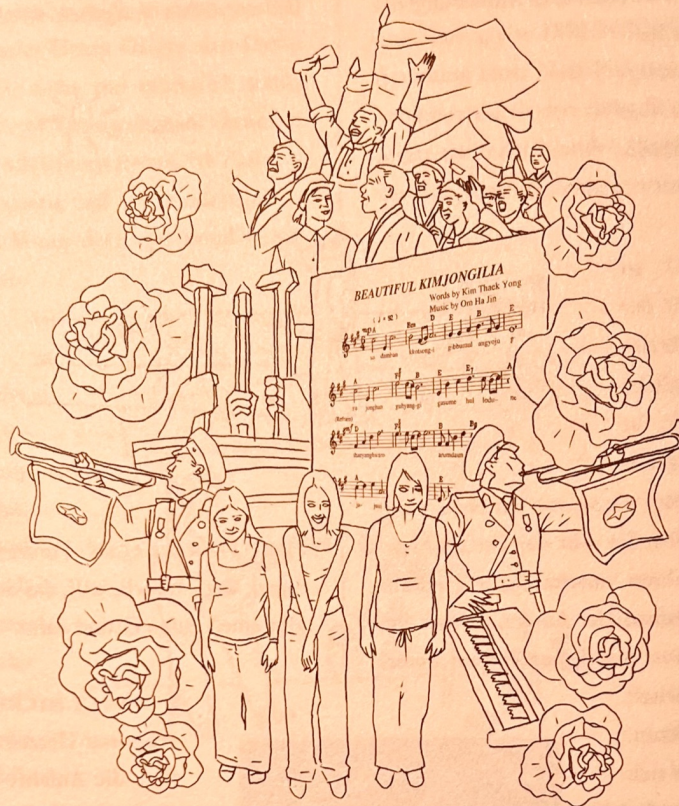


von DAVID WOODARD



BEAUTIFUL KIMJONGILIA

WIE EINE NORDKOREANISCHE BLUME ERST ALS MELODIE DES
STEFFIE-HARDER-TRIOS SO RECHT DAS LICHT DER WELT BENETZT.
UND: AUF ENGLISCH!

*Diskutiert: Das Strybing-Arboretum, abermals sind wir in Nueva Germania, Vize-Premier Kwak Pom-gi, die naseweisen Katzen
Buddy und Mitzie, Begonia boliviensis, William Blake, die Kleider devoter Jesuitenfrauen in Paraguay, Busby Berkeley*

KIMJONGILIA, THE IMMORTAL FLOWER named for the Dear Comrade Kim Jong-il, has appeared in the world.

I first became aware of the Kimjongilia begonia while seeking examples of the music compositions of Kim Jong-il, who is said to have composed six to eight operas. A fleeting reference on a page alongside a tiny picture, the gorgeous flower commanded my attention for months.

A quest for information about the Kimjongilia had temporarily replaced my research of Kim Jong-il's compositions, as the latter seemed impenetrably shrouded from scrutiny. Occasionally, watching smuggled videos of North Korea's Arirang Festival or Reunification Concert, both of which are festooned with images of the lovely Kimjongilia, I would fantasize that Kim Jong-il personally had a hand in at least a portion of the outlandish, quasi-Wagnerian composing. If so, that would explain the unwearing musical aesthetic (irresolute pensiveness married to boundless cheer), seemingly the work of either one composer or an omnipotent composition mentor. Moreover, North Korea's present composers, like those of pre-Bach Europe, seem motivated by love and devotion – not the chance to become an immortal icon. Is music composition in North Korea governed by an aesthetic communism, with anonymous visionaries carrying out festival and concert needs tailored to consensus betterment of the people? Kim Jong-il may be a composer, but he is certainly a composer.

I discovered the Kimjongilia Festival. Despite the wealth of references to a few facts concerning this loveliest of crimson tuberous cultivars, I encountered for the second time a North Korean subject inviting a multitude of references to a dearth of information.

