

## Missionary Testimony Bogota, Colombia 1975-1977

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*Photo date and location unknown*

### Providence for the Start

Ah, Colombia. In February, 1975, after the 1800 Couple Blessing, our True Father met with missionaries who were already in the field, including my new husband, Paul J. Perry, from Brazil. Paul asked Father to give me a state in Brazil, which was as big as any South American country, but Father said, “I want to give her own country.” And so he gave me Colombia.

We returned to the United States to meet with family, have wedding receptions and go to the 100-day missionary training at Barrytown. Our teacher, Ken Sudo, went to True Father’s residence every day. He received dictation from True Father on the standard Divine Principle lecture, which he then brought back to us and dictated word for word. This was so that Father’s Divine Principle lecture would be standardized around the world. We fundraised for the money to get to our countries. One day, at the end of fundraising, a young Buddhist monk gave me all the money in his bowl with the comment, “Because your master is higher than my master.”

Just before we left, Mother and Father came to speak to us, as they often did during the training. I remember when they came in, for just a moment, my spiritual eyes were opened and I saw this royal entourage of people that came in with them, including Jesus and the Saints, carrying beautiful flags. At the end of Father’s speech, Mother spoke for only a moment, the words we could never forget, “Remember, the True Parents are always with you.”

Next, we waved goodbye to the young brothers and sisters who were going to fundraise for our missions while we were there. I remember how my heart ached for them, and thought, they are so young. It was like seeing young recruits go off to war. Just before we left, Regis Hanna gave me one of his two guitars. It would prove to be a significant connection to the local people in Colombia.

Also, there were three Colombians at other workshops at Barrytown, one of whom, Pedro Rodriguez, turned out to be the first member of the Colombian church. When he left the States, he met me in Bogotá. He is fluent in English and Spanish.

Before going to Colombia, I returned with Paul to his center in Rio de Janeiro, and travelled to Passos, Minas Gerais, to meet his family. I liked them enormously right away. Paul’s center had suffered during the two months he had been away for training and blessing. I was sorry not to be able to stay and help.

### Bogotá

I travelled on to Bogotá, Colombia to meet with the German and Japanese missionaries, Barbara Heinboeck-Wilson and Toru Itagaki. We left our addresses at the embassies and were able to reach each other. In Spanish, Barabara’s name means “stranger”, Toru’s name means “bull” and my name means “beautiful.” Pedro was already at his parent’s restaurant in Bogotá, and we got in touch with him as well.

True Father had told us to find the spiritually open people because they were prepared to receive us. We rented an apartment in the center of town and began witnessing and giving lectures. We also began to lose some of our naiveté. At first, we took in gamines, children of the street, cleaned them up, fed them, and basically acted as a first aid station for them. [In Colombia, at the time, the government didn’t count gamines until they were 14, because too many of them died before then. The guerilla bands in the mountains would threaten the farmers, to either join or be burned out. Many fled to the cities, where they had no skills, and the children were sent to beg.] We hadn’t been there very long, when, in spite of 5 locks on the door, our apartment was robbed. The owner of the building asked us to leave because his daughter and granddaughter lived in the building also. We had learned that with street witnessing in Bogotá,

Colombia, you got a little bit of everything.

Soon Pedro was doing most of the teaching. One night he told me one of our students had a gun in his pocket, a young man in the army. I took him aside and asked the man about the gun. He admitted to having a gun in the pocket, so I asked him to take all the bullets out of it and give them to me. He did this as well. I told him I would give them to him when he left. He returned several times. Another evening student revealed that he was a hardcore communist, trained in Stalingrad, returning to Colombia as part of a 10-year takeover program. He kept track of us the whole time I was there. One woman came with her son, and asked me to take her 8 year-old son. We did, but after a while he disappeared. It turned out he was addicted to sniffing gasoline, and couldn't leave the addiction. Another gamine, Jaime Cassado, maybe 8 or 9 years old, lived with us for about a year.

Through Barbara's contact at the embassy, I received a request from the translator for the First Lady to edit her speech for a visit to America. I did the job and had a long talk with the translator. In the end, he said, "I admire what you are doing, and I'd like to help you, but I'm a communist." We worked for about 18 months with a lawyer to get the Unification Church recognized by the government, only to find that he was a communist and we would only have success with someone else. The head of the Colombian Army, who was in charge of guerilla groups in the mountains, was assassinated in downtown Bogotá the first month we were there. There was an active urban guerilla group. We were working in a semi-military zone.

We met a man named Ignacio, who rode a mule through the mountains teaching anti-communism. There were many guerilla bands in the mountains. They were being trained in North Korea and Panama and coming back into Colombia over the mountainous borders. His work was very dangerous, and he stayed with churches that would let him. We decided he could stay with us as we were also anti-communist. He had a huge silk map the church ladies had sewn for him that showed all the communist countries in red silk. He was associated with Reverend Richard Wurmbrand's group, Tortured for Christ.

Pedro's best friend began studying DP, joined and moved in. His mother had recently remarried and had two younger children, but she took great exception to her son moving out, and went to Pedro's mother and told her that she had gotten her son to move back home, and that she would help Mrs. Rodriguez to get her son, Pedro, to move back home also. She was convinced we were connected to the CIA. She was scheduled to have lunch with Mrs. Rodriguez the next day. When Pedro asked his mother if she knew what the CIA was, she said, "no, but it's really big and really bad." That morning, I was on the bus going to work teaching English. I looked out of the window and saw this brother's mother. Her arms were full of bouquets of flowers at the flower mart. She was very beautiful and she looked very happy. Later that afternoon, Pedro told me that she had died. The doctor couldn't find any cause for her death, just that her heart had stopped. That was one of my first experiences as a missionary.

