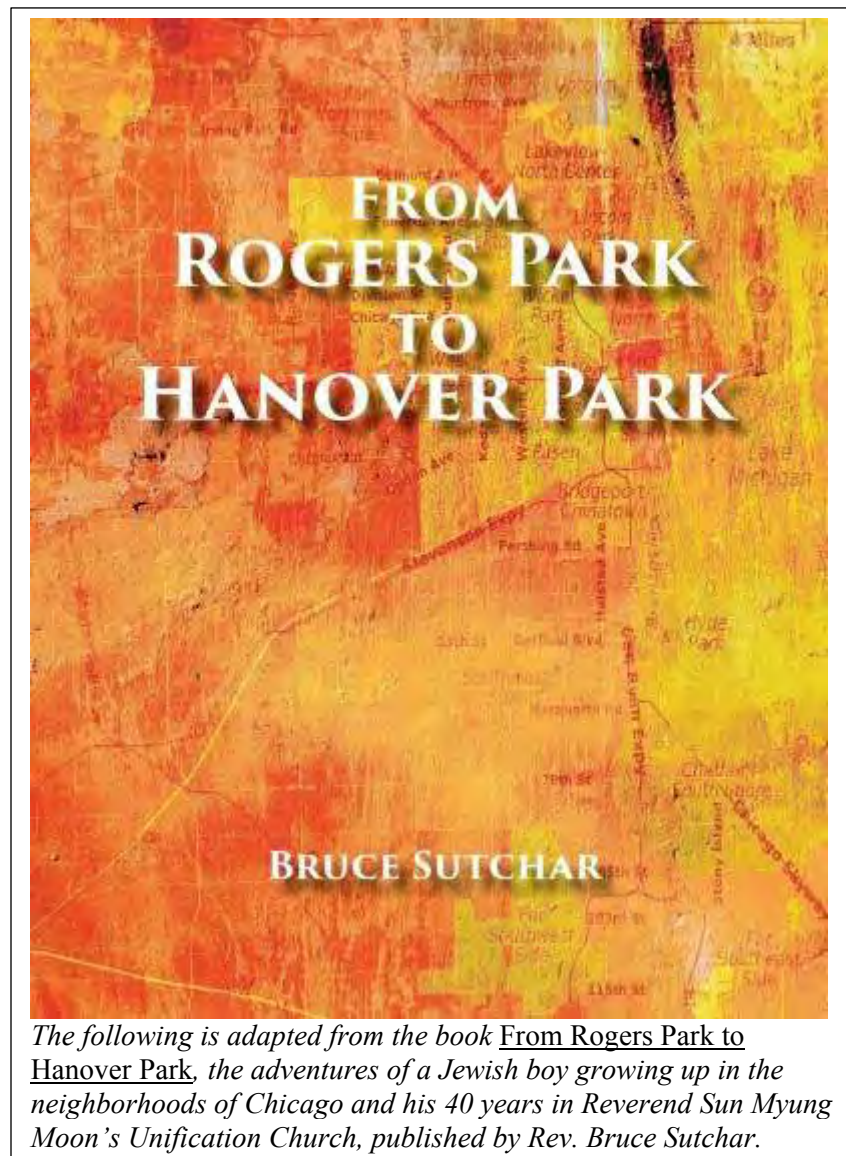


The True Value of a College Education

Bruce Sutchar
March 9, 2015



The following is adapted from the book From Rogers Park to Hanover Park, the adventures of a Jewish boy growing up in the neighborhoods of Chicago and his 40 years in Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, published by Rev. Bruce Sutchar.

When you grow up in a Jewish home with grandparents who were both doctors and parents who were both college graduates, the only question is which college, not whether you are going to college. And when you go to a college basketball game and one of the colleges you are considering makes an incredible comeback to win, you have answered the second question of where.

There is a famous ad campaign for the United Negro College Fund that says: "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste." But is it really better to go to college? In my case, God liberated me from my university's cultural influence to rekindle the values I had fully believed in before going off to school.

I have a friend who went to college for one semester and flunked out. He then got a job at the Post Office and 30 years later he retired with a million dollars and no college loans. My cousin is proud of the fact that he feels he is the only Jewish boy in Skokie who

did not go to college. After high school he visited and fell in love with Israel. He returned home for a time, so his parents could digest the idea of him not going to college. Eventually he emigrated, married a darling French artist and is now living on the richest kibbutz in Israel, near the Red Sea.

But I digress — I went to high school during the Vietnam War era. My father had been a navigator in Italy in World War II and I'm so old that I remember when the words "under God" were put into the Pledge of Allegiance.



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In fact, my fifth grade school teacher used to begin each day by selecting someone to lead our reading of the 23rd Psalm in our public school. Years later she is still my favorite teacher and her class was the only time I ever got straight A's.

