

Journeys Spiritual and Physical Since 1975

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October 20, 2005

Adapted from a 1999 e-mail exchange with an ex-Moonie in British Columbia/Canada whom I knew in San Francisco 24 years earlier:

... You know, when I came to America in March 1975, the place I wanted to go was actually British Columbia? I never made it to BC because I met the (Korean Rev. Sun Myung Moon's) Unification Church in the States. I never even crossed the border into Canada. I have some distant relatives in Vancouver, who have lived there since the mid-50s.

In 1974-75 I believed that modern civilization would be wiped out by a nuclear war in 1979 and that the only land areas of the world that would be more or less spared from the dangerous fallout would be in the southern hemisphere, because it contained few worth-while targets for nuclear strikes. But only very tough people used to surviving in a rough and wild environment could make it. So my plan was to put myself through a test: try to survive for at least one year alone in a wilderness area. The place I wanted to do that was an area somewhere to the north of Hazelton or New Hazelton in central British Columbia.

Why that place? I don't know -- I just selected that spot when I looked over a detailed map of BC. If I survived, then I wanted to go south to Patagonia (Argentina-Chile) and basically wait there for the end of the world as we know it. –

[[Thinking back to March 6, 1975, the day I arrived in New York on my first trip to North America -- I wrote the following lines in April 1994: ... Yes, this big city really conjured up the feeling that it was doomed, and the entire civilization that created it was doomed. It would all be annihilated in the nuclear war that I saw coming within a few years' time. That holocaust had to happen -- and I actually wished for it to occur. Because I felt that something was fundamentally wrong with this civilization. More than that, something was fundamentally wrong with humankind.

In my view the earth and in fact the entire universe was a harmonious whole, like a gigantic organism within which every part played a certain role and all parts were complementary to each other. Only man did not fit into this harmonious whole. Man was like a malignant cancer that, though originating from the whole, spread uncontrollably and destroyed other parts of the organism. Man alone was going against the purpose and design of the universe, and modern human civilization represented a cancer that had grown to such proportions that it threatened to overwhelm an entire planet. It had to be destroyed.

Actually, because of its inherent contradictions it was bound to destroy itself. But I believed there could be, there had to be, a new beginning -- because the universe had brought forth humankind and it was meant to exist, but it clearly had somehow gone wrong. Modern civilization would be destroyed but there would be survivors in different places. Those people would have to live in nature and start anew, but they would have to avoid the original mistake that made man go in the wrong direction. I felt that those survivors had to become completely one with nature, one with the spirit of the whole, the essence of the universe. And they should never ask the question "why?." To me, this was the root of all the problems.

We had to attune our hearts and minds to the harmonious whole of the universe without ever asking why things were the way they were and why we were what we were. Asking "why?" somehow meant that we separated ourselves mentally from the whole -- and that was what caused humankind to go astray. Our ancestors in Stone Age had made this mistake, and the survivors of the expected nuclear holocaust would have to go back to Stone Age to try again. I was on my way to Stone age ...]]

I was alone. I told people, including my parents, about my idea, and of course everyone thought I was crazy. In early March 1975 I said goodbye (forever, I was sure) and flew to New York (cheapest flight across). I planned to take a train to Montreal the next day and hitch-hike west from there, looking up my relatives in Vancouver for a brief visit and then heading up to the woods north of Hazelton. But in New York City I ran into lots of Moonie street preachers, and even though they seemed really crazy I accepted an invitation from one of them, a Japanese lady 10 years older than I, to listen to a lecture.

I thought their idea of uniting religion and science sounded kind of interesting and, since I had time (and I knew it would be getting warmer in Canada), I agreed to go to a 3-day workshop at a farm/training center (now seminary) in Barrytown on the Hudson River northeast of Kingston/NY. Well, after 3 days came the 7-day, then the 21-day workshop, and I was hooked, more or less. I completed a 40-day workshop as well, then worked with the movement in Boston and New York City, went down to Atlanta a couple of times in a big truck to pick up fundraising product (peanut brittle, mostly), which we dropped off for mobile fundraising teams in the Carolinas, the Virginias, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Then I worked in a church-owned printshop in Washington, D.C. After 3 weeks there, in the first half of November 1975, I felt I needed a break. I wanted to travel to the west coast and around the world, and rejoin the church somewhere else. I told my friends I would rejoin within 2 years, and I promised to visit a church center on my way in California.

So I left, with about \$40 in my pocket and no plane ticket home or anything like that. All I had was the address of a friend in San Rafael, Marin County/California, who had left the church and whom I wanted to visit. I hitch-hiked down to North Carolina and across to the Los Angeles area on Interstate 40, then north on Highway 101, always sleeping outside.

