

Documenting the 1975 Missionaries, sent to some 95 nations all over the world

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Gary Fleischman, whose original mission country was Mali, seen here distributing food in Cabinda, a enclave and province of Angola, in the late 1970s, during the Angolan Civil War

In late April and May 1975, some 270 members from Japan, the United States and Germany boarded planes bound for some ninety-five nations all over the world. Their departure was in response to True Father's urgent heart to bring the truth of Divine Principle to the world, and that response was carried out with a commensurate degree of urgency. Most of these men and women had never been to the part of the world where their assigned mission country was located. Some had never heard of the country they were to pioneer. Most could not speak the local language well, and many not at all. Most even had no idea where they would stay for their first night after arriving in their new mission country.

True Father had announced his global missionary vision in February 1975, just after

the 1,800-couple blessing ceremony. One missionary each from Japan, the US and Germany were assigned to each mission country. In almost every instance these members had never met nor communicated before they went out to the mission field. In many cases they went with the pure faith that they represented True Parents' hearts and that they would find their path forward. They knew that a key component of their mission was the internal battle to create unity and work together.

The demographics of the missionaries from each of the contributing countries differed significantly: The missionaries from Japan were all brothers, and all were selected from among those who had just received the blessing in February of that year. They had the advantage of comparative spiritual maturity and experience in the church (some were veteran members of five or six years). But to their great disadvantage, in most cases they did not have deep knowledge of the main languages of the regions to which they went: that is, Spanish, French, English and Arabic. Among the ninety or so American, or US-based missionaries, some were recently blessed and others not. Some indeed were not more than a year or so in the church.



Early Cameroonian members involved in a community service project in 1984

Even more remarkably, perhaps, some of the German members had just been members for a few months. Because many of the older German members had already been assigned, beginning in the late 1960s, to international missions far afield and to major responsibilities at home, younger members who had joined the church just six months before stepped up and willingly offered to go.

The account of how these young pioneers made the first footsteps of our movement in almost a hundred countries is recorded in letters and testimonies they wrote and sent to the world mission headquarters over the ensuing years. Father twice asked the missionaries to write their testimonies -- once after they had

completed the originally-assigned three-year mission and two years later, when Father turned 60. These two groups of testimonies plus numerous letters and early reports contain many lessons and much inspiration for missionaries and members in the present day.



An early effort of an unidentified missionary and the foundational members at creating a financial basis to plant God's kingdom throughout a mission country, in this case, Cameroon

Hidden from view

The problem was that until recently the letters were buried in the archives in Korea, where they had been sent en masse upon the closure of the World Mission Office in New York. Many were stored for a decade in the boxes in which they had been sent; it was only in recent years that the Korean staff found time to open the boxes and put the vast array of documents in some semblance of order. Recent efforts by volunteers and part-time workers over several months have greatly improved the organization of these materials.



Nanette Doroski, cooperating with the Red Cross in her mission nation, the Philippines

For the first months, the missionaries reported to their own national headquarters, and their early letters and reports reflect this division of the mission administration. As the person originally assigned to care for the American missionaries Nancy Barton (né Neiland) worked in the US church headquarters' world mission department from the very beginning. She witnessed the inception of what is now the International Headquarters. After a year or so, Father brought representative leaders together in New York City to form the first centralized, independent World Mission Office. There, the representatives from Japan, the US

and Germany naturally faced the same primary challenge as the missionaries working together in the field -- that of transcending their own cultural leanings and creating a working relationship, and a relationship of love.

Out of concern that precious missionary testimonies representing the record of the first footprints of True Parents' representatives in many of the world's nations might be left in the dusty storerooms in the New Yorker Hotel and ultimately lost, Nancy Barton ended up looking after hundreds of the three-year and five-year testimonies, even taking them with her when she moved from one home to another with changes of mission. She was always waiting for the chance to place them in safe hands.



Nanette Doroski, bringing True Parents vision to the people through a Divine Principle lecture

Historic treasures

This year, Nancy brought seven thousand pages of testimony to Korea to be archived at the Sunhak Institute of History. Here, the documents and paraphernalia of True Parents and the movement they inspired are being gathered, and documents digitized. Although the history institute's small but dedicated staff has been unable to do much more than record True Parents' multi-dimensional activities and the most major developments in the providence over the years, the initiative was recently begun to properly archive the thousands of letters and testimonies from the international missionary work.

The first task was to sort through hundreds of file boxes of these valuable documents, arranging them according to nation. In so doing, many lost testimonies and reports from the extraordinary efforts begun four or five decades ago came to light.

Nancy Barton did more than just safely deliver unique testimonies -- many unique manuscripts describing the earliest history of our movement in nations throughout Africa, the Middle East, South and Central America and Asia. She stayed on to work with the history institute throughout April this year to supervise the scanning and proper archiving of the documents. She personally created a database, logging all the missionary names, the nations they worked in, and the official records they created -- one that can be added to as more information becomes known. Nancy's unique knowledge of the history of the worldwide missionary work that commenced in 1975 allowed her to name missionaries in the photos the history institute keeps in albums for each nation (but which were in many instances uncaptioned), and to pick them out in many photos that were still loose in boxes, waiting for identification. Moreover, she helped identify testimonies that would be worthy of publication in the future. Nancy also consented to be interviewed, providing a unique video and audio record of the earliest days of the global mission.

This initiative to archive the original missionary stories aims to preserve the original footprints of True Parents across the world. Of course, the missionaries' stories are not the only source of history. It is still necessary to gather the personal testimonies of the early members who joined in the early years -- they are the native forefathers of Unificationism in their nations, True Parents' beloved representatives in all the lands across the world.

The stories of the beginnings of our movement in many countries are full of the qualities of courage, faith, perseverance, self-sacrifice and love for others. As such, they deserve to be known, as they can instruct us in the present time, and for the future, not only for our missionary work but also for our family and community life.