

Interview of Nora Spurgin: Reflections on the Beginning of WFWP

Emily Cornier
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Mrs. Nora Spurgin, the First President of WFWP USA

Nora Spurgin, at age 77, is the beloved Principal of Bridgeport International Academy (BIA) and was also the esteemed first president of WFWP USA. Under her leadership, WFWP earned the coveted title of an NGO in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) of the United Nations. During her tenure, the Bridge of Peace ceremonies that are a signature project of WFWP's work in promoting peace, was conceived and realized. Mrs. Spurgin is humble about the role she played for the organization, citing that much of her inspiration and motivation came from the guidance of WFWP's Co-founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.



WFWP USA initially came out of Women's Federation for Peace in Asia, where the Co-founders Rev.

and Mrs. Moon initially established the organization in Korea and Japan to promote goodwill between the two countries. When it was decided that WFWP should be established around the world, Rev. Moon asked Mrs. Nora Spurgin to take the responsibility in America. Ms. Spurgin assumed the position immediately, “I’ve always been interested in women’s work and women’s spirituality because I believe that women bring something to the plate that men don’t bring, it’s a different kind of style of working, there’s a different kind of spirituality, and I am very much a believer in the feminine energy that can be put into an organization.”



Original sisterhood ceremonies

Once in leadership, Mrs. Spurgin decided it should be a member organization. “I’m really glad we did that because when we went to get NGO status at the UN, that was a point that was very important; that our money wasn’t coming from one source, it was coming from the members. The international federation also became a membership organization all over the world.”

WFWP USA started small by first producing a newsletter, and trying to get women to set up meetings in their states and eventually finding women to become regional leaders. One of the biggest challenges for Mrs. Spurgin was to find and develop leadership throughout the country, and then to finance that. She said that finding people who were creative with ideas for projects to do on a regular basis was challenging at first. Mrs. Spurgin felt it was necessary to give freedom to each chapter. She shared, “We had projects anywhere from charity to educational projects. We gave freedom to each region to create what they felt they could do, each region had a different flavor. Some regions had issues that were totally different from others; so we tried to deal with those issues and then, of course, when we had the Bridge of Peace ceremonies we dealt with the issues that were within that region. There are different problems in the northeast and the southwest and it all comes down to the root that we have to heal. That we have to be good mothers and wives as well as leaders, that being a mother and a wife doesn’t mean that you can’t be a good leader as well.”

Originally known as the “Sisterhood Ceremonies” in Japan and Korea, Mrs. Spurgin helped start up what is now known in the US as the Bridge of Peace Ceremonies. Through these Sisterhood Ceremonies, WFWP in Asia started promoting peaceful relations between the countries of Japan and Korea. Mrs. Spurgin recalls, “In 1994, Rev. Moon called me and Mrs. Sugiyama. She was the president of the Japanese Women’s Federation. He asked us to do the sisterhood ceremony and the idea was to make sisters between Japanese and American women. In the process of planning it, I was trying to figure out how to make a meaningful ceremony that would move people’s hearts; as we said, women are moved by the heart. So we talked about having two bridges on the bridge and then we decided let’s make one bridge and have steps down the center, and go across the bridge and meet there in the middle. That became the signature piece of Women’s Federation. It was really a special thing, and it became the thing that we were known for, and it brought so much power to Women’s Federation. From then on, we had a much bigger organization and then we could reach out to many people through that Bridge of Peace Ceremony.”



Mrs. Barbara Bush and Mrs. Moto Sugiyama

President George H. W. Bush and his wife, Barbara, attended the first WFWP Bridge of Peace ceremony. At that time, Mrs. Bush crossed the Bridge of Peace to reconcile relations between Japan and America, along with many notable religious figures and social activists who subsequently have walked across the bridge in the two decades since its founding for the sake of reconciliation and peace.

I asked Mrs. Spurgin about how she could balance being President of WFWP and raising her family. She said she knew the challenges of balancing work and family were inevitable.

Raising young children is never an easy feat for any woman, but Mrs. Spurgin advises any working

mother to try to make your child feel included in your life and work. She says, “I’ve always tried to make my children feel that I loved them, and I cared about them. But when I took on this role I was doing it for a bigger purpose, I wasn’t just doing it because I was asked to do it, but I did it because I felt strongly that I had a purpose trying to make the world better. So I tried to make my children feel like they shared the mission with me. Not like ‘here’s them and they are lacking because I’m not there,’ but rather they’re part of the mission, so I included them wherever I could.”

She has found that that the key to a being a successful woman leader is confidence and compassion. She said, “I think if you have confidence you can put into place things that can be helpful wherever you go; but if you have confidence without compassion then you may be just like the men. So you have to have that compassion that comes with being a mother, a woman, and that kind of compassion really touches the hearts of people; and I think you can get so much more done with compassion. But you do have to have confidence to get out there.”

Mrs. Spurgin also spoke at the 23rd National Assembly in Washington, DC exclusively about the founding of the Bridge of Peace. In subsequent issues of the Logic of Love News, a deeper explanation of the Bridge of Peace will be included.

If you would like to see Bridges of Peace that have take place around the world, follow this link: [Bridge of Peace History](#).



In 1995, Mrs. Nora Spurgin & Mrs. Motoko Sugiyama cross the Bridge of Peace