

Experiences with True Father, the Fisherman

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In November 1988, when Father held an ICUS conference in Los Angeles, a Japanese brother, Mr. Habara, came to make preparations. He also wanted to see what kinds of fish we catch in Los Angeles. I invited him to fish with Tom Akuzawa, Gabriel Legay and me. We trolled in Santa Monica Bay and caught some of the biggest bonita I had ever seen. He sliced them up into sushi bites and said it was delicious. He told us we should be ready in case Father wanted to go fishing. I told him we also fish for halibut.

During the conference, to inspire Father, Gabriel and I caught two nice halibut and brought them in an icebox to Pasadena house, where Father was staying. We heard Father was happy to see the fish, which they enjoyed for lunch and dinner as sushi. Later, Mr. Habara met me, thanked me for taking care of the boat, but said he would take responsibility from then on and abruptly asked for the boat key. I assumed my mission was done when I passed the key to him. He asked me to get more boats in case Father wanted to bring more people. I borrowed one Good Go boat that had no electronics and moved another to King Harbor.

Unexpected responsibility

That evening Mr. Habara called to say Father wanted to fish for halibut after the conference. We met at the boat early one morning. I had arrived at 3:00 am to clean the boat and set up the gear. Father arrived with several members, including some Korean elders. Mr. Habara ran up, gave me the key and said I would be the captain. My blood pressure must have shot up. I was expecting Gabriel or Mr. Habara to be captain. I ran to the bathroom with a bit of diarrhea. I ran back to the boat. Father was already sitting in the back. Mr. Habara introduced me to Father. I bowed but neglected to remove my hat. Mr. Habara quickly grabbed my hat and shoved it into my chest. Father laughed and said, Let's go.

We left the dock with a full boat, with everyone staying in the front. I was in charge of providing direct service to Father in his needs during the trip.

Without travelling far, I came to an area where I had caught fish before. Almost immediately, we began catching halibut. We carved the first fish into a plate of sushi. Father tasted it and said it tasted better than Alaskan halibut. They continued to catch fish and enjoyed sushi throughout the day.

I showed someone a recent picture of a large white sea bass I had caught at Rocky Point, about five miles away. Father saw it and said he wanted to go there. It would be dark soon but they wanted to go. We fished there for a couple of hours in several spots and caught a few more fish but no white sea bass. We returned about 9:00 pm to the dock. Mr. Habara said Father was happy and shook my hand.

When I got home, Mr. Habara called to say Father wanted to go out the next day with heavier fishing tackle. I went into panic mode again, fearful of somehow causing a bad experience. The stress kept me hyper-vigilant. I repaired the damaged fishing lines and re-spoiled some of the reels. I returned to the boat to clean it thoroughly and check that all the electronics worked. I slept for an hour and a half. I worried that this would effect my concentration, but I was never tired or hungry with True Father.

Making an offering

The second day started like the first. I had a moment of diarrhea just before Father arrived. I baited Father's hooks and sometimes netted and removed the halibut he caught.

Father caught an unusually large sand bass. I said it was a good tasting fish. Father had someone return it to the water, saying we sometimes need to make an offering of appreciation to the creation.



A sudden test

Third Day: I was spending so much time with True Father. I only wished I could speak Korean. I observed Father and his level of concentration. I tried not to disturb him as I stood beside him most of the time. He watched me at one point tying hooks and leaders onto fishing line. He caught a nice halibut but his leader line broke in the middle. I began to remove the broken pieces to prepare a new leader for him. He said no and motioned for me to tie the two short pieces together. A long leader of sixty to ninety centimeters is better; the two short pieces he wanted me to connect were only ten centimeters long. He made a guttural sound for me to tie them together. I looked him in the eye and smiled. He smiled back. I knew he

wanted to test my skill. To make the best knot, I spent a bit too much time. He waved his hand as if to say, Forget it. I grunted back to insist on a few seconds more. When I finished, he examined the connecting knot and with both hands pulled to test the strength of my work. The 15 lb. fishing line nearly disappeared into the indentation in his flesh that the line was making. It held and he said, Good, with a smile. A few minutes later, he changed rods and I retied an appropriate-sized leader.

We continued to fish, and they all enjoyed lots of sushi. The Pasadena sisters always prepared containers of side dishes for Father including spicy dipping sauce.

A minor mishap

Mr. Habara called to say many people would come with Father the next day. We would use all three boats and would go to Catalina Island, around thirty miles from where we had been the first day, though the larger halibut were about forty-five miles away.

At 5:45 in the morning, Mr. Habara called. The phone connection was bad; I could not hear. I called the Pasadena house and learned everyone had left already. Oh no! I quickly gathered my things and drove to the boat. Everyone was waiting for me. Mr. Habara ran over. He said Father was on the boat already.

