

# CROSSING THE LINE



Comrade Joe, the last American Defector in North Korea

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## **CROSSING THE LINE**

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NICHOLAS BONNER

Narrated by  
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Music  
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## **CROSSING THE LINE**

UK / USA – 2007  
94 Minutes – Color  
HD CAM

In English and Korean with English subtitles

1.78:1  
Stereo

# KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

## CROSSING THE LINE

### SHORT SYNOPSIS

In 1962, a U.S. soldier sent to guard the peace in South Korea deserted his unit, walked across the most heavily fortified area on earth and defected to the Cold War enemy, the communist state of North Korea. He became a coveted star of the North Korean propaganda machine, but then disappeared from the face of the known world. He later found fame acting in North Korean films, typecast as an evil American. He uses Korean as his daily language. He has three sons from two wives. He has lived in North Korea twice as long as he has in America. At one time, there were four Americans living in North Korea. Today, just one remains. Now, after 45 years, the story of Comrade Joe, the last American defector in North Korea, is told for the first time...

### SYNOPSIS

This is the story of the last American defector in North Korea, James Joseph Dresnok. It's a story of defection, kidnap, love, and political intrigue, all set and captured in the most secret and inaccessible country on earth: North Korea.

In the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, four US soldiers defected to North Korea. None of the men had any idea what awaited them on the other side. No one knows why they defected, until now. Each man left his Southern border post in the demilitarised zone - the DMZ, a 2.5 mile wide patch of land that splits the Korean peninsula in half and is the most heavily fortified area on earth, packed with 2.5m land mines-and walked into an alien world.

Dresnok and his unique band of brothers published propaganda pamphlets, telling the world how happy they were in 'the People's Paradise' and starred in propaganda films, vilifying US servicemen. They became North Korean national heroes.

The world knows of only one of these men: Charles Robert Jenkins. His story broke open in September 2002 when it was reported that one of the kidnapped Japanese nationals, Hitomi Soga, had married an American defector. What no one knew at that time, except for the filmmakers, was that a second American defector, James Joseph Dresnok, was alive.

Jenkins now lives in Japan with his wife and daughters. He is a key part of the story but as much of it is now in the public domain, it is Dresnok who is the driving force of the film. Dresnok remains in North Korea and lives with his family in the capital city, Pyongyang, and has not had contact with outsiders since his defection in 1962. Dresnok grew up a poor orphan in Virginia, and never finished high school. He had little choice but go to the army when after a first stint in West Germany, he was sent over to the most dangerous border in the world, the DMZ.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

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Dresnok has now lived for 44 years in Pyongyang, capital city of North Korea, one of the most deeply anti-American societies in the world. He worked for the Korean People's Army as an English teacher, learned the language and the system.

For the first time, Dresnok tells his story.

In making the film, the filmmakers had astonishing access to Dresnok, his daily life in North Korea, his and the other defector families, and even the North Korean soldier who captured him in 1962. These sights have never been seen before to anyone outside North Korea, and even to most North Koreans.

### BACKGROUND

The Korean War was a brutal and devastating conflict that in just three years cost some four million lives, many of them civilians. An armistice was signed in 1953 to end hostilities but the war was never officially over. In the early 60s, at the height of the Cold War, a further confrontation between North and South seemed inevitable and the DMZ was one of the most perilous postings for a US soldier. To those serving either side of the divide, the Korean War had, indeed, never ended. There were constant incidents and provocations.

And in a story that seems more Hollywood but is very real, four US Army soldiers sent to guard the DMZ and keep the peace would betray everything their country stood for: cross over and defect to North Korea.

### DEFECTION

In May 1962, Private Larry Allen Abshier of the 2nd Infantry Division left his border post and walked across the DMZ, ignoring his squad leader's order to return. Abshier had been facing a court martial after military equipment went missing on his duty.

A month after his disappearance, the U.S. Army thought Abshier was hiding in South Korea until Pyongyang Radio announced that he had defected to the North. Soon, the DMZ was awash with a North Korean propaganda pamphlet entitled "I Am A Lucky Boy," which detailed in words and pictures, Abshier's happy new life in Pyongyang: "I have seen various cities in foreign countries and in South Korea, but I had never seen a city where the buildings were as magnificent and majestic as Pyongyang and where the streets were so clean and so dazzlingly beautiful at night..."

