

Keiko Hamada Foss, Kochi, Japan, 1966



I was raised in the Buddhist religion in the Kochi prefecture of Japan. In 1966, when I was 16 years old, I was introduced to the Divine Principle by my parents. My younger sister Kazuko, then 14, saw a young college student street preaching. He was passing out a flyer asking: “Does God really exist?” She knew right away that she should bring the flyer to our mother, because our mother was crazy for God. She was always looking for a higher truth and answers for the mysteries of universe. Six months earlier, a Jehovah’s Witness missionary had come to our door and we had been studying the Bible at home.

After my parents attended the first Divine Principle lecture, my mother was so inspired that she told me, “This is the one I have been looking for such a long time.” She then introduced True Parents to my elder sister Sanae, my cousin, and me. We went to study Divine Principle every day.

During high school, I started to bring my friends to attend fun-circle gatherings. We helped with activities such as *haihin-kaishu* (collecting and recycling newspapers, etc.) and street witnessing. Our lunches consisted of *su udon* (thick white-noodle soup) and *mimi pan* (only the crust of white bread). It was a humble meal, but the college students who came for 40 days of pioneering were afire with deep love and dedication to True Parents and God. They were constantly talking about how to restore the evil world and build a world of true love. I was completely drawn by their bright eyes and the smiles on their faces. They seemed so happy, bursting with hope and ambition. I wanted stay at the church center more than I wanted to stay at home.

After I graduated from high school in 1968, I enrolled in a four-year

technical college to be a knitting designer. After finishing one semester, I was encouraged to attend a seven-day workshop. That workshop was a life-changing experience. I decided to join and become a full-time member. After another 40-day workshop under Rev. Ken Sudo's guidance, I was assigned to the Nagoya Church under Rev. Takeru Kamiyama and Mr. Motoo Furuta. My training began with selling flowers and witnessing. Every day I wrote a letter to my parents to tell them how happy I was. I told them of the joy of meeting new people every day and being surrounded by wonderful brothers and sisters. I invited my parents to come to the Nagoya church to greet Rev. Kamiyama and Mr. Furuta.

My parents felt gratitude towards the church leaders for taking such good care of their daughter. They saw many devoted fathers and mothers coming to help the young members, cooking delicious meals for them, and cleaning the center, just as if it was their own home. My parents were so moved they decided to become full-time members. They inspired my elder sister and younger sister to join full-time also. Our whole family joined in 1970.

On September 6, 1973, I was among the 30 members of the fifth group of Japanese to arrive in New York. The next day, we attended a rally at Times Square, selling \$3 tickets for Father's speech event. During that time, we stayed at the Church building on 71st Street near Lexington Avenue in New York City. I also did witnessing. Once, I brought a guest without knowing that he was a homeless man just looking for free food. My lack of knowledge of English didn't stop me from going out every day.

One day, I was listening to Mr. Joe Tully's prayer. He was our leader at the time. I started crying. I surprised myself. I had gained some confidence and realized that understanding a language is from the heart, and not from the brain. I made some effort to speak beautiful English. Every night I put earphones on and slept while listening to the news

on the radio, trying to input English to my brain and expand my heart to love America and American people.

I joined an international Mobile Fundraising Team and traveled to 38 states. Every time we moved to a new state, I bought a post card and sent it to my parents and all my relatives and contacts in Japan. This became my habit, to write post cards all the time, even while travelling in the van. I wanted to share my joy and the wonderful experience of traveling in the United States. Whatever mission God gave to me, I always found simple joy, adding my own style and enthusiasm. I never felt burdened or pressured. I was always a positive thinker. I had such good relationships with everyone I met. I thank my parents who gave me an excellent example of parenting, and lots of love and care.

After the Yankee Stadium event, I started selling Korean ginseng in Queens, New York. I went to Cleveland, Ohio, to build a foundation for the ginseng business with Mrs. Sung Bok Hsu. I travelled to Columbus and Toledo, to all the health food stores and drug stores to give ginseng demonstrations. I strongly believe ginseng does cure all. I still take a ginseng capsule every day with Tenchi cha.

I worked hard for the Washington Monument Rally held September 18, 1976. My parents came to support this event, along with many members from Japan. I returned to Japan in 1976, after the rally. While I was in Tokyo, I heard about a matching. I sent my photo. Then I received a phone call from John Foss (whom I had never met before). He said, "Hello, I am John. I was picture-matched with you." What a surprise! I didn't know what to say. I just said, "Okay. Thank you very much for your call. Please send me your photo."

My mother was shouting with joy and singing "*Banzai!*" which is like cheering "*Mansei!*" She had a vision and saw the "Milky Way," the east meeting the west in the sky. You can imagine how happy my father was to have a son-in-law who was a fourth-generation architect of Norwegian ancestry.



Keiko Hamada Foss, second from left,
front row, husband John Foss behind her at left.

I entered America with a fiancé visa in 1980. Dr. David Kim officiated at a wedding ceremony for us in the New Yorker Hotel. On July 1, 1982, we attended the 2,075 couple Blessing. We were given a Blessing Trinity at that time, with Bill and Nancy Kubo and Rod and Rosanne Cameron. Since then, we have become good, true friends in faith and we still are writing letters to keep in touch.

I worked at the Edo Japanese Restaurant, Ilhwa Ginseng, Good Food Café, and Décor Marketing in the years we lived in Manhattan and New Jersey. My children went to Jin-A Nursery School in Clifton. John and I volunteered as parent representatives to help take care of things at the school.

On the first of July, 1992 we decided to go back to John's hometown of Fargo, North Dakota. We drove our car for about 27 hours from Nutley, New Jersey to North Dakota. It was a heart-wrenching experience for me to leave such a loving community with so many Japanese members and Blessed Children.

We started to pioneer the hometown providence together. I was the only Japanese member for 12 years. Now we have one more Japanese sister, Toshiko Olson, and one Japanese second-generation brother, Tomitaka Sodeyama, in Grand Forks. I belong to a Japanese luncheon group with non-Unification Church people. We meet every two months at a restaurant for fellowship. Most of the women are internationally married. John and I are also board members and volunteers for “African Soul, American Heart,” a non-profit organization. Our son Rygo and daughter Roshan truly have bridged relationships with all the cousins, uncles, and aunts. The grandparents really enjoy seeing all the grandchildren playing together so nicely when we gather at the family lake house in the summer.

We have been running an architect’s office as a husband and wife team since 1987. John is self-employed and I do the bookkeeping at our home office. I am following in my parents’ footsteps. They ran a construction/carpentry business together. I am so grateful that I can follow our precious True Parents. I understand that Heavenly Parents know everything about us. I remember Father saying that the gate to the Heavenly Kingdom cannot be opened with a key made of gold or silver. The only “key” that can open it is a “True family perfected through true love.”