

Meet the equipment technical support person for “Pictured Life” author Anne Crans. John Van Ooyen works behind the scenes to make sure everything goes smoothly when Anne goes on a book tour. John connects the computer and projector, making sure that everything is ready to go, and assists during the presentations.



John was born in South Korea in 1958, after the devastating Korean War. Many families were dispersed and separated from each other. There were so many lost children and they were placed in orphanages. During this time also, polio was rampant world-wide. There were no vaccines available to many third-world countries, including South Korea. Many suffered and died from it.

At age 2, John contracted polio and became paralyzed from his chest down. He was abandoned by his parents and left in Seoul, the capital of South Korea, on the steps of the City Hall.

John relates: “A kind policeman brought me to the Holt Ilsan orphanage, founded by Harry, Bertha, and Molly Holt from Eugene, Oregon. Many of the children and abandoned babies were placed in adoption to the United States of America and European countries through the Holt Adoption Agency.

At age 9, I started attending Ilsan elementary public school. I had to walk three miles there and I am back on my crutches every day. I was jealous of many of the children, babies and my friends being adopted out to another countries, except me. Many of the disabled children and older children didn’t get adopted, including my good friend, Hwong Jung Nam. I called him an older brother because he was two years older than me. He also contracted polio, just like me and used crutches to walk. He didn’t get adopted.

I diligently prayed and asked God that I would be adopted to America. At age 13, God answered my prayer. I was adopted into the large Dutch, loving family of Claude and Amy Van Ooyen with their 10 children in March of 1972. My newly- adopted family immigrated from the Netherlands when they had four young children and they had three more children after arriving to the United States of America. They then adopted three more Korean children. I was the fourth adopted child. I had to speak a brand-new language: English. In the beginning I communicated by pointing and by signs. I learned English very fast. With my adopted parents and my family’s love and support, along with my stubborn, determined, and independent spirit, I went on to graduating from Hudsonville High School, in just short three years with Honors in 1978.

Miraculously, by my determined heart, God had me attend Michigan State University and graduate with a degree in Special Education with a Teaching Certificate in 1984. By God's grace, I taught Special Education in Kalamazoo for 30 years and played wheelchair sports, basketball, softball, lacrosse and sled hockey through Mary Free Bed Adapted Sports in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

In 2004, God had me going back to my birth country, South Korea, to search for my birth-parents - but I was not able to find them. I received a scholarship from InKAS- (International Korean Adoptee Services) to re-learn my Korean language at the Ewha Women's University. That same year, I got to reunite with Molly Holt, the daughter of Harry and Bertha Holt, my older 'brother' Hwong Jung Nam, and my house-mate, and with my disabled buddies who are still at the Holt Orphanage in Ilsan.

Now, I'm retired and have this wonderful opportunity to work with my sister, Anne, with her "Pictured Life" book tours.

I'm just amazed at what Anne's gifts and talents are. She has poured her unique, creative, ingenuity and insight into her artistic, musical, poetic, short stories and photographic abilities. Now, many of her gifts and talents are manifested in the photography and written down in her "Pictured Life" Book. The "Picture Life" shows so many facets of nature's beauty and tells the stories of all different aspects of life in exquisite poems, beautiful short stories and extremely colorful photographs. Now, she's sharing all her gifts and talents and people are joyfully enjoying the "Pictured Life" with her.

I'm truly privileged, honored and blessed to go on Anne's "Pictured Life" book tours with her.