

True Mother's Life Story - Part 1

Unification Church History Committee
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Drawn from a book on Mother's life and work commemorating True Mother's seventieth birthday



True Mother, Hak-ja Han, was born on the sixth day of the first lunar-calendar month in 1943 (February 10 by the Gregorian calendar) at 4:30 am, in her mother's family home in the town of Anju, in Anju County, South Pyong-an Province, in what is today the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Her birth came ten years after Mr. Seung-woon Han^[1] and Ms. Soon-ae Hong^[2] had met and married in the New Jesus Church. She was her parents' only child.

Her mother's family home had a small hill behind it and a brook running nearby. True Mother looked back on her mother's home as a place that gave her a feeling of comfort and warmth. "It felt like the bosom of a hen nurturing her young. In the back garden, they grew a crop of corn for the family, and the corn plants were very tall," she remembered.

Mother's father Seung-woon Han and his family

The origin of Seung-woon Han's family line is Cheongju in North Chungcheong Province.^[3] True Father said that "chungcheong" signified that "the center of the mind is pure," and that "cheongju" meant "clear village," referring to a village where

enlightened men dwell. The Cheongju Han clan is therefore a family whose members' purpose in life is to attain enlightenment by achieving purity of the center of their minds.

True Mother's father, Seung-woon Han, was born on January 20, 1909 in the village of Yongheung in Anju County, South Pyong-an Province, as the oldest son of five children born to Byeong-geon Han and Gi-byeong Choi. He was studious in his school days, and from early on he was determined to become a teacher. After qualifying as an elementary school teacher, he taught in schools for forty-one years.

He was also a devoutly religious man. True Mother once explained, "My father was a devout believer of the New Jesus Church. Following Rev. Yong-do Lee^[4] and Rev. Ho-bin Lee, he practiced his life of faith together with Soon-ae Hong." From the beginning time of the New Jesus Church, founded by Rev. Yong-do Lee, Seung-woon Han devoted himself to the work of the church as one of its principal members.

Mother's mother Soon-ae Hong and her family

Soon-ae Hong was born on February 22, 1914, in Jongju, North Pyong-an Province, as the older of two children, one girl and one boy, born to Mr. Yu-il Hong and Mrs. Won-mo Cho, who were devout Christians.

Yu-il Hong, True Mother's grandfather on her mother's side, was a tall, kind-hearted and handsome man. He was also knowledgeable and open-minded, and a scholar of Chinese classics. True Mother reminisced that, when she first met True Father, his looks and general features reminded her of her grandfather, so she had not felt unfamiliar or awkward.

True Mother's grandmother on her mother's side, Won-mo Cho, was a woman of the modern age. Small in stature, with a pretty face, she had an active and assiduous character. In particular, she was sensitive to the changes of the times to such an extent that at the time of March 1st Demonstration for Independence in 1919, she joined the ranks of people shouting Mansei, carrying her then five-year old daughter Soon-ae on her back. Moreover, she was a devout Christian and greatly influenced Soon-ae in her religious beliefs. At the time she gave birth to Soon-ae, she had been an active member of the Presbyterian Church. Soon-ae's name was given by her minister.

When she was young, Soon-ae graduated from Anju Elementary School, and in April of 1936, she graduated from Pyongyang Seongdo Academy. She remained a member of the Presbyterian Church until

age 19.

True Mother was raised in the home where her mother had grown up; thus, she spent many hours with Grandmother Cho. Her grandmother came from a well-known wealthy family of Jongju, which was renowned for having performed many virtuous deeds for the village, and from a long time ago a legend had been handed down in the Cho clan that a princess would come to them in place of the Son of Heaven. True Mother related the story of the Cho family she had heard when she was young:

Since my family was Christian, we did not worship our ancestors and so I don't know how many generations back this story dates, but I've been told that it was around the time Korea was in a subordinate relationship to China. When an envoy of China wished to come to Korea, he needed to cross the Dalae River in Jongju, but at the time there was no bridge over that river, because the state was too poor to build one. Therefore, the state put up a notice to find someone who could build a bridge.

