

## Timeline of my first 40-odd years

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**Our family in the mountains of Seoraksan national park, South Korea, in April 1999**

**Chronology of my life until my arrival in Cyprus in early 1983, with more detailed accounts of some important periods and experiences I haven't covered much in other writings, plus a very short timeline from 1983 to the 1990s.**

**1951 Feb:** birth in Esch-sur-Alzette

**1957-1964:** elementary school Esch-Brill, 7 years.

**1960 ca. May:** Holy Communion

**1961 Summer:** One-week trip to Koksijde, Belgium with group of schoolkids organized by the Luxembourg Red Cross. This was the first time I saw the sea and swam in it. I had learned on my own to swim when I was about 8.

**1963 early August:** Traveled by train to Austria for about one week with Esch-Grenz boy scout group, staying at a chalet we rented at Tauplitz in Styria (Steiermark). Saw big mountains for the first time and

was totally fascinated by the sight of 2,351-meter Mount Grimming. Also was stung by wasps twice, including once on the lid of one eye, which swelled up and bothered me a lot for a short time.



**Our Esch-Grenz boy scout group at Tauplitz, Austria with local friends, summer 1963 – c. Esch-Grenz anniv. booklet**

**1964-1966:** Technical secondary school, preparation for apprenticeship, "*Ecole Professionnelle de l'État*" (EPE), Esch

**1966 Sep-1967 Feb:** Apprentice fitter at Luxembourg's largest steel mill Arbed Belval (my first paying job) and continuation of technical school EPE (36 hours' work in the steel mill plus 12 hours of classes per week – 48 hours); I quit in February 1967 after half a year because I believed my chances were not good to be accepted for training as an electrician, which is what I really wanted. Only a relatively small group of the best apprentice fitters were chosen after one year to be trained to become electricians. My ultimate goal at the time was to study electronics.

**1967-69:** I switched from the steel mill+EPE to "*Lycée de Garçons Esch*" (high school – really junior high) in mid-year. As I came from a different education program I had to start from the beginning, meaning I was 3 years older than most of my classmates. At this time I started learning English. In Luxembourg in 1968 the full high school program was increased from 6 to 7 years, which meant that I would have finished high school at age 22 – earliest (I wasn't good enough to be able to skip a year or two). I passed the "examen de passage" ("halfway" or junior-high exam/diploma) in 1969 and then



decided to quit school and get a job.

In the summer of 1968 I applied for a scholarship from the American Field Service to study for a year at a high school in the US. I had to write an essay in English on a theme I don't remember. My application was accepted but I could not go because I did not have enough money to pay for the trip, and my parents could not help me at the time as our means were very limited.

In late 1968 or early 1969, I met middle-aged American itinerant evangelical preacher and puppeteer Ben Barker at Clervaux youth hostel (no longer in existence as far as I know); he was on a cycling tour of Europe; my first American friend – I corresponded with him for a few years until around 1971-72 (still have some of his letters from that time).

Also at that youth hostel, I responded to a bulletin board pen pal request from Japan and then corresponded with Mitsuo Sekine in Sapporo/Hokkaido. A few months later he traveled overland across Asia and Europe to Luxembourg and stayed a few days with my family in the summer of 1969. He traveled around the world for two years through about 100 countries on an extended sabbatical from Hokkaido University. After this journey he finished his studies in Sapporo and became a physician. I corresponded with him for a few years but lost contact when I went to America in 1975; in 1986 I got in touch with him again through Hokkaido University, then we met in southern Japan in 1988, and in 1993 he took me and my family on a tour of Hokkaido Island; then later he came to see us in Luxembourg in 1994, 2009 and 2010.

During these last years of the 1960s I had my first struggles with religious questions and doubts about the Catholic faith I had been taught, and also my awakening to politics. We got our first black and white TV set in 1967 and I could see shocking pictures of what the US was doing in Vietnam, which led me to regard America as a world bully. I once joined a protest march against the Vietnam War to the American Embassy in Luxembourg City.

**1969 Oct-Dec:** worked at Banque Générale, Lux. City headquarters, Service Portefeuille (bank transfers). It was a high-pressure desk job and I really didn't like it, so I quit after three months when I was accepted by Luxair Luxembourg Airlines as a reservations agent.

Around this time I developed a strong desire to travel the world, which was first kindled in the mid-1960s when I read many short adventure stories and also several books on the great explorers of earlier times, and heard stories about World War II from my father and others.

**1970 Jan – 1972 Sep:** worked at Luxair as reservations agent starting 7 January 1970. -- Our Luxair reservations department was located in the Air Terminus building next to the tall CFL office building at Luxembourg City train station – not at the airport. Some time later we moved our office to a rented apartment in a building across the street, next to the old Alfa Hotel. I never worked at Luxembourg airport – though one of my brothers and one of my sisters both did (they joined Luxair later).

My first one-week trips with free tickets provided by Luxair took me to Vienna in July and Paris in November 1970 and to London in April 1971. In September 1971 I flew to Ivalo in Finnish Lapland with my first free ticket from another airline – Finnair. From Ivalo I hitch-hiked and walked for three days around the northern tip of Finland and Norway, and slept 2 nights out in nature without a tent. It was a most memorable experience. [erwinlux.com/2020/12/06/my-very-brief-arctic-adventure/](http://erwinlux.com/2020/12/06/my-very-brief-arctic-adventure/)

**1972 Mar:** 2-week trip to Iran and Afghanistan. -- In March 1972 I flew to Tehran, Iran on a once-weekly Lufthansa flight. This was my first trip outside Europe. I met Taff (or Taffy – Iltaf) at Asia Hotel in Tehran, and he proposed to take me on a journey to Lahore, Pakistan, in a big Ford Galaxie 500 he had

bought in the US if I paid for half of the gasoline used. I accepted because I wanted to go as far away from Luxembourg as possible, though I still wanted to get back to my job two weeks later. We made it as far as Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, and I had to return to Tehran by public transport in order to catch my flight home.

[see: [erwinlux.com/2005/07/11/my-first-journeys/](http://erwinlux.com/2005/07/11/my-first-journeys/)  
and: [erwinlux.com/2021/08/19/on-my-first-trip-to-iran-and-afghanistan/](http://erwinlux.com/2021/08/19/on-my-first-trip-to-iran-and-afghanistan/) ]

After this adventurous journey I found it difficult to go back to my daily work routine in Luxembourg.

I began to believe that I should leave Luxembourg and try to start a new life in another country. I felt I could not fit into this society. Apart from a certain social awkwardness and my particular idiosyncrasies it was especially my total inability to find a girlfriend which made me feel I did not belong here. I always felt I absolutely needed a female companion or partner but it never worked out because I was too awkward in trying to win one. I became infatuated with one beautiful girl after another but on the very rare occasions when a girl actually seemed interested in me I almost immediately lost interest in her. My real problem was that I was very afraid I would not know what to do if a girl came to me.

**1972 Aug:** smashed my first car (a 1964 Opel Kadett) at Ottange/France while drunk (it had cost only 8,000 francs / ca. 200 Euros). -- I had a crush on a beautiful and vivacious French young woman (A.G. of Algrange) who joined our team at Luxair reservations. We sort of became friends and I got to know her family in France and even slept one night in her bed when she wasn't there, but it was always clear that she was not interested in me as a love partner or companion. She was always after other men, and she was very popular. Once in August 1972 after a night of bowling and drinking with her and her father, brother and sister on the French side of the border I had a serious car accident. Her younger sister was with me in the car and she herself was with her father and brother in a car just behind me when they saw my car overturn in a complete barrel roll. They were shocked, and although neither I nor the sister were hurt the incident led to the ending of our relationship.

I had long been fascinated by the Amazon Jungle because several years earlier I had read a book by a German explorer who visited many of the tribes there in the 1940s, and I had marveled at the black and white pictures of those people whose lives were so different from ours. I got the idea to go to Amazonia and perhaps settle down there. A colleague at Luxair suggested that it might be a good idea to go to Cayenne, French Guiana, to get a first taste of the jungle before heading to Manaus in Brazil, as I was thinking to do. I resigned from my job in September 1972, and surprisingly the Luxair director still granted me a free ticket to Cayenne on Air France – even though I was not entitled to one. I had asked for a one-way ticket to make sure I wouldn't chicken out down there and come back too quickly, but he gave me a round-trip one.

**1972 Sep:** Left Luxair; with last free ticket, flew Air France B-747 to Cayenne/French Guiana but stayed only 3 days and returned to Paris; then took train to Strasbourg and hitch-hiked to Munich/Germany. -- At Cayenne Airport I was the only person on the 747 Jumbo jet who wanted to go to Cayenne itself – all the other passengers were engineers and their families who headed straight to the space base under construction at Kourou up the coast. In Cayenne I talked to the *sous-préfet*, who didn't think I had a chance to find a job there or an apartment – and I had no qualifications for any decent job in Kourou. I realized my money wouldn't last long as Cayenne was more expensive than expected. A couple of months before leaving Luxembourg I had received a letter from my friend Taff from Pakistan who suggested that he and I could meet in Munich and start a business there to make a lot of money in the wake of the Olympic Games (1972). Re-reading that letter in Cayenne I thought that sounded like a good idea – and I could come back later with a lot more money.

