

## How I Joined the Unification Church

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For karmic reasons, as well as the unresolved issues and the immaturity of both my wife and I, my second marriage had just gone south. We had a party one night and I fell asleep on the couch. I was harshly awakened by my spouse first thing in the morning with a slap across my face and an accusation of adultery, of which I was innocent (Twilight Zone stuff). She summarily packed her bags and left with one of the couples who was at the party. In her delusion, she thought I had slept with the wife of that couple (Go figure!) Anyway, she was gone.

At first, I felt relieved --- unburdened. I was free from living with two different people every month. She had serious premenstrual syndrome (PMS) for a week followed by her period. I was walking on egg shells 14 days out of 30. I was now free from all the arguments that these circumstances consistently led to. The feeling of freedom lasted for a few months and then sadness set in deeply. I did love her. Or I should say I did my best to love her. She was gone and I missed her intensely. I medicated with alcohol and marijuana, but after a while that didn't work. I was severely depressed.

Sometime later, I was at a night spot called Johnny's Supper Club with a friend who I rode motorcycles with. There was a band and people were dancing. An attractive woman who was sitting with a group of people beckoned me over to her table. It was Shirley Pelham, a person in her late 40's or early 50's. She asked me who I was, why was I here, and what I did for a living. I answered the questions and replied that I was employed by the C and S Bank in the data processing department. For some reason she didn't believe me. In retrospect I think she thought I was a bum. There was some more conversation which I can't remember completely, but in the end she asked us, me and my friend, to visit her at her home in Aiken, South Carolina.

We did visit her and that was the start of a most valuable relationship. Shirley became like a second mother to me. She listened to my story and empathized with my situation, my sadness. She gave me guidance and tough love. She wasn't afraid to say anything and that was exactly what I needed at that time. I know I was in her prayers and thoughts and I credit her with helping me through a very difficult time in my life. God bless Shirley.

Shortly after that, I quit my job at the bank and moved out of my apartment. I was living in my Volkswagen camper and my dog had recently had puppies. They were peeing and pooping on the floor of my van pretty constantly. Shirley took notice of that and offered to let the dogs stay in her fenced in stable yard where she had a large whelping box (a doghouse with a removable roof). Her youngest daughter Lisa, 12 at the time, happily agreed to take care of the puppies until they were old enough to be adopted. It was so incredibly generous of both of them and really touched my heart in a healing way.

A bit about Shirley: she was the mother of three, two being teenagers. At that time there were a lot of drugs being pushed for sale in Aiken. She was afraid her son Carl and older daughter Suzi would be vulnerable and tempted to use marijuana and the other drugs that were prevalent in Aiken. She became a self-proclaimed narc and purchased some marijuana from one of the bigger dealers in town. As it

happened he was arrested, tried and found guilty, and received a prison sentence. This did not set well with his supplier and the other drug dealers in the town, not to mention the users. They made threats and as a result of those threats she put up an 8 foot chain-link fence all around her property and purchased an attack German Shepherd guard dog named Buck. Every night she let Buck out to do his mission and keep Shirley and her family safe.

Shirley was a woman with a heart of gold. She was a person of deep wisdom and compassion. She was always mentoring young people and not so young people. She was a person you could talk to very easily and know that your secrets would be completely safe with her. She helped many people. People with conjugal relationship problems as well as parent-child relationship problems. In my opinion she was one-in-a-million. So valuable!

Two years passed and I had gotten a job with thoroughbred racehorses --- "walking hots" next to the training track in Aiken. Exercise riders would gallop their horses around the track and they would come back to the stable hot and covered with sweat. A hot walker, that's me, would walk the horse around in a large circle until the horse cooled down. That was so that the horse's muscles wouldn't seize up or cramp. The exercise season in Aiken ends in the spring and I traveled with a group of friends to Lexington, Kentucky - one of the various places where the horses go to participate in actual races. Walking hots was very therapeutic for me. You started doing it early in the morning before sunrise, so you watched the sun come up every morning. The smell and vibration of the horses and the camaraderie of the grooms, exercise riders and hot walkers (horse people) was like medicine for my soul. Also I really loved Lexington and I decided that I would like to live there permanently. I had left a bunch of my stuff behind in one of the stable stalls in Shirley's backyard. I determined to go back, rent a U-Haul and bring it all back with me.

A brief aside before I get on the road back to Aiken to get my stuff: for whatever reason my spirit started to soar and I began to receive inspiration and revelations about the future. One such was, that as time progresses, society will begin to live in intentional communities with like-minded people as well as in groups with the same purpose. An example would be a commune of medical people, or artistic people, or musical people. There would be a central person per se in each commune who was attuned to God and the spirit world and could give guidance and direction for that particular group. These would be like loving, supportive, extended families. There is more, but let's get back to Aiken.