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“I wanted to cut my relations with the American mercenary army that has incurred the hatred of the people of the world and tramples on the happiness and freedom of other countries and nations and is destroying world peace. I crossed into North Korea in order to cultivate a new life as a true human being.”

Abshier, who had no higher than an eighth grade education, then felt compelled to underline his commitment to his new life with another article, “The Most Joyous Days of My Life:”

“It's over 70 days since I came over to the North, but I have spent the most joyous and pleasant days in my life. And these days will remain forever in my memory... There is not a single jobless man in North Korea. Their living standard is very high... living in nice multi-storied apartment houses... receiving from the state every year three overalls, three pairs of shoes, milk, fish, meat, edible oil, cold drinks and many others, all free of charge...”

Brought up in a string of foster homes, Abshier never knew his biological parents. He struggled at school and saw the army as his way out. His home address in Army records is listed as the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Home. Engaged to be married at the time of his defection, his commanding officer said he had suffered a breakdown, laid down his weapon and wandered the DMZ before turning himself over to the North Koreans. His fiancée never heard from Abshier again, but wrote personally to North Korean President Kim Il Sung for news and was informed that he was alive, healthy and happy.

The U.S. Armed Forces newspaper Stars and Stripes mocked Abshier's statements and poured scorn on him for his defection. It was supposed to raise the troops' morale. However, it had the opposite effect on Private First Class James Joseph Dresnok.

Like Abshier, Dresnok was brought up in foster care as an orphan. He was beaten by his first foster parent, but was rescued by a second who took pity on local children in similar predicaments and put them to work on his farms. And like Abshier, Dresnok left high school after eighth grade. Dresnok joined the Army as soon as he could.

At the age of 18, Dresnok married while on leave from basic training. He returned to serve in West Germany, and his wife found a new lover and demanded a divorce on his return to the United States. Dresnok immediately re-enlisted and was posted to South Korea and Charlie Company of the 8th Cavalry on the DMZ.

Dresnok lived it up during his time in South Korea. Soon he was facing court martial for going on leave without permission. Having already had one court martial on his record from a previous tour, he was facing jail time, and possible dismissal from the Army.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

(CONTINUED)

On August 15th 1962, the day before his court martial, Dresnok was last seen by five U.S. personnel walking within the DMZ dressed in army fatigues and in possession of a U.S. Military Shotgun with five rounds of ammunition.

Dresnok's North Korean diaries were soon released:

“The officers of the People's Army warmly treated me, encouraging me for my decisive action... I feel my frozen heart suppressed for a long time suddenly thawing (August 17, 1962)... North Korea, that produces everything it wants on its own, is one of the most advanced countries in the world. This was the thing I had never imagined. Of course, all these owe to the leadership of the Korean Workers Party and Premier Kim Il Sung (August 20, 1962)... North Korea is an earthly paradise where the rights of labour and rest are guaranteed. I cannot help envying heartily the happy life of the children in North Korea. Comparing the life of the children here, the life in my childhood was too miserable (September 20, 1962).”

Dresnok and Abshier quickly became friends. Together they sent greetings to their “Old Fellow Friends”

“G.I.'s stationed in South Korea! Enjoying warm welcome from the North Korean people, I put off the disgusting G.I. uniform and visited Pyongyang and other cities and villages. To tell the truth, the people in North Korea are enjoying freedom and happiness inaccessible to the working people of the United States. Their Life is incomparably freer and happier than that of the Americans or the South Koreans.”

North Korea published a pamphlet entitled “Fortunes Favorites” to show G.I.s the brave new world the two were experiencing. No matter where they were, on the farms, in the factories, on the streets of the capital, they were having the time of their lives. Surely other G.I.s would see this and want to come?

In December 1963, Specialist Four Jerry Wayne Parrish was on routine walking patrol and last in line. He fled his group, leaving his equipment and rifle on a Military Demarcation Line marker. Next to his equipment lay a note: “Say so long to the fellows in the barracks and tell mother I love her. I will be home some day.”