After only 3 days in Cayenne I flew back to France and hitch-hiked to Munich.

**1972 Sep to Nov:** lived about 7 weeks in Munich; around 10 November, hitch-hiked back to Luxembourg. -- I stayed at the Pullach youth hostel and later rented an apartment when I worked for Manpower as a fork lift driver at Linde gas company in Dachau. I also tried my hand as a magazine subscription door-to-door salesman with devastatingly miserable results. Based on my excellent work certificate from Luxair I was offered a job for El Al Israel Airlines at München Riem Airport but declined because I didn't want to abuse their trust since I wasn't planning on staying in Munich too long. Taff never showed up, and I spent too much money having fun at the Oktoberfest with some American friends I'd met in Pullach. Finally, after only a month and a half in Munich I hitch-hiked back to Luxembourg – penniless.

**1972 Nov-Dec:** worked ca. 3 weeks at Rêve d'Orient carpet store Luxembourg City. -- While working in Luxembourg City for a few weeks in Mme. Servais' carpet store on Boulevard Royal I got a letter from Taff inviting me on a trip to Lahore, Pakistan. I was to be a backup driver. He and his brother Fakhar and his family (wife and 3 small boys) were planning to drive 2 cars, a VW van and a Ford Capri 3000 GT, from Rochdale/Lancashire, England where they lived via Luxembourg all the way to Kuwait, where I could stay with their oldest brother Hamid while they were going to race across Saudi Arabia to Jeddah, pick up their mother at the airport there in early January 1973, take her to Mecca and Medina for her first and probably last *Hajj* (the full Islamic pilgrimage – not *Umra*, for those who know the difference), and then return to Kuwait a month later for the rest of the trip with me to Lahore.

**1972 Dec 19 to 1973 Feb 27:** trip to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran (original final destination was Pakistan). -- We left Luxembourg on 19 December 1972. After an adventurous journey driving almost non-stop day and night we arrived at Abu Kemal (or Al Bukamal) on the Syrian-Iraqi border only 5 days later, on Christmas Eve 1972. The Iraqis insisted we needed to get visas from their embassy in Damascus in order to be allowed to proceed across their country to Kuwait.

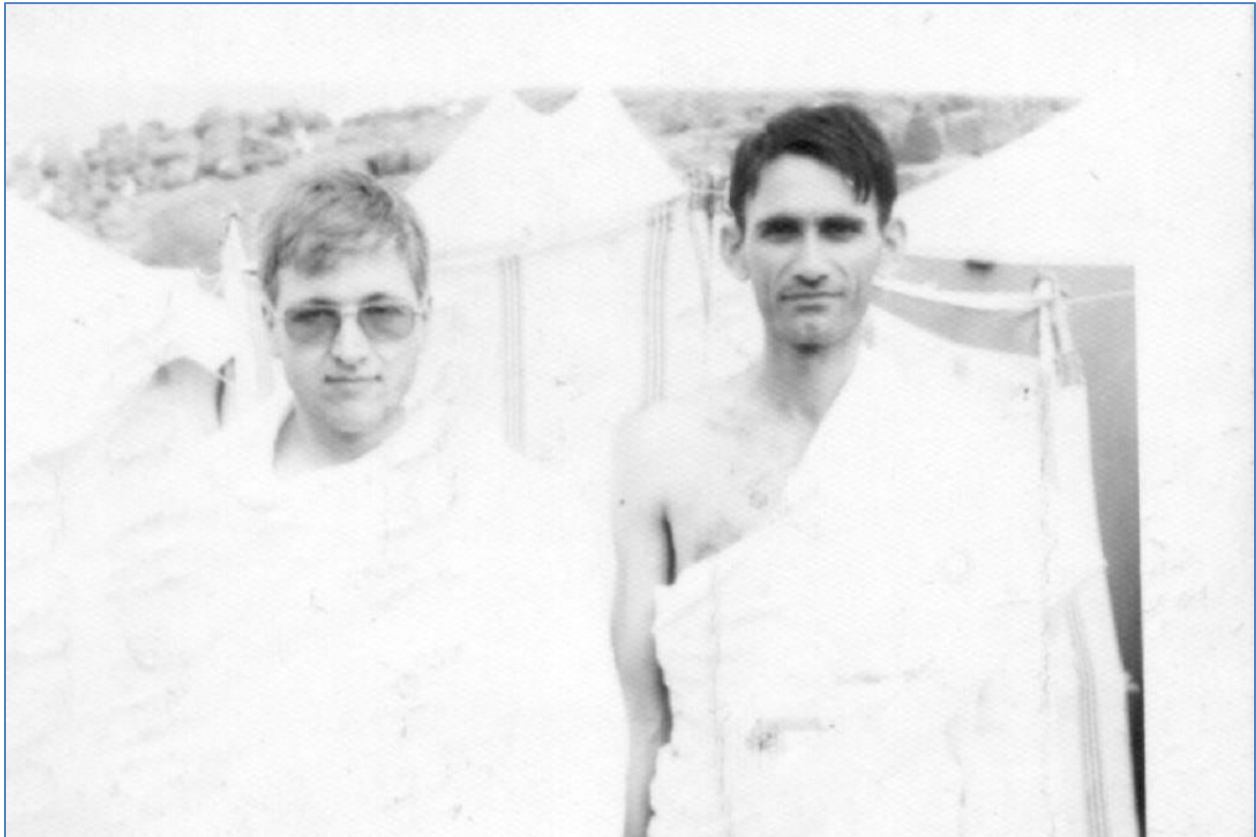
**1972 Dec 24-28:** Syria. -- Fakhar and his family stayed behind in the VW at the border while Taff and I raced back to Aleppo and then Damascus in the Capri. At the embassy we were told it could take up to 2 weeks to get the visas (the Iraqis made life difficult for us because of a diplomatic problem they had with Britain at the time). That was impossible for us. We had no way to contact Fakhar, so we drove all the way back to Abu Kemal via Aleppo (roads were not good enough to take a shortcut), and then returned in both cars to Damascus in order to proceed from there across Jordan into the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia, where the holy cities are (in the Capri we had thus driven nearly 3,000 kilometers in Syria alone). On the way Taff and Fakhar told me I would either have to return to Europe on my own or become a Muslim so I could go with them, as non-Muslims were not allowed in Medina and Mecca.

I officially became a Muslim at the Saudi Embassy in Damascus, where Taff and Fakhar vouched for me. I got a special pilgrim visa for Saudi Arabia and a new name: Omar Hussein (Hussein was my friends' family name).

**1972 Dec 30 to 1973 Feb 1:** Saudi Arabia; Haj, Medina, Mecca, Mina tent city, Jeddah; then across via Riyadh to Dammam and then Kuwait City. -- We drove to Medina, where we met Taff's Filipino friend Abdullah Mahdi (original name Leonardo Villar), who studied at the Islamic University there. Abdullah was to be our guide. The only two photos I have from my time in Saudi Arabia were taken by him. In Medina we had to prepare for our first visit to the Kaaba in Mecca, over 400 km to the south, by taking a bath and putting on our *Ihram* clothing, the two simple white sheets wrapped around the body that must be worn during the pilgrimage.

We arrived at the holy mosque in Mecca late in the evening of 31 December 1972, and I slept part of that

night on some steps in the colonnade surrounding the big central courtyard where crowds of people were making the rounds of the Kaaba in a counter-clockwise direction – what is called the *tawaf*. The next day we performed the same rite and the prescribed walks between the small rocks of Safa and Marwa, and drank the water of the Zamzam well, etc. Later we set up a big tent a few kilometers outside the city in Mina among thousands of other tents. We lived there for the next two weeks or so, and returned to Mecca a few times for further rites in the great mosque.



**At Mina tent city outside Mecca with Mr. M. Qureshi from Pakistan, 10 Jan. 1973; he was an uncle of Razia, the girl my friends thought I should marry in Jeddah.**

A few days after arriving in Mina we went to Jeddah to pick up Taff and Fakhar's mother, *Ummi*, from the airport. She stayed with us in the tent in Mina, and for the *tawaf* in Mecca we paid two men to carry her around the Kaaba on a sort of stretcher with a basket in the middle.

Near the end of our stay in Mina we spent a day at the foot of a hillock called Jebel Arafat, a few kilometers away, and then picked up pebbles in a place on the way back to Mina called Mustalifa. The pebbles were used the following day to throw at the *shaytan* (devils -petrified in this case) in Mina, three stone pillars with low walls around them. Also, an animal had to be sacrificed for every pilgrim. I gave some money to my friends who arranged for sheep to be slaughtered for us. I saw huge herds of sheep, goats and other animals near Mina, and large piles of bones of animals killed in earlier years. As a white European I seemed to be a curiosity in Mina and was invited by many people into their tents for a cup of tea and a chat.