My destination was Shirley's house. That's the first place I went when I got back, even before visiting my parents. Shirley, at the time, was more a mother to me than my own mother. I knocked on the door and she invited me and the two people I had traveled with into her house. Immediately I could smell "Death". I motioned and told her that I wanted to talk to her personally and we left the other people in the living room and went into the dining room. I was crying as I looked Shirley in the face and I said, "You are dying aren't you?" She said "Yes, I have pancreatic cancer and I have six months to a year to live. That's not a problem for me because I know where I'm going and I'm not afraid. The problem for me is that my children can't handle it, can't deal with losing their mother. My son has freaked out and is in the state hospital in Columbia and my youngest daughter has run away from home. I know where my son is but I'm really worried about Lisa (Lisa was 14 at the time). I have burned my bridges with all the young people in the town. They won't talk to me because of my being a narcotic agent in the past. You still have some relationship with the youth in Aiken. If there's any way you could find and locate Lisa, I would be eternally grateful. Please do what you can!"

Of course I promised that I would do everything in my power to find Lisa and help to bring her home. I asked everyone I knew and no one seemed to know where she was, or if they did, they wouldn't tell me because some knew of my friendship with Shirley. A week or 10 days passed with no result and then came the high school graduation celebration for the class of 1973, 10 years after my own graduation. There was to be a party at the Tea Cottage in Hitchcock Woods. Hitchcock Woods was a 2100 acre tract in the middle of Aiken with 70 miles of sandy trails reserved for horses and walkers only. It was a gift donated in perpetuity from Tommy Hitchcock and his wife Margaret Mellon Hitchcock (yes, that Mellon. The daughter of William L. Mellon, the founder of Gulf Oil). It was an outdoor gathering with several bonfires and several hundred people. As the festivity continued, my spiritual senses became extremely heightened. I could look at anyone and tell them what was going on in their lives and what to expect. I was like a manic medium and after a while people became frightened of me because they were transparent. They couldn't hide their secrets from me and so I retreated a distance from the group with a friend and began to sing the blues improvisationally with incredible lyrics, rhythm and musicality. It was someone singing through me, as me, and gave me such a feeling of bliss and amazement.

The Hitchcock Woods party ended and I went to an after party with some younger friends on Hayne Avenue, several blocks from where Shirley lived. I continued to make many in the group very uncomfortable with my insights and as a result, (as usual, after graduation many people go to the beach) I was not invited to go with them. I was mildly disappointed, when they left, but also relieved and left to my own vibrations. I was in such high spirits and I thought, what shall I do with this near ecstatic mindset?

The idea came like an eagle swooping down onto its prey. I would walk down to Shirley's house where, two years past, I had had the most give-and-take with Lisa. I walked the few blocks spouting an endless stream of very good spur of the moment poetry. Shortly I arrived in front of Shirley's tall chain-link fence. The attack guard dog Buck came right to the gate to meet me. What shall I do? Would it be safe to open the gate? Was I in danger of being mauled? Somehow all these serious questions seemed to evaporate and I felt that my intention was honorable and that God was with me and I would be protected. I opened the gate, Buck sniffed my hand and went back to curl up in his usual place on the mat before the front door. So far, so good.

I walked past the house back to the stable where the doghouse/whelping box resided in the middle of the yard. By this time, it's as though I don't have to think. I know just what to do. I get down on my hands and knees and crawl into the whelping box which is filled with fresh straw. I can still remember the smell and the feel of it. When I looked at the straw it brought to mind the straw that was in the manger where Jesus was laid as a baby. So that brought Jesus to my mind, which I hadn't been thinking of before---or actually for a long time before. So the next thought was, "How would Jesus go about finding Lisa? What was it about Jesus that was so special? What was his power?" The answer came, "LOVE". With that, it was as though the doghouse had a heart that was beating loudly and conspicuously. The doghouse also began to consciously breathe, expanding and contracting with measured deep breaths. The presence and love of God was palpable, unmistakable. Him him him At the time, I had a kitten hanging on my shirt in the front. The kitten was responding to the presence of God and was purring so forcefully I was afraid she might explode. The kitten and I were both in ecstasy.

What happened next I can never forget. Up to that point I had had my eyes closed and right in front of me there was a moving sign, like you see in Times Square. Except this moving sign had solid gold letters going across in front of me saying, (I could hear a voice from Heaven repeating them at the same time they passed): "Greater Love Hath No Man Than This, That He Lay Down His Life for the Sake of His Friends." John 15:13. (I had opened my eyes when the sign appeared and it was just as visible and powerful either way.)

