

HOW I RAN OFF TO SEA AND BECAME A MOONIE

Dagmar Corales



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Some thoughts before telling these stories

Why would a person nowadays still accept an arranged marriage? What is this "Matching"? How about these International Blessings? How do they work? Why would somebody give up a steady job to be part of a traveling fundraising team, with no personal income?

My hope is that these stories will answer these questions. These are stories about a culture, they are also about faith and beliefs—they are about a group of people and the culture they created.

Ours is a true cultural experience, because the Unification Church members all around the world created their own cultural hemisphere, in which parts of the Korean and Japanese cultures were incorporated and took a leading role. The Unification Community anywhere in the world, be it in Europe, Africa, North or South America, Oceania or Asia, has the same basic lifestyle and traditions, the same festive celebrations throughout the year and the same basic pattern of name-giving for their children, among other things.

Here I am talking about a certain time period, roughly speaking between the 1970s and 1990s, because then the Founder of "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity" or simply "Unification Church", Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon, had changed the organization into the "Family Federation for World Peace and Unification". It wasn't just a name-change, but a change of lifestyle, outreach and self-understanding as well. Now we consider ourselves "Unificationists" and the "Moonic-years" are undoubtedly and irrevocably over. That's because worldwide, there are many "Unificationists" who were never Unification Church members, but who identify with our ideals and live according to our principles in their respective walks of life. Also there are thousands of couples worldwide of very different faiths

and cultures who nevertheless have accepted the Blessing as their own way to follow in matrimony. What, then, is a "Unification Church member"?

Whoever was part of the experience I'm portraying in my stories, was part of a close-knit family, with their own rules, experiences, highs and lows. Closer than the members of a convent, we would watch over each other jealously, care for each other and help each other grow in every way.

I wrote down these stories continuing with the Unification Church tradition of sharing our experiences.

I hope these stories will amuse you, but my hope is also that they may be a bridge to the more profound things in life. Remember the movie *Karate Kid*? Daniel wanted to learn karate from Mr. Miyagi, but all that Mr. Miyagi did was make him wash his endless line of cars. He showed him, "With your right hand you wash like this... With your left hand you polish like that..." Daniel, obediently, went on to wash cars; and he washed and washed and washed...until at one point, very angry, he stepped up to Mr. Miyagi and told him off: "You promised to teach me karate! All I did was wash your stupid cars! Forget it! I'm out of here!" Then Mr. Miyagi proceeded to attack Daniel, and Daniel instinctively fended him off with the movements he did hundreds of times while washing the cars. A very astonished Daniel just heard Mr. Miyagi say: "You come back. Tomorrow morning. Nine o'clock." He had learned something after all! He just wasn't aware of it. This really decides our destiny: Do I spend my whole life "washing cars" or do I learn karate?

This is a collection of stories to be read while sitting around a campfire in good company—I provide the stories, you provide the campfire. Still, maybe the campfire is easier than the good company. Why don't you try your next door neighbor? Invite him or her on the next weekend for a barbecue, coffee and cake, just whatever is done in your part of the neighborhood. Just go out and meet somebody. Don't stay alone and isolated in your cubicle of life. *Life* is happening all around you, be part of it! And then—write your own stories and share them with your new-found friends.

These stories are dedicated to all of those who have gone

through life "with the heart of a father but in the shoes of a servant," as Rev. Moon has taught us. They are dedicated to all of those who have given the best years of their lives "sowing sweat for earth, tears for men, and blood for heaven," regardless of where they are or what they are doing now. Just remember the angel Clarence from *It's a Wonderful Life*: "No one is a failure who has friends".

May the Living God always be with you, show you the right way and protect you on your roads throughout the great adventure that is life...

Were you ever approached in, say, Pisa, in the late 1970s, by a neatly dressed German girl, offering you a magazine and asking you for money for her Church?

She could well have been Dagmar, the author of these fascinating tales of a young lady swept up in the enthusiasm of a new life with the Unification Church, as she followed the Father, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, on his special path to world peace and unity through Christian worship.

What makes young people devote their lives to such a cause – or a new religion? Living austere and disciplined lives, fundraising all over Europe, fasting and praying and finally, getting married – all this because 'Father knows best'!

Well, it was the international atmosphere, the strong bonds of friendship, and the desire to change the world, says the author, and, quoting a kindly Catholic priest in Nürtingen, 'You are all wrapped up in the fire of first love'.

Has the love survived? Read Dagmar Corales' stories of selflessness, optimism and spiritual grace, and decide for yourself.

Dagmar Corales is now working in Argentina as an English teacher and a freelance translator. She lives with her family in the Greater Buenos Aires area and is involved with the different activities of the "Family Federation for World Peace and Unification".

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