It was Christmas and Parrish sent thousands of cards to his former army colleagues, all handwritten to encourage them to join him. Soon voices of the three defectors were heard across the DMZ via loudspeakers mounted on the watchtowers, urging all U.S. soldiers to join them.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

(CONTINUED)

In the early hours of January 5, 1965, one of the coldest nights of the year, a four man patrol in the DMZ was led by Sergeant Charles Robert Jenkins. Having lain in vain for three hours in the freezing conditions on ambush stakeout, they elected to return to base at 2:30 am. Jenkins, who would later admit that he had drunk 10 cans of beer before going on patrol, told his men he would make sure the road ahead was clear. He never returned! Three weeks later, the North Korean authorities broadcasted a message from Jenkins, where he said that he, too, had found "Shangri-la" in North Korea.

Jenkins was the fourth man to defect from the U.S. Army in less than three years and a real prize to the North Koreans: he was an officer.

An updated 'Fortune's Favorites' was published, showing the four men having fun in North Korea, without cares or worries, urging more U.S. servicemen to defect to join them in paradise. And then the four effectively disappeared from the known world.

In 1996 the Pentagon admitted that four American defectors were in North Korea. The Pentagon sought to contact the four to see if they knew anything about Americans missing from the Korean War. Pyongyang responded that the four were North Korean citizens and did not want to speak with the U.S. By this time, Abshier was already dead of a heart attack in 1983. He was just 40 years old. It showed how little the U.S and the outside world knew of them and of North Korea. Parrish died in 1998, aged 54, of kidney disease. The U.S. lists all four men as deserters, charges which remain to this day.

### KIDNAP

In September 2002, the name Charles Robert Jenkins reappeared in the most bizarre circumstances. The Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had just returned from a historic visit to North Korea with confirmation that North Korean agents had kidnapped 13 Japanese nationals to teach Japanese language and customs to North Korean spies. Eight had since died. Among the surviving five was Hitomi Soga, who was married to Jenkins. The fourth U.S. defector was alive and living in Pyongyang, his home for nearly 40 years.

They met when he was instructed to teach her English. They married soon after in 1980, two years after her kidnapping. Jenkins revealed to the filmmakers in Pyongyang, June 2004, that he was not only Soga's English teacher, but also her protector.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

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In October 2002, Jenkins' wife returned to Tokyo. It was a highly publicized and emotional event. She had been kidnapped along with her mother, whom she never saw again. Soga's 10 day visit to Japan turned into an indefinite stay. Jenkins and their two daughters remained in Pyongyang.

As the days turned into months and then years, Jenkins' health began to deteriorate. Without his wife, he was a broken man. If somehow North Korea would allow him and his daughters to leave, he would face immediate arrest for desertion and aiding the enemy and be deported to the U.S. under the extradition agreement between Japan and the United States.

The kidnappings confirmed to the Japanese all their fears about their reclusive and dangerous neighbor, North Korea. But the Soga and Jenkins drama touched off a wave of sympathy and compassion for the separated family in Japan and the world.

In 2004, a compromise was reached between the governments of North Korea and Japan, ordered at the very highest level, whereby the family would reunite in a neutral country that had no extradition treaty with the United States.

Beijing was suggested but immediately rejected by Soga as being too close - politically, historically and geographically - to North Korea. On July 8, 2004 the family met in Indonesia, a tearful and overwhelming occasion witnessed by a frenzied world's media. An even more intense atmosphere greeted their arrival in Tokyo ten days later, where Jenkins had been persuaded to go for urgent medical treatment.

Jenkins then surrendered to the U.S. Forces in Japan to face court martial. The irony of the date of his surrender – September 11 – was not lost on most observers. Now aged 65, he said he wanted closure. He then made sensational allegations of his mistreatment in North Korea by both the authorities and by his fellow US defectors, especially Dresnok:

“If I didn't listen to the North Korean government, they would tie me up, call Dresnok in to beat me. Dresnok really enjoyed it. Dresnok is a beater, 1.96-m tall, weighed 128 kilograms. He's big. He likes to beat someone. And because I was a sergeant he took it out on me.”

