

Part Eight
The Blessing

How we all Ruined a Beautiful Building

That great and inevitable day, when the Blessing finally would come along, came closer and closer. One bunch was already blessed on July 1st in Madison Square Garden, New York. Those were the older ones, like Elena and her husband, or the ones with one spouse in the United States who had been matched with me in Camberg.

By the end of September 1982, we knew the Blessing was on its way. That was the time of *Shogun* on TV—the queen of the series with the king of the series... Since we had many Japanese brothers and sisters, we spent hours in front of the TV, with them translating for us the parts spoken in Japanese. On special occasions like that, we watched TV. And, guess what, the end of *Shogun* fell right into the days we would be in Korea. I wanted to die! Everybody else was pulling my leg: "We go to Korea, you can stay here and watch the end of *Shogun*, no problem." Over the years I saw many reruns of *Shogun*—it's a true classic, it stands the test of time. When I was in the United States, I even read the book—all nine-hundred pages of it. Do you want to know what the Unification Church looked like from the inside? Very much like the world of *Shogun*. Only, nobody is asking our leaders to commit hara-kiri after major blunders.

In all of these months up to the Blessing, I never really knew what happened to Jeff. He was gone for a couple of weeks, he came back, and yes, he wanted to participate in the Blessing with me. I was very young and inexperienced and anyway, I was brought up to behave and think like a nun. I had no idea what to do with someone like Jeff and Jeff probably was expecting to have a mature person at his side. I had many nice attributes, but "mature" wasn't one of them.

At one point we finally arrived in Korea. It was autumn and we were told that it was the best time to be around. All the Europeans were staying at the Little Angels Theater. Imagine a

Vienna opera house of the nineteenth century—that's the Little Angels Theater. It's all red and gold and white, and plush with crystal chandeliers and this exceptional nineteenth century feeling to it. It's a beautiful place. We were all stuffed inside this building. Rev. Moon was doing Matchings in the big auditorium—stripped of all the chairs, naturally. Luckily, we were already matched: one less headache. Such a beautiful place, and it was all in chaos. We sisters from the Southern Region found a nice little spot where we could spread our sleeping bags—a hallway on the second floor, small and somehow hidden away from the big areas, where everybody else had to stay. The majority stayed in big halls, brothers and sisters divided, of course. A sleeping bag, a suitcase, a sleeping bag, a suit-case... Refugee camp, I thought to myself, that's what it must look like in a refugee camp. We hung up our white dresses all over the place, we had never-ending queues for ironing, the Blessing rings had to be handed out, someone always needed some accessory, a veil, a tie, white gloves...you name it. The British Church members had their Blessing rings nice and neat; we Italian/Germans, German/Italians had fake, cheap rings from souvenir stores. "The gold rings weren't ready yet..." Typical.

On the day before the Blessing we had the Holy Wine Ceremony. Yes, we had done that one, too. How lucky we were! In any case, early in the morning they shipped us all off in these big coaches to the Jamsil Gymnasium, the one which was to be used for the 1988 Olympic Games in Korea. It was a nice warm day, we spent quite some time inside the compounds of that big stadium and watched the Holy Wine Ceremony everyone else had. The participants in the Ceremony occupied all of the ground floor decked out in white and the rest of us were hanging around somewhat bored, on the upper floors.

Then, the great day finally arrived. Yes sir, it was October 14th 1982, the Day of the Blessing. We put on our white dresses, white veils, white gloves, white shoes, left the main building in which most of the sisters stayed, descended the stairs and—there they were, our grooms waiting for us at the bottom of the stairs. They, all clad in dark blue suits with red ties. It was...somewhat crazy. With the endless waiting for the coaches, hustling and hustling in

and out of these coaches in our white dresses, no romantic feelings could ever come up. Then we were deposited in the enormous parking lot outside of the Jamsil Gymnasium, where we spent a couple of hours waiting. Many Koreans came and went, pretending to be hugely important, arranging and rearranging us, handing us out our bridal flower bouquets—very, very simple; I think some margarites. Well, there were so many people! Officially, this came to be known as the 1982, 6000 Couple Blessing in Korea. Since there would be another 6000 Couple Blessing in 1988, the two Blessings, July 1st 1982 and October 14th 1982, were counted together as the 8000 Couple Blessing of 1982.

