

True Mother's Life Story - Part 2

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 (left) with friends at with other members of the Seong Jeong Girls' Middle School Painting Club, which she attended from 1956 to 1959

True Mother's mother joins the church

True Mother's mother, Hong Soon-ae, came to know True Father while she was residing in Chuncheon. Jeong Seok-cheon^[1] had read an account in the Donga Ilbo newspaper of the May 1955 incident of students being expelled from Yonsei University and Ehwa Woman's University and wrote a letter to his sister, Jeong Seok-on, who was living in Busan at the time, to tell her about it. On her deathbed, Kim Seong-do had said to her children, "A church will arise that is misunderstood as a lewd group. Its members will thus be persecuted, even imprisoned, just as we were. When such a church appears, you should know it to be the true church and go to find it." They therefore felt in their bones that they must go and find this church. As soon as she received the letter, Jeong Seok-on went to Seoul with her daughter.

At the time, however, the Unification Church was in complete disarray, with its leaders in custody^[2] and parents of expelled students coming and going constantly. Consequently, they returned to Busan and Mrs. Gang Hyeon-shil introduced them to the church there. Jeong Seok-on informed her brother, Jeong Seok-cheon, who was living in Daegu, about the current situation. Upon receiving the communication, he made his way to the Daegu church right away and listened to Divine Principle lectures for a week. Realizing that the Divine Principle was more detailed and biblical than the teachings of the Holy Lord Church, he joined the church in June.

Hong Soon-ae had been living in Chuncheon at the time she received a letter from Jeong Seok-cheon in November 1955. The letter told her about a church in Seoul exactly like the Holy Lord Church. It said that the minister in that church was coming to Daegu to speak to his followers and that she should come at once and listen to him. Circumstances did not permit her to go to Daegu at once, however. She put off going there until the following month, December. It was at this time that she had a special revelatory dream. She dreamed of a great river that flowed from the east over a bed of white pebbles. A Turtle Ship^[3] shining in all its splendor appeared, and as she listened to the sound of rowing oars, a white dragon opened the top of the ship and came swimming out. It waved its tail and stopped in front of Hong Soon-ae to welcome her. Then it leaped into her bosom. Startled, she awoke.

Afterward, she just lay there, thinking to herself, "That is strange. Elder Jeong told me about a great church, which I was about to go to, and though I am in many respects an inadequate person, it welcomed me."

After receiving the revelation in her dream, she went to Daegu, where Jeong Seok-cheon told her, "We have finally found our Lord. We prepared his clothes in the Inside the Belly Church to receive him. Now we have finally found him. He came to Daegu and spoke to us." Then he told her that the minister had returned to Seoul, that his teachings were the same as those of the Inside the Belly Church. He added that he was a young, handsome man who sang well, who watched movies, and who was given to swearing occasionally. Though his description made him out to be quite human, in contrast to her expectations, her mind was filled with conviction.



Rarely seen photographs show Han Hak-ja, now True Mother (standing, third from the left) among classmates, and (second from the left) with friends. These were taken during the time she was living with her uncle and his family.

In a way, she was glad that when she reached Seoul she would be able to meet the one she had yearned for, but she also felt inadequate. She blamed herself for being so foolish as to wander around and suffer as a result. If she had been wise, she would have stayed in Daegu, and during those four years she would have found the Unification Church. Yet she had failed to do so. She had gone to Jeju Island and foolishly lived on raw food and made herself suffer, but she had not found the one she should have, so she was filled with regrets. With such thoughts in her head, she was sorry and felt that she had fallen short.

As she was preparing her mind in this way, she had another revelation in a dream. She saw two golden dragons bowing with their heads toward Seoul. Mrs. Hong thought to herself, "On my way to Daegu I saw a white dragon, and now that I am about to leave Daegu I see two golden dragons. That is strange."

She immediately went to Seoul, where she met and paid her respects to True Father at the old headquarters church in Cheongpa-dong. Surprisingly, he was the same person she had twice dreamed of while she was a member of the Inside the Belly Church. She was awestruck and she did not know what to do with herself.

Hong Soon-ae listened to what he said with her heart overflowing with gratitude and grace. Father, however, treated her coldly, calling her "You, you!" - as if he were implying, "What could you possibly know?" Though he spoke warmly to the people she had come with, he completely ignored her.

A war raged in her heart. He was the one she had received revelations about in North Korea. He was the one she had to follow now, in life or in death. She had to serve him even after her life ended. Here he was, though, treating her as if he were angry with her. She was at her wits' end as to what to do. She could not help feeling lost.