At the time, an elder of the family named Han-joon Cho built the bridge, with money from his own pocket. The bridge was built of stone and so big that boats could pass under it. The elder Cho spent all his wealth on the bridge, and in the end all he had left were three brass coins. He was scheduled to attend the bridge dedication ceremony and so he bought a pair of straw shoes with the remaining money and went to sleep. Then, in his dream, an old man dressed in white appeared and said, "Han-joon, you have done a remarkable deed. Heaven had planned to send the Son of Heaven to your clan, but the remaining three brass coins are weighing on our mind, and so we will send a princess instead."



Mother, wearing the Seonjeong Middle School uniform, with her Grandmother (Daemo nim's mother) Won-mo Cho

Mother's earliest years

True Mother was born at a time when Soon-ae Hong was still following Seong-do Kim,^[5] traveling to and from Cheolsan.^[6] Her father, Mr. Seung-woon Han, saw a vision and chose True Mother's name himself. "I was told," Mother said, "that when I was born, my father had something like a dream, more like a vision. A clear and beautiful ray of sunlight shone through a dense forest of green pine trees, and in that light, he saw two cranes playing together. That's why he named me "Hak-ja."^[7]

True Father said that the name, Hak-ja Han, has providential significance, in that it means "to become a scholar^[8] who has studied more than anyone else about the grieving God (God of han),^[9] and to go to God as His object partner." In particular, he explained that the Chinese character for "ja" (子) meaning "son" in the name Hak-ja indicates that "she is meant to form ties with the Son of God," and that "she was destined from birth to form a connection with God's prince."

True Mother's mother remembered, "Other babies cry, Waa, waa, waa! when they born, but when Mother was born, she did not cry; she said, Lala lala." And her grandmother said, 'I think this girl will grow up to be a musician.'"

Satan threatened True Mother immediately after she was born. Her mother had had her first bowl of seaweed soup^[10] and had fallen asleep. Satan, with black horns, approached the baby with the intention of harming her, saying, "If I let this girl be, the world will be at risk in the future; therefore, she should be killed now." Soon-ae Hong, however, boldly embraced the baby. She shouted, "Satan, go away! This girl is my precious daughter; who are you to come to try to kill her?" Engaging in a fierce spiritual fight, Soon-ae Hong continued to shout in a loud voice until her mother came running. She was astonished to hear what had happened. Soon-ae Hong also wondered, "Why does Satan want to kill this baby?" and resolved in her heart, "I will raise her to become a pure and beautiful girl untainted by the secular world."

Sometime later, she had a dream in which Seong-do Kim appeared wearing white clothes and riding a white cloud. Kim spoke to her, "Don't worry. This baby is the daughter of the Lord and you are her wet nurse. You should raise her well, bearing in mind that you are doing so in God's stead. Feed her well and nurture her." After receiving this spiritual revelation, Soon-ae Hong lived her whole life cherishing the belief in her mind that she should raise True Mother well as the daughter of the Lord.

A little while after True Mother's birth, Seong-do Kim - known as the New Lord - of the Seongju [Holy Lord] Church, was arrested and tortured. In the aftermath of the torture, she died. Mother's mother began her life of faith anew in the "Inside the Belly Church." Afterward, when Ho-bin Heo was imprisoned, Ho-bin Heo's mother received a revelation and continued to lead the Inside the Belly Church. In the year True Mother turned four, Ho-bin Heo's mother, wearing white hanbok,[\[11\]](#) blessed her with the words, "She is destined to become the bride of Heaven." Thus, the foundation of devotion to receive the Lord at his Second Coming was passed on to True Mother.

True Mother recollected the situation of the time, saying, "When I was not quite six years old, [Mrs. Heo] prophesied, 'She is the one destined to become the bride of Heaven.' She had continued to receive the revelation that a young girl not yet six years of age was born with the destiny of becoming Heaven's bride." Though she had been quite young at the time, that moment is still fresh in True Mother's memory.

"Following in the footsteps of the Holy Lord Church," Mother added, "Ho-bin Heo's group was an organization entrusted with the mission of the bride of the Lord at his Second Coming. Based on this she pronounced a benediction on me. Having received the prayer that I was the one destined to fulfill a great mission in the future, a not-so-old grandmother wearing a white jogori[\[12\]](#) called me and blessed me, saying that she had received the revelation from Heaven. I remember this all vividly."