I would conduct my own grassroots research, but first required a live specimen. I phoned North American nurseries

specializing in begonias. Scouring the internet yielded a promising webpage: Kimjongilia Garden, in Yongil, China – said to provide worldwide Kimjongilia distribution and propagation. There we go! Except that the webpage did not provide contact information, and neither the garden nor town would appear elsewhere on the net. I later received an email from Mitch Hur, Director of the Orchid and Begonia Society of America, based in Garden Grove, California:

„Yes, we have heard about the Kimjongilia flower exhibition in Dandong, China. I think the webpage to which you refer probably means to say that they are one of the major sources of Kimjongilia.“

Considering that Dandong, a medium-size port at the mouth of the Yalu River, is connected by rail to Sinuiju, North Korea, this seemed reasonable. Yongil is likewise attached to the DPRK by rail. Kim Jong-il himself is likely to pass through both on occasion.

Surely there exists a begonia world authority, or a national one here in the United States, to whom Kimjongilia questions may gravitate.

I discovered the American Begonia Society. After sending a cursory letter to their San Francisco P.O. Box, I received a phone call and email from ABS Treasurer Carol Notaras, an avid cultivator and sometime lecturer. In our initial conversation, I described what I could of the flower's traits. "It sounds to me like a tuberous cultivar," she pronounced, and proceeded to invite me to a lecture she was soon to give at Golden Gate Park's Strybing Arboretum. Ms. Notaras admitted to keeping the entire skylight top floor of her Pacific Heights home, as well as the most of the floor directly beneath that, dedicated to the cultivation of over 300 begonia varieties. But no Kimjongilia; never heard of it.

In our next conversation, Carol kindly urged me to attend

the following week's ABS Festival in San Diego. It seemed to me that since she was an expert and had never heard of Kimjongilia, then attending such a festival would most likely prove unfruitful. I considered the trip, though, as I could surely use the opportunity to slip across the border and stock up on ketamine. Even still, preparations for an incipient trip to Nueva Germania, Paraguay, dominated my thoughts, and I declined to attend.

Several days later, Carol faxed and emailed the image of a nursery's business card. She then phoned. As she was walking through the outdoor exhibition, she noticed a diminutive Korean-American man sitting behind a small display of large crimson blossoms, and boldly approached to enquire. Indeed, as she had suspected, the man's spaceship of card-tables supported 14 potted Kimjongilia flowers. She was still flabbergasted and urged me to call him – he was waiting. A major breakthrough, I thanked her profusely.

Peter Rhee, owner/operator of Euclid Nursery and Landscaping in Garden Grove, California, answered his phone so quickly and quietly it hadn't quite registered that he was on the line. I introduced myself, and he promised to ship a potted Kimjongilia, followed in two months by a package of bulbs. He initially gave the air of a man who barely understands English, but it soon appeared to be a self-protective ruse – one sees it in landscaping. Five or six minutes into the conversation, his pseudo-fragmented speech trick dismantled, moving me to complement him on his English.

Kimjongilia is a perennial begonia cultivated by a Japanese horticulturist named Kamo Mototeru, who dedicated the flower to Kim Jong-il on his 46th birthday, February 16, 1988. The plant grows to a height of 33 to 72 centimeters, and its 23 centimeter-wide crimson flowers last about 3 1/2 months. The Kimjongilia is not only easy to reproduce, it is also easy to grow. To disseminate and promote Kimjongilia

in and outside the country, North Korea built the Kimjongilia Greenhouse in the Pyongyang Central Botanical Garden in April 1988, and has since established many more greenhouses dedicated to the flower at the municipal and county level. On February 16, 1995, North Korea opened Kimjongilia Garden in Yongil, China, for the purpose of international distribution and promotion.

Since Kim Jong-il's 55th birthday, February 16, 1997, North Korea has included Kimjongilia exhibitions in the birthday celebrations. The government has completed a 5,600 square-meter two-story hall (with a basement level) in Pyongyang to exhibit flowers symbolizing the Kims – elder and junior.