Jenkins' court martial was set for November 3 - the same day the world's attention would be focussed on the U.S. Presidential Election. He was found guilty on two charges of desertion and aiding the enemy, and was sentenced to six months imprisonment, reduced to 30 days under the terms of his pre-trial agreement.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

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Upon his release from prison, Jenkins returned to Sado Island, where his wife was kidnapped in 1978 and where his family has decided to settle. On his return to Sado he declared: "Today is the first day of the last chapter of my life. It is here that I will hopefully live my remaining days."

### **MORE ALLEGATIONS**

There are allegations that North Korea deliberately set out to kidnap nationals of other countries and have them marry the Americans. They would then have Western looking children who in turn could be sent to the West as espionage agents. In other words, North Korea had a deliberate spy-breeding program.

In exploring these allegations the filmmakers met a most bizarre new generation in North Korea, the children of the American defectors. These Western looking boys are fully integrated into North Korean society. One son serves in the Korean People's Army, patrolling the DMZ from the northern side of the divide, just as his father patrolled and defected from the southern side over 40 years ago. James Dresnok Jr. goes to the Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies majoring in English. His ambition is to become a diplomat.

Jenkins' wife Soga was kidnapped from Japan in order to teach Japanese language and customs to North Korean spies. It has been alleged that Parrish's wife was taken from Lebanon with three others and forced to live and work in Pyongyang. Siham ShrieteH is very much alive and refutes the allegations saying she came of her own free will to vacation in North Korea, when she met Parrish and got pregnant. Jenkins claimed that Abshier not only married a woman kidnapped from Thailand, but previously had a Korean girlfriend, who disappeared after she fell pregnant.

Dresnok's first wife in Korea was suspected to be a Romanian, whom allegedly had been brought to North Korea against her will. Dresnok was mum on her story but was open telling the story of his second Korean wife, who is half Korean and half black. Her father was from Togo, and worked at the Togolese Embassy in Pyongyang. She does not know the name of her father, as he returned to Africa as soon as her mother fell pregnant.



## **CROSSING THE LINE**

**Q&A WITH FILMMAKER DANIEL GORDON**

### **How was making this movie different than the previous two?**

The subject matter of *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES* was a relatively straightforward story to tell. It was the story of an incredible World Cup football match in 1966 of how a town in England adopted the North Koreans as their 'home side'. We wanted to hear the players' stories, their anecdotes and memories.

Filming *A STATE OF MIND* was completely different, there was no story, we would simply follow one gymnast (eventually two gymnasts and their families) during the lead up to the next mass games performance (that was delayed on two occasions). Making a documentary on this subject meant visiting North Korea several times over nine months and hoping a strong storyline would develop. Over a longer period of time the characters warm to you and relax in front of camera adding to the quality of the film. On the second visit we were given access to family life in the home, trips to the countryside and a much more intimate portrayal than we thought possible.

The thought of filming the 'defector' was certainly in all of our minds going to be an incredible task but from day one of filming it just became another subject, developing the relationship and constructing the story. For *CROSSING THE LINE* it was a mixture of the defectors past (filming their lives in the U.S. as well as North Korea) and present life through the Dresnok and Parrish family. We followed Joe and his family (sometimes with the camera and sometimes without) for just over a year and as our relationship with him developed we were able to pick up more intimate and natural qualities.

### **What was the biggest risk you and the production took while making the film?**

The subject matter in itself was the biggest risk. Previously, my two films on North Korea had been relatively neutral but now I was entering a story that connects the governments and the armed forces of the US, North Korea, South Korea and Japan.

We were fortunate that we're British and don't have a vested interest in the story and so were trusted by all sides to make a non-judgemental film. To their credit the North Koreans never tried to interfere either with filming or with the editorial. That was also true of the US Army, who co-operated with us to film the army training sequence and to cover the court martial, which unfolded during filming.

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## **CROSSING THE LINE**

**Q&A WITH FILMMAKER DANIEL GORDON**

(CONTINUED)

**Did it take a lot of diplomacy and negotiating to meet Dresnok?**

Any project to be undertaken in DPRK involves brokering an understanding as to why we want to make the film, what we want out of it and that above all it must be natural. We must be given time with or without camera to get to know our subjects. For permission it was relatively straightforward.

