

Local

Kim pays homage to native leader

■ The South Korea president stopped at the Upper Prov home of Philip Jaisohn, who is credited with introducing democracy to Korea.

By SUSAN L. SERBIN
Times Correspondent

UPPER PROVIDENCE — Today all eyes will focus on South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in front of Independence Hall as he receives Philadelphia's Liberty Medal. Yesterday, in a quiet corner on the Media-Upper Providence border, Kim paid tribute to a man who set the stage for his country's independence, and perhaps his own presidency.

Kim visited the Philip Jaisohn Memorial House on Lincoln Street, the residence of a physician who practiced in Media for almost a quarter of a century but is better known in his country for introducing democracy to Korea.

Kim met with President Clinton on Friday, but yesterday's 30-minute visit in Delaware County represented a "private

event" and a break from issues of his country's economy and simmering tensions with North Korea.

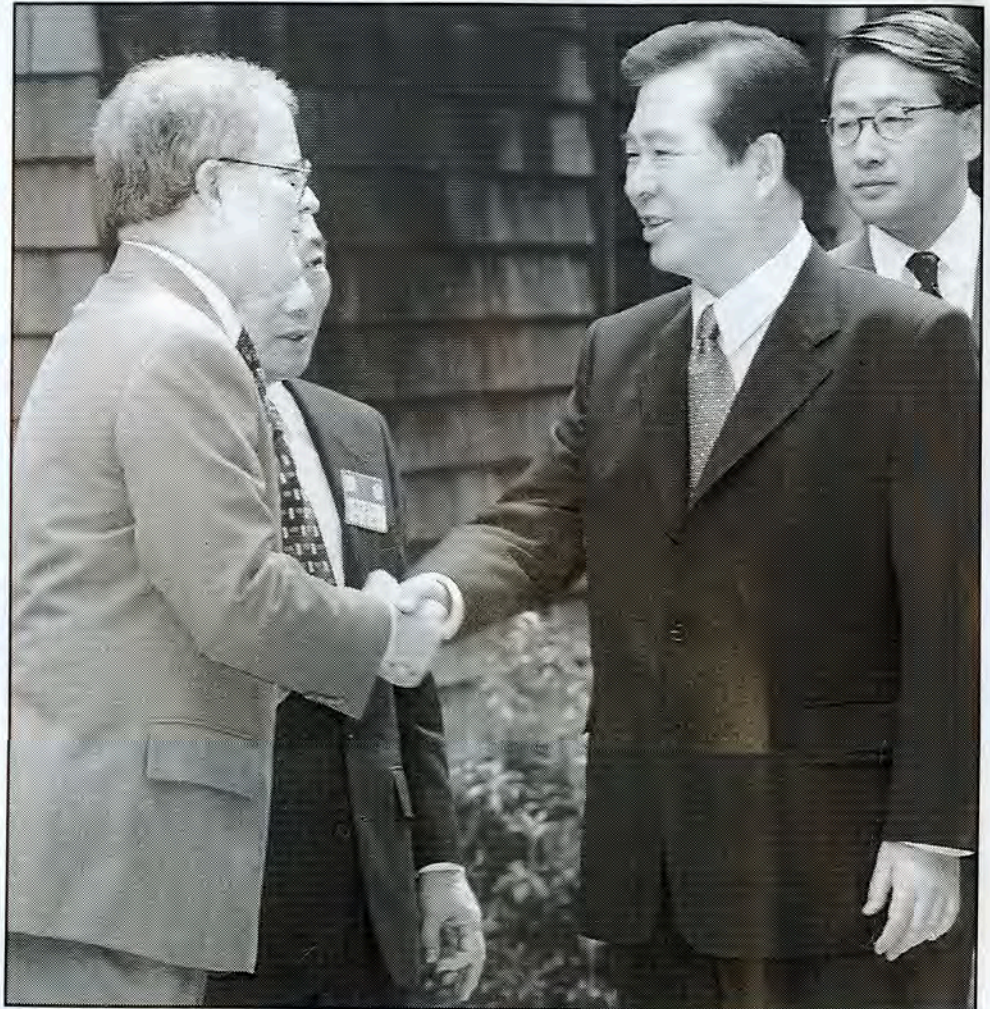
Kim arrived at the Jaisohn House at 11 a.m., preceded by an escort of Philadelphia motorcycle police. The motorcade included about 20 cars carrying Korean dignitaries and officials.

Close to 30 members of the Korean press corps accompanied the president, crowding in the two-story brick home where Jaisohn resided until his death in 1951. It was opened to the public in 1990 and now serves as a museum, library and meeting place.

Walking on the red-carpeted, newly groomed gravel path from the drive to front door, Kim and his wife shook hands with many board members of the Jaisohn Foundation and Mayor Robert McMahon, representing the borough. A banner in Korean read, "Welcome President Kim Dae Jung and Wife."

