

AEROGRAMES HOME

Jeffry Paul Belnap

1978 July to August

SERIES FROM KOREA

General Description of July and August 1978 Letters

[1978.07.03](#) - Describes monsoon life, household routines, cultural events, and steady missionary teaching, emphasizing patience, agency, and hopeful family investigators.

[1978.07.10](#) - Reflective letter on agency, teaching through example, family journaling, missionary discouragements, and renewed resolve amid ongoing investigator challenges.

[1978.07.17](#) - Recounts religious discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses and a Catholic priest, cultural confidence in language, and reflections on perseverance and maturity.

[1978.07.25](#) - Balances cultural excursions with growing homesickness, thoughtful budgeting for return, appreciation of Korea, and gratitude for family support.

[1978.07.31](#) - Expresses anxiety about approaching mission's end, future uncertainty, critique of Korean church culture, and continued commitment despite rejection.

[1978.08.22](#) - Deeply reflective letter on faith, suffering, divine will, leadership imperfection, and a solemn hospital blessing during emotionally demanding circumstances.

General Description (July–August 1978)

The letters written during July and August of 1978 form a continuous, reflective record of a young missionary's life in Korea during the final, intensifying phase of his mission. Across these two months, the correspondence blends daily experience, spiritual reflection, cultural observation, and emotional transition, revealing Jeff who is simultaneously grounded in routine missionary work and increasingly aware of approaching change.

At a practical level, the letters document a full and demanding schedule. Teaching hours are long and frequent, contacts come and go unpredictably, and progress is measured not only in baptisms but in persistence despite disappointment. Investigators may express interest yet fail to follow through; others engage deeply and arrive unexpectedly through chance encounters. Jeff repeatedly emphasizes a lesson learned through experience rather than theory: missionaries cannot supply desire for others. This recognition, expressed in nearly identical language across multiple letters, marks a shift from optimism rooted in effort to a more mature understanding of agency, patience, and limitation.

Daily life in Korea is described with attentiveness and understated affection. The monsoon rains, heat, and improvised bathing routines appear not as complaints but as accepted features of life. Housing quality, meals prepared at home, and shared domestic moments convey a sense of stability and adaptation. Cultural excursions—traditional dance performances, visits to the Korea House and Korean Folk Village—are moments of deliberate enjoyment, suggesting an awareness that this experience is finite and worth savoring. These descriptions are observational rather than exoticizing, written with familiarity rather than distance, indicating how thoroughly Jeff has settled into his surroundings.

Interwoven with routine are encounters with other religious traditions that sharpen the Jeff's own theological identity. Conversations with Jehovah's Witnesses, a Catholic priest, and members of various Protestant denominations are recounted in detail. These interactions are not treated as abstract debates but as emotionally charged experiences—frustrating, enlightening, or gently humanizing. The letters show a developing confidence in explaining belief while also revealing fatigue at repeated misunderstandings

and entrenched prejudice. Jeff becomes increasingly reflective about how faith is practiced publicly in Korea, particularly regarding church visibility, noise, and social pressure, and how these factors shape receptiveness.

Family remains a persistent reference point. The letters repeatedly encourage scripture study, journaling, and family home evening, not as generic counsel but as continuity between home and mission life. News of weddings, pregnancies, and everyday events back home carries emotional weight. As August approaches, thoughts of returning home surface more frequently—not with excitement alone, but with unease. Jeff expresses clear ambivalence: he misses home deeply, yet feels unready to leave Korea. This tension becomes one of the defining themes of the later letters.

The approaching end of the mission introduces practical concerns alongside emotional ones. Budgeting, purchases, books, clothing, and future education plans appear—often tentatively, with requests for parental guidance rather than declarations of intent. These passages reflect a transitional mindset: life after the mission is unavoidable, yet still abstract and delayed mentally, even as calendars advance.

One of the most emotionally serious moments occurs in late August with the account of administering a blessing to a woman in a prolonged coma following a suicide attempt. The tone here is restrained, careful, and reverent. The writer does not dramatize the event but reflects quietly on divine will, human suffering, and the limits of understanding. This experience seems to crystallize themes present throughout the letters: service without control, faith without certainty, and action undertaken with humility rather than expectation.

Overall, these two months of letters present a portrait of steady maturation. Jeff remains committed, hopeful, and sincere, yet increasingly nuanced in how he understands faith, people, and himself. Optimism is no longer naïve; it is tempered by realism and sustained by discipline rather than novelty. Korea is no longer merely a mission field—it has become a lived landscape of memory, effort, affection, and personal transformation. By late August, the letters read less like reports from abroad and more like a reflective bridge between who Jeff was when he arrived and who he is becoming as he prepares, reluctantly, to leave.

