

Homer at Point Park, a Foundation of Heart

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Homer was named after “Home Church,” which was one of our providences in our movement back in the eighties. He was born in 1982, when we just moved out of the New Yorker Hotel into our home church area, up in the Bronx, New York. Homer was born literally a day after we moved into this new home, the first little house of our own.

Then we moved to my family’s ancestral hometown in Keene Valley, New York in the Adirondack Mountains. From fourth grade on, Homer attended the tiny school here with 180 students in total. He was a part of the Unification community here, and he was well known. And, out of all of our children, he was probably the most spiritually inclined.

After high school, he went to the Special Task Force (STF, now Generation Peace Academy), a gap year program, for two years. In his first year, he had some good experiences, and he had a couple of bad experiences. He came home for a few months and then he returned and graduated from STF. Then, he went on the University of Bridgeport, and was only there for about three months before he had a sort of mental breakdown.

He went into a facility, then he came back home. He was home from November of 2002 until he died from an accident on June 11, 2003. So he was home the last six or seven months of his life.

We were trying to help him regain his mental balance. He was never clearly diagnosed, but they assumed it was some form of developing schizophrenia, which is a common illness especially among young boys between the ages of 18-25.

He was a nature boy, and he loved everybody. He was very sensitive to the people around him, almost too much so. He kind of lost himself sometimes in the process. He could tell if someone was upset or hurt, and he would be very playful with them and accept them. He was never judgmental, always gentle.

But he was also oblivious to risk, too, which is quite typical for boys. This probably led to his death, from climbing a waterfall on his own, without anyone else around to help him or express caution. He fell from a very high waterfall about three miles from our house. He just ran there one day on his own, leaving no note about where he was, climbed the waterfall because he loved nature and wanted to be on that waterfall. And he died.

The beauty of his life grows for me as a parent over the years since he’s been gone. He loved to serve, he loved doing things for people. A few weeks before he died, he was looking for things to do because he didn’t have a job, he wasn’t going to school yet, he was kind of floating. So he went to the town supervisor, who everyone knows in this little town of 600 people, and volunteered, “I have time, and I have some friends here. Is there anything that I can do?”

The supervisor said, “You know, this lady just donated a little tiny piece of land that adjoins her property that she doesn’t want to take care of and she thinks it could benefit the town.” It’s between two rivers that join here, coming from one side of the valley that drains down from those mountains, and there’s another, smaller river that comes from the other side of the valley. And they both meet at this point. Since it was private property, no one had ever really seen it, even though it was right off the main road in the village. And he said, “It would make a really nice park right by the rivers here if it was cleared.”

So Homer got a couple of his friends to clear the brush out of this downtown property. And all of a sudden, even though the trees were still there, you could see the place where the two rivers joined. People who had lived there their whole lives were so excited to see this place that they had never seen before. Homer and his friends were organizing another day to put some walkways down there. That was in the works when he had his fatal accident.

So all his friends and everybody that knew him -- he was well-loved at the school—all came out and decided to finish what Homer started. It wasn't our idea; we were in grief and shock. But his friends came out to do something in memory of Homer, and they cleared these walkways from the main road down to this park.

That was a wonderful blessing and a gift to us as a family that these kids came and did that. They were invested in the project, and they started to think of other projects to do in the park. Some townspeople donated money with the idea that maybe they could put some benches up in the park. We got four beautiful, heavy, iron and wood benches. Kids came out every year to keep working on the park. That became a tradition, and we as a family gave them a picnic lunch.

Then a stone was set up in memory of Homer at Point Park, named for the point where the two rivers meet. It remembers Homer and his classmates that started this park, and then at the very bottom of the plaque, I was inspired to make an inscription that says, "May your spirit live on wherever differing paths become one." That seemed to fit for the two rivers coming together.



The park work continues; it's been about 14 years now. Kids still come to help. I coordinate them and work together with the school, and now it's not just about the park. About six or seven years ago we expanded it to other town projects, because the park didn't need much work anymore. We started to do projects that the town needed done.

It's been wonderful. Recently, we've had about 20 kids show up each year, which is pretty good for a high school that only has about 50 students! We are excited that it has become a community service day, and last year somebody proposed that we call it Clean Keene Day. The Keene Business Association has also become involved in it. We have volunteers from the businesses and we have a mentoring program contribute.

Also, I have to say that what happened as a result of Homer's passing was that the spiritual barriers that had existed between our family and other people who knew we were Unificationists and didn't quite know how to deal with it, dissolved because we had a common bond of love for Homer. Our heart connection became very deep.

I feel that he contributed very, very deeply through offering his whole life to this little hometown. It brought our hearts together here with the townspeople. We forgot about any theological differences we might have. That has become more relaxed now.

It's a wonderful legacy that my son has left, and I'm deeply moved and grateful for what he did in 21 years of life. I have to admit, as a parent, that he has accomplished something for our tribe. It's not just

the town, but our family. I have many relatives up here. He did something in his brief life that I couldn't accomplish. My heart was not deep enough, my perspective was a little too much like that of a missionary's. That was, after all, why we came here, to be tribal messiahs.

But without the heart, you can't do it. You have to have your heart in the right place, and I think Homer did. I didn't go to the supervisor and ask what I could do for this town, but Homer did it.

Homer laid the foundation of heart for me to be able to reach out more to people now and to feel accepted by everyone. Family restoration with my siblings has made a big difference, too. Life-long struggles with my elder sister, especially, were finally resolved last summer, and I worked with two of my cousins to host a big family reunion at our family's summer cottage last August. About 60 people came, and it was very successful in cementing tribal relations as well.

Now I realize that with those familial and tribal relations now resolved and with love and forgiveness ruling those relations now, that is the foundation that God and True Parents want us to have if we are to be able to share God's heart and journey through history and restoration with our families and tribes.

After these 23 years of community service and the tea and spirit group gatherings, I felt I finally had a foundation of heart solid enough to invite about 16 people in October of 2014, by a one-page typed and mailed letter, to come to my ancestors' summer cottage to hear me share three talks on three consecutive late afternoons on the Divine Principle: Creation, the Fall and the Parallels of History. Eight people responded positively and two people—a couple I used to work with in the local assisted living home—came to all four talks I gave, the last one of which was an added one of the Life and Mission of Jesus, since they were interested. It was a very positive experience for them and for me. One person suggested I do it again next spring when we come back here again.

I do feel very hopeful now in my hometown and feel sorry to God that it has taken me so long to make a heart foundation upon which I could finally begin teaching Divine Principle.



Thomas and Alice Boutte