So she continued to pray, "Heavenly Father, our Teacher is very angry with me. What should I do? What sins should I confess?" When she had prayed for quite a while, she received the response, "You need to pass through this crisis at any cost. Otherwise, you will become like Judas Iscariot."

True Father treated her so coldly that it was apparent to everyone. On Christmas Day, he handed out Korean popcorn to the members, and whereas he conveyed warmth as he gave handfuls to other members, when he came in front of her, he almost threw it at her. When others came or even a lone person, he welcomed them warmly. He spoke to them all through the night and gave them love, but he did not do that for Mother's mother. Thankfully, he did not tell her to go away, though. She felt that if he were to tell her to go away, she would die. God had told her to endure everything and weather the crisis, so she persevered. When there were other members, she went in and sat with them in front of him. After a week of living in this way, her inner suffering was so severe that her heart burned and her lips became cracked.

At the end of the week, Father gave the Sunday sermon. He spoke of Jesus' heart, saying, "How great is the sin of the Israelites for failing to receive Jesus, who came as their true father, and instead crucified him?" From the moment Father began his sermon to his last word, Hong Soon-ae wept incessantly. Though she had wept many times in the New Jesus Church, the Holy Lord Church and the Inside the Belly Church, she had never cried her heart out as she did then. Though she wept and wept, she did not feel relieved. She was amazed in her heart, which ached, and she felt so sorrowful that she could not even speak.

When he gave his sermon, she felt as if he were speaking only to her. At the end of the sermon, before the other members left, Jeong Seok-on said, "Teacher, there is a person here who wept from the beginning to the end of your sermon." Upon hearing that, Father asked, "What is that person's name?" When Mrs. Hong heard that, she thought to herself, "I'm saved!" And when she went into his room and greeted him, he told her, "Right, sit down there!" This consoled her and filled her with such gratitude and reverence that her heart felt about to burst.

Meeting True Father

Right after Han Hak-ja graduated from elementary school in March 1956, her mother told her, "The man we were bowing to in the Inside the Belly Church has appeared in Seoul, so let us go there and pay our respects."

They went to Seoul together. Her mother led her to the Cheongpa-dong church and had her offer a bow to Father. From a young age, True Mother practiced absolute obedience in matters of faith.

After she had bowed respectfully to him, Father asked who she was. When her mother answered that she was her daughter, he asked, "You have such a beautiful daughter? Does she go to school?" After learning her name, to the surprise of all, three times Father said, "Han Hak-ja has been born in Korea!" Mother's mother said to herself, That is strange. Why did he speak of this daughter of mine three times?

Father then said, "Han Hak-ja, you will have to make sacrifices from now on."

True Mother recalled the circumstances:

I did not get a chance to meet True Father in North Korea. I met him for the first time in Seoul after we came to South Korea. At the time, I was thirteen years old and had just graduated from elementary school a short while after we joined the church. We had followed a path of such great difficulties before then that we could not be sure of what lay ahead. Moreover, we had no inkling of what was going to happen in 1960.

When I met True Father for the first time, the moment he saw me he closed his eyes and meditated, and then spoke to me, almost as if he were whispering in my heart. He asked, "What is your name?" I answered, "My name is Han Hak-ja." Then he said, "Oh, Heavenly Father! You have sent this wonderful woman, Han Hak-ja, to Korea. Thank you!" He had been meditating at the time and he spoke almost as if to himself, but those were the words I heard.

In that moment, it seemed to me that True Father, the founder of the Unification Church, was receiving a special revelation about my future, so I thought it somewhat strange. At the time I was living in Chuncheon, Gangwon Province and Father was at the church headquarters in Seoul. Chuncheon and Seoul were quite a distance apart.

Middle school days

Mother graduated from elementary school in 1956, but she had been unable to go on to middle school immediately. Her uncle, Hong Soon-jeong, came to Chuncheon and discovered that Mother's mother was in prison^[4] and that Mother (the young Han Hak-ja) had been staying at home, unable to go to school. He brought her to Seoul with him without a moment's delay. Fortunately, Seong Jeong Girls' Middle School was still permitting late registration, so she was able to enter the school right away.

Han Hak-ja entered the school on April 10, 1956 and graduated on March 25, 1959 in the school's third

graduating class.^[5] During this period, she lived in the Donam and Shindang^[6] districts of Seoul with the family of her uncle, Soon-jeong Hong. She sometimes cooked meals for them.

