



## Hugh A. Rose (盧厚德, 1926–2011), A Missionary Pioneer and the Cornerstone of Ophthalmology at Wonju Union Christian Hospital

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### FAITH/DISPATCH BACKGROUND

Hugh A. Rose was born on May 9, 1926 in Toronto, Canada. He studied Theology at the University of Toronto in 1945 and met Marilyn Black, who graduated from the University of Toronto and the Ontario Institute for Studies with a degree in English literature, in 1948.<sup>1</sup> While attending the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine in 1951, he was ordained as a pastor and married Marilyn in 1955 (Fig. 1). After graduating, Dr. Rose worked at the Bella Coola General Hospital in 1957 to thank the National Mission Ministry of the United Church of Canada for their help during his school days.

Hugh and Marilyn belonged to the Worldwide Mission Ministry of the United Church of Canada. At the end of 1958 to the beginning of 1959, the Worldwide Mission Ministry proposed that Dr. Rose go to Korea. Although Mr. and Mrs. Rose had been planning and preparing to be sent to Africa, they changed their plans and accepted their charge in Korea. As Dr. Rose prepared for Korea, he received 3 months of training in the Department of Ophthalmology at a university hospital at the request of the missionary department. In March 1960, he arrived in Korea and lived in accommodation near Seoul Station (former location of Severance Hospital).

**Received:** July 18, 2022 **Revised:** November 2, 2022

**Accepted:** January 3, 2023 **Published online:** February 8, 2023

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### PARTICIPATION IN EMERGENCY CARE AT SEVERANCE HOSPITAL DURING THE APRIL 19 REVOLUTION

During the April 19 Revolution, Dr. Rose received language education in Korea. He recorded the situation at the time:<sup>2</sup>

*“I arrived at the Korean Language Institute of Yonsei University in Sinchon for Korean classes, and I sensed a strange feeling. The instructor, who had normally conducted the lecture with a sincere attitude, was unable to concentrate. In the middle of the first period, an American officer entered the classroom. He said he would escort us to our accommodation because there was a riot in the city. Under their escort, we arrived at the Severance Hospital main gate (Fig. 2A). The square in front of the hospital soon became crowded with students of various ages, including elementary, middle, and high school, as well as university.*

– Omitted –

*I went to the hospital and found something I could do to help. Three rooms on the first floor were provided for foreigners. The emergency room was saturated. I classified the patients according to their conditions and tried to maintain the functions of the emergency room.*

*As the gunfire continued, tear gas leaked through the window. Medical students in white coats went out to the square with stretchers and carried the wounded. About 180 patients with gunshot wounds were brought every 2 minutes for 6 hours, almost filling 200 beds.*

– Omitted –

*By noon the next day, 26 out of 160 patients had died.”*

This was the first time that a medical missionary, Dr. Rose, had worked for Severance Hospital.



Fig. 1. Mr. and Mrs. Rose.



Fig. 2. Severance Hospital and Wonju Severance Christian Hospital. (A) Severance Hospital (courtesy of Dongeun museum). (B) Wonju Severance Christian Hospital in 1959.

## EQUIPPED WITH THE BEST OPHTHALMIC INSTRUMENTS, OFFERING CLINICAL PRACTICE TO HOSPITALS IN NEED

In the fall of 1961, the Roses moved to Wonju to work and fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Missionary Florence Murray; they lived in Dr. Murray's house. Wonju Union Christian Hospital (WUCH) had grown from 55 beds at the time of its opening to 125 beds (Fig. 2B). Dr. Rose worked with the foreign

missionaries dispatched in 1961 (Medical Director Donald Mattson, Head Nurse Ruth Saunders, Nurse John Carey, Surgeon Robert F. Roth, Physiotherapist Thelma Maw, Nurse Marion Pope, and Clinical Pathologist Barbara Firl). When Dr. Mattson returned to the United States in 1962 because of tuberculosis, Dr. Rose served as the medical director from 1963. Although the hospital was small that year, it had 46,587 outpatients.<sup>3</sup>

