

The Heart of a Pioneer Missionary – Part 4

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True Father in Europe 1960s

Paul and Christel Werner joined as a married couple in the United States in August 1963. In 1964 they returned to Germany among the first missionaries sent from the US to Europe. For one year they witnessed in Wiesbaden in Germany, but then felt guided to begin the mission in neighboring Austria. This is the fourth installment of Paul Werner's story of the Austria mission. To read the other three, click on the "Early Days" title under the main title on the home page.

On Sept. 30, 1966, we established our first pioneer center in Austria in the city of Graz. Our family in Graz expanded rapidly, and in Oct. 1967 we had to move into larger quarters in the Krenngasse [Street] 19.

Elfi Schiltermandl Verstraeten, who joined May 26, 1967 and Traudi Stimpfl Ebi, who accepted Sept. 29, 1967, were our first members in Graz, and both received True Parents' blessing as part of the 1800 couples in 1975.

I'll never forget my experiences with Elfi. She was a vegetarian and walked many kilometers each day to keep fit. If I wanted to talk to her I had to tag along, which wasn't so easy for my legs, but I persevered. One day we had a severe thunderstorm, and it was raining "cats and dogs". But Elfi didn't want to miss her walk and I accompanied her, wearing my \$150 suit I had bought while I still was a businessman in Sacramento, California. We walked through the fields and pastures, soaking wet from the downpour, and up to our knees in wet grass, all the time teaching her the Principle, quite an extraordinary experience. But my perseverance paid off and she finally accepted True Parents. Each of our early members truly has a unique history.

But joy and pain are often very close together. In February 1967 spirit world warned me and told me several times: "Paul, watch out, Gerhard is going to become your Judas". I just couldn't believe it and dismissed the warning. He was such a dynamic teacher and good brother, practically my right hand, and I trusted him all the way.

But suddenly the tragedy happened. After his wife came home from a trip, he got so involved in his married life again and became the strongest persecutor of our movement in Vienna. Now I could really understand how Jesus and our Father felt when they were betrayed by their closest disciples. My heart was deeply hurt, but my main concern was, to protect the family and keep them together. Everybody was sad, but determined to work even harder to restore this nation back to God. This experience also taught me to trust my intuition and really accept the cooperation of the spirit world at all times.

In early spring of 1967 we opened up a pioneer center in Linz, with Alfons Carda, and on April 5, 1967

Hilde Maierhofer Blanchard, also blessed in the 777 couples blessing, took over as center leader.

As the family expanded, we rented a large apartment in the Oelzeltgasse [Street] in April 1967, as our second center in Vienna.



Paul and Christel Werner with their son Klaus, reunited in Austria 1966

In June 1967 Christel and Klaus moved from Wiesbaden to Vienna to join our family there. Moving from the U.S. to Germany and now to Austria, Klaus was confronted with entire different school systems each time, and by the time he graduated, he had attended 13 different schools, quite a challenge in itself.

During the years 1966 and 1967 I gave public lectures in the Porr House in Vienna twice a week, proclaiming the Principle to a wide range of people. Usually about 30 people attended and some of them had visions while listening to my lectures. After my 2-hour presentation we usually had discussions, often very lively and inspiring. Sometimes very unusual people attended our meetings. One man introduced himself as the “Incarnation of John, the disciple of Jesus”, wanting to teach us something. Others insisted on being the incarnation of other great personalities. Once an old man, who had been a preacher for 30 years, gave me sound advice, never to eat beans before giving a sermon. We had contact with all kinds of people, messiahs, prophets, people who had their own revelation, and I could talk about many interesting experiences, which a person normally does not encounter.

Many times, while I was teaching the Principle, guests, even those who had met me for the first time, had spiritual experiences. I remember talking about the mission of Jesus, when one of the guests just looked and looked at me for a long time. He was so overwhelmed by his experience and he finally told me: “I saw Jesus standing behind you.” Of course I knew myself that Jesus was very near. During those years I was especially sensitive and keen spiritually, and was able to send spiritual messages to members and guests I had been teaching. I remember one instance in the book store while standing behind the counter selling books, I focused my thoughts on a certain girl, letting her know that I was hungry. Sure enough, half an hour later she came, bringing me something to eat, telling me that she felt I was hungry. At other times I concentrated on certain guests I wanted to meet, and they “just happened” to walk down a certain street, surprised to see me there.