Her school record shows that she was honored with awards in her second and third years consecutively as the student with the highest grades in her class. Her interests and skills included drawing and reading. As she had in elementary school, during her three years in middle school, Hak-ja showed talent in art. She served for three years as a senior member of the class council, and in her second year was the vice-chief of the general affairs division while serving concurrently as a student leader. In particular, in her third year she carried out student government activities as the head of the steering committee. As the leader of the steering committee, she displayed her leadership potential. True Mother spoke of the circumstances of the time:



I recall that, when I was young, in middle school or thereabouts, I was made the head of the steering committee. One time I had to go up to the podium in front of the whole student body and tell them decisions the committee had made. After I had made the announcement, I came down. I was told that Mrs. Han Jeong-ae, our Korean language teacher at that time, and other teachers who are still working in the school, all said, "Wow! Hak-ja is truly amazing!" I had always given the impression to those around me that I was a quiet and docile student, difficult to approach or befriend, yet I had gone up and made this announcement in public. All I had done was give an explanation.† That was my first experience of speaking to a large audience.

In the social development section of Mother's middle school record, it says, "She is courteous, kind and responsible; she contributes to her class by setting an example for others. Her character is both calm and cheerful." Under the general assessment section, it says, "She has the highest grades in her class and she behaves in an exemplary manner," but it also mentions that "she is physically frail and has missed classes."

High school days

Hong Soon-jeong was working in the supply office of a hospital on a military base in Busan, to which he had been transferred in 1957. Hak-ja needed to go to high school after graduating middle school, but her uncle's family had to relocate to Busan with him. They were in a dilemma because she was without a relative in Seoul who could protect her. Hak-ja entered St. Joseph's Nursing School, the predecessor of the Catholic University Nursing School, in March 1959. Older classmates recommended the nursing school dormitory, saying that it followed strict regulations and was a safe place. Accordingly, after graduating from middle school, Hak-ja attended nursing school and stayed in the student residence.

Hong Soon-jeong said, "At the time, True Mother was a young girl, but she spoke fewer words than a man and she was very composed." Under her mother's strict guidance, Hak-ja maintained a chaste and pure life. About her life in those days, True Mother said the following:

I was of a gentle disposition, and was well known in the school as a girl who enjoyed reading or listening to music in a quiet atmosphere. I also gave the impression that I was quite an intelligent girl. I was not emotional or excitable and always rational, so to people I met for the first time I would have seemed like a rather cold person.

My life at the time was almost like that of a nun. I avoided doing anything with men, and like a flower blooming in a greenhouse, I completely isolated myself from the outside world. I now know that all of this was part of the preparations made by Heaven to purify me, the woman who was destined to meet the Lord and become his bride one day, but at the time I knew nothing of that.

From the first, I was not an extrovert; on the contrary, I remained quiet, preferred to keep my distance from the world and was happy enough in my own company. When it came to men, I acted as if I did not notice them; not once did I even look at the men around me first. It was because I felt embarrassed in a way when I looked at them. I also felt that I would lose my innocence if I did.

In my school days, I did not like gadding about. I avoided sports and enjoyed reading in solitude. Whichever school I attended, the teachers all loved and protected me. Perhaps it was because I was relatively diligent, but the teachers took good care of me. They said I was not like other children of the time and that I should go out more, but only because I liked to sit still and stay quiet rather than because I had more worries than others or anything like that.

Even when I reached puberty, I did not worry about life. My maternal grandmother and my mother had implanted in my mind the faith of living a life of serving Heaven at all times.

From time to time, I read novels such as *Tess*,^[7] and I thought to myself that later in life I would like to live in the country with a friend. My friends sometimes said to me, You are somewhat prudish, but you will be the first one of us to marry.

[1] The first son of Kim Seong-do, leader of the Holy Lord Church

[2] Father and four leaders had been arrested and incarcerated in Seodaemun Prison pending trial.

[3] A late-sixteenth-century armored ship Koreans used in sea battles

[4] She had laid hands on and prayed for a mentally ill young man who subsequently died. Father later said, "Although her [True Mother's] mother had to experience prison life, it was all a blessing." He went on to indicate that it was an instance of restoration through indemnity.

[5] The school later relocated within Seoul and changed its name to Seon Jeong Girls' Middle School. It and a later-added accompanying high school were purchased by the church business foundation in 1987.

[6] In Korean, the term district is appended to the name as the suffix 동. Readers are likely familiar with Hannamdong and Cheongpadong.

[7] *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy