

God's Hope for America Bus Tour - The Teacher Who Didn't Speak

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Throughout his life, Rev. Sun Myung Moon was widely known as a man who loved to talk. Many were the occasions when his sermon would go on so long that night would turn into day, and back into night again. Food would sit uneaten on tables; schedules would be changed, deadlines changed, and still the speech would go on. And on. And on.

But it wasn't always like that, we've learned on this #godshopeforamerica holy ground pilgrimage.

The other day, for example, we were visiting the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York. For many of our pilgrims, especially the younger ones, it was the first time to see this peaceful retreat, a former Christian Brothers' School and Seminary about a hundred miles north of New York City.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Rev. Moon was a very frequent visitor to the seminary. He loved the students and wanted to push them to greater heights. He was fond of the faculty, who came from many different faith backgrounds, and he loved to playfully challenge them to think outside of their own traditions and think from new perspectives. He loved the mountains, and the trees, and liked to wander around the grounds communing with God and with nature.

Most of all, he loved to fish. So when he heard that the Hudson River and a lagoon bordering the seminary property were full of fish, he was excited. When he further learned that most of those fish were carp, a fish highly prized in throughout the Orient as a harbinger of good fortune, he was really pumped. He began to devise elaborate plans to capture those carp and relocate them into a lake on campus, where they could bring the school good fortune.

He had an idea to create long nets to cover the entrances of the lagoon, reasoning that once the tide went out, the water would be only inches deep, and it would be easy for the students to wade through the mud to pick up the stranded fish. There weren't any nets long enough, and there wasn't actually a lake on campus, so a stream would have to be dammed to make a lake to receive the carp. Small details!

Dr. Tyler Hendricks, who has served as both president of the Unification Church of America and of the Unification Seminary, recalled how things went from there—

“One day Father came up to UTS to begin the carp fishing project,” said Hendricks. “He came unannounced, got out of his car in front of the school, and unloaded hundreds of yards of netting. Without saying a word, he began sowing lengths of net together, adding floats every few yards or so.

He didn't look up, and he didn't ask for help, but slowly a small knot of students began to gather around to see what he was doing. After a while, one and then another found a different part of the net and began to work on that, until we had students working with him on fifty yards of net at the same time.”

After a few hours, it was clear he had no intention of stopping. Some students went off to classes, still in session, and others to the library to prepare for exams. Dinner time was another challenge: Father had not even stopped for a glass of water, and showed no signs of taking a dinner break. He went on, without stopping, until after midnight.

Throughout the entire time, he never said a word.

This was certainly a notable exception, as I will share in tomorrow's blog.

Contributed by Mike Balcomb