

The Power of Choo Choo...Pow! (MFT Oakies at the Washington Monument)

Greg Davis
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It was 1976, the year of the famous, and infamous, Bicentennial of America. True Father, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, was planning to speak at the Washington Monument on September 18 as a grand finale for the historical "God Bless America Festival," which had been launched at the beginning of the year.

I, like thousands of brothers and sisters, had been pulled off of "frontline" MFT (mobile fundraising team) duty to participate in the Yankee Stadium event that took place in June. That event was clearly a battle between heaven and hell, and in spite of the fact that we literally reversed the weather patterns inside the stadium by "chasing away the rain," singing "You Are My Sunshine" with all our hearts, True Father declared it a "victory."

Although some of us, maybe, were not sure. He said in his historic speech at the "victory" celebration at Belvedere, "...now I know you can succeed at the Washington Monument rally." Father, always with the "providential numbers."

As a veteran MFT team captain, I wasn't so sure about my future participation in the coming weeks. It seemed that few events, historical or not, altered the consistency of frontline MFT work. And, after a typical quick reshuffling of members, teams, and regions, my team and I went back out, to the streets, parking lots, shopping centers, and bar runs, of...Philadelphia. In summer 1976, Philadelphia was where it was all happening. A party in the streets every night.

As a veteran MFT team captain, I wasn't



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However, in early September, my team, as well as hundreds of others from around the country, were "called in" to join forces with the thousands of brothers and sisters who had already been working day and night preparing for the historic "Meet Us At the Monument" campaign, in cities all over the country. The plan was for Rev. Moon to address a crowd of 300,000 at the Monument and we were there to help "prepare buses."

Now everyone has heard, "God works in mysterious ways," so, as it turned out, my team, was sent to...Baltimore. We were assigned to work with an already established group headed by members who came from...Oakland, California.

In 1976, many had "heard" of the "touchy-feely" success the "Oakland Family" had in swelling the ranks of the Unification family. And the stories became legend.

Indeed, many "Oaklandites" (or Oakies) had survived the transition and were stellar members of MFT and missions beyond. Even so, there always seemed to be some mystery of their...magic.

Now, we were instructed to "work together" with our Oakland brothers and sisters and that "they were in charge." Okay, no problem. "Unite, unite. Let's unite into one..." If only it was as easy as singing a song...I'm quite certain the job would have been done long ago. World peace? No problem.

But, peace between hardcore frontline, blitz-all-night MFTers and choo choo pow'ers -- that was going to be challenging.

So, after the first night, meeting and making "pleasantries" with our new colleagues, we went to bed. After a good night's rest -- six hours! -- we were awoken with strains of "when the red, red robin comes

bob, bob bobin...." Oh no, the legends were true.

After a hearty sit-down breakfast, at a table, we heard about strategy and were formed into smaller teams and plans were made. There was a very bright, laidback, aura in the room. Kind of "a peaceful easy feeling..." vibe. Wasn't sure what to make of it.

After the strategy sessions and small group meetings, we came back together and then it happened...we all made a big circle and *held hands* and then they started... *choo choo choo, choo choo choo, choo choo choo...Pow!* After *pow!* they (we) all threw up our hands and then clapped. Everyone was laughing and grinning ear to ear. So...there it was.

I was assigned to work with "Margie," a tiny wisp of a sister (not all of five feet tall; I am 6' 4") and she was an "electric powerhouse." She had an intensity of spirit that belied her diminutive size, and a smile that could melt icecaps. This was going to be interesting.



Some of the witnessing material for the Washington Monument campaign

The "strategy" for success at Washington Monument was simple. We were going to "love bomb" the entire East Coast and put everybody on buses. We were going to send tens of thousands of chartered buses (hopefully filled with eager guests) to Washington, DC, on September 18.

We were going to work in small teams and go everywhere, passing out flyers and signing folks up to "get on the buses." We explained who we were, and what the activity was (get on the bus). In all the respective headquarters "numbers" were put up on a board daily as to what locations were sending how many to DC.

In the context of combing the streets of all the areas in all the cities on the East Coast, inviting people to "Meet Us At The Monument," the members on the teams and in the small groups got to know each other. As we walked for miles, we shared our stories, talked about where we'd come from and a bit of our respective journeys.

In the beginning it seemed that "Margie" was a

bit "irritated" by me. Perhaps my size was intimidating or she felt I was a bit "stiff" or "militaristic." Anyway as the days wore on and we continued choo choo powing in the evening, before turning in, things seemed to gradually change.

Margie had a delightful laugh and enjoyed telling stories of "the farm" and her journey. Apparently, like many who "joined in Oakland," she was "backpacking" across the country and ended up in California. She said she was looking for something, but wasn't sure what and that she had become disillusioned with so much of life and was not especially religious but "knew there was a higher power"...out there.