After the main part of the pilgrimage in Mecca and Mina was over we returned to Medina and rented a ground floor apartment in the old quarter behind the great mosque. We stayed there for more than a week together with *Ummi*, mainly to say the 40 prayers during 8 consecutive days prescribed in a *hadith* (an

account of the sayings and actions of Prophet Mohammed), and to visit the prophet's tomb and the Jennet Al Baqi cemetery, where many of his relatives and companions are interred. We also visited Jebel (Mount) Uhud and various other important sites from the early history of Islam. I could not resist climbing to the top of a rock on the 1,077-meter Mount Uhud above a famous cave that played a role in the Battle of Uhud – the second battle in Islamic history, and Abdullah took a picture of me coming back down, which I still have.

The quarter where we stayed seemed like a town from the Middle Ages. I learned from Abdullah much later that it was torn down a few months after our stay to make room for an expansion of the mosque.

After we saw *Ummi* off at Jeddah airport on a flight back to London we stayed a few days in the house of a Pakistani family living in Jeddah. My friends suggested that I could perhaps marry one of the daughters of this family, a 16-year-old girl named Razia. They said I might be able to stay in Saudi Arabia and get a scholarship to study at the Islamic University in Medina – just like Abdullah. I told them I was not at all ready to get married and settle down. They were concerned that I was not serious enough about studying and practicing Islam, and they felt their relatives in Pakistan, with whom we were going to stay, would not appreciate that. Taff and Fakhar themselves did not worry so much about me not trying hard to be a good Muslim but they believed their family would not accept me as I was, and this is why they no longer wanted to take me to Pakistan with them. Their family in Lahore would have been informed by "Ummi" that I had been on the pilgrimage with them.

So I decided to try to find a job on a ship. We first went to the port of Jeddah but were not allowed to enter for this purpose.

**1973 Feb 1 to Feb 27;** drove from Jeddah to Riyadh via Taif and then on to Kuwait City (arriving 1 February), where we spent 9 days in a villa of the Al Balool family with whom Hamid lived, then via Basra/Iraq (ferryboat across the Shatt Al Arab waterway) to Abadan/Iran, where I stayed behind alone to try to find a job on a ship, there and in nearby Khorramshahr. No chance. I took a train to Teheran (on my 22nd birthday, 11 February), stayed a few days, then took another train to Istanbul/Turkey, stayed 2-3 days, then went again by train via Belgrade to Ljubljana/Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) and on by bus to Kranj, which cost me my very last penny. From Kranj I hitch-hiked back to Luxembourg over 2-3 days, spending nights outside in the cold (February).

**1973 Mar to July:** worked short-term jobs in Luxembourg, then about 2 months at Avis car rental agency, Luxembourg Airport.



**My father inspecting ruins of ancient Carthage, July 1973**

**1973 July 8-15:** Flew Luxair Caravelle to Monastir, Tunisia, together with my father (his one and only trip outside Europe), using free tickets provided by my brother, who still worked for the airline (he was going to make the trip with my father but then something came up that prevented him, so I used the ticket issued in his name). We had a good one-week vacation in Sousse and Tunis together, and also visited the ruins of Carthage.

**1973 July 20 to 1974 Feb 14:** England and Ireland; went by train and ferryboat to England, lived in Hayes/Middlesex until end-August (6 weeks) and worked for Trust House Forte at Heathrow Airport Terminal 2 duty-free store; then moved to Rochdale/Lancashire at the invitation of Taff Mughal, lived in a house owned by his family and worked as a bus conductor for SELNEC Northern bus company based in Manchester; left the job and the town abruptly early November when confronted by Muslim co-workers who knew I was a Haji (one of them had come to my favorite pub one evening to buy cigarettes and saw me drinking beer there – which is *haram* – forbidden for Muslims); moved to Kensington/London (Kensington Student Centre) and worked at Army and Navy Stores on Victoria Street in the Radio and TV Department; left the job in December and traveled by train and boat to Dundrum near Dublin/Ireland where my brother Gilbert stayed with friends; spent ca. 3 weeks in the Dublin area, mostly drunk and high on hashish and opium (took LSD just once); together with my brother, his girlfriend and others returned to London via Liverpool, then stayed again in Kensington and worked short-term jobs for Industrial Overload at Tottenham Court, including a 2-day stint carrying large furniture eight floors up in the main BBC building.

**1974 Feb 14 to early March:** Left England for the continent, almost penniless again; hitch-hiked to Verden south of Bremen in Germany, spent one night out in the snow, then met some hippies whose address I got in London from 2 French professional thieves; the hippies gave me an address in Paris, so I hitch-hiked to southwest Paris, where other hippies at the given address let me stay in their well-stocked apartment near rue de Versailles while they were away on a vacation in the Savoie; stayed 10 days in Paris and walked all over the city; the hippies from the apartment were members of *Mouvement pour la libération de l'avortement et de la contraception* (MLAC), and based on some evidence I found might have performed abortions in their apartment; finally I hitch-hiked from Paris to Longwy and walked from there during one night in a few cm of snow to Belvaux (about 20 km), where a driver gave me a ride home to Esch in the early morning.

**1974 Mar to 1975 Mar:** worked short-term jobs (for Manpower Lux.City), then was accepted by Dupont De Nemours to work in the Typar physical testing laboratory near Contern, rented a room in Contern; worked at Dupont nearly 6 months then got bored by routine and quit; worked odd jobs again for Manpower, including one for 2 weeks at Eurotex (not sure of name? – we were doing quality control of freshly-assembled JB Lansing loudspeakers) near Bascharage where my boss was an American evangelical Christian (forgot his name) who told me a lot about the Last Days, the Apocalypse, as interpreted in the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey.

During this time I developed my ideas about a coming nuclear World War III that would wipe out modern civilization, probably around 1979; I made my plan to go live in the woods of British Columbia/Canada for at least one year as a survival test and then head for the southern hemisphere – Patagonia to wait out the expected nuclear war; my final job in Luxembourg was a 3-month stint as a van driver delivering washing machines and other large household appliances all over Luxembourg for Neckermann in Lux. City.

**1975 Mar 6: USA, first journey: 4 years and 4 months until 1979 July 7:** Flew to New York, intending to take a train to Montreal and hitch-hike to British Columbia; met Noriko S. of Japan (and others) in front of Madison Square Garden, who invited me to a lecture on "Divine Principle", talking



about the Last Days (right up my alley that time) and the need to unite religion and science, etc.; lecture by Irishman Aidan B. was interesting; agreed to attend a 3-day workshop in the countryside upstate to learn more about this movement, Unification Church and its founder Sun Myung Moon of Korea; went to Barrytown 170 km north of NYC on the Hudson River with many other young people, and after much prodding from some of them stayed after the 3 days for 7-day, 21-day and 40-day workshops; decided the Moonies with their Divine Principle had a better idea that could save humankind without first destroying civilization as I believed necessary, and I joined them (later that spring in Barrytown I saw Moon for the first time; he did not make a good first impression: he looked like a rich westernized businessman and seemed extremely arrogant -- but I was sufficiently impressed with many of my new Moonie friends and the Divine Principle to overlook this; I was never able to shake off that first negative feeling, though); worked on the small farm (we grew corn, etc.) at Barrytown, then spent over a month in Boston restoring a basement apartment where we then invited people to try to bring them into the fold; later I worked in New York City and traveled a few times in a big truck to the Sophie Mae factory in Atlanta/Georgia to pick up loads of peanut brittle (candy), which we dropped off for mobile fundraising teams (teams of young people who went door to door or approached people in shopping mall parking lots to sell candy, flowers, etc. at inflated prices allegedly for a good cause but in reality for the Moon movement -- often without disclosing for whom they worked) in the Carolinas, the Virginias, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio; finally I moved to Washington DC to work in a church printshop but felt constrained and bored, and decided to travel around on my own and to think about God and the world without having Moonies all over me; I told my friends I had to leave them because I needed a break but would be back within anywhere from three days to two years; I wanted to visit a friend with whom I had worked in New York and who had left the Moonies to return home to California; the others asked me to promise to visit a church center in California, which I did.