True Father said, "Grandmother Hong has followed a historic path of suffering to receive the Lord, carrying nothing but a packed bundle, leaving everything and everyone behind her, to follow the way of her faith. This is why Mother has also been trained to do the same. That's the easiest way, isn't it? If this is the path the husband has to follow to work zealously for the providence, he needs someone from a family that will wish him to work even more zealously. With this thought in mind, I chose Mother."

Mother's father parts ways with the family

After Soon-ae Hong's only sibling, her younger brother Soon-jeong Hong, had graduated from school in Pyongyang, he began studying in Japan. From around 1940, he was away from home. Therefore, Soon-ae's parents wanted their son-in-law, Seung-woon Han, to live with them after his marriage to their daughter. Seung-woon Han, however, was the oldest son in his family and did not desire to live as a man adopted into his wife's family. Also, he was working as a teacher in Yeonbaek, Hwanghae Province, so he could not have lived with them even if he had wanted to.

Under the circumstances that True Mother had been born in her mother's family home, her maternal relatives protected, raised and nurtured her in her faith. Grandmother Hong's parents did not wish for True Mother to be raised in Seung-woon Han's household.

The situation changed in 1946, when Seung-woon Han had to flee south to escape from a threat from communist authorities. He resolved to go south, and he went to his wife's home to take her and True Mother with him. Mr. Han implored his wife to travel south with him. At the time, however, Soon-ae Hong was offering devotions in preparation, at the Inside the Belly Church, for the Second Coming of the Lord, and she felt unable to abandon the path of her faith to go with her husband. After this, True Mother never met her father again.

Seung-woon Han remarried the following year, and he repeatedly told his oldest son from his second marriage, Wee-il Han, that he had left a daughter behind in North Korea and that when the country was reunited he should go to look for his older sister.[\[13\]](#)

Although True Mother was just three years old at the time, she remembers the circumstances relatively well. She had naturally accepted growing up in her maternal grandparents' home. Although her father was not present while she was growing up, her grandmother and mother had always taught her, "God is our Heavenly Father." Thus, when she heard the word "father," she always thought of God. On one occasion, she elaborated on this:

My maternal grandmother, Won-mo Cho, and my mother led lives of consistently making preparations and practicing their faith in order to receive the Lord at his Second Coming. They never made compromises with the world. Rather than practicing their faith in the conventional way, without impinging on the comfort of their domestic lives, they served heaven twenty-four hours a day and devoted themselves to preparing to receive the coming Lord. My mother's life of faith was such that she was usually away from home, so when I was young I spent most of my time with my grandmother. Through Grandmother Cho, I came to accept faith as a natural matter of course.

"I believe my grandmother knew Heaven's will regarding me; in any case, she tried to raise me as someone uninfluenced by the outside world, so that I could grow up pure and become a precious daughter that could be useful to Heaven. She always told me, 'Your father is our Heavenly Father.' That's all I remember. She told me, 'Our Heavenly Father is the father. Heavenly Father is your father.'

"Therefore, when I heard the word 'father,' I did not think of my natural father. Instead, I thought of our Heavenly Father. That was why the thought of God always gave me a feeling of comfort and warmth. Though I grew up in an environment that those looking from the outside might find difficult to understand, I did not feel dissatisfied or discontented. I always felt snug, as if someone were constantly embracing me. I always felt composed. I never questioned my mother or my grandmother about my natural father, or why the two of them lived the way they did. I was contented with my life. In my whole life, I never harbored feelings of resentment or rebelliousness against my natural parents."

Escaping to South Korea

Communist religious oppression mounted as time passed. In 1948, Grandmother Cho and Soon-ae Hong spent eleven days in prison. At the time, True Mother was pretty and courteous despite her very young age, so even the communist authorities treated her kindly.

During that time, Grandmother Cho received a revelation to go to South Korea to find the Lord. She tried to prevail on Soon-ae to go with her. Her father also advised her to go with her mother.

