

Young Unificationist Couple Joe Swearson and Erika Menning Interviewed on Connecticut Talk Radio

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Unificationist couple Joe Swearson and Erika Menning

Second-generation Unificationists Joe Swearson (23) of St. Louis, Missouri and Erika Menning (22) of Waterloo, Iowa proudly announced their Marriage Blessing plans for a large listening audience in Connecticut on the Colin McEnroe Show on February 29, 2012. The engaged couple plans to attend Rev. Sun Myung Moon's mass-wedding ceremony on March 24, 2012.

Swearson graduated from the Missouri University of Science and Technology, majoring in electrical engineering and is currently working full time at the John Deere Corp in Waterloo, Iowa. Menning is a fourth-year student at Wartburg College, majoring in social work, specializing in care of the elderly and handicapped.

The Colin McEnroe Show is broadcast on WNPR-Connecticut Public Radio, a locally owned media organization that reaches more than 240,000 listeners each week.

"I took the interview very seriously because I knew I was representing all second-generation Unificationists," said Swearson. "This was my first time being on the radio, and I was very nervous. But as soon as it was my turn to talk, I spoke from my heart and was ready for discussion. We did not have much time on the radio, so I tried to get to the main point."

"While preparing for the interview, I was pretty calm," Menning said, adding: "It was not until an hour before we were scheduled to talk on air that it really hit me that I was representing the entire Unification Church. Once we started talking and answering questions, the butterflies went away and I felt confident."

The show was titled "Arranged Marriages in America and Abroad." The first 45 minutes of the show discussed what arranged marriages are like in modern South Asian societies. Host McEnroe then turned to a story about a modern American couple that chose to have an arranged marriage. He then described the unique mass weddings performed decades ago by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and introduced Menning and Swearson.

Swearson spoke about how he and Menning were engaged. "Well, we've been matched for a year and a half now," he said. "Our parents arranged for us to get us matched. In my case, they asked, 'What do you think about Erika Menning?' I had met her before and felt that I was ready to be matched. Erica must have felt the same way."

The two of them briefly discussed their parents' experience in Rev. Moon's matching and wedding ceremonies. Both sets of parents participated in the Blessing ceremony at Madison Square Garden on July 1, 1982.

"They were personally matched by Rev. Moon," explained Menning. "They met and within that week got married. They relied on faith a lot, and they were committed to each other. They just made it work. Including me, they now have five children."

McEnroe asked the couple about how they decided to commit to one another so quickly, and why they believed their relationship would last. "I think it was just what each of us felt and communicated. Once we talked to each other, we had a better picture of what the other thought and we went from there," said Menning.

"Well, I think practicing true love, where you commit to the person you plan to marry, 100 percent, is the key thing. In our church, this is the person you're going to spend not just your lifetime but eternity with, so you have to give 100 percent to this person," Swearson explained.

On Valentine's Day, 2011, Menning and her family were a featured segment on Channel 7, KWWL Waterloo, Iowa. The feature was about the unique love and romance that is flourishing as a result of an arranged marriage in two generations of one family.

Menning expressed, "We are happy to tell the world about why we are going to the blessing because we want to give each other happiness for eternity."