on hash house harriers' clubs around the world on the [website](#).

For many more articles like this on the history of hashing, check out . . . [In the Spotlight](#).