Long live the Dear Comrade Kim Jong-il, the Sun of the 21st Century.

The Kimjongilia is a very large flower, sometimes exceeding 23 centimeters in diameter. It is a new variety of tuberous begonia putting forth glossy and crimson polypetalous flowers of lion-shape. Japanese horticulturist Dr. Kamo Mototeru bred it in his flower garden in 1988, named it Kimjongilia and presented it to the Dear Secretary Kim Jong-Il as a gift.

When an outsider contemplates Dr. Mototeru's Kimjongilia, the first layer of mystery his mind must pierce is the psychological dynamic between Mototeru and Kim Jong-il. Whence arises Mototeru's motivation?

Kamo Mototeru was not unvain. Perhaps it was because he presaged the publicity to unfold from his Kimjongilia that he insisted on flying between Pyongyang and Tokyo in a private jet. But even Mototeru's keen sense of personal dramatization and awareness of the fabled begonia's publicity value, once dedicated to the Dear Comrade Kim Jong-Il,

left him unprepared for the actual attention it would attract. He had hardly entered the Pyongyang Koryo Hotel when the congratulations began and didn't stop ringing through the lobby, in swelling sheets of cheer.

The tuberous begonia is a flowering plant which has evolved through the protracted, complicated crossbreeding of several pure breeds whose original home is the highlands of the Andes in South America, i.e. Bolivia and Peru. Hence, if grown in places that are cool in the summer yet not very cold in the winter – and where the sun shines for more than 12 hours per day, like on the highlands of the tropical regions, excellent flowers may bloom year-round.

The original plants crossbred for *Kimjongilia* are *B. boliviensis*, *B. pearcei*, *B. cinnabarina*, *B. veitchii*, *B. rosaeflora* and *B. davisii*, all of which grow wild on the highlands of the Andes Mountains, stock breeds of the tuberous begonia.

Research into the growing, propagation and breeding of *Kimjongilia* is now conducted at the *Kimjongilia* research room of the Central Botanical Garden, at the foot of Mt. Taesong in the suburbs of Pyongyang. Several hundred thousand plants are propagated by tissue culture every year there. At present, the Central Botanical Garden is very likely the largest *Kimjongilia* producer in the world. Mass propagation of the tuberous begonia by tissue culture is not yet done in the United States, nor in Europe.

At the International Flower Show, held in Czechoslovakia in 1991, the *Kimjongilia* from Pyongyang won admiration as never before and was awarded the Gold Medal for vivid color, distinguished magnificence and unique style of display.

The bird, a nest.

The spider, a web.

The people, friendship.

William Blake

Kimjongilia has appeared above Mount Paektu.

Per New York Times, February 20, 2002:

Minutes after President Bush's plane touched down in Seoul today, North Korea's news agency sought to upstage him with an amazing report that two halos had just appeared in the sky above the legendary mountain birthplace of Kim Jong-il. "Inhabitants were delighted to see a rare cloud in the shape of Kimjongilia," the state news agency added, referring to an artificially bred flower named after Mr. Kim, North Korea's leader. "Even the sky above the Mount Paektu area seemed to be decorated with beautiful flowers," said the dispatch, written 200 miles away in Pyongyang, the capital.

In what the news agency reported as divine coincidence, on Mr. Kim's 60th birthday last Saturday, Mount Paektu marked its 60th day of snow cover, which had accumulated to exactly 60 centimeters.

Churning out of old-fashioned news tickers in Japan or read on the Internet (www.kcna.co.jp), the Korean Central News Agency provides a window on the strange, secretive world of North Korea, a totalitarian government that Mr. Bush lumps together with Iran and Iraq in "the axis of evil".

Through the dispatches of the agency, which is controlled by the ruling Korean Workers Party, an image emerges of an Asian Sparta, a highly militarized, ultra-nationalistic government that seeks to inculcate worship of Mr. Kim.

