

Aspiring to a Noble Life, and interview of of Aeryun Lee Hokanson - Part 1

Amanda Hokanson
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A fellow student introduced Mrs. Hokanson (top row, second from the left) to our church in 1971

Question: How did you join the church?

In high school in Gangreung, my friends and I would pass by a church. People would always say, “That’s a bad church, a weird church, a crying church.” Because in the early days when members learned the Divine Principle, all they could do was cry. At the time, I did not know that it was the Unification Church, but when my classmate, who turned out to be a Unificationist, invited me to go to a three-day introductory Divine Principle workshop, it was at that “crying church.” So when the youth leader

came out greeting us and invited me to go in, I was reluctant. But he was kind and persuaded me, and once I heard the Divine Principle that was the end of it.

Before I joined the church, I used to go to a Christian church with my mother. Whenever I looked at the cross in the sanctuary or at a picture of Jesus on the cross, I had a big question mark in my mind. Christians believe we receive salvation through the cross, but I always felt there was more than just the cross.

When I was young, because of my father’s job, we had to move a lot. During the 1960s and 70s, Christianity was reviving strongly in Korea. Wherever we moved, the church in each town was a different denomination. One time it was a Presbyterian, another time Methodist or Catholic. Even within those churches were other denominations; people would just go to the closest church regardless of the type. We also just went to the closest church. As I was growing up, I would go around to different churches. I became interested in all the differences. I began seeking out new denominations to see how they differed. Yet, I still always had that question mark next to the cross. When I finally came to the Unification Church I stopped. I wasn’t interested in going to other churches anymore.

When I heard the Divine Principle, it answered all those questions. I joined not after hearing the mission of the messiah lecture but after hearing the introduction at the beginning of the book. It talked about the necessity of the new truth, about the purpose of creation, the Fall, and restoration—those three parts. I was so impressed by the introduction lecture that I still remember it.



Without any previous dance experience, she was among the 8 percent of accepted applicants.

That was 1971. It gave me a light in my struggle. I was a teenager at the time and I was feeling some despair. When I read the word (from the Bible) my original heart was saying that this was not the word that was meant to be. I was thinking that there was no real meaning for my life. There were many contradictions. I was losing hope for my life at that time. Thus, when I heard the Divine Principle it was like a great light. That is why I believe my ancestors guided me. It was not just me; my ancestors guided me to hear the Divine Principle and to meet the church.

Question: You were a Hanseon Korean Folk Ballet performer (1975–1976).

In 1974, True Father did a Day of Hope eight-city speaking tour in America. By that time, I had graduated high school. True Father had the New Hope singers and the Hanseon Korean Folk Ballet (founded in 1973 and mostly made up of former Little Angel members). Before that time, I had never had any dance

training nor was I from the Little Angels like most other performers.



Mrs. Hokanson is in the bottom row, second from the right.

The first troupe performed during the eight-city tour. After that, eight of its members left the team. Amazingly, out of the original one hundred applicants, I was among the new eight to join the second Hanseon troupe. We went to Japan on tour and performed at the Yankee Stadium rally in 1976.

Once again, I feel it was my ancestors. My ancestors are of the Yi Dynasty [also known as the Joseon Dynasty 1392–1897]. Yi Seong Gye [King Taejo] was the first king and founder of the Yi Dynasty. Right after I joined the church, I had the opportunity to visit a

grave in Gangreung. I learned that it was a *sanggung*'s [court lady's] grave. In those days when a queen died, the *sanggung* would no longer have a purpose and would thus follow the queen into the tomb.

I remember feeling she was one of my ancestors. I also had the heart that if I had lived three or four hundred years ago, I would have wanted to become a person just like that... more amazing than a queen. Most girls wish they could be a queen. But to me, the life of the queen's servant was nobler. Therefore, I feel as if due to the heart I had, Heavenly Parent remembered me and guided me to attend True Parents. Because of that I was able to be in the Hanseon Korean Folk Ballet, because of that I was matched to my husband, I could go to Kodiak, Alaska and I could attend True Parents directly and personally for eighteen years. (1985-2003)

Question: After folk ballet what did you do?

