

## Testimony to my Blessing in 1969: In Christ there is no East or West

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1980



*Edwin and Marie Ang are presently living at Barrytown with their children David, Joni, Dohi, Jennifer*

On the afternoon of February 28, 1969, after a very busy and intense week, Edwin and I found ourselves walking up the crowded little aisle in Upshur House, Washington, D.C. towards our True Parents to receive the blessing of marriage. The room was packed with Church members and guests, the atmosphere was charged... it seemed as if we were in a beautiful, pure garden. And although I knew very little about this older, oriental brother who was becoming my husband, I was completely sure this was the way it was supposed to be.

During the days just before the blessing, Mr. Eu was giving lectures on the Divine Principle. At the same time, in another part of the building, our True Parents had been interviewing candidates for the blessing. As newly engaged couples were announced, there was much excitement, joy and a somewhat more peaceful atmosphere. Everyone was working feverishly on the many preparations for this glorious day.

Father had decided to bless thirteen couples. As we lined up to enter the room, the emotions that I experienced were incredible. I felt great joy and yet I felt very unworthy to be there. There were feelings of sadness as some of the older Church members who had helped to guide me into the Church were not included in this blessing. But I was also filled with gratitude to Heavenly Father for this new life, realizing to

some degree that I must be responsible to maintain a high and pure standard in myself and our future family. This responsibility seemed awesome, yet quite simple. (At that time, we had almost no contact with blessed couples or families, so our understandings were quite idealistic. The reality of our mission became evident as we began our married lives and started our families. In one sense, it was a real pioneer mission!)

The emotion that amazed me the most was feeling completely confident and at peace that this was God's desire for us, even though Edwin and I hardly knew each other.

As we walked down the aisle, bowing every seven steps, I knew we were "walking through history" together as a couple to begin a new life and lineage, and that our ancestors were there, celebrating with us. It is a day that will eternally be a vivid memory.

That evening, Father and Mother asked each couple to sing. For most, if not all of the couples, it was our debut! Edwin and I were inspired to sing, " In Christ There is no East or West." It seemed appropriate as we were from the East and West coasts of this country and also were coming together from the Eastern and Western worlds. That evening, I think we all were aware of a feeling of unity with each other and our True Parents.

Yet, when one is confronted with the daily realities of life, living with a spouse from an entirely different culture, there surely are times when there definitely does seem to be an "East and West."

### **Our different backgrounds**

Edwin and I were born on opposite sides of the earth in very different cultures and climates. Yet we seemed to have a fairly strong common base on which to begin our marriage. Cultural differences have

posed minimal problems.

Edwin is Chinese but was born in Indonesia in Eastern Java. His parents are Confucianists. He grew up with many brothers and sisters in an extended family situation. His father was a successful businessman, but they lost everything during the war, including the cohesiveness of his family. As a boy, he attended a Dutch Reform elementary school. Then later, after the war, he went to Hong Kong to an Anglican (Episcopal) high school, where he became a Christian. A few years later, he received a scholarship to attend International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. After graduating from there, he was then able to come to the United States to do his graduate work in the field of economics. It was his dream (on the basis of a promise to God to do His Will) to help the poor people in underdeveloped countries. He had been in Berkeley about ten years before we met, so he was, as one Korean missionary told me, quite Westernized. He had also lived in several cultures and had grappled with learning languages.

In contrast, I was born in Michigan and raised on a farm near where my grandparents had pioneered. They had worked hard to eke out a living from the sandy Michigan soil. Their faith in God was strong and so many of my relatives are either ministers or are devoted church workers. My parents, attending church regularly, did their best to pass on to us Christian principles and values. We didn't have so much in a material sense, but I am grateful for my parents' faith in God, and the opportunity I had to grow up in a relatively healthy and pure environment. I went on to become an elementary school teacher and did some traveling abroad. This gave me some awareness of other cultures. However, I was fortunate to spend one summer traveling in Japan and Korea just before meeting the Unification Church.

This is, briefly, our background. We feel we were guided in our preparation for the blessing in many ways. So when I left my teaching position in Northern Virginia and went to Berkeley, California to join my husband in beginning our life together, it was a time of great happiness for us.

