

Heidi Windisch Schmidt, Graz, Austria, 1969



I was born and raised in Hohenbrugg, Austria, the first of five daughters in my family. After high school, I attended nursing school in Graz, a town about an hour away from my home. I graduated from nursing school in 1966 at the age of 21. At the time, I was engaged to a wonderful young man who happened to be a Lutheran. I was Catholic, and as time went on, it became increasingly clear that our different religious beliefs would be problematic. Neither of us felt we could convert to the other's faith.

One day, I happened to meet a childhood friend and classmate, Maria Kanno, on the street in Graz. She seemed very different from when I knew her. She told me about the church center in Graz and invited me to come over. I heard the lectures and felt that the teaching addressed the issues I had been thinking about – especially the way to unite religions. My relationship with Jesus had always been very strong, and now I realized that Christ was walking on the earth! I had to follow him. On Children's Day, November 8, 1969, I joined the church.

I hoped that I could witness to my fiancé, but he was not interested. Shortly thereafter, he appeared outside the center with my parents and asked me to come outside to speak with them. When I did, my fiancé, who was a policeman, grabbed me and threw me into a van. I was kidnapped and locked in my parents' house. They threatened to take me to a psychiatric unit at the hospital, but when my parents consulted with the police department, they were advised that I was over the age of 21, an adult, and therefore free to go. The incident permanently damaged my relationship with my family. My parents

suffered tremendously, for the entire community knew their daughter had joined a “cult,” and they were severely ostracized. Their reputations were sacrificed, and trust was lost. It was so painful for everyone concerned.

On September 18, 1973, I came to America to join Mr. Reiner Vincenz’s International One World Crusade team. We witnessed and fundraised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Ohio; Los Angeles, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington.

In 1975, I attended Mr. Ken Sudo’s 120-day workshop at Barrytown. After completing that, I spent 40 days witnessing in the Bronx. Later that year, I was assigned to the Unification Theological Seminary staff as a nurse, a position I held from 1975 until 1984. I helped students and staff with their medical needs and also helped cook for the True Family when they visited the seminary. I was blessed in 1977 at the New Yorker Hotel, but ultimately my husband left the church. I was re-blessed in 1982 to Ron Schmidt. We lived in the River House on the Unification Theological Seminary grounds for 15 years. During this time, I worked part-time for the seminary and part-time at the Northern Dutchess Hospital.

We were unable to have children, but in November 1990, we adopted a beautiful blessed child, our son Klaus, from Madeline and John Raucci. He has been the joy of our lives. My husband, Ron, died on June 1, 2006. Klaus is now a full-time college student. Currently, I work as a surgical nurse at Northern Dutchess Hospital in Rhinebeck, New York.

I feel truly honored to have been able to walk the path of restoration together with our True Parents.