Readers learn that Mr. Bush is "a moral leper," who leads the "empire of the devil." "After flying into South Korea with many war servants and warmongers," the agency said, he is "to examine a plan for a war against the North."

Reflecting the agency's praise of Mr. Kim's "army-centered leadership," North Korea devotes an estimated one quarter of its economic activity to the military, fielding the fourth largest standing army in the world, 1.2 million soldiers.

"The North Korean propaganda machine does not need to be taken too seriously – it's on auto pilot," Selig S. Harrison, author of a new book, "Korean Endgame" (Princeton University Press, 2002), said from Washington. Noting that the news agency issued a dispatch condemning terrorism after the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States, he added, "When it winds down, that is significant because it means that someone from above has reached out."

Over the December, 2004 holidays, whilst visiting descendents of Nueva Germania royalty in their home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, one of the eugenics colony's 11-year-old bluebloods approached my desk in her parents' guestroom overlooking endless snow sliced into finite blocks by wire fences, the desk blossoming ominously with important Kimjongilia-related study materials.

"What's that?" Stefie asked about the music and lyrics for "Beautiful Kimjongilia". "This is a song about a beautiful flower, Stefie – a song named after the flower named after the dear, austere comrade Kim Jong-il," I explained, her eyes intelligent and willful. "Can I sing it?"

I knew as those words rang that we were entering mutual heightened awareness – garden variety coincidence, as earlier in the day, while singing from the same sheet music to myself in the livingroom, surrounded by rubber tree leaves, I longed to hear a child, or children, render the same for recording purposes. "Do you read music?"

"Yeah, but this looks weird. I'll just make up my own melody," she said.

With that, she was off with my book. Within the next two hours, she had invited two little German-Paraguayan

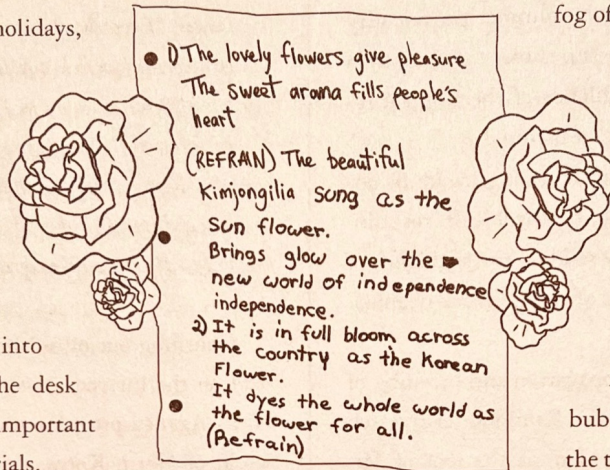
friends over, Tanya and Judy, and the trio proceeded to spend the entire night – until 5:30 am – arranging, rehearsing, re-arranging, in Stefie's room, across the hall from mine. They didn't worry about waking Stefie's older sister Tatiana, or their parents, as everyone else's room is downstairs.

I returned to my study, leaving the door slightly ajar so that the geniuses might feel I was accessible to them. I tried to peer out at the snow, but could only see my own reflection – even up close. My own reflection in a fog of my own exhaust, unable to appreciate coldness. I sat at the desk

and began to read, but too much energy was whispering through my soul. It was orgone energy, something utterly secretive one feels in the presence of God – secretive in that it is imminently subject to memory screen. I was in a perfect bubble shielded from and unsullied by the trivial affairs of humanity. I glanced down at my boots, and the visage was

good to my eyes. The look of my strong, long, lean legs tucked into my recently polished engineer boots purchased with money from a Swiss grant to orchestrate the organ compositions of Jack Kevorkian. Death With Dignity boots.