**Two of my new friends (brothers in the Unification Church) in front of Belvedere center in**

## **Tarrytown, New York, in the spring of 1975 -- Polaroid photo**

**1975 Nov 11-27: 16 days' "vacation" from the Moonies:** hitch-hiked from Washington DC to Durham/North Carolina (where I spent a night under a highway bridge), then along Interstate Highway 40 up to Asheville near the western end of North Carolina; was getting ready to sleep under another bridge there when a blue car stopped by the side below; amazingly the driver (whose name I don't remember, only his handle on CB radio: the Blue Blazer) was on his way from Miami/Florida to a place called North Highlands in California; he took me along; we drove along I-40 across Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas (Panhandle – Amarillo) and New Mexico to Arizona, where he dropped me off in Seligman west of Flagstaff (he wanted to go back to Ash Fork to visit relatives there who could tell him where North Highlands was, since none of the many truckers he contacted via CB radio had known the place -- much later I learned that it was a suburb of Sacramento); I hitch-hiked to Kingman/Arizona and then in the night on to Yucca (the big burly guy in a small truck with a rifle inside who picked me up late evening in Kingman threatened to throw me out in the desert if I didn't give him a blowjob -- but I managed to get him interested in talking about God and the world's problems, and when he dropped me off near Yucca he said it was the most interesting conversation he'd had in years); slept under a bridge on I-40 near Yucca and got a ride next morning with a Mexican family on the bed of a pickup truck among sacks of potatoes and onions; they took me to Thousand Oaks west of Los Angeles, then I continued to Santa Barbara, and on Highway 101 to Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo and on to San Francisco, and across the Golden Gate Bridge to San Rafael, where I stayed a few days with Brad Bufkin.

Brad later took me to Sacramento. I wanted to travel north to British Columbia, going back to my original plan before I met the Moonies. I tried to hitch-hike north for 3 days (sleeping in some bushes near Interstate Highway 5 to Redding) -- no success. Then I met a hobo at the local soup kitchen and he talked me into going south with him to Indio, near Los Angeles, where he was sure we could get jobs during the winter (I could always go to BC later on). We rode freight trains but got only as far as Stockton. Later, not far from there, he got badly hurt on one train, breaking his hip bone, and I had to take him to a hospital in Tracy. I couldn't stay with him: I was an illegal alien (that's another part of the story).

Later the same day, Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 27), I was robbed of all my possessions except my passport and a few dollars near Livermore, then a fundamentalist Christian guy gave me \$ 60, and I was about ready to look up the church again. I couldn't find the church center in Berkeley, but in the evening I ran into two young guys who invited me to a free Thanksgiving Dinner at a place on Hearst Avenue near Berkeley campus. That turned out to be the Unification Church, under a different name (Creative Community Project)....

[see: [erwinlux.com/2006/12/09/memory-of-california-thanksgiving-1975/](http://erwinlux.com/2006/12/09/memory-of-california-thanksgiving-1975/) ]

**1975 Nov 27 to 1976 Nov 7:** Boonville, San Francisco, then Tarrytown, New York and Washington DC; I attended workshops of the Creative Community Project in Boonville/Mendocino County/California for about 5 weeks and also worked on the farm there, then spent the month of January 1976 "witnessing" (proselytizing, trying to win converts) in San Francisco, mostly at Fisherman's Wharf, where we invited people to have a cup of tea or coffee and donuts while listening to lectures in a converted bus we called "Dumbo".

We also once swept and cleaned some streets near city hall and were proud to see our efforts shown on TV. At the end of January 1976 about 30 of us left California on that Dumbo bus, headed for New York. We were fresh recruits from California, where a lot more Moonies were produced than on the East Coast, and were sent to help on the other side of the continent.

We traveled east along Interstate Highway 10, the southernmost major route just north of the Mexican border. From El Paso/Texas we turned northeast via Abilene to Dallas, where we cleaned some streets

and tried to get TV coverage of what the Moonie leadership called the God Bless America Bicentennial Cleanup Campaign (1976 was, of course, the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence).

We then went on to do the same in several other cities along our route: Birmingham/Alabama, Atlanta/Georgia, Raleigh/North Carolina, Richmond/Virginia, Washington DC and finally New York City, then headed to Barrytown for a 21-day workshop; after that I worked in Tarrytown (50 km north of NYC) for a few weeks refurbishing an old house called the "Green House," then in New York City (in a 7-story building at 4 West 43rd St.) installing window air conditioners in church offices there.

In August my brother Gilbert, an evangelical Christian, came to visit me in New York after spending some time street witnessing in Canada during the Montreal Olympic Games. He was traveling with a British girlfriend and they invited me to spend a few days with them at an evangelical Christian youth camp near Camden, New Jersey. I joined them at the camp for a few days, and later they attended a 2-day Divine Principle workshop in New York City. They had hoped I would turn to Jesus and I had hoped they would be inspired by Moon instead – but in the end we parted with our own different beliefs unchallenged.

1976 was a very important year for the Moonies as Moon held his two biggest rallies ever in the US as part of what he called the God Bless America Festival. The first one was held in New York's Yankee Stadium on 1 June, and the second at the Washington (DC) Monument on 18 September. According to the Moonies, several hundred thousand people attended the two rallies. Even if their figures were inflated the rallies were really big events.

I went to Washington DC in late August to prepare to bring people to the September rally there, and worked mostly in Silver Spring/Maryland, where my old friend Ben Barker (from 1969) had once lived. I wasn't successful at all, so later I was surprised that other Moonies had managed to bring huge crowds to the rally. It's quite possible there were indeed 2-300,000 people at the Washington Monument listening to Moon.

After the rally I stayed on in DC and, to sort of atone for my failure I volunteered to join a fundraising team; sold flowers for the Moonies door to door and in parking lots mostly in small towns of northern Virginia, and once also in Hagerstown/Maryland. My results were among the best of the team the first 2 weeks or so but then, as others got better I lagged behind – and finally ran out of steam completely.

Some of my better-educated friends in DC received application forms to join a daily newspaper Moon was planning to publish in New York City as a conservative counterweight to the New York Times, which was considered hopelessly liberal and influenced by leftists. One Chinese-American girl I knew received a form but was not interested, so she gave it to me and I applied, even though my formal education was sorely lacking.

**1976 Nov 7 to 1979 Jul 7:** New York City – beginnings of The News World newspaper – and Washington DC, and my plan for Bangkok...; I was accepted and invited to come to New York on 7 November 1976. Moon himself had decided that the newspaper should be named The News World and that its first issue must come out before the end of the year 1976.

If I remember correctly about 180 of us future journalist Moonies got together in the New Yorker Hotel, which the church had bought earlier that year and later renamed the World Mission Center.

The New Yorker had been built around the same time as the Empire State Building, 1930, in the same style, but was "only" half its size: 43 stories above ground and I think 3 floors in the basement. The hotel had once been great but had become unprofitable and closed its doors a few years before our church

bought it. It boasted about 2,500 rooms and many elevators, ballrooms, etc. The great Serbian inventor Nikola Tesla had lived out the last 10 years or so of his life in a room on the 33rd floor of the hotel until he died in 1943.

We occupied at least 2 floors and many rooms for the newspaper and almost all of us lived in the hotel. I was going to spend altogether more than 4 years living in this hotel off and on until 1982, mostly on the 21st and 22nd floors.

In the first years of the church's ownership of the hotel there were several deaths among members (Moonies), some by accident probably due to lacking safety standards, such as when at least one Moonie fell into an elevator shaft, and others by suicide when some jumped out of windows on the higher floors.

Most of us on the staff of The News World were total novices in journalism, so we were trained more or less on the job. Only a few members had university degrees in journalism, but there were also a few experienced "outside" professional journalists who helped and advised us almost from the beginning (for good pay, of course), including well-known figures like Barry Farber and Tommy Zumbo, etc. (also at least one ex-US intelligence man [CIA?] whose name I don't remember). We were going to be the daily anti-communist voice in New York and the nemesis of the "liberal-leftist" New York Times et al.!!!

The first issue of the paper was due to come out on the last day of 1976 and it seemed like an enormous amount of work to put it together. But then, of course, once it came out we would have to prepare the next day's paper, and the next, and so on...

I was first assigned to the National Department dealing with US American news. My direct superior was a very attractive young woman (sister – in the Moonies we called each other brother and sister) named J. S. I was immediately smitten with her but felt guilty because as far as I knew, as Moonies we were not supposed to have such feelings. We were supposed to wait until Moon himself matched us with a person who would become our life partner – the idea being that Moon would give us the partner with whom God wanted us to be paired; it was not our choice.

Somehow I believed that J. must be the partner God would choose for me, simply because I had such strong feelings for her. But there was always a nagging doubt: what if I was mistaken, and God had someone else in mind for me whereas I was not ready at all to consider any other woman? Over the next 2 and a half years this would cause me much anguish.

I now believe J. – and others – probably noticed that I had a crush on her (though I was by no means the only one, as I later found out). She talked to me once over breakfast at the New Yorker Hotel about my position on the newspaper and said she felt the International Department was more appropriate for me than her own section. I had to agree, even though I really wanted to stay with her.

So I moved to International – world news. My job in the very beginning was just to cut up the endless rolls of paper our teleprinters from 3 news agencies spat out, separating the individual articles and sorting them by the department for which they were destined: national, international, features, sports, etc. But fairly quickly afterwards I was tasked with proofreading and then editing and combining wire dispatches, cutting up articles from the news agencies and pasting the pieces on sheets with text typed or hand-written in between to make them fit together and to give the stories a conservative, anti-communist slant.