Mother's mother, however, was troubled over the situation of Ho-bin Heo, who was still in prison. She was reluctant to go south, saying, "She is still in prison; how can we just leave?" Grandmother Cho continued to try to persuade her to travel to South Korea, saying that if she stayed, she would end up dead. Soon-ae Hong still hesitated and agonized over the matter, but in the end she decided to go. Walking down the road with their backs to Pyongyang, they could not speak. Their hearts were breaking.

Added to this, Mother's grandfather, Yu-il Hong, remained behind so the family would not incur suspicion. In fact, this turned out to be a final parting; they never saw him again.

South Korea was a strange place for all three, Grandmother Cho, Soon-ae Hong, and the young Hak-ja Han. They had never been to Seoul, but Soon-ae Hong's younger brother (True Mother's uncle) Soon-jeong, who had been studying in Japan, had returned to Korea in the middle of his studies when the Second World War broke out and had begun working at a Seoul chemical research laboratory. Eventually, he had finished his studies at the Seoul Pharmaceutical School, and after being trained as a pharmaceutical officer in the Korea Military Academy, he served in the military as a first lieutenant.

The three women had come south in the hope of meeting up with Soon-jeong Hong, but because he was serving in the army, they could not meet him right away. Therefore, having heard the news that the oldest son of Seong-do Kim of the Holy Lord Church in Cheolsan had come to South Korea before them, they made a plan to go to see him first.

True Mother's memory from that time differs a little from the testimony of her mother. True Mother said as she recalled that moment in time, "My uncle on my mother's side was in the army. My grandmother missed him so much that we three, my grandmother, my mother, and I, came to South Korea just for a visit, but we were forced to stay in South Korea from then on. My uncle wanted to go to North Korea, but the circumstances did not permit it, and he couldn't go."

Several days after they had left their home, they crossed the Thirty-Eighth Parallel with great difficulty. As soon as they had crossed, True Mother said, "We don't have to sing songs praising Kim Il-sung anymore, do we? I will sing a South Korean song," and all of a sudden she started to sing. At that moment some South Korean soldiers, having heard the sounds of people approaching from the north, raised their weapons. But when the soldiers heard the song they lowered their guns once more and warmly welcomed the party. One soldier said, "You must have gone through so much trouble to bring such a beautiful daughter with you," and unexpectedly gave them enough money to pay for their way to Seoul. As can be seen, though they encountered many difficulties on their way south, God was watching over them.

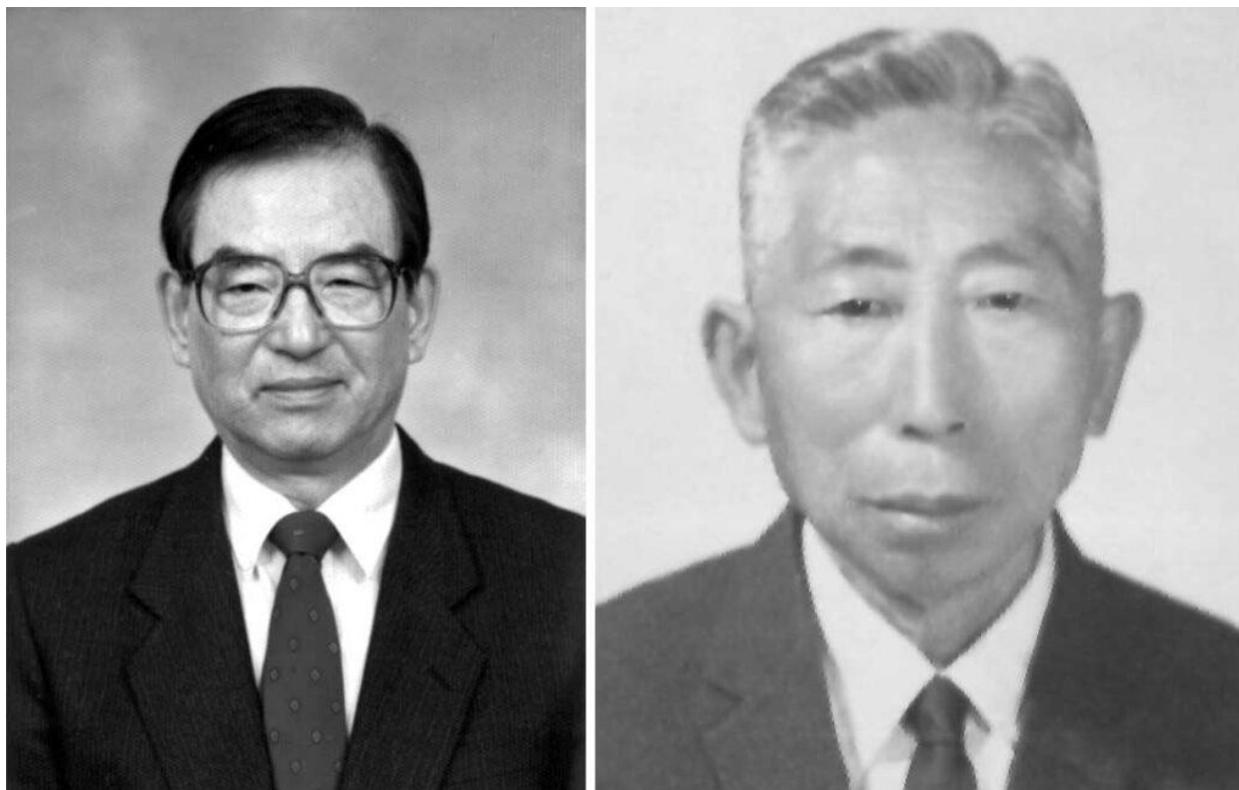
With the hope of meeting the Lord, they offered bows and prayers on the road. True Mother had been participating in the bowing rites of the Inside the Belly Church since the age of three, so she bowed with them.