Shrugging off these unproductive thoughts, I grabbed „KIMJONGILIA: The King Flower Has Appeared And Spread Abroad“ (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Juche 87) and fell to the bed. From across the hall – quite loudly, actually – I could hear Stefie, Tanya and Judy singing ("The sweet aroma . . ."), laughing, consulting ("It's 'aroma', not 'arona'!"), singing ("The sweet aroma fills people's breast"), amending ("Let's change 'breast' to something else . . . How about 'heart'?"), singing (" . . . It dyes the whole world as the flower for all") . . .



I lifted the volume and read.

It was in 1964 that Kamo Mototeru first obtained the tuberous begonia from Reynolds, a Hungarian-American, and Yoshie Seiro, a Japanese man. Mototeru had admired the flower even before seeing it. But, unable to endure the heat, the flower withered within a year. Disappointed, he aborted his interest in the flower for a while. Later, after becoming acquainted with Rangdon of England, Hagman of Belgium and the Anternery Brothers of the United States, world authorities of the tuberous begonia, he made a fresh new start. Kamo imagined, above all, that the Kimjongilia must be a very large flower of vigorous lion-form. From the olden days, the Japanese people have honored polypetalous flowers with a quiet love and respect. Among these, the lion-form flower, unique to Japan, has held a special place in the people's heart.

Lion-form flowering is evocative of the brave lion appearing in the masque dance Stone Bridge, a Japanese folk dance. The flower, whose many distinct petals emerged in multiple folds, was to be mannish, magnificent and perfectly irresistible.

Dr. Mototeru began to obtain the variety of lion-form flowering and at last reverentially presented the flower worthy of being called Kimjongilia to His Excellency Secretary Kim Jong Il.

From then until Spring, 1994, he visited Korea nine times, and members of the Central Botanical Garden of Pyongyang stayed in his flower garden for six months, visiting it on three occasions as members of the delegation for exchange of horticultural technique and deeper understanding. The flower of the tuberous begonia is massive, elegant and requires sincere scientific study for proper cultivation, dissemination and breeding. Only Japan and Korea bring begonias into magnificent bloom, in perpetuum.

"I intend to broaden the ties of friendship by further

prompting exchange and always leading in the van of the world," says Dr. Kamo Mototeru.

I paused to reflect on the word „van“. What could he possibly mean? "I intend to lead in the van of the world." Oh, I see, he means something like „vanguard“. Whilst energetically staring at the ceiling, doorjam and corner of the bed, near my feet, I was calmed by the sounds of Stefie Harder Trio developing "Beautiful Kimjongilia" at slowly elevating levels: "The beautiful Kimjongilia / Sung as the sun flower / Brings glow over the new world / Of independence, independence" ... "That's better, let's sing 'independence' twice."

My eyes, glued to my knees for unknown reasons, returned to the book:

MY TUBEROUS BEGONIA

Of the pioneers who taught Dr. Mototeru floriculture, the dearest was Mr. Yoshie Seiro, who first studied and bred the tuberous begonia in Japan. Over thirty years ago, Seiro bequeathed to Mototeru the tuberous begonia – advising the upstart to devote himself entirely to its continued study and development. Seiro's fraternal gesture served as Mototeru's spiritual basis for a life dedicated to the art and perfection of the tuberous begonia.

At about the same time, he became acquainted with Mr. Frank Reynolds of Capitera, California, and obtained the tuberous begonia from him on the introduction of Mr. Jack Graig, an Iris ensata fancier of the United States. But the tuberous begonia withered in three or four years, as it was sultry in the summer in Kakegawa City where he lived, and because his breeding technique was perhaps a bit immature. Dr. Mototeru recounts from the comfort of his deathbed:

"At that time, Sankei Newspaper Company requested that I grow flowers in the skiing ground 1,400 meters above

sea level, called Biwakobare. I recommended that they plant the tuberous begonia, assigned Mr. Yoshie to lead the technical work and suggested that they obtain the tuberous begonia from Mr. Reynolds. My suggestion was accepted, and the glasshouse for the tuberous begonia first came into being in Japan. With the success of this undertaking, Sankei Newspaper Company built the Amaki Plateau Flower garden on Mt. Amaki in Izu. This great success at once aroused interest in the tuberous begonia throughout Japan.

