

FFWPU USA Blessing and Family Ministry: In Memory of Burton Ellsworth Leavitt

Carina Mendez
October 1, 2024



Burton Ellsworth Leavitt

Spouse: Michiyo Fujita Leavitt

Children: Mari Grace

DOB: May 25, 1950

Blessing: July 1, 1982

Ascension: September 25, 2024

Seonghwa Ceremony: October 4, 2024 11:00 AM
at 3600 New York Ave NE Washington, DC 20002

Livestream on Zoom:
us02web.zoom.us/j/618147675 Passcode: 2027

Burton Ellsworth Leavitt was born on May 25, 1950, in Newport, New Hampshire, as the oldest of five children (brothers Timothy and Gordon and sisters Louise and Diana) to Herbert Gordon Leavitt and Alice Mae Roberts (O'Brien).

From an early age, Burt took on much of the responsibility for raising his siblings, especially after his parents divorced. Burt's mother was a nurse and often worked double shifts to support the family. Although he wasn't free to socialize given his family responsibilities, Burt did well academically, in great part because his mother raised him and his brother Tim to enjoy various word games. a member of the National Honor Society in high school, Burt received awards in math, English, French, music, and history; was voted most likely to succeed; and graduated third in his class.

Inspired by his parents' love for music, painting, and knitting, Burt picked up these interests as well. He began playing piano as a child and was able to take lessons starting in high school. He taught himself to crochet and also developed a talent for cutting hair by watching his father cut his siblings' hair. Despite being shy, Burt took part in various plays throughout his school years, including the French play *La Farce du cuvier*, and to sing in and play the piano for choruses.

In 1968, he began studying at the University of New Hampshire, intending to major in math and French but turning to piano instead (thanks to the suggestion of a football player in his dorm). He graduated in 1973 with a BA in piano performance.

During his last year of college, Burt felt compelled to find out what God thought about his life, so he began searching in churches and Christian groups on campus. Nothing moved his heart until he saw the movie *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, about the life of Saint Francis, who gave away everything he owned to serve God. Inspired by this example of total surrender to God, Burt decided to give away everything he owned except one shirt and a pair of pants. His friends and piano teacher thought he was crazy, but the next week he met the Unification Church.

The Divine Principle was captivating in its clarity of understanding about the purpose of life, the Fall, and God's work in history, culminating with the Second Coming of the messiah. He told God he would dedicate his life to helping the Messiah, giving up everything, including the piano, which had meant

everything to him. On the very day that he moved into the church center, the church leader all of a sudden said, "Let's go buy a piano for the center." He realized that God gave him back his first love because he had given it up in faith.

Daily church life was a challenge for Burt because of his shyness. As time passed, though, it became clear that his experiences were helping him develop a broader character and heart by learning to love all types of people.

In February 1974, he met Father Moon and his wife, known as the True Parents, for the first time, during a public speaking tour. Although he had been in the church only six months, he was asked to be a security guard at the house where they would stay. All he could think was, "How can I protect them when I'm so small and unprepared?"

Later that year he was sent to the Belvedere International leadership training Center in Tarrytown, New York. After a year learning to lecture the Principle with 300 brothers and sisters, he was dropped off alone on his birthday to begin pioneer witnessing in Keene, New Hampshire, beginning with a three-day fast, no money, and no place to stay. As the driver waved good-bye, Burt began lecturing the Principle in the rotary at the center of town. That night he spent on a picnic table next to the town reservoir. It was cold and damp, and he couldn't sleep for fear there were bears in the surrounding woods. The next day he found a room at a Catholic Church.

In 1977, Burt began studies at the Unification Theological Seminary, where he played piano for daily morning services and the choir and was also the resident barber. In 1979, he graduated with a master's degree in religious education. Though sheltered during his early life, he was able to travel widely during his church life, doing spiritual work in nine states across the country as well as in England, Russia, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan.

Whereas in the secular world Burt might have had trouble finding a rewarding career with a degree in piano performance, he discovered that God sees possibilities that others may not. At a state leaders meeting in 1981, when Father Moon sought volunteers to staff the Washington Times that he was creating, Burt felt called to help and was chosen. Too anxious to get started during the orientation period, he was made a copy editor at the News World/New York City Tribune instead and served there for 4.5 years. Later he edited for The World and I for 18 years and for the American Psychological Association for 11 years. He also helped to edit God's Will and the World, the Chambumo Gyeong, As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen, and several of Father Moon's public speeches.

With a background in piano, he enjoyed accompanying church services for 21 years in the Washington, DC area. Also, while working at The World and I, for three years he played at banquets for the 30,000 Korean guests who came to tour Father Moon's companies.

Burt was matched with Michiyo Fujita on May 12, 1979, and was blessed among the 2,075 Couples at Madison Square Garden on July 1, 1982. At the time of their matching, he discovered he couldn't have children, a devastating blow. For seven years he worked on his health in faith that somehow God would open a way to healing. Finally, after an intense course for seven months in Japan, he had a dramatic spiritual and physical healing in Korea in 1986 and they were blessed with a beautiful daughter, Mari Grace, born on Easter Sunday in 1987.

Although Burt felt hampered by health issues throughout his life, his two main passions for serving God and True Parents were through music and teaching the Divine Principle, both for guests and for second generation children.

He is survived by his wife Michiyo Fujita Leavitt; daughter Mari Grace; grandchild; brother Timothy Leavitt; and sisters Louise Leavitt and Diana Goodson. Both his parents and another brother, Gordon Leavitt, passed away previously.