I was working in Korea when I was engaged by photo in 1978. In 1979, I joined the International One World Crusade. True Father said that those matched to an American husband should go to a mobile fundraising team (MFT) because according to him fundraising was the fastest way to learn English. That was true and that's how I learned English.



She spent some years working at East Garden; here, she is with True Mother's mother, Soon-Ae Hong, Dae Mo Nim

Question: But you were in New York before you got blessed.

Yes. It was the first time for Korean and American couples to be blessed. In the 1970s, getting a visa to go to America was very hard. To everybody, America was like the kingdom of heaven, so [the government thought] nobody would return. Nobody in the church could get a visa because most members did not have a regular job. I was one of the first members to get a visa. Thus, I had to meet True Father personally at East Garden to receive his direction on where to go, my mission. Can you believe that? Can you imagine? It was a terrifying experience.

He told me I should go to MFT, but back then I was brave enough to talk to him and show off. Because you need to show off.

"Father, if I could go to CARP, I could go

fundraising and witnessing too." Then True Father said, "Okay!" He listened to me and said okay!

Then one night in Belvedere, Mrs. [Mal Sook] Lee came to me. Mrs. Lee worked at Jacob house, where the wives would leave their children when they were working for the church. They needed a caregiver and I showed her my records showing I had been a preschool teacher at the church. Well, her radar went up. She talked to True Father and said, "I want to take her to the Jacob house," and True Father said, "Okay!"

I wanted to go to CARP, but I was intercepted. Then, at East Garden, two Japanese wives got pregnant, so they needed somebody. I was the only person who could speak Korean, so I was sent in their place. Then in the summertime, the entire staff moved to Gloucester, near Boston, for the fishing tournaments. By that time, all the Korean wives, about fifty of them, had arrived in America and gathered there.



True Mother wanted to select someone to take care of Hyung Jin nim. Based on a Divine Principle test they would choose the carer. I am usually one of the best at taking tests. On quizzes or tests at school or church, I would win. But I had a spiritual experience of a big force that blocked me. I could not study, I could not concentrate, I could not listen to the lectures—nothing. I was not meant to be chosen. True Mother selected a person from the group, and the rest of the Korean wives were sent to Chicago for fund raising.

Question: Please tell us about attending True Parents in Kodiak.

When I was attending True Parents, I was mainly cooking, which I had not even had any experience in or knowledge of. I still sometimes feel very sorry. But because I did my best there were moments that True Parents were very happy with my food and True Father said, “You did well.”

In 1985, True Father was released from Danbury prison and he came to Kodiak. I had moved to Kodiak to join my husband with our first daughter earlier that same year.

As the only Korean in Kodiak, I not only had to cook for True Parents, the True Children and

guests, I had to coordinate all of North Garden. True Parents would come three to four times a year bringing people from all over the world, sometimes up to three hundred members for fishing tournaments and workshops. At the time, Hyun Jin nim, Kook Jin nim, Sun Jin nim, Yeong Jin nim, Jeong Jin nim, all the True Children and grandchildren would also come.



Aeryun Lee and Allan Hokanson lives today in Korea

I was still young spiritually. When attending True Parents, so physically close, you sometimes look at True Parents through humanistic eyes. For example, I would be in remote areas such as Karluk, Chignik, or King Salmon, living in the same small house and sharing the same bathroom as True Parents. You can't help looking at them as normal human beings who are simply fishing. You see them eating, you see them going to the bathroom. You look at them from your physical point of view and you lose sight of

them.

Moreover, I had to leave all my children at other people's homes. That's the time I started to seriously read True Parents' words for the first time in order to understand True Parents directly from where they stand. That was the beginning of my study about True Parents and discovering their true value.



The folk ballet performed on June 1, 1976 at Yankee Stadium, where Father spoke on "God's Hope for America."