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# The New



## Resistance in Cambodia

By Aaron Stevenson  
NEWS WORLD STAFF

Although Cambodia remains closed to the outside world, news has filtered out about the large-scale slaughter of the population that has been going on there since the Khmers Rouges (Cambodian Communists) took power. Relatively little information, however, has emerged concerning the armed resistance to the Khmers Rouges.

This heroic resistance against seemingly hopeless odds is gathering strength and receives support from abroad. News World contributors in France who have made contact with leaders of the resistance have enabled us to piece together a picture of the ongoing guerrilla war against the

<sup>ALAN E. F.</sup>  
Cambodian Premier and Communist Chief Pol Pot emerged as the strongman of the mystery-shrouded two-year-old Cambodian Communist regime when he stepped out of an airplane to a glittering red carpet reception in Peking at the end of September. Later he also visited North Korean dictator Kim Il-Sung in Pyongyang.

In Peking he said that Cambodia's present population was about eight million, but this figure aroused skepticism in the West, especially among Cambodian refugees.

According to Sam Prasith, the leader of one of the Khmer (Cambodian) resistance groups fighting the Marxist government, up to one and a half million people have died miserable deaths since the Khmer Rouge takeover

in April 1975, as a direct result of the policies of the new leadership.

Hundreds of statements made by refugees who fled Cambodia at the risk of their lives support Prasith's claim. Many of the stories were compiled by John Barron and Anthony Paul in the book entitled "Murder of a Gentle Land."

In an interview with the French magazine L'Express published last July, Prasith said: "The world must know that in keeping silent it is guilty of abetting the genocide of the Khmer people. It must also know that today, 27 months after the fall of Phnom Penh, Cambodia is in agony..."

"Those who have survived," he continued, "are now in such a state of hopelessness that death comes to them like a relief."

(continued on page 7A)

## One of my articles in *The News World* in 1977, using the pseudonym Aaron Stevenson

Before the end of 1976 I started writing my first article for the paper. I had just read three books, one on the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), another on the Soviet KGB and a third one on the Chinese intelligence service. Spy stuff had fascinated me ever since I read a book on the history of espionage when I was still in my teens and watched the James Bond movies that came out in the 1960s. So my first article was a brief description of the US, Soviet and Chinese intelligence services.

My piece finally made it into the newspaper on the editorial page in March 1977, cut by about a third and under the byline of Aaron Stevenson, a pseudonym that was chosen for me because there were concerns about my being an illegal alien, and my bosses didn't want trouble from the Immigration Service.

I became an assistant editor in the International Department and started writing other articles on the side about subjects of concern or interest to me, hoping to get them published. It was not difficult because the paper always needed more stuff to fill the editorial and feature pages. My second article was on communism and the expected collapse of the Soviet Union, based in part on the book "*La Chute Finale*" by the French demographer Emmanuel Todd, which I had just read. The stuff I wrote was pretty naive and simplistic, and I don't think any other papers, least of all a prestigious publication like the New York Times, would have deigned to publish anything like it. But that was the standard of our paper. We were, almost all of us, very young, wide-eyed and inexperienced.

In the spring of 1977 we moved our offices from the New Yorker Hotel to the old Tiffany and Company Building on 5th Avenue and 37th Street (401 5th Ave.). That building had been the home and main store of Tiffany and Co. from about 1906 to 1940, and our movement had bought it during 1976. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1978.

Sometime during 1977 I became fascinated with Thailand. I read a book on the country in which it was described in such glowing terms that I thought it must be paradise on earth. But it was threatened by the turmoil in neighboring Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, controlled by communists. I collected a lot of information and wrote several articles on Thailand, including a two-page feature with color photographs provided by a friend who had been there.

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About mid-1977 I took over a paper route someone else had started in the Lower East Side section of Manhattan, where this person had supposedly sold about 50 subscriptions to our newspaper (although I found only a few people paid up). It was at the time a run-down, crime-ridden area just east of Tompkins Square Park, between 6th and 9th streets and Avenues B and D (this part is now called the East Village – though apparently local Latinos still refer to it as "*Loisaida*" -- from Lower East Side, which is now limited to areas further south). For about a year and a half I walked down there every morning carrying newspapers from the New Yorker Hotel at 34th Street and 8th Avenue, and then back up to our ex-Tiffany Building offices on 37th Street and 5th Avenue. I met many interesting people there but also had some encounters with real weirdos. One incident that happened to me in a different area in early 1978 caused me to become paranoid for a few months and to have nightmares about criminals attacking me on my paper route – but I kept going anyway.

From time to time we were sent fundraising, which meant selling candy or flowers door-to-door in different parts of New York City. The incident I mentioned happened while I was fundraising in St. Albans, Queens, on Saturday 25 February 1978. Unbeknownst to me at the time, that same afternoon police found the body of our French sister (fellow church member) Christiane Coste, who had been beaten, strangled and thrown down from a tenement building in East Harlem the day before and then

covered with cardboard. She had disappeared while delivering our newspaper in that area. A few other members had been mugged in different parts of the city earlier, and at least two or three were killed while distributing leaflets or fundraising – so there was reason to worry.

Together with other members I had been taken in a van to St. Albans and dropped off in late afternoon, to be picked up a couple of hours later. My partner Roger and I split up, with me taking the main street and him doing a residential area nearby. I saw only black people in the area, and after dark it seemed a lot of mostly young men appeared in the street on their way to various nearby bars. I tried my luck in some of those bars, selling candy out of a big box I was carrying. At one point I became aware of two young guys who seemed a bit suspicious because of the way they looked at me. I had the vague impression that they might be following me.

In one apartment building I climbed several flights of stairs to the top and started knocking on doors to try selling my candy, going down floor by floor. Just below a landing between two floors I encountered one of the two guys I noticed earlier sitting on one step, looking down. I had a strange feeling about it and didn't want him to get behind me, so I stopped on the step next to him and asked him very nervously if something was wrong. He didn't answer, and then I asked whether he was locked out of his apartment. Again, no answer, but I didn't budge even though I felt very fearful. Suddenly he jumped up and grabbed me (I don't remember exactly how – I was extremely scared but he seemed calm, as if what he was doing was routine). Then, out of the corner of my eye I saw his accomplice coming quickly up the steps from below and pulling something out of his back pocket that might have been a switchblade knife (I didn't see it clearly).

Despite my fear I managed to push the guy holding me a couple of steps up to the landing and then kicked wildly at the other one coming at me from below. It seems I must have hit him in such a way that he lost his knife or whatever it was he held in his hand. He either fell down the stairs or went down to pick up the object. Then the other one shouted something like: "Come back. I got him, I got him." I dropped my box of candy and managed to wrestle him loose, then I somehow pushed him down the stairs as well. My memory of how this happened is not clear.

Just then I heard doors open upstairs and people's voices shouting, asking what was happening. One big, burly black man came running down the stairs towards me. When I looked down to see the assailants they were already on their way out of the building. I talked to the big man and other residents, and they told me there had been muggings before in the building but the police never came when they called them. This time, however, perhaps because I was a white guy who had been attacked there, two white police officers came and took down a report of "attempted robbery." Later, they took me around the block in their patrol car to look for the two guys, but of course they had long disappeared. The police told me to be more careful and left.

When it was time for us to be picked up my partner Roger and I met in front of a supermarket that had closed since we had been dropped off and was now in the dark. As we were waiting for our ride a group of perhaps ten black teenagers approached us, several looking no more than 13 or 14 years old but at least two of around 18. One of those two walked up to Roger and grabbed packs of candy from his box, while the other one came to me and took three packs of mine.

I was nervous but also angry, so I suddenly kicked him in the chest and he fell down, dropping the candy packs. He got up quickly but was clearly dazed for a moment when he asked me: "Why d'you kick me? Why d'you kick me?" I didn't respond but put down my box and took up a fighting stance, as if I was ready to kick and punch it out with him and his friends. Roger had pulled away behind me, clearly intimidated. At this point I noticed our van pulling up and I thought it would stop right in front of us – but instead it passed us and came to a stop about 50 meters away near a street lamp. The guy I had kicked

turned around, picked up the candy packs he had taken from my box, and the group left.

Later it turned out that our friends in the van had seen me kick the guy, and the story went around our office that I could fight if provoked. I earned some respect there but at the same time I was for a while deathly afraid of getting killed by young black men, and had some nightmares about it over the next couple of months. The fact that for about 6 months in 1978 I had a second newspaper route to take care of in Harlem (though not in the most dangerous area) didn't help.

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In May 1979 Rev. Moon came to the New Yorker Hotel and matched hundreds of couples for a future 'Blessing'/mass wedding. I was among a few men left over when there were not enough women but to my great shock and dismay J. S. was matched with a guy from the Midwest whom I had met at Boonville in California. I was crestfallen but recovered after a while and decided it was time for me to go elsewhere. I pressured my bosses to let me go to Bangkok as correspondent. Our publisher at the time, Mike W., sent me on a 3-day vacation to our retreat at Barrytown (the seminary) to meditate about what I really wanted to do. I came back to New York determined to go to Thailand, and both Mike W. and the chief editor J. D. agreed to let me go as long as the paper didn't need to pay for all my expenses including the trip.