“At that time, I refrained from growing the tuberous begonia independently and preferred to help my mentor Mr. Yoshie to succeed. However, continuing research, I deepened my exchange with specialists in the tuberous begonia of different countries.”

Several years ago, Mr. Yoshie lost his ability to continue growing the tuberous begonia, on account of old age and poor health. So, he advised Dr. Mototeru to do it himself.

Dr. Mototeru made up his mind anew, and began research into the tuberous begonia and improvement of its species – introducing all the achievement in the world, to say nothing of those of the Yoshie school. Mototeru's research rapidly progressed with the cooperation of Mr. Rangdon of Bristol in England, Mr. Anterney of Santa Cruz in the United States, Mr. Joba of Capitera, and Mr. Rokerich of Belgium, and he began stating with pride that he had attained a level unexcelled in Japan.

Having built his tuberous begonia exhibition on an area of about 560 square meters in his head flower garden in Kakegawa City, and strategically placed 2,300 potted begonia plants on display there, Dr. Mototeru is in charge of a highly popular attraction. He is growing several thousand plants in the central flower garden and in the branch flower garden, whose total area amounts to 2,800 square meters. In

the near future, he intends to grow Kimjongilia on a large scale, building glasshouses with an area of 14,000 square meters.

When they decided that breast “sounds strange” and should be replaced by heart, I began to scrawl the lyrics in large red letters on a piece of hole-punched paper for them, enabling them to easily read from a distance. Little Tanya insisted on taking over pen duties at the word sung, as I was writing too slowly...

They were up at about 10 am, rehearsing again. While making my way to the kitchen for coffee, I found Stefie had donned her elaborate nanduti lace dress, crafted by the devout Jesuit women of Itagua, Paraguay. It is her preferred dancewear, and she sportingly furnished Judy and Tanya with complementary dresses for the occasion. As the lovely, flowerlike spiderweb patterns on her dress possessed little of the Kimjongilia's austerity, we became concerned that the song's subject would be trivialized by more or less indiscriminate displays of floral imagery. Stefie, Tanya and Judy scoured the house for flowers that might actually resemble Kimjongilia on camera. At last, in the kitchen, they discovered three pink and yellow plastic flowers shaped like carnations for the lapel. Next, paying a visit to sleeping big sister Tatiana's room downstairs, they “borrowed” her red acrylic paint tubes and brushes and set up shop on the kitchen table. Within 15 minutes, three plastic Kimjongilias were set to dry on the table. These would be worn behind the ears.

Kimjongilia behind the ear. Young ladies have always been known to compliment their beauty with a Kimjongilia behind the ear (left if you're married, right if you're single or “looking”). At first, North Korea took part in the International Flower Show, but it was her successful contribution to the promotion of international friendship and exchange that won her the most hearts – which brings us to an email I re-

ceived this morning, from a Mr. Alejandro Cao de Benos, President of the Korean Friendship Association (KFA):

Dr. Woodard,

It is not possible for U.S. citizens to visit the D.P.R.K., except as part of our organized delegations. We are preparing one from August the 23rd though 30th, 2005, and it is possible for you to speak with officials related to the Kimjongilia flower, and to exchange friendship and knowledge.

You can send your Video CD or DVD to:

Alejandro Cao de Benos

Special Delegate-DPRK

Government

C/ Valencia, 555, 3, 3

08026-Barcelona, SPAIN

I had written to the President of the Korean Friendship Association, seeking to remit via post a video CD of "Beautiful Kimjongilia" – and, perhaps, advance my quest for a North Korean visa. Mr.

