

My experience at being matched by True Parents - Part 1

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Photo date and location unknown

I joined the family, the church in Oakland, and spent a year cleaning carpets there. During that time, I saw Reverend Moon for the first time. He was driving around America and dropped in on our Berkeley center. Our carpet crew heard him speak, then drove back down to Los Angeles, where we were based. 12 hours after I heard the messiah speak for the first time, I was ankle deep in muck in a greasy restaurant in LA. After a year in Oakland I went to National MFT, where I spent the next three years running around Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.

I am going now to tell you about the second time I saw Rev Moon. I had spent two years fundraising and at the Christmas season, I was sent to Lexington, Kentucky to sell wood roses and butterfly domes at a mall. The way we did things in those days, I was the sole employee and worked all the hours the place was open. I had a storage space at the mall, and walked to a room I rented from a gritty old lady down the street.

Well, there are other stories here, but I will focus on this one: I spent a lot of time by myself, walking to and from the mall, fixing my dinner around 9:30 at night. One night as I was washing up, alone, looking out the dark window, I suddenly said "I'm not ready for the Blessing!" And I wondered where that came from. I had heard absolutely nothing about one coming up. When I was starting to pack up after Christmas, expecting to be there five more days, my MFT commander called me one night. "Come Nashville, tomorrow. Matching, matching," he said in his way, laconic even for a Japanese brother.

Well, I went. Kind of felt like "Who am I to say yes to this? But on the other hand, who am I to say no?" So I got onto the plane and flew to New York, to see the World Mission Center (aka the New Yorker Hotel) for the first time. The place was thronged with family members from all over the globe – Japanese, Korean, Filipino, African, Brazilian, German, Australian, etc.

Mostly I remember the huge cheer that erupted from the crowd packed into the New Yorker Grand Ballroom, brothers on the right side, sisters on the left. First thing Rev Moon did after gesturing for us to sit was to make an aisle down the middle of the room, mock kicking people out of the way. We were inspired, excited, moved, giddy, prayerful. And after two years of being yelled at for following 'that Korean brainwasher', I was seeing him for the second time.

I had heard how Rev Moon had an intuitive, spiritual sense of who should marry who. One that he had been using since he was a child, when people would seek out his advice on their choice of spouse. Being a spiritualist and dabbler myself, I was keen to see how he did it.

The first thing he did was to ask if it was anyone's birthday. One brother and sister put their hands up. He looked at them, then flicked his hands together, and off they went to talk. I was outraged. What!!! Because it's their birthday! How is that spiritual?

Next he asked for foreign missionaries to line up in the center, men and women facing each other across the aisle. Which I should mention is only three or four feet wide. I was sitting on the side, towards the back, and all I could see was several legs, Father's and his translator's, and couples coming out of the line from either end. I couldn't see what he was doing.

Next he called for MFT captains. Same thing, they line up, he goes up and down matching people. The matched couples went up the stairs to a little terrace area where translators stood by, to discuss their matching. If they accepted it, they came down and waited to bow to True Parents, signifying accepting their match. If they refused the match, they went back into the ballroom to try again.

Not long after this, he gestured for me to stand up. I stood up, in my corduroy fundraising jacket. "Mansei, Sam!" Janet, a sister from my team, whispered. He grabbed my lapel with one hand and frog marched me up the aisle, where he pointed at a group of sisters standing by the side wall. One by one, they gestured "Me?" and he shook his head until one sister got the yes.

We went up into the balcony, found out she spoke English, and waived off the translators. We looked shyly at each other. "What's your name?" "Sam. What's your's?" "_____." Awkward pause. "What do you think about the matching?" she asked. "I trust Father." was all I could think to say. "What about you?" "I trust Father." "What do we do now?" "I think we go bow."

We waited until there were three couples there and one of the attendants signaled to Father, who turned as we bowed to him, a full kyung-bae, both hands to the forehead, all the way to the ground. There was a smattering of applause. Then we went to sign a registry, got congratulated several times, searched for our shoes among the thousands against the wall, then emerged onto the mezzanine of the hotel lobby, where a large crowd was waiting to see the newly matched couples emerging.

In Unification Church culture, we didn't date or look for partners. We worked as hard as we could on our missions, and waited for the sudden summons to come to a matching. A summons which could take years and years to come. So a popular pastime was joking about what kind of spouse you'd get. One liberal type sister, knowing True Father often advised people to volunteer for the worst kind of person, joked to her friends "Yeah, I'll probably get matched to an MFT captain from Iowa." And when the matching came about, and she asked the brother she had just been matched with what his mission was, he said "I'm an MFT captain." "Where are you from?" "Iowa."

But I digress.

She and I spent a few days together, then she went back to the fish business in Louisiana, beheading shrimp and selling them on street corners, and I went back to MFT. We wrote letters over a few years, I came to Denver so we could be legally married. We went to the Blessing the next year, on July 1st. We met early in the morning to go over to Madison Square Gardens, around 6 or 7 am, in our full wedding gear. This was because someone had heard protestors might be throwing paint on us. We had breakfast with Reverend and Mrs. Moon in the Felt Forum, where he gave us some earthy advice on how to treat each other, then we went into the Gardens itself for the main ceremony.

My parents both came down from Montreal to be there, and her father came from Wales. Her mother couldn't make it. We went through the ceremony, came back for the entertainment, a bizarre mix of marching bands, capoeira dancers, Frank Sinatra cover, and Enzo Stuarti singing an aria. We stayed around long enough to tour the Cloisters, watch July 4th fireworks from atop the Empire State Building along with the two thousand other people who thought it was a good idea.