Well that made me think, him "what does this mean?" When I thought about it, I suddenly had a dual life review... my life compared to Shirley's. Up to that time, I hadn't done much for anyone. I was selfish and self-centered and I had hurt many people emotionally. By contrast, Shirley's accomplishments were saintly weighed next to my own. It seemed very clear, if my life continued on the same path, and it probably would, I wasn't going to a very nice place in the spirit world at the end. I had no credits. And then the next thought came to me, what if I do locate Lisa and Shirley is able to be with her daughter for a few more months and then die. It was crystal clear to me that up to that him him him time, Shirley's life was infinitely more valuable to God (and humanity) than mine. If she could live, she could continue her virtuous work and lifestyle. She could help so many more people. And so the meaning of the message, "Greater Love..." became clear and logical. I was being given a chance to have credits in my life where there were none. I could offer my life in place of Shirley's and she could continue to bring joy and healing him him him him him him to many people and God and my life and death would take on a new and more honorable meaning.

So that's there in front of me to consider and somehow I realized this was the only chance I might get to offer something of value. I more than acutely felt I had to act right now before I changed my mind. In retrospect, in my minds eye it was as though I was climbing up on the high dive and when I jumped off it was going to be the end of my life on earth. I said the prayer, "Heavenly Father, please take my life in place of Shirley's life. Please let her recover from her illness and go on to do goodness with the rest of her existence!"

Well, as you can probably gather I didn't die then. The next thing that happened was, with my eyes open, I became aware of two enormous mountains like volcanoes that were on fire and made completely of precious flowing liquid metals --- gold, silver and platinum. They were more real than anything I'd ever seen and the feeling coming from them was beyond description. My eyesight was focused on their middles, but the higher up you looked the brighter the light was, to the point where I was afraid to look at the top because I thought I might go blind. And also, at the same time, I didn't want to look because I didn't feel worthy. Then the one on the left spoke to me with tears of gratitude and said, "Jackson, because of your prayer and willingness to offer your life I want to tell you something very important. My Son is on the earth once again. I want you to find Him, and when you find Him, you will have a very special mission." And then the mountains began to disappear and I began to consider what had just happened. By now, daylight had begun to appear and I wanted to tell Shirley this experience. I went over to the back door and a young girl who had been staying with Shirley while she straightened out her parents' relationship came to the door. She said, "I had a dream that you were standing in the air outside of my upstairs bedroom window and that you wanted to come in the house. It woke me up and so here I am. Please come in." It was still very early so I went to Lisa's room and prayed for her there. Seven or 8 o'clock I went downstairs to the living room and waited for Shirley to wake up. She came down and I began to tell her of my experience. In the middle, the phone rang and it was the Myrtle Beach police

calling Shirley to tell her that they had found Lisa camped out on the beach. Wow!

Shirley, unfortunately, did not recover. However my life took on new meaning and merit. I found God's son when, under God's instruction, I went back to Lexington Kentucky and encountered a young Irish girl named Mary White. She invited me to have dinner, fellowship and hear lectures about Divine Principle. She said she belonged to an international organization dedicated to the unification of all religions for the purpose of bringing a peaceful and heavenly world on earth. This was the Unified Family, also known as the Unification Church founded by Sun Myung Moon --- the Messiah. God's Son. And his daughter, Hak Ja Han Moon. Together --- Co-Messiahs, the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and all Mankind.

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I went to the Unification Church center on Monday evening, August 13, 1973. After dinner, they invited me upstairs to listen to a lecture. The presentation was called "The Principle of Creation". Earlier that year I had had the realization that whatever you focused on, you could become that. This was reinforced in the part of the lecture concerning Give-And-Take Action which says:

## 2. GIVE AND TAKE ACTION

When a subject and an object are engaged in give and take action within a being, after having established a reciprocal relationship between themselves through the Universal Prime Energy, the energy necessary to maintain the existence of that being is produced. This energy provides power for existence, multiplication and action. The process which generates the necessary energy is called "give and take action". Therefore, Universal Prime Energy and the power of give and take action form a reciprocal relationship of cause and effect, internal and external, and subject and object. Consequently, Universal Prime Energy is a vertical power, while the power of give and take action is a horizontal power.

My take on this was that by having give-and-take action with Truth and Purity and True Love, I would become what I had give-and-take action with. So that's the reason why we study Divine Principle, True Parents' words, various scriptures and words of truth. Just as important, actually more important is to have give-and-take action with a perfected being like God, Jesus, True Father and True Mother. The more we have give-and-take action with these perfected beings, the more we will come to ultimately, completely embody them. For me that means that the focal point of my meditation, and everyone else's at the present time, should be centered on True Mother.