1978.07.03 - Aerogramme (OCR Transcribed)

Page 1

Happy 4 of July. Last year we played baseball and had a pick-nick.

No activities planned this year, but Friday I will speak to a group of 15 men or so who are some form of Kiwanus Club - about how I learned the Korean. That evening will be the New York Philharmonic, hopefully Leonard Bernstein (unless his wife is sick as rumor has it). That will be our celebration.

The monsoon season is upon us. It rains some every day and the dew is upon our bodies. It's so much fun. These days we don't go to the public bath house, but use the cool water in our own home tap morning and night. We have relaxation comfort as the cool refreshing water is poured over. We just take the scooper and dump the water out of the tub onto ourselves. It's nice.

We have a nice house. I feel fortunate to have lived in some of the nicer cleaner homes during my mission. Our eating is improving. I have created some fine meals. I did a soybean casserole that was great. So, the only regret is the time we lose.

We taught another big week, 21 hours, and I believe we have (2 two) new family groups which would be baptized if they will only try.

We seriously got studying with one family in an interesting way. We first met the wife with the 9 month baby and talked about the church and made a return appointment for Sunday. But about Thursday, we knocked on their door again not knowing it because we came in from the other direction. The husband was home, not going to work due to overtiredness, but willing to talk with us. We presented a "C" [Discussion] left a Book of Mormon. He met Sunday as previously promised, and even though he has a Methodist background, he wants to continue studying. I'm very impressed with them.

There is also his family, his parents, etc., that should be introduced to the church through his meeting us. Looks good.

We met another college family when the father's younger unmarried brother met us and took us to his house, right then.

Page 2...We talked to the father, the brothers, the rest of the family all sitting near and listening. Then some neighbor girl came in and asked us for having additional scripture to the Bible. We discussed it and some other things - the whole time wondering "where and why she come?" But the father, one with no previous religion, liked our explanations. He bought a Book of Mormon.

We keep working. We will have a baptism on the 15th, and I anticipate more this month. You can't give desire to people. I hope you're all well and busy. Remember your journals and scripture reading!

Love JEFF

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1978.07.10 – Arogramme (OCR Transcription)

Page 1 Dear family,

“Hello. O.K. Tank-you Betty much!!” As we say to the kids in Korea.

All my busy brothers and sisters and parents and family, are we finding the time for reading the scriptures together, and a personal daily journal? In thinking back about school and especially 3rd–4th grades, I hope Denis is working on a journal. President Kimball has kept his since then I believe. Mom's letters give a good history of events and so I keep them.

Personal thoughts and feelings have been the hardest for me to put down. When we present a family home evening program, we explain it as a meeting with all the family once a week. Discuss problems, set goals, discuss the gospel, participate in activities. Maybe scripture reading and journals would be a good item to consider for planning and setting goals in the next family home evening.

Mom often makes the comment how difficult it is to work with undependable people. Thank goodness the Lord is patient with us. We are many, many times disappointed with investigators who don't come through with their commitments and promises, who don't read and pray, who don't come to church.

We can't give people desire, nor does the Lord give it to us. We all have free agency to choose what we will. The reward of applied proper choice is well known, but the moving forces are often weak. We learn as missionaries, “You teach what you are.”

If we will have spiritual prayers regularly, our investigators will. It's probably the most talked about and yet least understood principle. “Let he who would change the world move first change himself.” That is true, and a lesson I am still learning.

Even when we are right, we will never change others without making a change for the betterment of ourselves first. I think there is a lengthy speech behind this truth, but it isn't too well outlined here. I hope you can catch the gist of what I'm trying to say. I'm enjoying some personal character victories and lessons and hoping for some miracles in conversions soon. We have about 15 investigators, 10 will be given a baptismal challenge

and goal this week. We have a young man of [OCR GUESS-name] who is a candidate this Saturday. He's 26, out of the army. He says he feels a need to be baptized but is still waiting for answers to his prayers. Good brother. Love you. JEFF

Page 2 Have Elder Merrill translate the following.

Handwritten Hangul (typed transcription)

야! 매릴 장로님. 왜 그래? 빨리 나란 말야!

너의 가족은 어땡니? 괜찮아? 난 잘 있어.

여보세요. 우리 와드 자매님들 즉 폭스 아안 등을 조심해 응!