I was then sent to Washington DC for a month to work with J. S. – who was then our bureau chief there – and to get to know a little bit about how the US government functioned. During the whole of June I attended hearings in congressional buildings, press briefings and conferences almost every day (with only my News World badge as ID – both my stay permit and passport having long expired; today that might seem incredible but back then it wasn't), and got to know J.S. a little better. Only then did I realize we were very different and wouldn't fit together at all. She really seemed to enjoy being around rich, well-dressed and powerful people, whereas I could not imagine living in such an environment.

**1979 Jul 7 to Oct 6:** First return to Luxembourg; work with local Moonies to make money for my trip to Bangkok via Japan. Returned with a long-expired passport (it had expired in May 1977 and I was unable to renew it at the Luxembourg consulate in New York because I couldn't provide any documents proving that I was still legal in the US) via England and Belgium. Noriko S., my Japanese "spiritual mother", had invited me to visit her in Japan, which I wanted to do on my way to Thailand. – So I worked in Luxembourg for 3 months, mostly staying in a house owned by the Unification Church in Luxembourg City rather than with my parents in Esch – though I visited them from time to time. We Moonies prepared and sold hot dogs, hamburgers and French fries at stands in different places around Luxembourg, and business was good. I didn't want to just fly to Japan but rather travel by train across the Soviet Union and on from there by boat. I really wanted to see what our "evil empire" looked like up close.





**My new friend Andrei A. Gossen of Tselinograd Khazakh SSR Fields and Forests Dept. 1979**

**1979 Oct 6 to Oct 20:** Trans-Siberian and boat in typhoon to Japan. – Took a train from Luxembourg to Liège, Belgium, and another train from there to Moscow. On the train I met and became friends with Communist Party official Andrei A. Gossen, Director of the Fields and Forestry Department in Tselinograd, Khazakh SSR, who was returning from a visit with family in Paraguay. I later corresponded with him for 11 years until 1990, when his wife wrote me that he had died. Traveled on the trans-Siberian train from Moscow Yaroslavski station to Khabarovsk on the Amur River near the northeastern tip of Manchuria between 9 and 16 October, then spent one day there and continued on another train to Nakhodka, east of Vladivostok (which was then closed to foreigners). From Nakhodka port I continued on the Soviet *Morflot* passenger ship Baikal to Yokohama, spending 24 hours terribly seasick off the Pacific coast of Honshu Island in the remnant of Super typhoon Tip, which a few days earlier had been the largest and most intense tropical cyclone ever measured (it was well over 2,000 km [!!!] in diameter; Wikipedia has a good article on it).

**1979 Oct 20 to Nov 4:** Japan. Stayed in Hiyoshi, Yokohama but went to Shibuya, Tokyo a few times; visited Kyoto and Nara by Shinkansen "bullet" train with Noriko but didn't get to meet her husband or children; went fishing in a boat off Itoh on Izu Peninsula with a friend of Noriko's named Kunitoki, who

also took me to the Japanese parliament (called Diet) to meet two senators including Ichiro Inamine of Okinawa, who was planning to go on an official visit to Bangkok, and whom I would meet there again in December.

**1979 Nov 4 to 1980 Feb 01:** Air India Boeing 707 flight Tokyo Narita via Hong Kong Kaitak to Bangkok; stay in Bangkok Unification Church (Moonie) center off Sukhumvit Avenue; got press card but no work permit due to inability to find required Thai guarantor; was somewhat disappointed with Thailand and in the Moonie center it was impossible for me to work as a journalist; helped to bring supplies to Si Khiu refugee camp northeast of Bangkok twice with Japanese Moonie doctors and nurses sponsored in part by Senator Inamine, whom I met again in Bangkok; also traveled by bus and train and ferry boat to Penang Island, Malaysia twice for a few days to renew my Thai stay permit/visa; one day in January I received a call from New York, where several important people had quit The News World and the church, and I was asked to return to help with the paper there; they sent me enough money for the trip back to the US. I was fed up with Bangkok anyway....



**My first postcard home from Bangkok Thailand in November 1979 -- postage stamp was removed for collection**

**1980 Feb 01 to late August:** Flew TAROM Boeing 707 via Bahrain to Bucharest, then on a Tupolev 156 to Frankfurt, and back to Luxembourg; stayed 2 weeks and got new visa for US in new passport; then flew Loftleidir/Icelandair back to New York; worked in the paper and helped to start a "strategic information" newsletter – the International Report – with Robert M. of Tennessee, who had been Tokyo correspondent (I had met him in Japan) and now became International Editor; after six months I became restless again, and used the excuse of wanting to attend my brother Gilbert's upcoming wedding in Luxembourg to take another break from New York (which I had come to love and hate at the same time).

**1980 end-August to 1981 Jan 1/2:** Flew Icelandair to Luxembourg and attended my brother's wedding.

Stayed alternately at my parents' house in Esch and in the small Unification Church center in Luxembourg City while I worked part-time as night doorman/receptionist at Hotel International opposite Luxembourg City train station. After about 4 months I gave up and returned to New York.

**1981 Jan 1/2 to 1982 Jan 1/2:** Worked in the International Department at The News World again, and on the International Report with Robert M. In March I spent a few days in Washington DC helping to organize a press conference at the prestigious National Press Club a stone's throw from the White House for the Cambodian rebel group Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF). This group was founded and led by former Prime Minister Son Sann of Cambodia. Japanese UC missionary Satoru K. brought some members of the KPNLF from Bangkok to the US for this conference. I helped to organize the event, which was not well attended, and wrote a big article on the group that nearly filled a whole page in our newspaper.

Later in the year Rev. Moon announced that the movement needed to launch a newspaper for the Middle East in order to promote peace in that volatile region. Dana W., one of our Middle East correspondents and UC missionaries, was among the first to be chosen for this task, along with Thomas C., a former missionary to Egypt and Jordan. The newspaper was going to be a weekly called The Middle East Times. I immediately volunteered to join this project and was accepted. At first there was a plan for us to launch the paper in Turkey but Thomas, who was to become its publisher, preferred Cyprus, where he said conditions were better. He hoped to be able to start the project within less than a year.

Towards the end of 1981 after spending another full year there I got tired of New York again and wanted to return to Europe, to wait there until we could found The Middle East Times in Cyprus. I wanted to explore a possibility to work as a correspondent in Berlin although The News World could not support me directly there and I would need to earn a living mostly by freelancing.

**1982 Jan 1/2 to 1983 Jan 15:** In Luxembourg during most of 1982; travel in Germany and Austria; prison in Czechoslovakia; another 3 months in New York; Moonie mass wedding 'Blessing' in Korea; finally, Cyprus. –

I flew back to Luxembourg, stayed a short time and then traveled to Bonn, Germany, where I stayed a few days with The News World's correspondent Jeremy G. (since deceased) and his wife. Then I took a train to Vienna, where I spent around two weeks staying with semi-undercover Moonies (the church had been banned in Austria) who published a somewhat independent political magazine called Integral. Vienna was an important hub for the Unification Movement's secret religious and political activities in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I went there mainly to take a substantial amount of money my boss Robert M. had given me in New York to Floyd C., an American former missionary to Africa who was now our paper's secret correspondent for Eastern Europe. I met Floyd at Schloss Schönbrunn (if I remember correctly) and handed over the dollars. My mission in Vienna finished I took a train to Berlin, which would, of course, pass through then-communist Czechoslovakia and East Germany (DDR).

**1982 Mar 3-5:** A short time before the train reached Tabor, about 100 kilometers south of Prague, a Czech soldier in uniform came to search my big green 'seabag' (US Navy duffel bag – I had owned it since at least 1971 but don't remember now how I got it). He quickly found some literature that intrigued him and left, only to return with four other soldiers who let me know I would have to get off with them at the next station. At Tabor the soldiers took me to a large office on the second floor of the station and searched all my luggage, then I had to undress completely and they checked all my clothes very thoroughly. I talked to them in German only. They told me they had found anti-Soviet and other suspicious literature in my luggage, and I had to wait for some officials coming from Prague to inspect those items and interrogate me. Among the stuff in my bag was at least one copy of the current US Secretary of Defense's Annual Report to the US Congress (I got those documents in the mail from the



Pentagon for free every year I was in New York, from Donald Rumsfeld under President Ford, Harold Brown under Carter and Caspar Weinberger under Reagan) and a lot of information on the military situation in Europe. I had to wait for a couple of hours in the train station, with two soldiers armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles behind my back even when I went to the toilet.

