

## A Story to Tell the Nations

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Tribute, Reflections from the Early Years

Doug Burton, editor, Introduction by Rev. In Jin Moon

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*Father Moon embraces David S.C. Kim at a church gathering in the mid-1970s.*

The Unification Church in North America is little more than half a century old, yet its impact on the history of religion is already significant. It is considered by some scholars to be the most successful new religious movement in terms of growth and influence during the lifetime of the founder. Without a doubt the efforts and sacrifices of hundreds of American disciples of True Parents from the early 1960s made this achievement possible, and 120 of their personal stories are now the subject of an unprecedented collection of testimonies documenting the early history of the Unification Church in the United States: *Tribute, Reflections from the Early Years*, published by HSA-UWC in July, 2011.

The personal accounts of 56 Americans and 64 missionaries from Korea, Japan, and Europe who spent most of their careers in America, likely will stand as bedrock inspirational literature serving succeeding generations of Unificationists, as well as a treasure trove for social scientists fascinated by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his movement. All testimonies are from members who joined the movement in 1970 or earlier.



*True Parents with Reiner and Barbara Vincenz on an outing in Los Angeles in the early 1970s.*

Rev. In Jin Moon introduces the book this way: “Within the pages of this book are cherished stories that capture the experience of the early disciples of True Parents as they lived and worked together with them to build the foundation in America... Each and every person represented in this book was handpicked by God to serve and protect the Messiah. This is their eternal pride and honor. As the baton is passed to the next generation, these testimonies can fuel our resolve to strive for and even surpass the standard of faith and dedication they established through their 40-plus years of service.”

Readers will encounter in this book of 400 pages a full range of unforgettable stories. Some are tragic: Dee Anne Sneed’s toddlers were snatched away from her by parents who feared her new-found faith in the early 1960s, and her children grew to adulthood without her; later, her marriage blessing resulted in victory. In other stories, readers will be surprised to find out how much fun it was to pioneer a group called the “Unified Family.” Kay Hughes tells how she and her sister, Susan, couldn’t wait until they reached their 18th birthdays so that they could “move in” to the Berkeley Center. A young Berkeley recruit, Dan Fefferman, spiritually received the words and melody to the classic song, “Generation of Righteousness” in the span of 15 minutes.



*Christen Reb Brooks born in France, left, and Galen Brooks, who became a follower of True Parents in Seattle in 1962.*

Readers will learn of revelations, spirit guides, epiphanies and miracles aplenty. David S.C. Kim writes of hearing the voice of God in 1954 through a Korean medium telling him to accept and obey Sun Myung Moon. He promised to do so, even though he hadn't heard the Divine Principle. Martin Porter tells how the messiah appeared to him in spirit and taught him Divine Principle before he met True Father in the flesh. In 1966 Sandra Scott Singleton (today Lowen) was guided by a spirit voice in Washington, D.C. that told her: "This is the place. Go up here." She knocked at the door, and Unification Church President Phillip Burley opened it. Readers will find drama: John Hessell tells how he wrestled an armed burglar at a house at the Belvedere complex in Tarrytown, New York and risked his life to prevent fundraising cash from being stolen. And romance: Galen Brooks endured celibacy for 21 years before getting blessed to the love of his life, Christen Reb of France.

Although some of the testimonials are of disciples who retired from church activism years ago, the love in their hearts for True Parents and the dream of God are still fresh in their words. Take the reflection of former lecturer David Hose: "These 40 years have gone by like a fast-moving wind. Now, in our 60s, we look back with so many memories – but a few that are in very bold type: First the GRATITUDE we both feel for the love and the blessing of God and True Parents. From the Divine heart was a 'seed-love' that was deeply rooted in history long before we were ourselves reborn and wed in love; long before the birth of our five wonderful children; long before we took our sometimes stumbling steps in learning the meaning of loving."

Time will tell how important these 120 autobiographical accounts will be to following generations. But for the descendants of these brave, determined saints, their stories will be a must-read volume this year. The rising generation of Unificationist leaders will profit from this volume and understand better, if they don't already know, what Rev. In Jin Moon means when she preaches from the pulpit of Lovin' Life Ministries that "we [the second generation] stand on the shoulders of giants."