화곡지부가 좋다.

침례를 받을 사람들은 많უნ가 봐.

자, 빨리 나서 한국에 되돌아와주어. 응. 잘 있어!

내 가족 한테 좋은 말씀만을 통역하지 오케이!

배 인성 드릴.

English meaning (literal)

Hey! Elder Merrill. What's wrong? Hurry up!

How is your family? Are you okay? I am doing well.

Hey! Please watch out for our ward sisters, like Fox Ann [Hangul Sound], okay.

The Hwagok branch is good.

It looks like there are many people to be baptized.

Now, hurry and come back to Korea. Okay.

Take care! Only translate good words to my family, okay.

From Bae In-Seong.

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1978.07.17 – Aerogramme (ICR Transcription)

Page 1 Dear family,

Another week and time to say hello. This last week was different from my entire mission. I had encounters with Jehovah Witnesses, a friendly talk with a 58 yr. old Catholic priest, and several disappointments with people that are more concerned with social relationships at their old church than having the full blessings of the only true and living gospel.

The time with the JW's was most dissatisfying. In agreeing to meet with them, it was decided to take turns at Bible viewpoint presentation. I sat and questioned to understand them 4 ¼ hours on their day. They were in a constant effort to prove with the Bible who Jehovah is. They were amazed when I could not accept their interpretations of plain writ.

My turn came, and they challenged me to talk about God from the Bible. If he is not Jehovah, I said my message came from material other than the Bible. They didn't want to hear about Joseph Smith, but I told them and presented the Book of Mormon as evidence and witness of Christ. Then, when they pretended to ignore all I had said, I was able to leave them with a list of scriptures which indicate Jehovah is Christ. They were upset because I couldn't accept the Bible was complete and perfect. They wouldn't accept the evidence that shows the Bible imperfect. I was amazed at their closed eyes.

The Catholic priest was so sweet and kind, had never heard of Mormons, and asked questions to understand the differences between us. After explaining about Joseph Smith, he said, "Oh, that's just opposite of us!" We exchanged two books. He gave us a book he had written, and I gave him the Book of Mormon.

Each day gets harder and heavier to record in my journal for all the things that happen. We do have some investigators preparing for their baptismal goal. It's a difficult work, but I'll never give up. My companion is struggling with knowing the lines of discussion but not having anyone understand him when he says them. I feel free and easy about the language.

Page 2...So my challenge is to not get the idea I've learned enough to last my remaining 3 months. I woke up this morning thinking about Scott's wedding, and their announced a baby is on the way.

I'm not that old, nor do I want to be. I'm not ready for life after mission. The day your mission is over never comes. But it is.

I miss you all and want to be with you, but I'm not ready to leave Korea. What a place. What I've learned, I don't know.

Peace, love, happiness.

Love,
Jeff

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1978.07.25 – Aerogramme (OCR Transcribed)

Page 1 Dear family,

We saw some Korean dances last week in a trip to “The Korea House.” I recorded a lot of the accompaniment, a foursome on traditional instruments, live. The quality of the recording is, well, it’s a small machine like you said. This dance group was dressed better than they performed, but it made it good for picture.

Talking and writing is a great challenge in any language these days. It’s hot, but now the sun shines instead. We have a couple of contacts which I feel pretty good about.

Your last few letters sure made home sound like you’re all busy and happy. I’d like to be with you during all those proceedings. Yet, at the same time when I think that the time I must leave Korea comes closer, I don’t want to go. In order to settle these emotions I’m taking time to really enjoy things in this country.

Monday we went to “Korean Folk Village,” which depicts the old lifestyles of Korea. Rice stalk roofing and mud walls. It is a very fun place. There is also a modern swimming pool at this attraction which sure looked refreshing. We took pictures, tasted some foods, and more fun than anything was talking to those who work and live in the village. Several people live a life there just like their ancestors, but with a few hidden niceties like electricity, etc. We enjoyed it.

There are all kinds of things to buy in this land, but rather than do too much of that I’m trying to invest in books. I only have a couple, but there are several I’m interested in. I would like to get a suit to bring or wear home. I don’t think the Mr. Mac suit I brought is worth bringing back. So when you say the O.K. for about \$80–90 extra dollars, I’ll get my suit and all. I’m thinking it might be a good idea to budget about \$220 each of my last two months and that should be enough. It seems funny to be writing about this already, but if you’ll express your feelings and tell me what is feasible, then I would be able to plan for it.