We were really driven by the spirit of God in those years. I remember talking to Rosemarie Stiermyer De Goy for a few hours, teaching her the Principle, chapter by chapter, after she had accepted True Parents already. All of a sudden she jumped up and said: “I can’t stand it anymore. I have to get out onto the streets. How can I sit here and study the Principle when God needs people?” Then she ran out of the door and came back within the hour with a girl, Rosi Zenz Boland. Rosi accepted True Parents and was also blessed in the 777 couples blessing in Oct. 1970. Others, such as Emmi Steberl Lee, had similar experiences.

One of my early members gave me a lot of trouble right from the beginning. She was very rebellious but finally she accepted our True Parents. Many times she ran away and we didn’t have any idea of her whereabouts. Since she had suicidal tendencies, my first thought was always in that direction. I alarmed several members to look for her, especially along the Danube River. Deeply troubled, I drove from Vienna to the city of Linz to look for her myself. At that time though she was sitting in the train to Graz, her hometown, and told us later what happened. Suddenly she saw me sitting across from her in the train,

looking at her with sad eyes, asking her: “Why don’t you come home?” She felt so much love and compassion that she just got off at the next station, and took the next train back to Vienna.

That wasn’t the end of the story though. She ran away many more times and we didn’t know where to look for her. Once, when she finally appeared again, I was so fed up that I loaded her into the car and drove all night through the mountain passes to Graz to take her home to her parents, as I couldn’t accept the responsibility for her any more. On the way through the mountains I was so exhausted and worked up, that I felt my heart getting weaker. I stopped by the roadside to relax and recover. The girl really got frightened and begged me in tears to take her back to the center. Once I was able to drive again, I turned the car around and arrived in Vienna in the early morning hours.

But after a few months it happened again. This time I took a few members with me into the prayer room and told Heavenly Father: “I’ve had enough problems with this girl now, and I’m at the end of the line. If You really want her, send her back and I’ll cope with her in the future. But if you don’t want her, please don’t let her show up again, ever!” Our center was on the fourth floor of an apartment building and as it was summertime, all the windows were open while the family gathered in our large meeting room. Several hours after my prayer we heard somebody whistling “Arirang” outside on the sidewalk. Except for our members, nobody knew this song, and I went downstairs to open the door for our returned troublemaker. I didn’t say a word, just let her in and sent her to bed. I knew God wanted her, dumping her into my lap again.

The last episode with her though surpassed all others in severity. For a while she was doing fine, but the day came when she was missing again. I had a hunch where she could be and called up a certain number. When she answered, her voice sounded dead, mumbling something into the phone, like: “This time I made sure you can’t get me in time, because I took some pills,” and her voice trailed off. I jumped into my car and found her in sad shape, her face all red and swollen. In the wastebasket I found the evidence, that she had taken 30 pills and her life was really in danger. I grabbed her and took her to the car, almost breaking her arm in the process, since she resisted with all her might. She wanted to die and refused to come along. I sped with her to the hospital, frantically looking for a doctor. Since it was evening and a weekend, only a skeleton crew was around. Time was running out and I was really desperate. Finally we found a doctor in another wing and her stomach was pumped out immediately, saving her life.



Paul Werner with core brothers and son Klaus

But what happened then came as a surprise to me too. It’s the policy in Austria that everyone who tries to commit suicide will be automatically committed to a mental institution for a certain length of time. Therefore, as soon as the doctor was finished at the hospital, she was put into an ambulance and taken to Steinhof, the mental institution in the outskirts of Vienna. Following the ambulance, all I could see was a

heavy door slamming shut and she was inside. The very next day I tried to connect with the psychologists and it took three days to get an appointment. I talked to the doctors, taking responsibility for her, so that she could be released. They finally consented and I was allowed to pick her up. There she was in this big room with all those mentally ill people, and I got a taste of that myself. Some of those crazy women yelled at the top of their lungs, others just stared or laughed like a witch, and another one paraded around, announcing that she was a queen. Our girl was terribly frightened and pleaded with me in tears: "Please, Paul, please take me out of here. I'm losing my mind." As I had vouched for her, I could take her home, but this experience was a lesson for her for the rest of her life. Since then she became a stable member, got blessed in the 1800 couples blessing and today has three children.