### **Life together**

The first three years of our marriage were spent in Berkeley where we saw the Center grow from a handful of members to around sixty brothers and sisters. During this time, we also had our first child. These were really years of tremendous joy and fulfillment, hard work, and also a period of adjustment to my role as wife and mother in the midst of a thriving Church center.

I was always quite conscious that my husband was of a different culture and race, but this added an element of excitement to our marriage. Somehow, through the years, as we have gone through various missions, sometimes working together and sometimes separated, I have grown to very rarely think of my husband as Chinese, but as Edwin, my husband, with his own unique personality.

I often think of the international couples in our church who are having to overcome all kinds of barriers as they work out their relationships within their family. It's exciting to marry someone from another race or nation, to have interracial children; but when there is a language problem, or a wide cultural difference, there must be trying and frustrating times too.

### **The language barrier**

I must say we have had minimal difficulties in our home due to language since Edwin has spoken English for many years. However, I must admit that the first time I talked with him over the phone, I could hardly understand him! The area of communication is so important in a marriage relationship and is sometimes not so easy, even when the same language is spoken. I really feel it is an area where one must have unlimited patience in realizing what one's husband or wife is saying or feeling. Communication is so vital and necessary, although of course it takes more than good communication for an ideal marriage.

It is interesting to see couples in our Church who each have a different native language but communicate in a third language. Their children are learning this third language, which many times is English -- or the children are being taught several languages simultaneously. Although there must be frustrating moments for the parents, what a rich heritage these children have as they continue the heavenly lineage! Racial and

external differences eventually melt away.

### **Living situation**

Before coming to Barrytown, we had always lived in a Church Center. But here we have our own living quarters away from the seminary activities. We have the tradition in our home of removing our shoes at the door -- partly for practical reasons of keeping the floor clean, and partly due to my husband's personal background and preference -- (and our tradition in the Unification Church too, I guess!) Anyway, there are times when our four children plus friends are going in and out that I wonder if it's really necessary. I sometimes would really rather wear shoes -- yet I realize we have to be consistent or the children become careless. It seems like a small thing, but one's upbringing has its effect in small things like this.

Another minor area in which I find a challenge is table behavior. There is the Eastern reach-for-what-you-need and the Western pass-the-food-to-the-left. We seem to always be somewhere in the middle of the two traditions at our house! Small, but interesting. To our family, the differences in East and West show up in subtle ways, but with a family of six, it becomes obvious!

### **In-laws**

Sometimes meeting one's in-laws from another race or country must be quite a traumatic experience, depending on their attitude toward the Church, etc. Unfortunately, I have had very little contact with my in-laws as they are living in another country. But I find it interesting to see my husband's way of serving my parents when we are with them -- showing them the upmost respect. It really won the hearts of my family! He would suggest taking them to a good or even expensive restaurant, when I knew they would be happy and probably more comfortable in just an average eating spot. The attitude towards parents the high respect that is Dr. and Mrs. Ang are presently living at Barrytown with their four children. given them in oriental cultures, I felt, has been shown to my parents by my bus band.

Each blessed family in the Church, I feel has a unique situation with the wonderful, but often challenging, task of restoring one's lineage and pioneering the path to the kingdom of Heaven as a family. It is often not easy in our situations, living in such a confused and troubled world.

Although there are difficulties in any marriage to work out, and perhaps additional problems in international or interracial families -- if you have an embracing heart and a strong and abiding faith in Heavenly Father and our True Parents and can communicate this to other members of your family, then problems can be overcome and the unity maintained and enhanced over time.

A few weeks ago, our family was on an outing and a lady came up to me exclaiming, "And who are these beautiful children?" I started to introduce them to her, but suddenly realized she was really asking, "Where are they from?" I explained our situation and she said, "Oh, don't you wish you had those beautiful oriental eyes?" It takes a person like this to remind me that our children have oriental eyes. To me they are simply the eyes of David, Joni, Dohi, Jennifer, our contribution to God's growing family which will one day transcend all barriers into one family of God in which there is "No East or West" -- only the best of each!