**What was your biggest surprise about Mr. Dresnok?**

The way his son and in particular his youngest son Tony had such a warmth to his father. Mr. Dresnok is, I believe, a much more difficult subject for a film than the girls in A STATE OF MIND. The girls are young and have grown up only knowing the NK system. Dresnok, on the other hand, was a young man when he defected.

**Did you feel you needed to hold Mr Dresnok to a different or higher standard than the protagonists of your earlier movies?**

No - just a different set of questions to suit the different circumstances and he is asked more controversial questions than you can ask children. This is a man with opinions and not afraid to give an answer.

**Some people accuse you of providing propaganda for North Korea. How do you draw the line between letting them tell their own story and supporting a government and system?**

We believe the film is an accurate impression of what we saw. We have taken an apolitical viewpoint - with interviews from both sides of the spectrum; the North Koreans and the Americans were interviewed in the film and no right of reply was denied.

We did not go out to make one story and film it. We made a documentary with the story unfolding as it happened.

This film presents points of view from all sides and therefore we do not believe this can be seen as a propaganda film. We hope to produce a film with points of view from all sides and therefore balanced.

Our previous films have been shown both in North and South Korea and worldwide- we take this as a significant acceptance of their neutrality.



## CROSSING THE LINE

### DANIEL GORDON DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first entered North Korea, back in 2001, to make my first film, *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES* (2002), the story of the legendary North Korean World Cup team who in 1966, performed the greatest shock in World Cup history by knocking the mighty Italians out of the competition.

It was then that I began to hear stories that at first glance were mind blowing but on reflection seemed too fantastic to be true: Americans were living in North Korea. And not just any Americans but US soldiers who had defected during the height of the Cold War in the 1960s and had lived in Pyongyang for 40 years.

Once I had confirmation, the quest began to do what everyone thought impossible: get permission to film these men inside the world's most isolated country. This was never going to be a quick or simple mission. Although these men had defected between 1962 and 1965, it was not until 1996 that the US Department of Defense officially acknowledged that the four were living in North Korea. This showed how little even the US authorities knew, as one of the men had actually died thirteen years earlier.

Gradually, I began to get answers from our film partners in North Korea. Yes, there were Americans living in Pyongyang. Yes, they were considered heroes in North Korea. No, it would not be possible to film them.

So, along with my Associate Producer and North Korea specialist Nicholas Bonner, we made our second film in North Korea, *A STATE OF MIND* (2004). We spent nine months following two North Korean schoolgirls during their year-long preparation for the Mass Games - the world's biggest choreographed extravaganza with over 100,000 performers.

During the latter stages of filming *STATE*, we were informed that, yes, against all the odds, we would have permission to start *CROSSING THE LINE* and film the American defectors. This would be our third, most compelling film to date, and certainly the most ambitious.

We began filming in June 2004, with the two remaining live defectors. Within a month, one of these, Charles Robert Jenkins, would leave North Korea and surrender to the US Army in Japan to face court martial. This left just James Joseph Dresnok, or Joe as he prefers to be called, as the last American defector living in North Korea.

But what had made him cross? What had his life been like for 40 years in North Korea? Had he married? Had children? *CROSSING THE LINE* is his story.



## CROSSING THE LINE

### HOW THE FILM WAS MADE

Based on our work on the two North Korean films over the last five years, VeryMuchSo Productions, in partnership with Koryo tours, has gained the trust of the North Korean authorities. This has enabled clear and unrestricted access to James Joseph Dresnok and to the North Korean-based families of the other U.S. defectors.

After a negotiation period of over two years, filming began in June 2004 with a two hour interview with Dresnok and Charles Robert Jenkins. The North Korean authorities considered this initial meeting too sensitive to be filmed, as the Jenkins family issue was no nearer a resolution and a final agreement on filming had not been signed. This was a decision the authorities would later admit to regretting, as Jenkins had a very different story to tell once he left North Korea. A small amount of filming took place afterwards which features in the film.

In September 2004, just days after Jenkins had publicly alleged that Dresnok would tie him up and beat him on behalf of the North Korean authorities, the filmmakers were in North Korea interviewing Dresnok, who had no idea of the detail of these allegations. His immediate and emotional reaction is captured in the film.

