

Testimony: My Unificationist Wonderful Life

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I grew up in an all Jewish neighborhood in Chicago. My family was culturally Jewish but not religious. However, all our parents decided that we should get Bar Mitzvah when we were 13. My Rabbi Birnbaum was George Burns' brother. I survived High School and attended Indiana University in Bloomington. I decided to take my junior year off to reflect during the Vietnam era. In 1968 I peacefully participated in the riots during the Democratic National Convention hanging out with the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Phil Ochs, Chad Mitchell and Harry Belafonte. Many of us were broken hearted by the assassination of Robert Kennedy. I had met him when he was campaigning during the Indiana Primary.

One year later I went back to school and after I graduated I began teaching in the inner-city. 2 years later returned to Indiana but just before completing my doctorate in Counseling/Psychology, I had a spiritual awakening. People were taking drugs and everybody was sleeping with everybody. Then I realized that none of my professors were really happy. Intuitively, I knew that if I finished my doctorate, I would most likely turn out to be just like them. It took me a full year to disentangle myself including a reunion road trip with my brother until I was ready to leave school.

Eventually I made it to San Francisco and met members of the Creative Community Project which was led by Dr. and Mrs. Durst. I connected easily with their Jewish members, Kristina Seher, Sheri Rueter,

Noah Ross, Bethie Morrison and Dr. Durst. I joined on Christmas eve, 1976 and have never left. I spent two years working at our Jewish Deli in Oakland and in 1982 I was blessed to an Austrian classical pianist in Madison Square Garden. Her Father was a chief of police and good friends with Arnold Schwarzenegger's chief of police father.

After the blessing I began attending UTS from 1982-85. What a gift from True Parents. I could be with President David S.C. Kim, Dr. Young Oon Kim and could be with True Parents on many occasions. Sadly, this was also the time of Danbury. The very thing that Father did after the Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal was to immediately come up to Barrytown in order to comfort us. He spoke to us at the pond for three hours, because he was so worried about us. One good thing was that my wife could join me after my first year and we graduated together in 1985.

After graduation I worked with Mark Boitano in New Mexico for a year and then became the state leader in Wyoming. Just 400,000 people, me and Congressman Dick Cheney. Cheyenne had 1 Target Store, one Baskin-Robbins, one hotel and rush hour was four cars at a stop light at 4:30 pm. But in 1987 I was chosen to join AFC in Chicago with Michael Jenkins. Dr. Jenkins and I worked together every day for the next seventeen years until he became the President of the Church. We combined our AFC political work with ACLC minister work and then started SunCorp manufacturing to support our efforts.

16 years later we sold SunCorp and I ran for a county office and then worked for ten years in Human Resources (remember my graduate degree was in Psychology) for the county around Chicago. I worked alongside Mayor Daley and his brother, Jewish Chicago Mayor Rahn Emanuel and became casual friends with State Senator Barak Obama and his wife Michelle. Meanwhile my wife was teaching piano 7 days a week.

In the meantime, we managed to have 5 children in 6 years. All graduated college and were successful athletes. The 3 boys all won National Football titles in their respective categories, and my daughters became cross country runners and participants in 2 Boston Marathons. Three of them have migrated from Chicago to Denver. All are blessed to wonderful spouses of their own choosing. And in 2025 we added grandchildren, nine, ten and eleven.

As I reflect on my life since seminary, my wife and I are so grateful to our relationship with the Jenkins family. Mike and Reiko have been a God-send by becoming our best friends and elder mentors. During the most difficult of times we prepared an emergency plan to all move into one home together while we rented the other house. Although very nearly happening this happily never materialized. But our ten children have truly become one family. We have attended each other's weddings and Mike and Reiko are responsible for blessing my children. Ilse and I have blessed almost 600 couples and I carry a bottle of holy wine with me at all times. I always felt that our church was like a diamond. But you don't keep a diamond in your pocket, you have it share with everyone you meet. So I have always loved witnessing (thank you Sheri Rueter).