

THE DEATH OF A REVOLUTIONARY

Peter J. Donaldson*

1960年代 初 부터 우리나라 家族計劃事業을 위하여 헌신한 바 있는 S.M. Keeny氏가 95歲를 일기로 지난 1988年 10月 20日 美國 워싱턴에서 別世하셨습니다. 이 글은 1970年代 美國 人口協會 駐韓代表로 근무한 바 있는 P.J. Donaldson 博士가 故人을 追慕하기 위해서 쓴 것으로 梁在模博士를 통해 當 學會誌에 掲載해 줄 것을 要請해 왔으며, 이를 기꺼이 受諾 하였습니다. 삼가 故人의 冥福을 빕니다.(編輯者 註)

A revolutionary died in Washington on October 20th and the world took almost on notice. Dutiful accounts of Spurgeon Milton Keeny's life appeared in the *Washington post* and the *New York Times*, but neither gave a sense that the author knew Sam or understood his accomplishments, illustrated Sam's obituary with a photograph of his son.

With two towering achievements, Keeny helped change the lives of millions. In 1948, already 55 years old and an executive with the YMCA, Sam Keeny joined the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and returned to the overseas relief work he had first done after World War I in Russia. For the next 15 years, Keeny concentrated on improving the welfare of children in Asia from his post as UNICEF's Regional Director for Asia. When Sam began working for UNICEF, almost one fifth of Asia's children died before their first birthday. By the time he retired, infant mortality rates were half what they had been. His campaigns against yaws, malaria, tuberculosis and malnutrition made an often indifferent world recognize the plight of children. He established mechanisms, some of them still in use, to provide food and medical care to children throughout Asia. James Grant, UNICEF's current Executive Director, says Keeny "contributed more to UNICEF's practical work than any single person" in the organization's history.

When UNICEF won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965, many people thought the award belonged to Sam. UNICEF's largest and most successful programs were in Asia. Even the UN's harshest critics were impressed with his accomplishments. In 1965, when President Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from the United Nations and ridiculed the UN's development assistance efforts, he sent a personal note of thanks to UNICEF for its efforts on behalf of Indonesia.

Keeny's first revolution was for Asia's children; his second was for Asia's women. It began in 1963 when Sam reached the UN's mandatory retirement age of 70 and joined the Population Council, a New

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York foundation started by John D. Rockefeller 3rd to help developing countries deal with their population problems. Although stationed in Taiwan, he served as an advisor to governments throughout Asia.

International family planning has become such a contentious issue in the United States that it is difficult to convey the spirit that moved the first generation of Asian family planners. Beginning in the early 1960s more and more thoughtful people across Asia, from Korea to India, began to worry about their ability to feed ever large number of citizens and about how to provide enough schools, jobs, and health care to meet the need of populations growing faster than ever before in human history. A growing number of people were also beginning to recognize the connection between high fertility and the health and well-being of mothers and their children.

Keeny was deeply committed to giving couples choices about family size and spacing, but he never became strident or preachy. As a consequence of his efforts, together with the efforts of thousands of others, fertility has declined substantially and population growth has slowed in Asia since the early 1960s. In the process many Asian countries have modernized at an incredible pace. Sam understood that although slowing population growth alone would not improve the lives of Asia's millions, slower growth would provide an environment that made the solution of many of the region's problems easier. To judge from the record, he was correct.

Sam's accomplishments were founded on a combination of commitment, intelligence, hard work, common sense and superb management skills. He set priorities and stayed with them. He did the hard jobs first. And he stayed in touch with his clients, women and children throughout Asia. An indefatigable traveler, Sam spent great chunks of time visiting rural health centers to make sure health workers had what they required to provide services to those who needed them.

In addition to his efforts to feed Asia's children and to slow the region's population growth, Sam was also generous to friends and acquaintances, paying for the education of the children of former office workers, maids and hangers on of one sort or another, sponsoring a host of small business loans, and helping dozens of people find jobs.

Keeny was 95 when he died, so he outlived most of his friends and the memories of most people who work in the health and population field in Asia. That's too bad, because Sam was a memorable character. He stayed in shape into his 70s by playing basketball. He claimed to write in the nude in order to lessen the temptation to get up and do other things. He often looked terribly disheveled in part because he smoked his pipe so enthusiastically that the ashes scattered and burned holes in his shirts. I once saw him asked to leave the Washington Hilton because someone on the hotel staff thought he was a street person. Another of his enthusiasms was for the ladies. We were at a conference together after Sam had passed his 90th birthday. He lost his overcoat and dozed during most of the scientific presentations. At the breaks, however, he charmed one of the young women who worked at a book display, asking at one point if she were free because he was "without a companion at the moment."

We live in an age when institutions seem more important than the individuals who staff them. Sam Keeny provided a model of how one person can make a difference, no matter what the constraints. In a world overwhelmed by institutions, individuals can seem ordinary and often unimportant. It is good to have Sam as a model.

There was a memorial service for Sam Keeny at 4:30 on December 3rd at the chapel at the St. Alban's School in Washington, D.C..