All Veiled Up With No Place To Go...

One Korean had a pretty smart idea: we were arranged in rows of six couples to enter the hall that way, and he decided that the nationality of the groom decided the position of the couple. In my row, all the grooms were British. We felt good that way. There was a sense of order to it. Moreover, the guys had someone to joke around with, in all the hours of waiting. The sense of time got lost, when we entered the buses in the morning, it was about 8 A.M. By the time we finally entered the hall with the Wedding March and all, it must have been sometime around noon. But before that, all of us brides had been "sliced and diced" big time. One overly important Korean came around and made it very clear to the sisters that we had to put our veils over our faces. My goodness! I never had heard of a Blessing anywhere where such a thing had happened. We would be unrecognizable! We would look like sonic Arabian women, all veiled up, with no face to be seen! Worse yet, with the Arabian women, you get to see at least the eyes, with us...nothing! Koreans don't ask, they just do. So Korean sisters came around, and without much ado, just pulled the veil over the head of one or two—and the rest just had to follow. I did not follow! I bitched and screamed—well, symbolically speaking.

Apart from that, my veil was stuck up backwards; the standard veil had three layers and in the early morning one sister, who had not gotten matched and blessed, helped all of us to put on our veils. That sure was nice of her, but in my case, she put the fabric backwards on the comb, which meant I couldn't access the shortest layer, which was to cover the face. I had to pull the whole entirety of the veil over my face—and it just looked ridiculous. I was there, all alone in a sea of submissive sisters with their veils over their faces, fighting for my independence! Jeff understood why I received scornful looks from many brothers, but he defended me by saying, "Well, she has a free mind." I imagined

Anja from the German Flatland somewhere on another parking lot far, far away, doing her own fighting against this monstrosity of veiling us all up. She told me later that yes, until the last minute she didn't put the veil over her head, but just before entering the stadium, a Korean sister pulled the veil over her face anyway and that was that.

So the Blessing of October 14th, 1982 went down in history as the only one with veiled brides. At one point, when we all had entered and settled in, the groom had to lift the veil. Well yes, you do that at wedding ceremonies, but usually after lifting the veil, the groom kisses the bride. But with us, there was no kissing. What good is lifting the veil, if you can't kiss the bride? It just leaves you with an uneasy, strange and unfinished feeling.

The Ceremony of the Blessing is very much like the Holy Wine Ceremony. It creates a very high spiritual atmosphere, accompanied by the music of the "Wedding March" and other pieces of music associated with marriages. We had Blessing Vows—to be faithful, good citizens and bring up our children to serve mankind—which were read to us in Korean and answered in Korean as well—everybody was screaming in unison "Yeah!", which means "yes" in Korean. We exchanged the rings, me and all the other German/Italians receiving our fake, cheap jewelry rings, until we got the real gold Blessing rings, about three months later. There was a long prayer by Rev. Moon, but even though nobody understood a word,—he always prays in Korean—almost everybody cried. You just can't help it. We were waiting so long for this moment, it was the culmination of our dreams, we were brought up to believe that the Living God had been waiting so long for this moment. There was a lot of effort behind the lives of every one of the brothers and sisters who participated; there was blood, sweat and tears, literally, and all of this found its culmination at the Blessing Ceremony. One couldn't help but cry. This is how it must feel to stand on a podium and receive an Olympic medal—every athlete has invested so much time, so much effort, has stumbled and fallen and lifted himself up again and again, and when they hear their National Anthem and see their flag waving, they just cry.