One of our members witnessed to another girl and invited her to the lectures. She was an attractive young girl, 21 years old, but surrounded by evil spirits. Recognizing her problems, I asked questions and she told me her story. She got involved with an old man in a satanic relationship and he really controlled her. Every time she had to pass his house, she wasn't able to walk by, but felt his eyes behind the window, staring at her, and magnetically pulling her upstairs into the apartment.

He would treat her in an extremely perverse way, whipping her among other things. Lately, every time she passed his window she heard his voice telling her to commit suicide, and she feared for her life, longing to be liberated. Finally she said, "I know for sure, if you are able to explain to me how spirit world works, I know I can be free." I had so much compassion with this girl and began to talk about spirit world, spirit possessions, analyzing her relationship with the old man, and explaining the laws of spirit world step by step. After four hours of talk I felt something like electricity going from my right side into her direction, going through her body like a bolt of lightning. Her body began to shake and she started yelling, "What are you doing to me?" But I actually didn't do anything. I just projected my love and compassion towards her and she could feel the spiritual power. After a minute or so I had a completely different person in front of me, and all those evil spirits surrounding her before, had left.

She felt such a relief and tears were streaming down her face. She was completely free. I advised her to leave the country immediately and stay with friends in Greece for at least a year to really regain her strength and start a new life. I told her not to even think about her past experiences any more, and get more involved in physical work for a while. She took my advice, quit her job the next day and went to Greece, a free person. This was quite an experience and a lesson for all of us.

Once one of our older members got possessed. She rolled around on the floor, trying to get underneath a cupboard into an opening, only four inches high, making strange noises in different low voices, as if demons were possessing her. Suddenly she got up and tried to jump out of the fourth floor window. I grabbed her, but all of a sudden she was strong like a horse.



Austrian membership growing

She had so much power that I had a tough time holding her down. It was such a dangerous situation, that I desperately called for help, praying, "Father, please help me with this girl." I felt so much compassion and love and began to cry and cry. Slowly this growling voice stopped and the demons left her. Her body was trembling as she started to cry in relief. Later she told me what happened. She found herself wrapped up in dirty rags in the gutter, small like a worm, yelling my name for help. She could see me walking down the street looking for her, but I didn't hear her voice. She was desperately trying to attract my attention to get her out of this hell. Then slowly I came into her direction, picked her up and through my compassion made it possible for her spirit to take control over her body again. It was an incredible experience for both of us and it took her several weeks to recover completely. I advised her to eat and sleep very much and refrain from spiritual work for a while. She regained her physical, spiritual and mental strength again and was a great tool for God. In the meantime, she got blessed in the 1800 couples blessing and has two children.

During those four years in Austria I taught the Divine Principle every day and had to sleep on the couch in our meeting room. After my teaching for twelve hours the room was full of spirits, and I saw them, sitting around our large table in golden attire, eager to hear more of the truth. Sometimes they walked around debating certain points, making a lot of noise as they paced the floor. They bothered me so much that I had trouble sleeping. I could feel them, sitting on my bed. It was not just a vision, but reality. Spirit world was there all the time. Sometimes I yelled at them, "Keep quiet now and leave me alone. I need some hours of sleep." But early in the morning they woke me up again.

I also had several encounters with Satan. Once he fought me in the form of a black panther. He jumped at me while I was lying in bed, and it was a tremendous struggle fighting him off. I knew I had to get up and chase him out. With all my might I pushed him away and he disappeared through the fourth floor window.

At another occasion I met him in an entirely different way. In our prayer room we had a 3×4 ft. picture of Father on the wall between two windows, and below the picture we had set up a little altar with a candle and flowers. When I entered the room one evening to pray, I saw a radiant being, clad in a beautiful robe like a prince, in front of the altar. His vibrations filled the whole room and it looked like snow was falling softly around him. I was awe-stricken and magnetically drawn by so much light and beauty and almost forced down on my knees to worship God, when I noticed a dark spot on him. I immediately sensed, this is not Father, this is Lucifer. Then I accused him: "You are Satan, get out." He immediately became smaller and smaller, turning really ugly. He disappeared behind Father's picture and took off through the window.

That experience taught me a great lesson, that we always have to be on our guard in order not to be deceived.