She explained that she was excited when she met the "Oakland Family" and immediately "felt at home." And, after several months she was surprised to find that she was "somewhat of a leader" and had no problem accepting that all this "goodness" had come from Rev. Moon and his teachings.

She had been surprised and challenged when she was chosen to come to the East Coast and take a leadership role in preparing for Washington Monument. And now here she was, leading me and my colleagues on this seemingly impossible task of mobilizing tens of thousands into hundreds of buses all to converge on Washington, DC, on September 18. But the numbers started adding up not only for us in Baltimore but all over the East Coast and Chicago.

Margie was indeed a dynamo and she loved to remind me that "dynamite comes in small packages." After a few days I began to relax a little and let go and... "let God." We didn't talk a lot about Divine Principle or Father's words, as I recall, but we went out with hearts full of joy and shared that with the people. We were telling them that this amazing man, Rev. Moon, had a message from God to all Americans at this historic time, the Bicentennial, and that we were inviting them to come and listen. And afterwards we were going to have a big party.

All they had to do was get a ticket, sign up, and...get on the bus. And "magic" was in the air.

Meet us at the Monument. September 18th.

The Washington Post
September 5, 1976

The Washington Star
September 5, 1976



Over the next 13 days we'll be inviting you to meet us at the Washington Monument on September 18th. Enthusiastic young men and women will be approaching you personally, asking you to come to the God Bless America Festival to the singing, the dancing, the picnicking, the listening and the world's greatest international fireworks.

At the same time, you'll see an unprecedented media campaign in support of these

young people — newspaper ads, TV and radio messages and posters. The reason is not only that it takes an extensive effort to reach every person in a large area like Washington, D.C., but also that this event takes place in perhaps the most crucial period of our nation's history.

More than ever, today we need God with us. He is the key to solving the growing problems of crime, drug abuse, moral corruption and universal

conflict. To discover God we historically have needed mediators and we believe Reverend Moon is playing such a critical role today. Therefore we think it is vital that his message be heard.

Moreover, we feel that Reverend Moon and the Unification Church have been seriously misinterpreted by certain members of the media. Obviously, sensational allegations make sensational stories. But in many instances

this has been done at the expense of truth. In our upcoming newspaper ads we'd like to confront some of these issues. Ultimately, we want you to hear Reverend Moon in person and make up your own mind.

September 18th will be a day for you. Washington Monument will be a place for you. And Reverend Moon? He may be the man for you. We hope you will meet us at the Monument.

FESTIVAL PROGRAM

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God Bless America Festival
with the World's Greatest International Fireworks

For information call 466-4260 or write to: God Bless America Festival, 1365 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036

The first of 11 full-page newspaper ads that ran in The Washington Post and The Washington Star from Sept. 5-18, 1976. The ad campaign was conceived by the well-known advertising executive, Stephen Baker.

And sign up they did. Every night at the boards we were asked about "sure guests" and "sure sure guests." And we kept choo choo powing. I was beginning to enjoy our evening recap meetings and our closing prayer.

I saw and experienced the joy and excitement with which the teams went out (and came back) day after day. We were spreading the love and everybody was feeling it. The numbers were going up and the buses were being reserved. We were nearing the finish line and everybody was so high with excitement, anticipation and wearing kilowatt smiles. I felt no tension or stress or sense of "Oh no, something is going to go wrong" at all. And of course, some things did go wrong, but we just "worked through them" and chugged right along.

The morning of September 18, 1976 came and we...got on the buses. We *all* got on the buses, and as history tells it, there *were* buses. Every major highway and thoroughfare was jam-packed with buses as

far as the eye could see, in every direction. And indeed myriads of souls did "meet us at the Monument."

Thank you, "Margie" (wherever you are) and thousands of brothers and sisters, for teaching this "stiff-necked" Midwesterner about love and heart. Miles and miles and miles of heart. And Margie, though small in stature, had the biggest heart of all!

Hmmm... maybe there is something to this "choo choo pow" after all.

Gregory (Greg) Davis is a transplanted Midwesterner, who met the Unification Movement in Rochester, NY, and joined the IOWC in July 1974. After working on the streets of New York giving out tickets for the Madison Square Garden speech on September 18, he was sent to MFT where he spent the next seven years, with brief interruptions for work on the 1976 "God Bless America Festivals" of Yankee Stadium and Washington Monument. Greg was blessed in July 1982 with the 1275 couples and is happily married living on Long Island. He and his wife are the proud parents of two daughters, and grandparents of two granddaughters.

Graphic at top: *The poster used for the 1976 Washington Monument campaign (Note: A full-color hi-res graphic was unavailable at press time, but if someone who has one can email us a hi-res JPG or PNG file of this poster or the similar flyer, we would gladly use it instead).*