Inside, in what would have most likely been the dining room Jaisohn shared with his wife and two daughters, a desk stood with a small replica of the Liberty Bell on one side. Kim signed the guest book and looked at photographs and memorabilia on the first floor.

The president, 73, walked with a cane due



Times staff photo by ERIC HARTLINE

Media Mayor Bob McMahon, left, greets South Korean President Kim Dae-jung at the Philip Jaisohn Memorial House yesterday.

to an injury from an automobile accident, only one event in a tumultuous life that has included kidnapping, a death sentence and exile, all in the name of freedom for his country. Kim shares with Jaisohn an enduring and stalwart commitment to the principles of democracy and government of the people.

"While (Kim) was in exile in the United States, he showed an interest in Dr. Jaisohn, a true leader for Korean independence as far back as the 19th century," said Hyong Woong Pak, executive director of the foundation.

Dongkyu Bak, an architect and Media resident, is the foundation board member with the greatest proximity to the Jaisohn house. Since Kim's visit was confirmed about a month ago, Bak has been supervising sprucing up of the property. Foundation members equated the work around the house to that of someone having an important party.

"We have been underpublicized considering the foundation has been in existence for 20 years," said board member Sun K. Shin of Wilmington. "We've taken our personal savings and contributions to purchase and maintain the house. We're happy with this visit since it will not only be publicity, but that Dr. Jaisohn, his history and idealism will be once again known. He is looked upon and respected as a forefather who single-handedly brought Korean into the modern age. President Kim personifies those same ideals."

Bob McMahon noted the Media visit was "only" the second by a president, the first having been a 1984 campaign stop by Ronald Reagan at the courthouse. George Bush also visited Delaware County during his presidency. No one could recall any other visit by foreign president.

McMahon admitted it was his first visit to the Jaisohn residence. He accompanied Kim into the home and emerged referring to Kim as "a great man," and called the occasion "thrilling."

For members of the Korean community, the importance and honor of Kim's visit took on an even more emotional element, judging by a tear in more than one eye.

Security beefed up for visit

UPPER PROVIDENCE — The visit of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung to the Jaisohn House was a "private event," according to organizers. Nevertheless, it had all the trappings of a state visit, if only by virtue of security and protocol.

Media and Upper Providence police patrolled the perimeters, restricting traffic on Lincoln and Edgmont streets and monitoring activity on Gayley Street. Closer to the home at 100 E. Lincoln St., the Secret Service took over. Visitors, whose names were previously submitted, got the once-over with an electronic detector before gaining admittance to the grounds. The United States and Korea shared security duties, both at the house and with the president.

While it appeared there were no fewer than a dozen Secret Service agents, and at least as many from Korean security, one observer commented, "Those were only the ones you could identify."

Security personnel had no need for crowd control as the president's visit drew extremely little public attention in Media, with only a handful of spectators near the drive. The neighbors in the immediate proximity had been advised about parking, but given virtually no other instruc-

tions or restrictions.

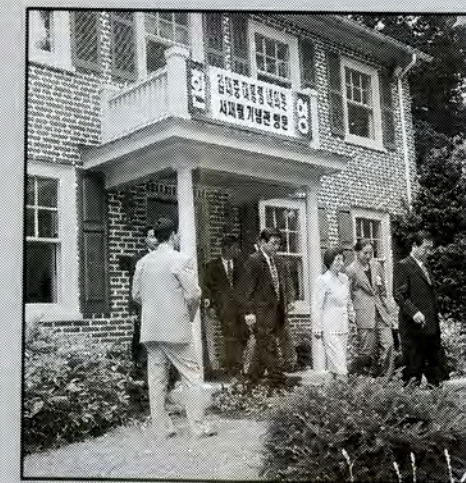
"We had a police officer in our back yard," said Bob Levesque, who has lived next door to the Jaisohn home for 16 years, including a short period when Muriel Jaisohn, the doctor's daughter, was alive.

The Levesques and other nearby residents, like Addie Ciannelli, who has lived on South Edgmont Street for about six weeks, were "really impressed" with the 20-car motorcade and influx of national foreign press. "We were talking with one reporter from Los Angeles who was here with her boss. They were impressed with by our neighborhood," said Peggy Levesque.

Resident student guards local landmark

UPPER PROVIDENCE — Gangheong Lee and his wife live in the cottage which was converted from the Jaisohn's garage. Gangheong is the third resident in a growing "tradition" of students from the University of Pennsylvania.

Don Bak, a Jaisohn Foundation board member, said the resident combines the idea of having someone on the property with the availability of a person to com-



The president was accompanied by an entourage of assistants.

municate with Korean visitors. Gangheong seems well suited to the task as a doctoral student with a communications major at the Annenberg School. Jaisohn is known to students in Korean even today, Gangheong said, as the founder of the first Korean-language newspaper, the Independence Organization and as the man who introduced democracy to Korea.