But when I think of Colombia, I don't think of that at all. I think of the most beautiful green grass I've ever seen. Buckets of orchids in the flower stalls. Colombia is just beautiful. Colombians are pretty people. Earth as black as topsoil everywhere. It rained almost every day, and it's right on the equator and twice as high as Denver. That's Bogotá.

We had a visit from our IW, who got us to go to a bullfight and eat blood sausage because those are very Colombian and we hadn't done them. Barbara got a job as a quadrilingual secretary for an import/export business, and I taught at three English schools including the La Universidad de la Gran Colombia and Colombo Americana, the largest bicultural center in South America. They were good places to witness.

Pedro's mother had a friend who was willing to sign for us to rent a house. In Colombia at the time, only someone who owned land could sign a lease to rent. He came to dinner and liked us very much. Although it was hard for him to believe that young men and women could live in the same house with nothing going on between them, he felt that it was true. Luce, Pedro's spiritual daughter, moved in. It was in that place that Ignacio came to live with us when he was in Bogotá. He had friends at a church that were very spiritually open, and when his name came up in a conversation, the wife spiritually knew where Ignacio was: he was in Bogotá, and living with foreigners. They came to visit him, heard the Principle, and the father, the mother, the 11 year-old daughter and the 8 year-old son all moved in. He was a teacher. Then was his sister who ran a small food cart. She moved in as well. Another man from their church came and played Regis' guitar so well and so incredibly beautifully that I gave him that guitar, and then unexpectedly never returned. Later, that church did us a huge favor. I'd learned a secret about witnessing when I was at Barrytown from Elisabeth who had 7 spiritual children in one year. I asked her how she did it. She said that she prayed three hours before she witnessed. So, in Colombia I did that. I found I had to pray with a notepad and a pen, because as I prayed, many things would come through telling me what to do. I was teaching a man Divine Principle who was a businessman from Ecuador, who travelled back and forth to Bogotá. He came for years off and on, and heard the Principle many times. I think he was really just getting free English lessons. I taught him in English. One day, I was praying for him these three hours, and that night we were all going to the movies. As we stood in line talking, a very tall, handsome man in front of us enquired about our group. He had the same first name as the man I'd been praying for.

So, George did respond, just a different George. He joined and moved in on the 4th of July.

When Father held the Yankee Stadium Rally, our center was in full swing. My husband, Paul, attended it, and stopped by on his way back to Brazil. The morning of Yankee Stadium, I had a vision that scared me to death. I saw Yankee Stadium full of people and Father walked up to the podium to give his speech and Neil Salonen was beside him. About two-thirds through the speech, Father was shot in his right side. Although he slumped over the podium, he wouldn't let Mr. Salonen take him to the hospital until he had finished his speech. So, he finished his speech, and up above the stadium, I saw the side of God's face with a big tear on the cheek. Finally, Father slumped over, and the tear just rolled down the cheek of God: a great, big, blue tear, like liquid oxygen. It filled Yankee Stadium and everything was frozen and a second later, it all cracked, and the people were transformed. They came pouring out of the stadium just singing and praising God and True Parents, completely reborn. Father was taken away, but we didn't know how he was or if he would live.

So, I did something that I'd never done before or since. I went to my bunk bed, got under my quilt and stayed there all day. I was absolutely terrified. I knew we wouldn't hear right away and I didn't know what else to do. Then, the family who had joined, the 8 year-old boy, came up with his mother crying, "Dona Linda, Dona Linda, it's okay! It's okay!" And I asked from under my quilt, "What's okay?" And the boy said, "The man. The man is okay." I said, "What man?" and he went over and pointed to a picture of True Father. I said, "How do you know he's okay?" And he said, "I saw him standing on a rock. All the people all around him were eating hamburgers." The fear left me completely, and I knew it was true. I was so grateful.

Ignacio was so taken with us, so he witnessed to his churches about us. There was this place in Bogotá, with people from different countries and cultures, races and religions living together in harmony centered on God. So, one time when he was giving his presentation at this church—the same one with the guitar player—he introduced us after his lecture and we sang a song and told a bit about who we were and a little introduction to the Principle. So, they knew us. After we had been there for about two years, one of our members really wanted to marry Pedro and decided that if she could just get rid of me and Barbara, she could probably do that. So, she and another member went to DAS (secret service and intelligence), and told them that we were really bad people. We weren't really teachers and translators, but missionaries, and our church should be shut down. We were corrupting the Colombian men and getting them to go to the government emerald mine and mine emeralds for us. This is an extremely dangerous place with lots of pirates and murder and not a place people want their sons to go. It did look odd. We were both married women whose husbands weren't there. When Ignacio's church heard about the woman's report and that DAS was attacking us, they started a full church prayer condition. They prayed all through the evening for us. The next day, a detective was sent out to the center to investigate us. We were in serious danger of being deported and the church closed down. But through God's grace and the prayers of that church, the detective who was sent out to investigate us, was a man who had been witnessed to by Toru, brought back to the center previously and heard chapter 1 and 2. Needless to say, we were exonerated of being a moral threat to Colombia, and we only needed to register that we were, in fact, missionaries.

Since my husband and I were 32 at the time of our Blessing, my husband had written to True Father if we could start our family life together a bit earlier. True Parents thought it was a great idea. So, I left Bogotá, Colombia and went to Rio de Janeiro to become the wife of the missionary. After 9 months there, I returned to the United States to give birth to our first child, Limi Marie.

Colombia remains close to my heart.