

Traveling To the Sun - How I met the Unification Church at A Celebration of Life

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April 1, 2020

A few years before I joined the church I was in Chicago. I had a friend who had a friend who had a stained glass window studio. His friend and couple of others had developed a very successful "art business" creating beautiful one of kind stained glass masterpieces that they would sell to wealthy families in the Chicago suburbs. Their studio was in the basement of a large home in one of those wealthy suburbs. My friend suggested that we go over and hang out with them one day and "watch them make art".



At that time I was still in College at a large State University in Southern Illinois, SIU. I was visiting my friend and roommate who was from Chicago. In the summer before that, visit to Chicago, I was in NYC with a summer job. (another story for another time). While in NYC at my summer job I acquired a unique vehicle. It was a sky blue Chevy step van ("bread truck") you know the big square box with big sliding doors and a huge 6 ft wide windshield. It ran pretty good and I had faith that I could drive it back home to my college after the summer. Amazingly, I made it!



That truck turned out to be very "providential". When I got back to SIU I took a part time job in a donut shop. One of my co-workers, a college student like myself, who was a business major, suggested that we go into "business together". It seems he needed "a project" for his class and he thought this would work.

He suggested that we sell donuts on the college campus. After all we worked at a donut shop, making donuts. We negotiated with our boss to get a good price for the donuts. My part of the deal was I would supply the truck, and my friend John would put in some money and also would build out the inside of the truck and set it up with racks and shelves for the donuts, just like a mobile donut shop. My nickname was "Davo" so our little enterprise became "Davos Donuts" complete with a hand painted sign on the side of my truck. As you might imagine donuts and late night snacks at the dorms were a perfect fit and we did really well. We took turns parking the truck and selling two or three nights a week. And that is a very long explanation of how I got the truck and what I did with it.



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So, I drove my "Davos Donut" truck everywhere. Amazingly it always ran great. And I drove it up to Chicago to visit my friend. I loved that truck. On a hot summer day you could slide the doors open and feel the breeze just blow through, it was my "air conditioner" . You could see the whole world through that giant 6ft wide windshield. And now here I was in Chicago, and my friend and I were going to the stained glass studio.

When got to the studio, our friends gave us a quick tour, they were all high school friends and kind of "just started" playing around with making designs with stained glass and it became, in a few years, surprising to all, a very successful business. They showed us all the beautiful bits and pieces of the glass that they worked with, and how they created designs and then cut the small glass pieces to make the

designs and then soldered it all together in small leaded channels. Their designs were quite beautiful and exquisite, breathtaking really. It was painstaking and meticulous work. A small slip of the glass cutter and you could ruin a piece of rare glass. We watched as they cut and assembled and soldered. Then one of the group said, "hey why don't you try it?"

I needed no encouragement, after all I was a studio art major in college and I was up for anything. I thought for a moment about what I would like to create and started sketching some ideas. Cutting glass (a skill that much later in life I would become proficient at) was not like taking a knife and just carving away to get your desired design. You had a little diamond wheel tool, kind of like a small screw driver and you would actually just "score" the glass by making a tiny scratch with the tool on the piece of glass. Then you would very carefully "break" the glass at the scratched marks. It was incredibly tedious work. You can understand why a piece of exquisite stained glass artwork with hundreds of tiny hand cut pieces of glass would be very expensive. I had great respect for my "teachers" in this craft.

After 2 or 3 hours of scratching and breaking and dozens of tiny pieces of wasted glass, I finished my simple design, and soldered it all together. I was kind of proud of it for my first piece. The design I came up with was kind of an inspiration, you see even at that time, years before I would travel all over the east coast and Midwest as Unification Church member, I fancied myself as a sojourner of sorts, having already driven my "donut truck" back to NYC later that winter and then back to school (amazing that it made it with nothing more than a flat tire!) and then after graduation to Rochester, NY. My rolling, studio, mobile home, business vehicle, and reliable companion was taking me to new horizons.

It was there in Rochester, NY after a 40 days "condition in hell" (more about that later) I met "the Moonies".

One week before, I had gotten the inspiration to paint over my "Davos Donuts" sign on the side of my sky blue Chevy step van. The sign had served me well, but I didn't see any donut business in the foreseeable future so I decided it was time for something new.

Something new was a large full sized mural that I painted on both sides of my truck. It was a quick inspiration. It has been said that "necessity is the mother of inspiration" or something like that. I needed something big to cover the signs on the sides of my truck so I painted two giant snow covered mountain peaks, on both sides, with a sunrise coming up between them and a small American flag perched on the top of one peak. Little did I know it would become a "beacon" attracting "spiritual " beings.

Now, the IOWC had come to Rochester on its tour through the northeast, complete with its entourage of New Hope Singers, Korean Folk ballet and various other "characters". They were on a "Celebration of Life" tour. It was advertised on the radio as "an international musical event" nothing about a "religious message". When I heard the ad on my truck radio, I remember thinking, "wow, that sounds pretty neat maybe I'll check it out". I made a mental note of it.

About a week later after I had already been conspicuously invited to a "free dinner" by a proper English gentleman in a park, to meet some strange international people who were "discussing spiritual ideas"...I found myself in a gas station around midnight. Just as I was getting ready to pull out of the station, I was approached by a tiny Japanese lady who could barely reach me up in my truck, she was holding in her hand some small piece of paper. I leaned down to look at the paper. It was a ticket. And printed on the ticket were the words "A Celebration of Life" and some information about an international musical program being held in the upcoming week at a famous opera house in downtown Rochester. This little Japanese lady, had a bright smile but could hardly speak any English. The best she could do was utter, "please come". I felt a tug on my heart. And told her I would probably come. She smiled and thanked me and disappeared. I never stopped to think, "what was a tiny Japanese lady who spoke little or no English doing out at midnight approaching total strangers in a gas station?!" Nope, nothing weird about that.

So, I went to "*A Celebration of Life*" with all its pageantry and...a religious message, that at first, for me, was not very well received. I battled, spiritually. I had so many spiritual experiences within three days that I felt like I was on a stage in a very bizarre play. Spirits were my fellow actors, it was truly other worldly. Somehow, I managed to get to a 3 day workshop and was blown away on the second day, I "knew" I had to do this. I signed membership on 7/21/74 joining together with the IOWC and a few days later we headed to Philadelphia through the rolling hills of northern Pennsylvania. Several shiny new Dodge passenger vans and one rather scruffy sky blue Chevy step van all in a line winding its way to "The City of Brotherly Love". I donated my trusty truck to the IOWC. And there we were. Later I met that little Japanese sister who had given me "the ticket", she came running over to me when she saw "the truck". She was excitedly proclaiming, "Oh it was you!"