Upon arriving in Seoul, they prayed, How can we find Soon-jeong Hong? Then seemingly by chance they met one of his friends near the main road. The friend guided them right to the army headquarters in the Yongsan^[14] district, where Soon-jeong Hong was working at the time. He immediately sent out his staff sergeant to find a room in Hyochang-dong^[15] for them, and had them stay there. Thanks to the foundation they had laid through the devotions they had made with prayers and bows, they had been able to meet Soon-jeong Hong and find a place to live in Seoul without much difficulty. Meanwhile, True Mother entered Hyochang Elementary School.

The Korean War begins

It was not long afterward that the Korean War broke out. Even during the war, God watched over True

Mother's family. As soon as the war began, her uncle Soon-jeong Hong came to bring True Mother away. Having received the intelligence that the Han River Bridge was going to be blown up,[\[16\]](#) he had hastily driven over in his three-quarter-ton army truck, and they left at once. As soon as they had crossed the bridge, her uncle urged his family members to get out of the vehicle, and when they had all gotten out and thrown themselves flat on the ground, the bridge blew up.



Left: Soon-jeong Hong, Soon-ae Hong's brother, who helped his sister and niece in their early days in South Korea. Right: Seong-do Kim's oldest son Seok-cheon Chung who introduced Soon-ae Hong to True Father in 1955; his son, Su-won Chung, was blessed among the 36 couples.

True Mother has given a detailed account of the situation. "At the time, many civilians and soldiers who were crossing the bridge fell into the river and drowned, but thanks to my uncle, we were fortunate enough to escape with our lives. Most Korean people of my age have gone through the war and a period of suffering, but Heaven always watched over me and protected me. I was able to live through it all without incident. During the Korean War, I was unharmed.

"While we were fleeing south, I caught a cold. My mother gave me taffy[\[17\]](#) to eat so I wouldn't cough. And when I cut myself, she treated the injury by mashing cactus and rice together and placing the mixture on it, which drained the wound."

Moving to Daegu

Later, Soon-ae Hong and family stayed in the military family relocation camp in Jeolla Province, and after Seoul was reclaimed on September 28,[\[18\]](#) they returned to Seoul and stayed in an empty house. Then, the January 4 retreat[\[19\]](#) forced them to flee south once again. Soldiers' families were allowed to get on a special train before other refugees, and they left Seoul on the train and went to Daegu. At the time, the army headquarters was in Daegu, so they lived in the vicinity of the home of Mother's uncle, who was working there.