Cao de Benos was advertising on his website two sequential "delegations", or organized group tours, in August, 2005. He suggested that I join the first of the two. This would include honorary performances of music and, to some pandering degree, gymnastics. I replied immediately with passport information. The following day, I received a second group email from Mr. Cao de Benos, now stating that, though the first delegation is entirely booked, I may still register for the second. The emphasis of the second delegation was to provide foreign guests with the unique opportunity to volunteer as a farm or factory worker for a week. I was appalled.



Two weeks later, another email:

Dear Dr. Woodard,

I received your video and will send it to Pyongyang.

Thank you. With our best regards,

Alejandro Cao de Benos de Les y Perez

"Kimjongilia plays a significant role in the friendly foreign activity of Korea. Dear Secretary Kim Jong-il has already sent the flowers as a gift to 47 countries in the world, evoking great admiration in these countries," tuts Dr. Mototeru in „KIMJONGILIA: The King Flower Has Appeared And Spread Abroad“. Exchange between me and the Central Botanical Garden of Pyongyang commenced, when many plants were presented to President Kim Il-sung from Japan on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

Beginning with the International Flower Show in Hamburg in 1963, Mototeru participated in International Flower Shows in Vienna, Paris and Montreal, each time displaying a variety of plants. The flowers he cultivated continue to grow in the RHS Flower Garden in Wisray, the Yunnan Botanical Institute in China, the Moscow Central Botanical Garden in Russia and the Leningrad Botanical Garden. But the Central Botanical Garden in Pyongyang extends the greatest effort into cultivating and disseminating the floriculture of Mototeru and other leading Japanese botanists.

Given the Central Botanical Garden's advanced behavior, the North Korean/Japanese exchange naturally deepened. This eventually led to the addition of 280 species of Cam-

panula punctata, 140 species of lily and lotuses – and at last, Kimjongilia came to light.

When Dr. Kamo Mototeru visited the Central Botanical Garden over thirty years ago, he saw that Kimilsungia was placed in front of a greenhouse there. This is the flower President Sukarno of Indonesia presented to President Kim Il-sung as a gift.

He asked the guide, “As there is Kimilsungia, there must be Kimjongilia, too. Is that so?”

“Not yet.”

“Don’t you think it must be?”

“...”

From that point forward, prompted by a mysterious floral panic, Dr. Mototeru sought out the ideal flower worthy of the name Kimjongilia.

“In my flower garden I bred *Iris ensata*, the tuberous begonia, *Iris*, lily and others – but there was no new flower of independent high level worthy of being called Kimjongilia. I thought, it could be bred from the tuberous begonia.”

The tuberous begonia, having derived from pure breeds occurring on the highlands of the Andes, passed through centuries of crossbreeding and thus attained a remarkable level of achievement. It continues to be crossbred today, developing beautifully across Europe, the Americas and Japan.

Dear Dr. Woodard,

Thank you very much for having an interest in the Kim Jong-il flower. Your inquiries have been brought to my attention by Mr. Peter Rhee. On behalf of Mr. Rhee, I would love to give you all of the answers that I possibly can. So please feel free to email me.

I watched the DVD that you sent to Mr. Rhee, and I saw three young ladies as angels. I couldn't quite hear what they

were singing, but I loved to see their pure, innocent faces. I would like to invite you to become a member of our society and send you the Kim Jong-il plant as soon as I can.

Would you please explain a bit more about your position as Music Director of the Los Angeles Chamber Group? Also, your position as American Liaison to Nueva Germania, Paraguay.

Sincerely yours,

Mitchell Hur

Director, Orchid and Begonia Society of America

The DPRK celebrates Kim Jong-il’s birthday with fireworks and vows of loyalty. North Koreans take pilgrimages to the sacred camp of Mount Paektu, holy land of the revolution, where Kim Jong-il was born. Horticulturists time the blossoming of the Kimjongilia to coincide with Feb. 16. They are in full bloom, likely to express reverence for the peerlessly great man at all exhibition places in Pyongyang.