Father told everyone to make new leaders for fishing off Catalina as a challenge to see whose leader caught the most fish. Everyone began to make a leader, with special knots and different sized hooks. The atmosphere was joyful. I saw Father make his leader and slip it into his pocket rather than attaching it to his fishing line. Others attached theirs and made ready for the long trip. The challenge was on!

Three Good Go boats sped away from Kings Harbor Marina as if in a race. The water was slick, flat and pleasant to travel on. After a few minutes we slowed down to put less stress on the motors, but about ten miles from the island my boat hit something that caused the whole boat to shudder and the motor to bounce up. The propeller no longer turned. I was embarrassed, but I had seen nothing in the water. They quickly decided to switch boats. One good boat stayed with the disabled boat after I had arranged rescue by radio giving the coordinates.

Father and the others crossed into the third boat, the one with no compass and a radio and sonar Fishfinder that did not work well. I expected them to leave with a new captain but they called me over.

Once on the far side of the island, being unable to depend on the Fishfinder, I went to the first cove where a sandy bottom was likely. We fished without catching anything. Someone said that Father was hungry so we had to catch something. I felt tremendous pressure and hoped someone would. A Japanese brother finally hooked a large seven-gill shark, the flesh of which requires soaking overnight in a brine solution to be edible. The catch excited everyone but we continued without catching a fish we could eat.

Father ate only the food the Pasadena sisters had prepared. I felt so bad. In the late afternoon, Peter Kim got a bite, but the line broke. Everyone moaned. We continued into the night but did not catch another fish. We left the far side of Catalina Island about 9:00 PM.

Everyone appeared weary and disappointed.



The leader Father gave to the writer following their harrowing experience at sea

Dangerous circumstance

I started the engine. We had no running lights and no navigation lights. That and no compass meant I had to drive back from memory. No moon illuminated the night, and with many men onboard, I could not see anything in front of me. I prayed that we did not hit any of the numerous things I knew were floating in the water. I rounded the island and in the distance could see lights from a couple of cities. I calculated which cities they were and adjusted my direction to head into the darkest point on the horizon. The more we traveled, the darker it became. A Japanese brother said he thought we should head toward the lights. I indicated each sets of lights, saying one was Long Beach, one

was Huntington Beach and the other was Newport. He went back to the others and returned to say that everyone thinks that is Redondo, as he pointed toward the lights of Long Beach. We were over twenty miles out, so no skyline was discernable. I said no, it is Long Beach. Redondo is straight ahead and I pointed into the darkest part of the ocean. We all knew we were low on fuel and only had enough to get back to Redondo. If we discovered I was heading in the wrong direction, we would not be able to make it, and we could not ask for help over a radio that would not transmit far. I understood their concern and tried to reassure them.

Father spoke. The Japanese brother said Father thinks King Harbor is that way, pointing toward Long Beach. I said that if Father wants to go to Long Beach, I will change our course, but we will end up in Long Beach. He told Father and then sat down for a few minutes. Someone on the bow became insistent, so again I heard that everyone thinks I am wrong. I said OK, if you want to go to Long Beach, I will.

This time Father stood up. He held my left arm for several minutes. Feeling as if he were my father, I smiled at him and said that if Father wants, we would go that way, but we would end up in Long Beach. I pointed straight ahead and said this is the way home. Finally, Father said OK and pointed straight ahead. After a few moments, he sat back down.

I was nervous about boldly speaking against everyone. I felt relief that we did not have to go to Long Beach but had to make sure I did not overshoot Redondo. At the angle we were going, the Palos Verdes Peninsula juts out, obscuring our view of the city lights in Santa Monica Bay. We traveled another hour and finally made out a few home lights along Palos Verdes. A little farther and they all recognized Father's favorite fishing spot. They let out a cheer releasing a lot of tension. The Japanese brother said I was a great captain and everyone clapped.

As we approached nearer, Father said to stop and fish. We were all so surprised. Emotional and physical exhaustion weighed heavy on us all, but we put out the anchor and caught a few small bottom fish in about an hour. During that time, I worked on the radio to get it to work. I contacted the Land Marine Operator, who connected me to Mr. Habara. He was relieved. The members were worried, because no one knew what was happening.

I gave our present position so he could be ready when we returned. We got back about 1:00 AM. Several members greeted us at the dock. As others shared their stories or ran to the bathroom, Father stood up, grabbed my arm and put something into my pocket—the leader he had made but never used. I bowed and thanked him. He asked for paper and pen. It was not my boat; I found only a magic marker and a paper towel. Father wrote his name on it and gave it to me. The following day, I framed that paper towel and displayed the leader on top it.