They also met the family of Seok-cheon Jeong, who had been living in the city of Daegu for a while. He was the oldest son of Seong-do Kim, the New Lord of Seongju Church, and at the time, he was in the petroleum business in Daegu. Before Korea had gained independence, when Seong-do Kim died after being in prison, he had liquefied a part of his inheritance, and in 1944 had invested in the Chilgok Mine in North Gyeongsang Province. This, in turn, had led to his settling down in Daegu.

After the first joyful meeting of the two families, Soon-ae Hong said, "When we were living in North Korea we received many blessings through the New Lord Seong-do Kim and Mrs. Ho-bin Heo, and great miracles occurred. Since the Second Coming of the Lord is to occur in Korea, let us pool our efforts and pray together to find this path." So they lived for four years with Seok-cheon Jeong's family in Daegu, with one heart.

The older sister of Seok-cheon Jeong, Seok-on Jeong, came up from Busan, and other people came to offer prayers. While doing so, they received a revelation, "Henceforth, praying devoutly is not enough. You need to eat raw food." Therefore, Soon-ae Hong began eating pine needles. Raw pine needles hurt

her teeth badly. She also ate kimchi soup spiced with salt and nothing else. Looking back on those days, Grandmother Hong said:

I felt that it was my responsibility to put Mother through elementary school at the least, so I began a small business in Daegu. I lived solely on kimchi soup, pine needles and peanuts, eating only twice a day at that, and though I felt a little weak while working, my mind was all the clearer.

My mother came to see me and she told me, 'You have gone insane. How can you do business eating nothing but that? It is a miracle.' I felt at ease in my mind, however. I continued working thus for three months. Having been a believer of the Seongju Church and the Inside the Belly Church, all I knew was to have unconditional faith.

Moving to Jeju Island

In raising the young Hak-ja Han, Grandmother Hong tried to have her grow up pure and untainted by the world. True Mother attended an elementary school in Daegu, and she grew more beautiful each day. She was also a good student, so she was popular. Grandmother Hong was uncomfortable with the fact that True Mother was always the center of attention, because she had received many signs in addition to the revelation, "This child is the daughter of the Lord."

Not long after they had come to South Korea, a stranger who saw True Mother gave an astonishing testimony, saying in effect, "She is a sacred person of heaven and earth. She has come to do two great things. However, she needs to succeed in the righteous way; otherwise, when she goes out into the world she will become a traitor."

Surprised by what the man said, Grandmother Hong exclaimed, "How can you say such a thing?"

He answered, "This is the destiny she was born with when she came into the world." Then he asked, "Do you believe in Jesus?" When she answered yes, he said that was good.

From then on, Grandmother Hong resolved even harder to raise True Mother righteously. She spoke of the thoughts that had been in her mind at the time:

After hearing what he said, I was determined to succeed on the righteous path, no matter what. That was why I went to Jeju Island after coming to South Korea, and why when I joined the Unification Church, I thought that I would put her through middle school no matter what it takes and then fortify her with the Divine Principle and make her into one of the best Unification Church members. Not once did I even dream that she would become the True Mother.

Thus, to raise True Mother to be even more chaste and pure, Grandmother Hong moved to Seoguipo on Jeju Island in 1954. She was of the mind that True Mother should be raised as an ascetic after she graduated from elementary school. It was her mother's determination to create an environment in which True Mother could grow up thinking of nothing else but God, unshaken by any temptation, until she met the Lord at his Second Coming. Therefore, they went to Jeju Island, and at an age when she might otherwise have been playing and running around with her friends, True Mother began her spiritual training, which was so severe that even Heaven took pity on her.

At the time, True Mother transferred to the fifth grade class of Shinhyo Elementary School in Seoguipo, which is Hyodon Elementary School today. Soon-ae Hong continued with her practice of eating raw food, eating nothing but pressed barley soaked in water with radish kimchi, but she made steamed millet for True Mother. Even though that was the life they led, she also donated school uniforms and shirts to her more needy neighbors.

