

Louise Strait, Washington, D.C., 1969



I joined in Washington, DC, on June 10, 1969. My spiritual parent is Rebecca Salonen. I was an editorial assistant at the National Education Association on 16th Street, my first job out of college. I “inherited” the job from a college friend who had to move away suddenly; she told me that Becky was something like a nun in an unusual religious order but liked her well enough anyway.

There was a whole group of us young worker bees at this project, which was quite chaotic. We took to Becky right away and she began talking to us about the “Unified Family.” When I heard they lived in a community, I was very interested. So, she would bring me to Upshur House from work, riding the bus up 16th Street, and I would stay for dinner and a lecture or program. I started coming right after the Blessing there in January 1969 but took my time making up my mind. Upshur was quite full then and I had to wait to move in.

I want to pay tribute to my background. I was raised Methodist but went to Quaker schools and the preeminent U.S. Quaker college, Earlham. It was a wonderful spiritual atmosphere. Three other members went there at the same time: Alice Boutte, Lydia Compton, and Robert Davis. The president was a member of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship and sponsored Father on his first trip to the U.S. in 1965 (he was probably also at the sitting with Arthur Ford). He is also over 90 now and very actively working for peace in the Middle East.

I was attracted to the Upshur House community because it very much echoed my college experience. I also quickly connected with others of Quaker background: Barbara ten Wolde, Diane Fernsler, and Sara Horsfall. Center life then had the interpersonal conflicts that so

many of you have also experienced, but I loved it. Every night we would join hands and sing around the dinner table; songs from the Medical Mission Sisters were the most popular ("God Is Like the Rain," for one). Miss Young Oon Kim would preside from the head of the table. From those first days at Upshur, I remember George Edwards, Hillie Edwards, Neil Salonen, Therese Stewart, Nora Spurgin, Hugh Spurgin, Sandra Lowen, and Marshal Frothing-ham. Marie Ang, Linna Rapkins, and Sylvia Norton, among the first blessed couples, had just left to join their husbands. Philip Burley was the president then.

Every night we went out witnessing, and when we returned, she was usually waiting for us, heating up some leftovers for us in the Upshur kitchen. My first witnessing assignment was at American University, where Linda Perry and I started a "New Age Club." We rode back and forth across Rock Creek Park to the campus on Linda's Vespa, before the age of helmets. I was scared.

History will look back on that ragtag group at Upshur with some bemusement. The enterprise was kept afloat by the fortunate ones who had jobs. I remember one night Neal Salonen said, "Someday the Unified Family will have an office, like in a real office building." I remember looking at him, slack-jawed and incredulous.

That was a while in coming. For a long time, the church offices were in Upshur. When Farley Jones became president and the first International One World Crusade (IOWC) teams went out after Father's first tour, I was the first person asked to quit my job and work for the church full time. As it was, I had to hand over my last paycheck because we had to pay for vans for the IOWC. It was years before I saw a paycheck again. And my "office" was in the basement of the house on nearby Varnum Street.

From that office I worked on the church publications, a mission that I have continued in one form or another from that day until this. When Neil Salonen became president, he asked me to be editor of the

Rising Tide for the Freedom Leadership Foundation. That was one of the most challenging and most rewarding missions that I have had. We won a Freedoms Foundation Award and a yearly award from the Hungarian Freedom Fighters Association; I developed a great sympathy for people suffering in the Soviet Union and in what we then called the "captive nations," and I was overjoyed at the fall of communism.

Then I went back to doing church membership publications, including *New Hope News*, the *Way of the World*, and the *Blessing Quarterly*. Upon the birth of our second child, I took on work for the International Cultural Foundation, and upon our move to Washington, D.C., I went to work for the *World and I*, where I remained until it closed in 2004. (Since then, I have worked at the American Psychological Association, which has happily taken on three other former *World and I* editors.)

I was blessed at the 1800-Couples Blessing in Korea and have had my life enriched by my husband Glenn, children Lenissa, Elgen, and Graeson, and grandchildren Andy and Shayla Byrne.

I have seen a lot and learned a lot. I have pretty much remained on the back lines and the side lines, but I am ever grateful to all those who have been on the front lines for me for all these years.