

How I Got to Know Father at the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury - Part 3

Bill Sheppard, as told to Laura Reinig

July 1986

Republished by FFWPU International HQ December 26, 2022



Once Father and I developed a relationship he knew how to talk to me. He knew how to get my attention, what would make me laugh, and what wouldn't. He wouldn't be opposed to saying something really out of character just to make me do a double take. One time Father referred to Moonies as snakes. I said, "Huh? What in the world are you talking about?" He said he was giving me an analogy about how snakes shed their skin, how they change. Father said a lot of things for dramatic effect, probably specifically for me to get my character changed. He speaks differently when he talks to a group, of course, but his meanings were always personally directed at me in some way. That was our give-and-take relationship; he adapted his words to our unique situation.

I saw Father in the TV room one day with a bunch of guys. Father was watching some weird movie. I thought, "Wow, what's going on here?" It was unlike him. He very rarely did that. Father didn't become Westernized, but he became familiar with Western things and I became familiar with Oriental things.



Not afraid to be bold

There is an aloofness among many religious groups, organizations, and people; they often try to stay

removed from the outside world. But Father showed me something different. One of the major things Father taught me was how it's okay to do very bold things even though they may be drastic and shocking. I remember watching the mass wedding on television. I mean, that was a big shock. You really wake up when you see something like that. "Look, honey! Watch the TV! There's a guy from Korea marrying all these people at once!" If someone had told you years ago that that was going to happen, would you have believed it? It was an amazing thing to see.

I remember Father talking to me about effective action. He felt it was very important. To him effective action means you decide to accomplish something and then you act upon your plan. Even if you don't accomplish what you were trying to do but you gave it your 110 percent, there's nothing wrong with that. However, if you try to do something to gain credit in someone else's eyes, it means nothing.

Father said that even the Moonies who didn't make it become better people. Absolutely no question about it. Even if they weren't strong enough to go the entire way, being in the movement helped them become better.

There are some people who work harder than most and have a great drive and energy to accomplish things, but once you get to their heart you find out that their outlook or motivation isn't really so good. Since I've known Father, I find myself going to people and trying to find out who they are right away, so I can get to their heart instead of waiting.

Father would give out a lot of advice even to people who were being blatantly ridiculous. There was a lot of that type of interaction between Father and the inmates. He made the atmosphere a lot better. It's different here in Danbury now that he's gone - much different. Most of the people that knew him here have left.



Love for all to see

On visiting days what an entourage would follow Father! He had as many visitors as he could. As they left in the afternoon, his youngest daughter would be calling out to him the whole time. Then everybody would get into the car. Sometimes they had a car with a sunroof on it, and Mother would wave to Father out of it. Their love was there for anybody to see. It wasn't a pretentious type of attitude; it wasn't a show. You just got a very close, warm feeling - what you'd expect to see in a very close-knit family.

A very real concern for him as a father was his own children. He is a very compassionate man. Some of the things he told me broke my heart. Also Kami has his daughter in Korea now. He doesn't let on, but I'm sure he misses her a lot. They are very close. She's only 13 or 14.

Father told me that he was going to make a concentrated effort to be with his wife and family when he got out and give them the private time they didn't have together while he was here. He talked a lot about the importance of your family, about making up to your family the time that you lose. I made a promise that I would do that with my wife and daughter.

When Carol and I were first married we were always looking for things to get involved in. We were always doing things for other people. We enjoyed ourselves. Then my daughter was born and we never had much time to do things together after that. When I left for Danbury I made promises to my wife and

daughter that have been hard to keep. Father's expectations for me were that he wanted me to survive, that he wanted my family to survive. You know, I thought he would have said, "Go out and work 24 hours a day!" But he told me that I have an obligation to keep my promise to them.

Beyond that, I don't know. I'm apprehensive about what the future brings. Right now, my wife's been working part-time and she's also been working on my case. What a job she has! She's living on welfare, but she's been able to keep our house, which is in mortgage. Still, people would never know how much pain and suffering she's going through. She doesn't wear it on her shirtsleeve. I say that proudly. She's a fighter and she's doing very well; I see that by looking at my daughter. My daughter has kept her innocence. She has a fantastic attitude; and she looks like she's doing very well.

When Father left

Father left Danbury on July 4 and that was hard for me. I remember that day very well. I was standing outside, but they made us go in. They didn't want the media to see that there was a number of people here who wanted to wave goodbye to Father. As soon as the cameras turned around they told us to go inside. None of us saw what happened when Father walked out.

Right after Father left was a very difficult time for me. I went through an emotional period, and I kept thinking, "This is not going to happen anymore. We're not going to have any more of these walks and these talks and the good times and the bad times. We're not going to have these. This is gone." But it didn't last too long.

A very interesting phenomenon happened here concerning the grounds. As I mentioned, I was working on the landscaping just before Father came. I was determined to accomplish the mission of getting this place finished. Little did I know what I was doing it for! Getting everything finished gave me a great sense of accomplishment. While Father was here the grounds were very nice, but then after Father left, everything started to deteriorate, and the trees began to die. As a matter of fact, one of the pine trees died almost within a week after he left!

Father and I spent the greater part of a year together. That's a long period of time. Being with Father for a year is like being with somebody else for 10 years. I mean, he's so full of information and discussion! He concentrates his time, his efforts, his relationships with people. Father and I talked about the fact that there were very few people in his lifetime that have spent such a concentrated period of time with him as I did. It gives me a headache! Really! That's a heavy responsibility and it's very difficult to live up to. Now I know the importance of Danbury to Father and to the church. So that's why I take it very seriously.

One thing bothers me. I haven't spent years fundraising, I haven't read the Divine Principle over and over and over. I happen to be a little guy from New Jersey who's sitting in a prison. There are church members who have gone through all kinds of difficulties. What I feel uncomfortable with is, it's too bad it wasn't a Moonie here in my place. Or even somebody who was a good writer or a good artist. Not that I would give it up, don't get me wrong. But it's a shame. What did I do to deserve to be here? I mean, I didn't go through a Blessing with my wife. We got married in a conventional way. I knew absolutely nothing about the Unification Church. That's how far removed I was.