So off I went to college and although I had been in the top 5% of my graduating class, I did not find college particularly easy. With my five hours of "F" in zoology, I barely made it back to a 2.0 GPA. My first two years were uneventful. I played every sport's intramurals; our team won one football championship and my university won the conference championship in both

football (the first since 1945) and basketball.

By my junior year, things were beginning to change dramatically. Protests against the war in Vietnam were getting stronger and stronger. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated and drugs were surfacing on campus for the first time. My parents would only drink when they were entertaining, but one night when I was ten years old, I took the last sip from a whiskey glass and almost died. Even though both my parents smoked cigarettes, I did not. I went to summer camp when I was 13 and met some kids who smoked. I tried it and almost choked to death. So much for that potential habit.

I began to attend anti-war meetings on campus (the only conservatives or Republicans on campus met in a small nook in the student union so no one would notice them). Draft eligible men were fleeing the United States for Canada. One reason many opposed the war was that it didn't seem like we were really trying to win it. All of a sudden we would stop bombing North Vietnam for seemingly no reason (Senator John McCain said that hearing American bombers coming when he was imprisoned in Hanoi brought hope to his fellow POWs).

When it came time for me to vote for President for the first time, I rejected the liberal candidate my parents loved so much in order to vote for my best friend, since I felt that even the liberal candidate was too far to the right. By the next election, I had traveled to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, Venice Beach in Los Angeles, and participated in demonstrations during the Democratic Convention in Chicago and against the war in Vietnam in Washington, D.C., where I was even tear-gassed.

As a freshman, I was determined to get drunk and I fulfilled this goal. All around me, especially as the hippie movement began to blossom and the anti-war movement got stronger, I saw drugs being smoked, ingested, swallowed or inhaled. Actually marijuana became the campus drug of choice, followed closely by LSD. Luckily, because of my strong upbringing, I had the discipline to avoid these temptations. People were cooking brownies with marijuana and spiking lemonade with LSD. I even saw people watching television and smoking marijuana with their young children and remember a friend even going to vote quite stoned with no idea who he was going to vote for.

One day after college I came home and was looking through some of my old high school papers when I came upon a theme that I had written about my opinion on the war in Vietnam. It was the most right wing conservative thing that I had ever read — and I, the kid with the long hair and beard, had written it. I was in shock! In college we would laugh at the pro-American right wing pro-war stuff. Radio broadcaster Paul Harvey would offer his pro-America comments twice a day — in the morning and “The Rest of the Story” every afternoon and we would laugh at his point of view.

Several years later, I would have a very deep experience with Jesus and my entire attitude would change. I would vote for Ronald Reagan (which almost caused my mother to have a heart attack) and return to my pro-American roots.



Rev. Bruce Sutchar displays proclamations during the “God’s Hope for America” tour in Chicago on July 25, 2014.

Today, as I was walking down the Magnificent Mile in Chicago, I came upon a bust of Jack Brickhouse. Jack was basically Chicago’s only sports announcer. He did every baseball game — both the White Sox and the Cubs, every Bears game on the radio, every Bulls game, and he even interviewed half a dozen presidents and the pope. We hated him with a vengeance, because just like Paul Harvey he was as gung-ho pro-American and apple pie as anyone could be.

But, as I walked past that bust of Brickhouse, I realized what a great American he really was, like Paul Harvey and so many others. And standing up for America during the Vietnam era, when it wasn't a popular thing to do. Over the years I have worked with Wayne Messmer, one of the truly great vocalists of the “Star Spangled Banner,” Alderman Jim Balcer and Major General Ted W. Sorensen as we helped plan America’s first “Welcome Home” parade after Operation Desert Storm, where we honored not only those returning heroes, but the veterans of Vietnam and Korea as well, who had never been welcomed home or honored before.

I'm about to go to a Blackhawks hockey game. Before it begins, possibly the greatest solo singer of the "Star Spangled Banner" will get center stage. Twenty-five thousand people will stand and the roar of the crowd will be like nothing ever heard in any indoor sports stadium anywhere. And I will be standing with them all. Remembering John and Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln, I will be thanking my grandparents, who came here from Russia at the turn of the 20th century, so I could grow up in the greatest nation in the history of the world.

And I realize that I didn't learn these ideals in college. I did get my A.B. in history and my M.S. Ed. in counseling /psychology over an eight-year period. But college also changed my worldview. It made me critical of my country without offering any solutions. It changed my attitudes not only toward politics, but also toward drugs, abortion, cohabitation, same-sex marriage, religion, and morality in general. What I learned in college was 95% outside of the classroom. I experienced music, art, a presidential campaign, an anti-war movement, and so much more. But the cost was to give up many of the values with which I had been raised.

Thank God for God. Without my life-changing God-experience at age 29, I can only imagine where I would be today. Yes, it took God to free me of my university's influence and rekindle the values that I had totally believed in before going off to college.

Bruce Sutchar is Midwest Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation, USA.