Grandmother Won-mo Cho had been living in comfort with her son and daughter-in-law, but she wanted to come and live with her daughter Soon-ae on Jeju Island. So finally they brought her to Jeju Island, and the three of them, True Mother, her mother and grandmother, were reunited once again. In those days, Soon-ae Hong had grown thinner due to her long practice of eating raw food.

Moving to Chuncheon

Soon-ae Hong's younger brother Soon-jeong Hong grew deeply concerned about his lonely mother, sister and niece living all by themselves on Jeju Island. At the time, his military posting was to Chuncheon in Gangwon Province,[\[20\]](#) so he wrote to them, twice, inviting them to come to live with him. At first, his sister refused, but then she got the feeling that his invitation was in some way Heaven's will, so they moved to Chuncheon.

Drawing an end to their nine-month stay on Jeju Island, they rented a room in the Yaksa district in Chuncheon. Soon-ae Hong recalls the circumstances of the time:



The Bong-eui Elementary School in Chuncheon as it looked in the 1950s when True Mother was a student there (1955). Her mother, Soon-ae Hong (later given the title Daemo nim) met and joined the Unification Church during her final weeks here.

After living in such a way for nine months, I received a letter from my younger brother asking me to return to the mainland with our mother. At first, I did not go. Then he sent another letter, asking me to bring our mother to the mainland at once. Left no choice, I then thought to myself, 'There must be a reason that we need to return to the mainland'. When I think about it now, I believe I did well to leave Jeju Island. If we had not left then, we might have continued to live there for good. So, when all is said and done, my brother saved me. I went to Chuncheon. At the time, my brother was working as the head of a distribution agency. In Chuncheon, I began my business again.

In February 1955, True Mother transferred to Bongeui Elementary School in the same district in Chuncheon and soon after moved up to sixth grade. On March 2, 1956, she graduated. In True Mother's school record, it is written, "She is virtuous and kind, somewhat refined in manner, and the most feminine among all her classmates." It also states that she graduated with honors.

[1] 1909 - 1978

[2] 1914 - 1989, Father gave her the posthumous title, Dae-mo, in English, Great Mother

[3] Today, the provincial capital of South Korea's North Chungcheong Province. Koreans use their lineal place of origin to distinguish two family lines that use the same surname with the same Chinese character(s). (Some surnames, such as Lim, are derived from more than one Chinese character with the same pronunciation.) Han is used for only one lineage, and its Chinese character is the same as that in Hanguk (Korea).

[4] A young preacher whose charisma led him to gather some 6,000 followers before his early death from tuberculosis at the age of thirty-two.

[5] Seong-do Kim (1882 - 1944) was the woman leader of the Seongju [Holy Lord] Church, who had received from God some details of what later became key points of Divine Principle that differ from traditional Christianity. Her daughter had received the name "the New Lord" (for her mother) in a revelation.

[6] In North Pyong-an Province, very close to China; in 2009, the North Korean military established a missile launch complex (Sohae Satellite Launching Station) on its outskirts.

[7] "Hak" is Korean for crane.

[8] "Hakja" in Korean

[9] Of this, a Korean professor of anthropology writes, "Han takes the form of a painful, invisible knot that an individual carries in her heart over a long time, made of a complex of undesirable emotions and sentiments such as sadness, regret, anger, remorse and resignation¹. Han is represented in the languages of Korea, Japan and China."

[10] Traditionally, Korean mothers eat this for some time after giving birth, to replenish their strength.

[11] Korean traditional clothing

[12] The upper portion of a hanbok that women wore on ordinary occasions; the skirt, which begins well above the waist, is known as chima.

[13] Wee-il Han did manage to reconnect with True Mother (his half-sister) and is now working with one of the Tongil Foundation businesses.

[14] The Yongsan Army Base is still located in the middle of Seoul.

[\[15\]](#) A mile or so from Yongsan.

[\[16\]](#) By the South Korean side, to help prevent the North Korean advance to the south

[\[17\]](#) Traditional Korean candy made of rice.

[\[18\]](#) After General Douglas MacArthur's famed landing at Incheon on September 15, the UN-backed troops quickly changed the tide of the war.

[\[19\]](#) The Chinese entered the war later in 1951 and Seoul was retaken by the communist forces.

[\[20\]](#) Northeast of Seoul