At that moment one truly feels blessed, it is a true pouring out

of the Holy Spirit over all of humanity—we represented all of humanity, we were young, we were pure, we had given the best years of our lives. Ours was the future. We truly felt united with one bond transcending the cultures, transcending the races, transcending the countries and their languages. We were all part of this one big human family, all equal and all beautiful in our own special and unique way. Most of us knew very little about the brother or sister we were blessed to; but it did not matter, there was a feeling of hope in showing the way for the rest of mankind to follow.

Being Wined and Dined...

When the long ceremony was finally over, we were whisked back to the buses and that was a challenge, because we had to find the very same bus we had come with. Then we were driven all over town, we crisscrossed Seoul I don't know how many times. I just remember us all in white, all in unison waving to mostly smiling children, at whom we were throwing our bridal bouquets. In the evening we had fine entertainment. Somehow we were changing out of our white clothes into something that was not white, but elegant, and enjoyed many different representations from different countries in their national costumes. I don't remember much of that anymore. I do remember though, at one point we were told that the "Little Angels" would sing and dance for us. Now that was a feast. Since we already stayed in the Little Angels Theater and made that beautiful building suffer through our presence, at least we would have the benefit of enjoying the Little Angels. And we enjoyed them. They are such an incredibly well-trained group, it feels like they move with one body when they dance, and when they sing, they sound like one voice. This performing arts group was founded by Rev. Moon in the Sixties, when the Unification Movement was still very small and it seemed quite presumptuous to have a folk dance group on an international worldwide level. They were dancing, they were singing, they were even yodeling (no kidding), and they had us all in awe.

The Unification Church of Korea had something quite special organized for all of the Blessed Couples—a trip to Pusan to our Church Holy Sites... It was a two-day trip with an overnight stay at a fancy hotel. We were about six hundred people in quite a few buses traveling in convoy throughout Korea. We were made to get up very, very early, because we had to be at sunrise at the temple—I don't know why one has to visit that temple at sunrise, but here we were. It was a beautiful, big Buddhist temple by the

name of Bulguksa and we spent all morning there. Dutifully, I took my photos at sunrise, like everyone else. The temple is impressive, though. One walks from building to building and sees Buddhist monks who live, pray and meditate. Everything was well-kept, colorfully painted, neat and nice, spick and span... There were these bright colors everywhere, no comparison with our somber and dark churches and cathedrals.

It was a warm day, almost hot, and we were taken up to the "Rock of Tears". That's a true Unification Church site. When Rev. Moon was very young and had just started his public ministry, around 1946, he went voluntarily to North Korea, because that's where the big and powerful Christian Churches were. In Korea, something very interesting had happened. Every country at one point or another has an independence movement, because there is always an evil empire who wants to take over. Korea's "evil empire" was Japan and they had been taken over by Japan around 1905; this lasted until the collapse of all "evil empires" in 1945. That was the good news. The bad news was that after the "Evil Japanese Empire" was all destroyed, the even more "Evil Communist Empire" came into existence. The unusual news was that in times of the "Evil Japanese Empire" the "Resistance" was all Christian...yes sir, they weren't shouting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Min!"—they were shouting "Jesus loves you and you are free!"—or something like that, I imagine.

Rev. Moon went voluntarily to North Korea, after the Second World War, to be part of this great Christian Revival Movement which was taking place in and around the North Korean capital of Pyong Yang. Those devout Christians in North Korea couldn't care less and little did they know that in a short time they would be neither devout nor Christians anymore, with the Communists around...

Rev. Moon was sentenced to slave labor in a Communist concentration camp for five years for disturbing the public peace. It was hard to say who hated him more, the devout Christians, who understood that Rev. Moon was competition in the making, or the Communist leadership. The fact is, all of them were quite happy to have him in a concentration camp, where ninety percent of the inmates died after the first year. He survived it: all two

