

My testimonial message about Jon and Sandy Schuhart

Gary Jarmin
March 1, 2023



Jon Schuhart performing one of his songs circa 1973

My father died from leukemia when I was 15 years-old and it had a major impact on my life. I eventually became an atheist, rejected my Southern Baptist upbringing and went on a downward spiral that ended up with me being incarcerated in juvenile correction institutions on three occasions -- the last time I spent almost a year locked-up for "stealing" my sister's car. In July, 1967, two weeks after I was released, I and two others were arrested for possession of marijuana. It was later dismissed but that night in jail I had hit rock bottom and for the first and only time in my life I contemplated committing suicide. I could not imagine, after only two weeks of freedom, that I would be incarcerated again. As a repeat offender, I was facing at least one more year in a California Youth Authority prison -- a much far worse environment for juvenile offenders. Fortunately, Heavenly Father had other plans for my life.

My cousin, Ray Barlow, had joined the Unified Family church in Los Angeles, and had told its leaders, Jon and Sandy Schuhart, about my predicament and urged them to come visit/witness to me; I was living in Desert Hot Springs which was a 2 1/2 hour drive from LA. One day, soon after I was released and awaiting trial for the possession charge, I looked out my window and saw this '57 Chevy pull up in front of my house. The car was about four different colors with many sayings painted on it exclaiming about the "Dawn of the New Age," our Movement's symbol and other sayings. Jon Schuhart was an artist and did an excellent wording and illustrations which made the car really stand out. Jon also had a goatee at the time and he, and Sandy, looked nothing like your typical, straight-laced fundamentalists.



Jon and Sandy Schuhart circa 1972

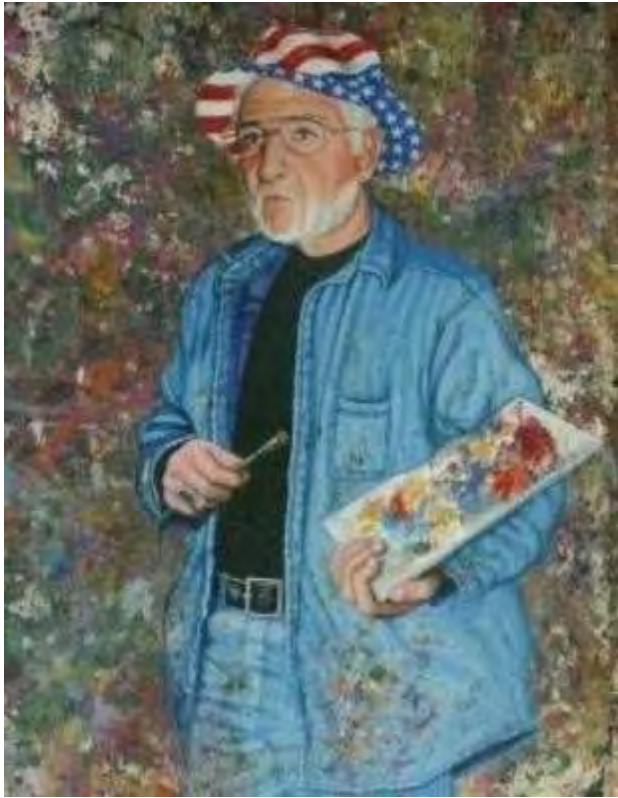
Had Heavenly Father sent anyone else, I'm sure I would have tuned out their message. Jon was very charismatic, charming and humorous while Sandy was very loving, warm and compassionate. I was also impressed that they made the long, 2 1/2 hour drive from LA to gamble on witnessing to a total stranger who, had fate happened differently, was a young, juvenile delinquent awaiting trial and was likely been sent back to prison. For that, I also owe my cousin Ray for making an appeal to them on my behalf. Without his intercession, Jon and Sandy would not even be aware of my existence.

Jon and Sandy went above and beyond to help me during this extremely difficult period in my life. They interceded with my Probation Officer (whose approval was needed) to allow me to move to LA and live in the Unified Family center while I and my friends were awaiting trial. After moving into the LA center, Jon and

Sandy took it very slow with me. They didn't force me to listen to the Divine Principle or participate in other spiritual functions.

They just demonstrated total, absolute unconditional love. Just being around them and seeing the deep love they and other members demonstrated toward each other and me, I began to feel the love and awareness of God in my life. Eventually, my possession charge was dismissed and my probation officer allowed me to stay in LA. He obviously could see the positive improvement my religious life in LA was having and approved allowing me to stay permanently in LA. (I was only 17 years-old at the time and was on mandatory probation until I turned 21).

Eventually, on September 16, Jon began to teach me the Divine Principle. He had just finished teaching me the third chapter on Christology -- we used Miss Kim's version of the Divine Principle -- and I pointed to True Father's picture in the book and asked, "Is he the new Messiah who has come to fulfill Jesus' mission?" Jon was surprised I got it so soon but confirmed I was correct. I was so excited about this new, profound teaching and that the Lord of the Second Advent had arrived! That night I became a totally committed convert and joined the Unification Church movement.



Jon Schuhart self portrait

But this story is really about Jon and Sandy; Heavenly Father could not have sent a better couple to bear witness to the Divine Principle and who, with great love, patience and wisdom, brought me into True Parents fold.

Jon and Sandy greatly complemented each other. They were great role models for all of us blessed to a part of the LA church family. Jon was a very outgoing, charismatic leader who had a great sense of humor and was very creative. He was also a great teacher of the Divine Principle. Sandy was a person of great love, compassion and spirituality -- she was really the rock of stability in the LA center. Together, they truly represented Heavenly Father's ideal of a man and woman centered upon Him and stood in the position representing True Parents.

They were among the first American 13 couples to be blessed in 1969. I remember how excited and happy all of us in the Los Angeles church were when Jon and Sandy were chosen to be in this extremely and historical event in God's providence. After they returned from the

blessing in DC, our LA church soared and brought in many new members. It was the fastest growing church in the US and had almost twice as many members than our HQ church in Washington, D.C. Several years later, they would go on to replicate this success in Michigan.

Jon has since transitioned to the spirit world while Sandy still lives amongst us and is always there to continue blessing us with her great love and spiritual guidance. I'll conclude by sending them both this heartfelt message:

Jon and Sandy, you saved my life... literally and spiritually. We're it not for you, my children and grandchildren would not exist. My career in politics and all I accomplished would never have happened. For all those things and more, I owe you my eternal gratitude. I dearly love you both and look forward one day us being a family again on the other side. Until then, with all my love, I remain

Your son,

Gary Jarmin