

*Yoshiko Katayama des Lauriers,
Tokushima, Japan, 1970*



I met the Unification Church in Tokushima, Japan when I was 15 years old in high school. That was in 1970. Before that, I had visited a Catholic Church for three months, but was not satisfied, because nobody really reached out to me. Then I met my spiritual father, Kenjiro Aaoki (spiritual son of Mr. Motoo Furuta, True World-Japan chairman), and he answered all my questions about the spirit world.

I was afraid of dying and wanted to know about the next world and who the creator was. Every Sunday I would attend Sunday Service, but I didn't become a full-time member until I went to college for two years and got involved with the Collegiate Association for Research of Principles (CARP). I joined a fundraising crusade team for one year. After that I was on International One World Crusade (IOWC) with the Korean Folk Ballet for two years, spending six months of that time in Korea. Then I joined the Unification Church education department back in Japan, worked at an elementary school, and attended college to finish my degree as a teacher. After that I became a kindergarten teacher at a Unification Church school called Hikari No Koen. In the evenings I fundraised and witnessed and met a famous theatre family who joined the church with some of their relatives.

In 1982, just before the 2075-couple blessing, Father was waiting for us to arrive from Japan to start matching. I was on one of the first teams that arrived at the New Yorker Hotel; Father spoke to us, and then I was picked as a representative of Japan at our matching. Father picked representatives from key nations and matched them to each other first; then there was only me and a Korean sister, so Father asked, "Who would like a Japanese wife?" At that time, there were so many

Western brothers and almost all of the brothers in the ballroom raised their hand as volunteers. I'll never forget that moment in my life. At that moment, I strongly felt Father's love and sensed Japan's providential mission for the future. Therefore, even if I would have difficulties with my husband, I should never think about breaking our Blessing. That was my promise to God at that time. I was matched and blessed to Stefan des Lauriers in the 2075 Blessing ceremony. We were the 12th couple matched, and I have been in the United States since that time.

I joined the Boston Church and Happy Group, where I learned to be a bookkeeper. I later worked as a bookkeeper for 18 years at a Japanese security firm on Wall Street, where I witnessed the tragedy of 9-11. I saw the second plane hit the World Trade Center on 9-11 from my office window where I was working. When I saw people jumping to their death, I thought, "If I were in that situation, I would be thinking, 'It is not time for me to die, I have much to accomplish for heaven.'" At that time, I was working at three jobs to support my family and got stressed a lot. Four years later, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent chemotherapy. Just after that, Rev. Dong Woo Kim (the New Jersey leader) initiated Small Groups. I was hesitant to be involved, but decided to commit myself to it (it seems my ancestors pushed me to attend). I experienced both repentance and rebirth. From then, on I completely changed my lifestyle and got more involved in church activities as I had originally done as a missionary. So, I am grateful for the good that came from overcoming my illness.

Currently, when I am not working full-time at my job as a bookkeeper, I am a Small Group leader, community leader, Kodan chapter Leader and a Women's Federation for World Peace assistant. We have three children who have all received the Blessing.