years and eight months of it. By 1950 the Korean War had broken out, and North Korea was liberated for a short time. That was everybody's great chance. Thousands of refugees were flooding from North to South Korea, there was no end to this constant stream of refugees. Rev. Moon and two of his followers—the only two of his disciples who were left—did the same. One of the men was Rev. Won Pil Kim, very young and ready to follow his teacher to the end of the world, and the other one had a broken leg and was left behind for that reason by his friends and countrymen. They escaped together. They had an incredible journey and ended up finally in Pusan, almost at the other end of the Korean Peninsula. They had crossed almost all of their country not knowing where to stay, where to sleep, where to go...and the country was in open war. They pushed the broken-legged man on a bicycle onward, but Rev. Moon was also carrying him on his back on occasion, like he did when they were crossing knee-deep water to reach some boat going south...the boat went south without them. A war photographer saw this scene and took a photo. Many years later the photo was published, a man walking through knee-deep water with another fully-grown man on his back. The face of Rev. Moon is recognizable without a shadow of a doubt. They ended up in Pusan with nothing but their lives—which was a lot, given the time and circumstances.

The man with the broken leg, once that leg was healed, was gone as quick as the "beep, beep" roadrunner. Only Rev. Moon and Won Pil Kim were left. They established themselves on the top of a hill in Pusan, built a shack out of U. S. Army cardboard boxes and whatever else they could find around. That was the first Unification Church building. Rev. Moon went up on a hill behind the house to pray...and that's the "Rock of Tears". As the name indicates, it was no more than a rock, and here he prayed and asked the Living God for guidance...and he promised the Living God, that he would take charge of the problems of the people...the real problems of the people...the problems of the heart and spirit...he promised the Living God that he would find a way to free man from his bondage to sin...he promised the Living God that he would find real solutions for real problems...all up there on that hill, being a war refugee with

nothing to his name, but his faith, his conviction and his life.

That was the "Rock of Tears" we visited. All six hundred of us. It was somewhat crowded, yes, but it didn't matter. It was one precious experience. If you love Elvis—it's like being in Graceland; if you love Jesus, it's like being in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The shack was obviously torn down over the years, but walking down the small streets, one is led to a Unification Church Museum where the artifacts of those early years were exhibited—the kerosene lamp they used and things like that.

Apart from the trip to Pusan we made another trip to the Korean Folk Village, that's Korea's open air museum of what life was like in the old days. We spent one full day there, saw neatly made-up houses, schools, barns, temples...you name it. And of course, there were souvenir stores for all budgets—one could buy small cheap things up to very elaborate works of art.

I think, you might have guessed it by now—Jeff and I, we didn't make it. In the end, we fell victims to the Unification Church policy, by which the couple were expected to keep their faith throughout long years of waiting and working on their respective missions, until they were finally allowed to live together as a couple. After six years of that, Jeff had had enough. He was thirty-five by then, and at that age a man knows what he wants in life. I cried my eyes out. For a long time, I just cried and cried. Then I pulled myself together and went on with my life. Which meant I would probably participate in another Matching and Blessing.

Of all the forty Holy Songs we have in the *Unification Songbook*, there is one which is the song of the Blessing. We sing it at Sunday Services and other occasions, too, but still...it is the song when the promised Lord will celebrate his banquet with his faithful followers, waiting for him—receiving him.

Song of the Banquet

Pure new life that once was sown within the Garden's fertile soil,
Sprouting seed has now become a blossom of heavenly loveliness,
Father above, Lord of all, shower your blessing upon
This Holy Day, bond of love for evermore!
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!

Fairest flowers of the meadow, tender buds of perfect form,
Now receive the gift of life and dance in the joy of eternal spring.
Heavenly host, men on earth, join us in praising this Day;
Bless us to share love's communion faithfully.
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!

Hushed we stand in awe before you, ready now to give our pledge
To attend and serve completely with an unchanging eternal love.
Glorious King, mighty God, fill with your blessed Grace
This dearest one; holy banquet of our love.
Hallelujah. Glorious Day of Joy!

Overflowing with your love as dawn proclaims eternal life,
Earth and Heaven, come surround the glorious Parents of mankind.
Gather around, sing the song, fragrant the love of the Lord;
Tell all the world: Spring has come eternally!
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!