I love you and can’t say enough about how I appreciate your support. I’ve

Page 2... no more new and clever ways to say Thanks, but as always, I am a blessed soul with 2 fine parents and 4 fine brothers and sisters (and their families). We will endure to the end! Yes!

I will work on the tape and send it next week! I’m working on a budget which won’t allow me to send it till then. Love,
Jeff Sorry so messy.

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1978.07.31 – Arogramme (OCT Transcribed)

Page 1 Tomorrow is August, today is July, September, October, and home I fly. So soon, it scares me, especially when I see how beautiful everybody is.

Two things I miss, you and drumsticks. As you know, I've had chances to snare a drumset, but not timpani or any others. I haven't made any decisions for the future, but I think I'll come home and practice and work. I'd like to take a whole bunch of religion classes, so that might put me at BYU. I've considered USU, etc. [Hangul-MoLa-"IDK"] I wish not to think about it till November.

We are coming along with some good and hopeful contacts. The telephone crewmen in Korea ride bicycles, but many have not the courage to find out if it is true or not by praying. Sometimes I feel they don't want to know, giving themselves an excuse for not having to face the social changes.

Usually your best contacts are without a church, disinterested with Buddhism, or no religion. We do have some start of your basic three: Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. On the average, Methodists are decent, but I just can't like the Presbyterians sometimes.

They all have their quirks. Ugly cement blocks with a red neon cross towered in the sky, and church meetings everyday at dawn and Sunday and Wednesday evening. But the Presbyterians have speakers on the cross towers that play a recording of church bells and choir, loudly. It's gross. When a Presbyterian preacher graduates, he receives instructions on building a red neon cross and a tape to play over his loud speakers, or so it seems. Every time.

There are such preachers all over. Even when they haven't a church building, they have that tower with the cross and speakers every Sunday and Wednesday night. No wonder people don't even open the door at times. As soon as they hear "church," they run and hide. So our door ...

Page 2... knocking is difficult. We are thinking of trying to do some presentations to theological schools, and maybe get some people in the right path in addition to correcting prejudices against our church. Recently an old western movie, which showed distaste of Mormons, came on T.V. "Americans don't like Mormons, do they?"

We are still small and struggling here. 15,000 saints out of 35,000,000 people is a small percent. But it's true and living. We are happy.

Love you all. JEFF

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1978.08.22 – Aerogramme (OCR Transcribed)

Page 1 Dear family, It has been a while since I sat down to write a letter. I guess you have my tape. Sorry it had to do for two letters. So Ron and Shari are married and things will be settled a bit.

We had an opportunity last week to ponder the will of the Lord. I was reading your letter and considering what the Lord has in mind for our family, especially those who are in need or more church activity. I considered if He wasn't prepared a way for His righteous purpose to bring about that activity. If so, it would be an answer to many prayers. But we must always remember to submit to His will. Elder Oswald has left me now. He's been transferred into the heart of the city. Last week, Friday or so, we had one of our last experiences together.

The two sister missionaries who work in this district were tracting Thursday and met a woman with married children, one daughter about 26. They learned was in the hospital. After their regular discussion they explained about how the priesthood held by some missionaries could be used to bless her daughter according to her faith and the Lord's will. We were asked then Friday to go to the hospital with the sisters and this worried mother. The 26 yr old daughter has a child, now in the care of relatives. She has been in a coma for 4 months and has no response to sound or light. Her muscles were stretched tight, toes pointed, fists clenched, but breathing normal. She was of course being fed intravenously. A nice looking lady, but with her hair shaven it was difficult to tell. Elder Oswald anointed and I sealed the anointing and blessed her according to the faith of her mom and we missionaries.

I was impressed to say that all would be done by the will of God, even though I had previously designed to say so. We learned just before going to the hospital that this lady had attempted suicide after a fight with her separated husband. She had intentionally inhaled "YunTan" gas (charcoal briquet like-carbon monoxide gas). I don't know yet what has happened, but I felt things were well in the hands of the Lord. Being in a coma, she isn't suffering pain, but she will when reviving, if she does.

Page 2 Everything we do, is it for the building of the Lord's kingdom? Is our fundamental reference group the saints in the kingdom, or some other? These are some other thoughts President Hawkins has given at least me to consider.

I imagine you well know our leaders are not perfect, neither are we. The Lord blesses us when we follow the counsel of our leaders according to righteousness. Paul once had to remind Peter, who was the head of the church, that even the uncircumcised were members of the kingdom. But it was not one of pride, but love. "Charity is the pure love of Christ."

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