I got along with her father, and my parents liked her. For all the exoticism possible, I was half expecting to end up married to a sister with a bone in her nose. I certainly loved other cultures more than mine. So who did I get? A sister who could have been my cousin.

She wanted to form a relationship, and I wanted to survive MFT. There wasn't a lot that I felt I could do to build relationships when I was restoring man's relationship to all things. She suddenly showed up, on the advice of my spiritual father, when I was in New York for a 21 day workshop. I just suddenly was told my fiance was in the hallway to see me. She told me she was struggling and was about to go home to Wales. I had no inkling. She was persuaded to stay.

We continued our letter writing. After 5 years, I was sluiced out of MFT (which is another story) and put on an IOWC team which hit Columbus, Ohio, Dallas, Norman, Oklahoma and Albuquerque. In Albuquerque she called me long distance with her parents standing by to talk, but she called right in the middle of our nightly prayer condition. I was on my hands and knees on the prayer room rug when Mary Pat tapped me on the shoulder and said "Your fiancé's on the phone." "Tell her to call back." She went away, returned. "She said you have to come now." "Tell her I'm praying for America!" I finished the prayer, then called her. After repeated attempts, I got through. She sounded deflated. "My parents have gone now, it's too late to talk." We had a desultory conversation, then hung up.

Mary Pat told me "Sam, I was so proud of you when you said that." Looking back, however, I think the Korean way would have been to talk to her, then come back and finish praying. For me, I think it was easier to sound vertical, but I was uncomfortable trying to make a deeper relationship at that point in my life.

It was a few weeks after that when she called the Albuquerque center to tell me "I'm really struggling with who Rev Moon is, you don't want to make a relationship, I may be leaving the church. I'm not sure about any of this." I felt relief. There had been a lot of unspoken tension, and now it was out in the open. I

got the ok to go to New York and see what I could do. Officially, I was to return to the team, but I think everyone pretty much knew I was not coming back.

I landed in New York, found a piece of floor to sleep on at 43rd St., and met my fiance. We went to the Marble Collegiate Church, where she was finding inspiration in Norman Vincent Peale's sermons on positive thinking. I was less than impressed, with glad-handing ushers, lots of flowers and a simple but effective message. Good, but not even close to the depth and vision Rev Moon spoke about.

We spontaneously decided to go up to Montreal to see my parents. After I had paid for the tickets, I held up the \$10 we had left and said "Here's peanut money for the trip up."

A man next to us in line overheard us and immediately insisted on giving us money to eat with on our adventure. We talked to him on the way up. He was quite taken with us, and insisted on taking us to his favorite Chinese restaurant when we got back to New York.

My parents, especially my mother, were overjoyed to see us. We had a good few days, then came back, and had dinner with our train friend at his favorite Chinese restaurant. But once we were back, we were going in different directions.

I cooked at 43rd street, visited Jennifer Hagar with her new daughter whenever I could. Went to Belvedere to hear Rev Moon speak on Sundays. Went up to Camp Happy Lake, upstate, to be in nature for a few weeks. And bit by bit, step by step, she was moving out of the church. There had been people I thought she was close to, but when I asked them they said "I don't really know her that well." The idea of her going to one church and me to another was not how I saw the blessing. That idea, of course, would not be so radical now. But that was then.

Eventually, we gave up and decided to divorce. Which shocked Kathy Sommers, the Blessed Family Department sister who we announced this to, right after we walked in to her office for the first time. At her urging, we did continue to work on it, but she filed for divorce, I refused to sign the papers, and it went through.

Now begins many years of waiting and wondering. I was asked to be the central figure up at Happy Lake, to feed the guard dogs and patrol through the snow for vandals. I started counselling sessions with Pat Detlefsen in New York, driving down once a week. That helped me a lot. I finished my bachelor's degree and started working in the kitchen at the seminary, ready to start classes.

In our therapy group we did exercises to release buried emotions, and one time I was releasing some deep grief. Pat kept me going for what seemed like 45 minutes. When I was finished, my hair was wet with my tears and I felt completely drained. A lot of pent up grief and pain were gone.

A couple of days later, my former fiance called me out of the blue. She said she was sorry she didn't understand then what she knew now. She had felt the Unification church had no sense of how to build a community, but she had been shocked to find out the Christian community she was with now had even less of an idea than we did.

"I'm cooking for a Christian community in Poughkeepsie (on the Hudson River). Once a week I take the train to New York to see a Christian therapist."

"Really? I'm cooking at the seminary (on the Hudson River). I'm seeing a church therapist in New York once a week. I take the train down."

We had been leading parallel lives, even though we'd been out of touch for two years.

"I'm really sorry. I just wish that I understood what I know now back then. I really thought it would be better in other churches, and it isn't. If I knew that, I wouldn't have left. I hope you're ok."

At that moment, I felt complete forgiveness for her. Which surprised me, as I had felt a lot of things in the last few years, but not that. I found myself saying "I don't think you've done anything God or I can't forgive." and to my surprise, I absolutely meant it.

Which did not mean that I knew what to do next. I didn't know how to go out and get her, and she didn't feel able to reconnect. We said goodbye, and that was about it. We didn't keep in touch. I heard later that she was married.

And so began several years of waiting. The matchings and Blessings were not scheduled in advance in those years, you simply did your mission and waited. And waited. And waited. For how long, you did not know