Two men in civilian clothes came after dark and took me by car to Ceske Budejovice (Budweis in German). We entered a large office building with a red star on it that later turned out to be a high-security prison. In one of the offices on the second floor I was interrogated (without any violence) for hours into the night and then taken to prison cell number 26 for the night. The interrogation by the two men, always in the presence of armed soldiers, continued the next day and into the morning of a third day. I always spoke only in German. They translated what I said into Czech, typed it up on sheets with three carbon copies, then read it back to me in German and I had to sign every copy of every page. On the third day, after filling 9 pages, they decided to send me back to Austria. I was taken to the border at Ceske Velenice and put on a special train (I was the only passenger on that train), with two soldiers with Kalashnikovs watching as it headed into the forest towards Gmünd on the Austrian side (I guess they thought I might jump off before the train crossed the border). [erwinlux.com/2021/07/12/on-my-2%bd-days-in-prison-in-czechoslovakia/](http://erwinlux.com/2021/07/12/on-my-2%bd-days-in-prison-in-czechoslovakia/)

**1982 mid-March to mid-June:** 3 months New York. -- When I returned to Jeremy's place in Bonn I found out that I was offered a temporary job: to do research in New York for 3 months for the Soviet exile writer Lev Navrozov, who was working on a book about The New York Times – to be entitled "*What The New York Times Knows About the World.*" I quickly got a visa from the US Embassy in Bonn and not much more than a week later I was on a Capitol Airways flight from Frankfurt back to New York. The immigration officer at John F. Kennedy Airport asked me how long I wanted to stay in the US, and when I said 3 months he gave me exactly that amount of time. I had never before been given more than 2 weeks, so I had always overstayed my permit and become an illegal alien.

Lev Navrozov was a 54-year-old Russian of Jewish background who had left the Soviet Union with his wife and son in 1972. He had done a lot of secret research on the Soviet system in his privileged position in Moscow as the only translator of Russian literary, philosophical and scientific works into English, and after he emigrated he published the information he had covertly collected in the west.

I stayed for a month in a rented room in an apartment building by the Hudson River in the Bronx on the same floor where Lev lived, and then spent the remaining two months in the New Yorker Hotel. The research I did mostly involved copying New York Times articles on the Soviet Union from the 1920s onwards in the New York Public Library. The pages of the New York Times were all preserved on microfiches.

Later, my former boss Robert hosted about a dozen budding Moonie journalists from various countries for training in the Tiffany Building. As part of their journalism training I gave them assignments to do further research for Lev's book.

Much later I was to find out that the book was never published. Lev used some of the information we had collected to write many commentaries for various publications including Newsmax, and in a 2004 self-published 700-page book entitled "*Out of Moscow and into New York*" in which he warned that China and Russia could come to dominate the "Western democracies" by threatening their annihilation with "post-nuclear superweapons" based on nanotechnology etc.

**1982 mid-June to 1983 Jan 15:** Returned to Luxembourg and helped the small local group of members of the Unification Church with various business and other activities. Also tried unsuccessfully to find a regular job outside the movement. I was waiting to hear from Thomas C. and his British business partner



Peter E. in Cyprus when the money would be available to launch the Middle East Times.

Shortly after my departure from New York, Moon had organized a mass wedding of over 2,000 couples at Madison Square Garden on 1 July. A similar but larger wedding was to take place in Seoul, South Korea, in October. As the date for this event approached I was urged by my Moonie friends in Luxembourg and in New York to participate in it. I was plagued by doubts about Moon himself (whom we revered as the Messiah) and many aspects of the movement I didn't like, and felt I was not ready for such a deep commitment. But as my friends kept insisting and offered to lend me the money needed for the trip and the various expenses involved in such an undertaking I agreed to go.

I flew to Seoul via Singapore and stayed with thousands of other members at the school of the Little Angels Children's Folk Ballet of Korea, a dance troupe Moon had founded in 1962. Two days after my arrival, on 10 October 1982, I had my closest encounter with Moon himself as he was matching couples for the upcoming 'Blessing'. In a big hall in the main building of the Little Angels school he asked Western men who wanted to be matched with Oriental women to come forward. I was one of several dozen or more who did so. After matching a few others he reached over somebody else's shoulder, gently took me by the chin and – to my great surprise – asked me directly in English why I wanted an Oriental wife. I said I thought it was more interesting and I could learn more. He seemed to like my answer, then he asked where I worked and where I was from, and after hearing my answers he took me along a row of Oriental women and chose my future wife Tomoko, who is Japanese.

I realized later that I was chosen for the "Blessing" not because I was a good member or ready but simply because they needed to try to get as close to 6,000 couples together as possible. So bodies were needed to fill the quota.



**Our "blessing" in Seoul in October 1982 among nearly 6,000 couples – c. N.H.**

After Moon matched us Tomoko and I were led to a hall on the second floor of the building, where several Oriental "sisters" were sitting on a carpet, talking to other newly formed couples. One Japanese

sister who spoke good English acted as our translator. Even though, like most Japanese, Tomoko had learned some English in school, she had never actually practiced it and found it very difficult. The sister asked if we had any questions, and Tomoko asked me through her whether I wanted children. Although founding families and raising children was a central theme in our Unification belief system I had never considered this idea for myself at all. To me, a female partner would be just something like a very close friend and traveling companion.

I answered that I hadn't thought about it but if Tomoko wanted children I would help her and welcome any offspring. She was satisfied with my answer and we returned downstairs to bow to Moon, indicating that we accepted the matching. Some people who didn't want to accept their new partners were severely scolded by Moon.

One thing that amazed me in the following days was that I somehow always quickly found Tomoko among large groups of Oriental sisters, even though I had seen her only very briefly and we were able to communicate only with gestures and a handful of English words that she managed to pronounce.

On 14 October we were officially "blessed" by Moon and his wife in the Jamshil Gymnasium, along with 5,836 other couples.

We lived in different places as men and women were strictly separated, and could not spend much time together as we were almost always surrounded by hundreds or thousands of other couples. In the Unification Church at the time it was customary for newly-married couples to spend a few years apart before they could get together to start a family. In our case, as Tomoko was only 23 at the time (I was 31), her Japanese leaders felt she had plenty of time and we should get together only after she turned 30 or even later – which meant that we would have to wait at least 7 years.

Tomoko had to return to Japan a few days after our blessing but I stayed a few more days in Korea and joined other members on a very interesting bus trip to Gyeongju and Pusan.

After returning to Luxembourg I continued working with local church members until word came from Cyprus that we could start The Middle East Times early the following year, 1983. In January I traveled by train from Luxembourg to Athens, where I linked up with Dana W. who had flown in from the US. We stayed two days in the Greek capital and then flew Olympic Airways to Larnaca, Cyprus on 15 January.

**1983 Jan 15 to 1987 May 4:** Lived in Nicosia, Cyprus working for Middle East Times weekly; returned briefly to Luxembourg in 1984 and 1986; went to Pakistan and Afghanistan in 1984 and 1985, and to Lebanon and Israel in 1985. In May 1987 took a ferryboat to Athens, Greece after our main office moved there. –

Our first office in Cyprus was an apartment in Nicosia, the divided capital, whose northern portion is occupied by Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot troops, with United Nations peacekeeping soldiers watching over the demarcation line / buffer zone between the two sides. Cyprus has been divided de facto into two separate states since a Turkish invasion in 1974 that separated the northern 38 percent of the island's area from the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, which is dominated by Greek-Cypriots. The northern, Turkish-Cypriot state is recognized only by Turkey.

Soon after we started making our plans for the newspaper we were able to rent a large office on the fourth floor of a 5-storey building on Dighenis Akritas Avenue in Nicosia. Thomas, Dana, Peter and I were joined by Toni M., an American sister with whom I had worked in Washington DC in 1975 and later at The News World in New York. For a short time another sister (church member) joined us in the early days – Jane S., who I believe was originally from Australia.

Also, we were able to hire other professional staff who were not church members, including Cypriots Elpida N. and Philip de C., American Gary L., Briton Ian M., a journalist in his 50s who became associate editor in the early years, and 70-year-old Ethel D. from what is now Zimbabwe who became our secretary. We also hired a part-time proofreader, a middle-aged British lady named Carol R. Others such as British businessman John B. and Professor John M. of the American University in Beirut and later A. U. Cairo, helped out as advisors.

For financial support we depended on Newsworld Communications in New York, the holding company church members had created in 1976 to launch The News World and any other future publications including – as of May 1982 – The Washington Times. We published a prototype edition of The Middle East Times (MET) at the end of January 1983, and a special advertising edition 3 weeks later.

On 7 March 1983 the first regular weekly edition of MET came out. It contained three articles I had written, including one on the front page on Syria and one bylined with a pseudonym composed of my middle names: François Charles.



**View of Kakopetria, my favorite village in Cyprus, mid-1980s**

My former boss Robert M. came from New York, representing the holding company, to discuss financial matters and the political orientation of our paper. He and Thomas and Dana had an argument over our position in regards to Israel, which Robert felt was too critical. ....