In San Rafael, north of the Golden Gate Bridge, I spent a few days with this ex-moonie friend, and he later dropped me off in Sacramento, from where I wanted to travel north to BC, going back to my original plan. I tried to hitch-hike north for 3 days -- no success. Then I met some hobo at the local soup kitchen and he talked me into going south with him to Indio, near Los Angeles, where he was sure we could get jobs during the winter (I could always go to BC later on). Anyway, we wound up riding freight trains but got only as far as Stockton. Later, not far from there, he got badly hurt on one train, breaking his hip bone, and I had to take him to a hospital in Tracy. I couldn't stay with him: I was an illegal alien (that's another part of the story).

Later the same day, Thanksgiving Day, I was robbed of all my possessions except my passport and a few dollars near Livermore, then a fundamentalist Christian guy gave me \$ 60, and I was about ready to look up the church again. I couldn't find the church center in Berkeley, but in the evening I ran into two young guys who invited me to a free Thanksgiving Dinner at a place on Hearst Street near Berkeley campus. That turned out to be the Unification Church, under a different name (Creative Community Project)....

After spending more than a month at the church's farm in Boonville/Mendocino County and another month "recruiting" and selling roses in San Francisco I was sent with a group of over 30 other members on a bus (the "Dumbo" the elephant bus, which we had used as a mobile coffee shop at Fisherman's Wharf to invite potential recruits) to New York.

We drove south and then east along Interstate Highway 10. From El Paso we went northeast to Dallas via Abilene. In Dallas we started the Bicentennial God Bless America cleanup campaign by picking up garbage in one or two streets and doing our best to get some television coverage of our efforts (we had done the same earlier in San Francisco). We did the same in Birmingham/AL, Raleigh/NC, Richmond/VA, Washington DC and New York City, then headed to Barrytown for a 21-day workshop.

[Here comes a very long sentence:]...

I stayed in the movement through Moon's big Yankee Stadium (June 1976) and Washington Monument (September 1976) rallies, joined The News World (a new daily newspaper founded by church members) in New York City in late 1976,

came back to my country Luxembourg for 3 months in 1979, traveled some 8,000 miles by train from here to Nakhodka in eastern Siberia and then by boat to Japan in October 1979 [through the northern edge of Super typhoon Tip for 24 hours off the Pacific coast of Honshu Island] to visit my spiritual mother (the Japanese lady I had met in March 1975) there,

went down to Bangkok to try working as a correspondent, was called back to New York a few months later,

spent half of 1980 and all of 1981 in New York working for The News World and Free Press International,

then in 1982 traveled around Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia (just 3 days – in prison in Ceske Budejovice (Budweis)!),

did research in New York City for an émigré Russian writer for 3 months,

was arm-twisted by church member friends in the US and Luxembourg to go to Korea in October 1982, where I was matched and blessed to a Japanese sister,

then went to Cyprus at the beginning of 1983 to help start The Middle East Times weekly English-language newspaper,

went to Pakistan in August 1984 and over the hills into Afghanistan (I had first visited that country from Iran in March 1972, when it was at peace) with a bunch of mujahideen warriors fighting the Soviets there,

did the same again in August 1985,

also went alone up the highest mountain (10,000+ feet) in then very much war-torn Lebanon that year (June),

and to Israel (2 weeks in December 1985),

then moved to Athens, Greece with Middle East Times in May 1987,

then spent a month with my wife in Japan (July-August), where we got married both legally and in a Shinto ceremony at a temple near her tiny hometown in Miyazaki Prefecture of Kyushu Island,

then I went off to Pakistan (late August) and she back to her work in Tokyo,

worked as correspondent for both Middle East Times and Sekai Nippo in Islamabad and Peshawar,

went again into Afghanistan with mujahideen in October 1987 (came under artillery fire every time I went), then spent 2 weeks in the winter (Dec. '87-Jan. '88) in wild and dirt-poor Baltistan (home of 28,000-foot K2 mountain),

went back to Japan in late January 1988, started my family there (in April),

took my wife back to Greece in late May,

worked for Middle East Times in Cairo, Egypt, in early 1989 (Feb. – April),

then our first child, a son, was born outside Athens in June,

and we went off to Cairo again (Jan. '90), where I worked as managing editor of the local edition during most of 1990,

then we spent 10 months in Larnaca, Cyprus (Nov. '90-Sep. '91),

and finally, at my wife's insistence (upon Rev. Moon's instruction to all "blessed" families), we came here to my country in October 1991. A second son was born to us here in 1994 and a daughter in 1996.

... I have stopped thinking of myself as a Moonie. I don't know how I could describe my state of being at this point. In some ways I'm still a full member -- though a very passive one -- and in other ways I am probably as skeptical as you can get about not only this organization but all religion.

My wife remains a loyal member, and I support her and cooperate with the movement to a limited extent. Our two boys have what is called fragile X-chromosome syndrome and are seriously mentally handicapped. The girl is perfectly normal. We didn't find out about the origin of the boys' problem until late 1997.