In November, having attended Jenkins' court martial in Japan – Japanese authorities banned all filming – the crew flew immediately to North Korea to film, shooting on High Definition. This trip included an extensive two and a half hour interview with Dresnok in his home and a further hour of interviews with Dresnok and his fellow film stars.

Furthermore there was a 90-minute interview with Parrish's wife, where she talks of her life with her husband and addresses the allegations of how she came to be in North Korea. Also filmed was two sets of interviews with the sons of Parrish and Dresnok and with their friends, as well as a tearful interview with the University classmates of Jenkins' daughters, who had left for Japan four months' earlier. And finally there was an hour-long interview with hospital staff, those doctors and surgeons who have treated all the Americans over the years. Among the many issues they addressed was the allegation that they botched Jenkins' operation in April 2004.

More time was spent with Dresnok included fishing (his favourite pastime and one the four Americans enjoyed together) and bowling. Dresnok notes the irony of such an American pastime being popular in North Korea. He is filmed having his monthly heart check up. There is a visit to the restaurant where he met both his wives in Korea and a revolutionary opera. In addition, Dresnok gives a guest lecture in English at the Grand People's Study House. Filming was suspended when Dresnok was rushed into hospital after complaining of chest pains.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

(CONTINUED)

The crew resumed their shoot in the United States in April 2005, tracking down the early lives of the four defectors, and noted the effect the defections had had on the friends and family they left behind, and a month later, in May 2005, arrived in North Korea for their final shoot.

### ARCHIVE

We had full access to the North Korean archive, all the films that the men starred in, and never-before-seen propaganda leaflets. In addition, the filmmakers were given an exclusive pictorial archive - a stunning set of photographs taken from the families' personal albums and detailing the men's lives in North Korea. Among these photographs are those of the Jenkins family, which they left behind when they departed North Korea.

### FILM LOCATIONS

#### *NORTH KOREA*

Filming in North Korea was predominantly in Pyongyang, the country's capital, where the four men spent most of their lives. Dresnok's daily life was recorded at home, at work and socialising.

A further venue for filming was the film studio where they made their names in the public consciousness of the Korean people. Legendary North Korean actors who starred alongside them agreed to be interviewed. They gave a first hand account as to why the medium of film is so important to North Korea's propaganda machine.

The film crew was granted remarkable access to the northern side of the De-Militarized Zone - the DMZ - the border with South Korea and the area that President Clinton described as the scariest place on earth. Here was where the men from the Korean People's Army arrested the U.S. soldiers when they defected in the 1960s. These men were tracked down and interviewed in Pyongyang, more than four decades later.

#### *AMERICA*

In April 2005, filming took place in Urbana, Illinois, Glenn Allen, Virginia, Morganfield, Kentucky, Rich Square, North Carolina and many other areas across the United States. Interviews took place not only in the four men's hometowns, but in talking to those who knew the defectors, the trail led across the United States.

A great insight was given not only by their family and friends but also by their contemporaries from the Army, including commanding officers and those who served in the border outposts in South Korea.



## CROSSING THE LINE

### THE FILMMAKERS

#### **DANIEL GORDON (Director, Producer)**

Daniel Gordon grew up a fan of Sheffield Wednesday and after writing two books on his favorite soccer club he began his filmmaking career at Sky Sports and Chrysalis TV. He directed and produced his first feature film, *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES*, which took him to North Korea for the first time to find the original members of the 1966 World Cup team. He also formed his own company, VeryMuchSo, to make the film which went on to international acclaim, winning Gordon the UK RTS award for Best Sports Documentary.

Gordon's second film, *A STATE OF MIND*, again took him to North Korea where he followed two young gymnasts, aged 13 and 11, for nine months as they prepared for the Mass Games, the most elaborate human spectacle to be produced. *STATE* played at major festivals and theatrically throughout the world. Rotten Tomatoes ranked it the best reviewed theatrical doc of 2004.

*CROSSING THE LINE* marks the third film by Gordon. He has spent the last 2 years on his most ambitious project. He is currently working on his fourth film, on Greyhound racing at a track North of Sheffield.