The Kimjongilia Festival, each unprecedented in content, form and scale, mirrors the North Korean people’s unquestioning confidence in Dear Leader Kim Jong-il and fully demonstrates the unshakable faith and will of the Korean Army and of the people to carry out a Songun-based revolution under his leadership. Annual festival participants include commissions and ministries of the cabinet, organs of armed forces, national institutions, working people from all walks of life from all provinces, overseas Koreans, individuals and overseas compatriots who are cultivating Kimjongilia, and floriculturists and lovers of flowers worldwide.

The more than 23,000 Kimjongilia displayed at the 2005 festival reflected the international progressive community’s undying reverence and admiration for Kim Jong-il. Large posters were spotted standing in front of the Kimilsungia-Kimjongilia exhibition, its venue.

The Cuban ambassador to North Korea wrote in the guest book that he and fellow delegates were deeply moved by the beautiful Kimjongilia, which so eloquently expresses Cuba's love, admiration and respect for Kim Jong-il on the occasion of his 63rd birthday, and that he sincerely hoped the Juche philosophy would forever remain in the hearts of peace-loving and justice-supporting people throughout the world.

The military attache of the Iranian embassy wrote in the book that the festival hall was blossoming with feelings of deep reverence for Kim Jong-il. The head of the folk dance troupe from the Russian Moiseyev State Academy wrote that she was deeply stirred by her admiration for the beautiful Kimjongilia and that celebrating Kim Jong-il's birthday was a pleasure held dear not only by the Korean people but by Russians as well.

The head of a delegation of the Japanese Society for the Study of Kimilsungism wrote that Kimjongilia fully reflected the Korean people's reverence for Kim Jong-il, and that through the flower's beauty they would surely achieve greater success in building a prosperous, powerful nation under his leadership.

The opening ceremony on February 12 was attended by Vice-President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly Yang Hyong-sop (who is also Secretary of the CC) and the KWP's Jong Ha-chol. Other notables included a delegation of China's Dandong Kimjongilia Hot House, a delegation of China's Dandong Jianyuan Trade Company, a delegation of international environmental television professionals and a delegate of the Berlin Botanical Garden of Germany.

Addressing the ceremony as keynote speaker this important multi-Anniversary year, Vice-Premier Kwak Pom-gi, chairman of the DPRK Kimilsungia-Kimjongilia Federation, carried himself with a dignified, pseudo-reluctant smile

as he ascended to the podium. Following a lengthy, emotional applause, he quietly announced that Kimjongilia is an immortal flower that represents Kim Jong-il as a great man and a flower of the sun best loved by the Korean people. It is the highest pride of the Korean nation and the greatest desire of humankind to widely cultivate and propagate the flower, he added.

The following evening, illuminated by what must have been millions of klieglight watts, a musical-gymnastic premiere filling Kim Il-sung Square portrayed the blooming cycle of Kimjongilia as represented by the massive, detailed choreography of over 140,000 rigorously trained pre-teen dancers. Sweeping, largo movement and vast, undulating fields of red and flesh tones suggested to me the miracle of childbirth. In massive displays such as this and the Arirang Festival in April, the higher and further back one's spectator seat the better. What matters is the big picture.

"Whenever I climb, I am followed by a dog called Ego."
Nietzsche

The big picture. I thought back to Stefie Harder – her parents, her big sister Tatiana who was often in the basement. Her triomates, Tanya and Judy. Her cats, Buddy and Mitzi. Stefie may have been here too, if it weren't for the hackneyed custom of parents worrying about their daughters. Mitch Hur had, after all, noted her angelic quality and invited me to invite her. Alejandro Cao de Benos had kindly taken it upon himself to forward the video disc of Stefie's reverent trio to North Korea. If it weren't for the surety of little Stefie's clear vision and good nature, perhaps I wouldn't be here myself today – swaddled in communist magnificence, observing from the aerial row of honor the premiere of this Busby Berkeley-inspired Kimjongilia dance, Pyongyang, Juche 94. One encounters only so many magical creatures per lifetime, for they are elusive.