Missionary Rose's primary job was to perform ophthalmic treatment, but equipment, including portable medical devices, inspection lenses, and surgical tools, was scarce. He purchased barber chairs for patients to sit on. From late 1962 to early 1963, he received a letter from Dr. Ed Cunningham, an ophthalmologist living in Vancouver, Canada. He was sent to China with his wife Gladys Cunningham, but they were deported because of Communist rule. They settled in Vancouver and opened a small hospital. Dr. Cunningham stated that he was going to retire and that he would send his equipment to Wonju. Additionally, he and his wife worked together in the ward in Wonju for a few weeks. In 1963, Korean-American ophthalmologist Park Junhong joined the ophthalmology department. Rose's 3-month training experience in ophthalmology at a university hospital in the United States was an obstacle to his practice, and he realized he needed to become a fully qualified ophthalmologist.

In the spring of 1964, he began formal training to become an ophthalmologist in Vancouver, Canada. After completing a 3-year course, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada granted him his certificate as an ophthalmologist. HA Rose received a wonderful gift from a church in Toronto. Believers of the Kingsway-Lambton United Church, which Marilyn attended when she was young, showed great interest in their medical mission. Therefore, ophthalmologist Page Harshman and the church provided WUCH with a complete set of eye equipment. In 1968, HA Rose returned to Wonju and started treatment in a ward stocked with the new equipment, including two state-of-the-art clinics, a surgical microscope, and a low-temperature surgical device.

In a letter, Dr. Kim Chunbae wrote in 1968:<sup>4</sup>

*"We are very pleased that you and your family rejoined Wonju Union Christian Hospital in June 1968. It has been reborn as an ophthalmology clinic with the best equipment in Korea under your guidance. In addition to our hospital, you have reached out to nearby or distant Christian hospitals, Christian orphanages, and US and UN forces."*

At that time, the hospital's financial condition was poor. Tuberculosis was a troubling disease, and it was difficult to procure various types of medical supplies and drugs, including sufficient X-ray film. WUCH provided treatment and medical services to the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea in Wonju. Dr. Rose and Dr. Roth worked as medical advisors

at the US military base (Camp Long) and received medicines and medical supplies instead of being paid in cash (Fig. 3).

In the 1960s, there were few general hospitals, so WUCH provided mobile medical treatment outside Wonju. Dr. Rose visited St. Columban Hospital in Chuncheon, Merinol Hospital in Jeungpyeong, as well as others, and treated ophthalmic patients. Furthermore, he provided medical services in doctorless villages and promoted the Sight Saving Project (Fig. 4). Entrusting his department of ophthalmology to the young and talented Dr. Park Junhong, missionary Rose returned to Canada in 1970.

## CONSTANT MEDICAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Upon returning home, Dr. Rose worked as an ophthalmologist in charge of the 500000-square-mile Mackenzie zone in north-eastern Canada. He lived in a small town called Yellowknife and traveled by plane. In 1978, he moved to southern Ontario to be closer to the academic center. He retired from a hospital affiliated with the United Church of Canada in Hazelton, Northern British Columbia, Canada. He passed away on December 29, 2011.<sup>2,5</sup> Dr. Rose's work was not limited to clinical practice, resident training, and state-of-the-art ophthalmic instruments. He



Fig. 3. Helicopter for drug and patient transport (Dr. Mattson [left]).



Fig. 4. Medical service in a doctorless village.

visited many small hospitals and rural areas where doctors were lacking to carry out the “Sight Saving Project,” a preventive medicine program. The work of Dr. Rose serves as the pioneering footstep for public health in Korea.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Conceptualization:** Sung Ku Ahn. **Data curation:** all authors. **Formal analysis:** all authors. **Investigation:** all authors. **Methodology:** all authors. **Project administration:** Sung Ku Ahn. **Resources:** Jong Won Yoon. **Supervision:** Sung Ku Ahn. **Validation:** all authors. **Visualization:** Jong Won Yoon. **Writing—original draft:** Sung Ha Lim and Sung Ku Ahn. **Writing—review & editing:** all authors. **Approval of final manuscript:** all authors.

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