#### **NICHOLAS BONNER (Co-Producer)**

In 2000, Bonner and Gordon stopped all other commitments to make the film that they had been told could not be made: the story of the North Korean World Cup team of 1966, *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES*. Bonner has worked with VeryMuchSo Productions as Associate Producer and a North Korean specialist on both *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES* and *A STATE OF THEIR MIND*. Since 1993, Bonner has been based in China and has visited North Korea more than any other westerner.

Bonner is the Director of Koryo Tours, which is now in its fourteenth year and expert in travel, cultural and educational exchanges in North Korea. He has worked on various projects that have helped open North Korea to the outside world but none more challenging than the films made in conjunction with VeryMuchSo Productions. Together, they brought the players of the 1966 North Korean World Cup team back to Britain in 2002, North Korea's biggest cultural exchange with the West. During the 3 week tour, the players were lauded by 120,000 football fans at four different matches.

#### **PETER HADDON (Editor)**

Peter has 18 years of experience across all genres of programme making, including documentary and drama. He is an award winning editor whose recent post production credits include the features *HEADRUSH*, *BLOOM* and *GOLDFISH MEMORY*. Peter was the acclaimed Finishing Artist for *THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES* and was the editor for *A STATE OF MIND*.

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## CROSSING THE LINE

### THE FILMMAKERS

(CONTINUED)

#### **NICK BENNETT (Cinematographer)**

Having first met Daniel Gordon when working with Sky Sports, Bennet has gone on to work as Cinematographer with VeryMuchSo on both THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES and A STATE OF MIND. His experience covers a wide area of production and media, from documentary to commercials; 16mm to High Definition video. Now based in the South East of England, he has just completed shooting Gordon's first UK based feature documentary, about an unlicensed greyhound racing track in Yorkshire.

#### **JOHN BATTSEK (Executive Producer)**

John Battsek was the Executive Producer for THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES and A STATE OF MIND. The principal at Passion Pictures, John previously produced the Oscar® winning documentary ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER, the acclaimed LIVE FOREVER (the story of Britpop in the 1990s) and ONCE IN A LIFETIME (the explosive tale of the New York Cosmos).

#### **PAUL YI (Executive Producer, World Sales and Publicity & Marketing)**

A producer and sales agent based in Los Angeles, Yi is the head of E Pictures, a production and sales company based in Seoul and Los Angeles. He produced the 2002 Cannes competition film UNKNOWN PLEASURE by Jia Zhangke. Yi began his film career as a filmmaker before becoming Festival Director of the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival. He was advisor to the first Pusan International Film Festival, where he founded and directed the first film co-production market in Asia, the Pusan Promotion Plan, and then went onto found and directed the Hong Kong Asian Film Financing Forum.

He was the Chief of the International Business Department of the Korean Film Commission and has had films in competition in Cannes, Venice and Berlin, many films in Toronto, Pusan and other major international festivals. He was the world sales agent for THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES and A STATE OF MIND.



## CROSSING THE LINE

### ABOUT VERYMUCHSO PRODUCTIONS

CROSSING THE LINE is the third feature length documentary by VeryMuchSo Productions, the team that produced the RTS award-winning THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES (four awards in total plus two Grierson nominations, one British Independent Film Awards nomination) and the acclaimed A STATE OF MIND (broadcast UK June 7th 2004 and chosen as 'Pick of the Day' in every broadsheet) the story of two North Korean gymnasts as they prepare a Mass Games celebration. A STATE OF MIND was selected for competition at Tribeca Film Festival and officially selected to Pusan International Film Festival, Sheffield International Documentary Festival and to International Documentary Festival Amsterdam.

VeryMuchSo has unique access to North Korea, having spent the last six years negotiating and filming in the country. The team is also highly respected in North Korea itself, THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES has been broadcast ten times there (one channel, 100% ratings!) and a follow up documentary on the football players' return to England in 2002 was broadcast twice a week for two months in 2003.

VeryMuchSo has recently produced a series of sport and lifestyle based interstitials for Discovery Italy and DMAX in Germany, and also used images from A STATE OF MIND to produce Faithless' much talked about pop promo 'I Want More.'