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*Here is a very brief record of the time from the end of the above account to the 1990s, when I returned to live in Luxembourg with my new family.*



**1983 – all year from 15 Jan.:** lived in Nicosia, Cyprus (Greek-Cypriot side of this divided capital, with many short trips to the Turkish-controlled side), working for Middle East Times, new English-language weekly newspaper published by News World Communications Co., which was wholly owned by members of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Movement.

**1984 June:** Flew Interflug East German (GDR) airline via East Berlin (bus to West Berlin, then Pan Am flight to Frankfurt, and then by train) to Luxembourg for about 10 days, mainly to renew my passport, which I could not do in either Cyprus or Greece as there was no Luxembourg embassy or consulate as yet.

**1984 August-September:** Pakistan and Afghanistan, first trip with mujahideen (A. R. Sayyaf group) since the Soviet's end-1979 military intervention: Islamabad, Peshawar, and Jaji (or Zazi) in Afghanistan's Paktia Province. Came under mortar and tank fire, including one shell that passed just over my head and blew up a tree 50 meters behind me.

**1985 June:** At invitation of a Lebanese friend, flew to Beirut, Lebanon, for one week, amid civil war there. Traveled north alone (my Lebanese Moonie friends in Antelias near Beirut couldn't get permission to pass through the many Syrian Army checkpoints on the way) to Bsharré, the village of Kahlil Gibran, and to the Cedars of God, then climbed up from there to the summit of Qurnat As Sawda (3,088 meters asl), Lebanon's highest mountain, spending one night in a stone hut inhabited only by bats on a plateau at 2,800 meters. Later also spent one night with a local family in Bsharré. On the return to Cyprus my Middle East Airlines flight to Larnaca on 14 June was delayed because we had to wait for the hijacked TWA jet (flight TWA 847 -see Wikipedia, etc.) to take off on its first trip to Algiers.



**On a bridge in the Kunar Valley north of Asmar with Yunus Khalis group mujahideen, August 1985**



**1985 August:** Pakistan and Afghanistan, again. Went with mujahideen (Hezb-e Islami Yunus Khalis group) over 3,000-meter+ pass to bombed-out Sao village on Kunar River, Kunar Province, Afghanistan and then to Narei (or Naray) to launch rockets against Barikot border post. We came under mortar fire from Barikot. After return to Islamabad, found out my boss in Cyprus allowed me to stay an extra week in Pakistan, then I flew to Skardu, Baltistan in the Karakoram Mountains, traveled from there to Gilgit and Hunza up to Passu village and returned by bus on the Karakoram Highway.

**1985 December:** Traveled by boat to Haifa and spent 2 weeks in Israel just before Christmas, mostly Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Dead Sea. Got temporary Israeli press card so I could interview a professor at Hebrew University Mount Scopus campus, Jerusalem, an expert on Saudi Arabia.

**1986 ca. May:** Flew to Luxembourg for about 2 weeks. My "wife" Tomoko came from Japan for one week to meet me and my parents in Esch-sur-Alzette. This was the first time we saw each other since our "blessing" in Korea in 1982.

**1987 early May:** Traveled by ferryboat from Cyprus to Greece as our newspaper moved to Athens (Voucourestiou Street close to Syntagma Square).

**1987 late July-August:** Flew via Singapore to Japan and spent a month traveling with my wife, always staying in separate rooms. Got legally married in her hometown in southern Miyazaki Prefecture on Kyushu Island and also held a formal wedding in a Shinto temple at Takaharu near the foot of Shinmoe-dake volcano (known as the James Bond volcano as it was featured in the 1967 movie "You Only Live Twice" with Sean Connery).

**1987 late August:** Moved to Islamabad, Pakistan, to work there as correspondent for both Middle East Times and the Japanese daily newspaper Sekai Nippo (also owned by Moon movement). My wife stayed behind in Tokyo, working as an accountant in an office of the Moon movement.

**1987 October:** Went with mujahideen (Hezb-e Islami Yunus Khalis group) from Bajaur tribal area over the mountains to the Shultan Valley in Kunar Province to launch a mortar attack on Shigal Tarna garrison, and afterwards came under hours-long heavy artillery bombardment from 3 directions.  
[erwinlux.com/2009/08/30/under-fire-in-Afghanistan-some-time-ago/](http://erwinlux.com/2009/08/30/under-fire-in-Afghanistan-some-time-ago/)

In November of same year, traveled between Peshawar and Islamabad and Malakand with 2 American Moonies to try to find information about the mysterious disappearance (and probable death) of American member Lee Shapiro and his non-member soundman Jim Lindelof in Afghanistan in October.

**1987 December to early January 1988:** Flew to Skardu/Baltistan in the Karakoram Mountains and spent two weeks traveling to various villages including Khaplu with staff members of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme for a report for the newspapers. Returned to Islamabad via Gilgit by bus on the Karakoram Highway -- a very scary winter journey (in 1994 I wrote a German version of the story of this trip and it was published in **Tageblatt** newspaper in Luxembourg -- I won a prize for it that time: "*Haarsträubende Reise auf Pakistans Karakorumstrasse*").

[see English version of the article here: [erwinlux.com/2010/07/11/dangerous-bus-ride-on-pakistans-karakoram-highway-in-winter-january-1988/](http://erwinlux.com/2010/07/11/dangerous-bus-ride-on-pakistans-karakoram-highway-in-winter-january-1988/) ]

**1988 late January:** Quit my job as Pakistan correspondent and flew from Islamabad to Tokyo via Beijing. Got permission from Japanese Moon church leaders to start a family with my wife (such permission was required) but she was gone fundraising in other parts of Japan most the first month after

my arrival and I didn't see her until several weeks later. Worked temporarily for Moon company Kogensha publishing in Tokyo. Attended a couple of Japanese church workshops with my wife to learn about family life as an international Moonie couple. Started family with my wife in a room of a large house with other Moonie families in Setagaya-ku, Tokyo in early April but soon decided it would be very difficult for me to live and work in Tokyo, and my wife needed to get to know the world outside Japan and to learn English. My former bosses at the Middle East Times in Athens agreed to take me back.

**1988 late May:** With my wife, flew to Athens via Karachi, Pakistan and settled in the Pangrati area, where we rented a small apartment. Several months later my wife became pregnant.

**1988 September:** One-week trip from Athens to Luxembourg with my wife to attend my youngest sister's wedding in Belvaux.

**1989 February to April:** My bosses sent me to Cairo to take care of computers in our rented office in Mohandesseen and help our managing editor for two months. From mid-February to mid-April my wife and I lived in Zamalek (on the big Nile island – Gezira).



**With my wife at the Sphinx, Giza, Egypt, in the spring of 1989**

**1989 mid-June:** Our first child, a son, was born at Mitera maternity hospital in Maroussi north of Athens.

**1990 late January:** Our office in Cairo had moved from Mohandesseen to Zamalek during 1989 and sometime later the managing editor there quit his job and went home to the US. I volunteered to take over his job, and moved with my family to Cairo this time, where we rented an apartment in Zamalek.

**1990 August:** Flew to Luxembourg via Brussels with my family and spent a week with my parents in Esch-sur-Alzette. This was the first time my parents saw our son and the very last time I saw my father,

who died just over a year later aged 80.

**1990 mid-November:** Difficulties piled up in Cairo, including problems with the Egyptian government and financial troubles, and my own feeling of inadequacy as editor, etc., leading me to quit the job. Moved to Larnaca, Cyprus, and started working for Japan Security Support Company (owned by various Japanese businesses including Japan Airlines) doing bi-weekly security surveys of the Middle East -- Cyprus and Lebanon in particular -- and also writing an occasional article for the Middle East Times, which were also published in the New York City Tribune (successor of our old News World New York daily).

**1991 September:** My father died in Esch-sur-Alzette and my mother lived alone in an apartment they had just bought after selling our old house. A few months earlier Sun Myung Moon had declared that all "blessed" families (like us) should move to the husbands' hometowns and become "Tribal Messiahs" to all their relatives and neighbors, convincing them to follow the True Parents of humankind (Moon and his wife). My wife wanted to do that but I was reluctant as I still harbored dreams of returning to Pakistan -- especially Baltistan in the Karakoram. After I heard of my father's death and quick cremation in Liège, Belgium (there was no crematorium in Luxembourg yet), I agreed to the plan and we traveled by ferryboat to Athens in late September, spent a few weeks there with friends and then flew to Luxembourg.

**1991 October:** Arrived in Luxembourg 11 October and stayed with my mother in her apartment, helping her pay back a loan my parents had taken out to buy the place as the money they got for their house was much less. I wrote many applications for jobs but all were rejected or remained unanswered. The father of one of my brothers-in-law helped me to get a job with the Bettembourg forest warden. During December 1991 through February 1992 I did forestry work in the Bettembourg-Kockelscheuer area for the Luxembourg Water and Forests administration and earned much more than I ever had before. My boss the warden did not want to keep me after February, so I had to quit. I then worked briefly in the reception at Rix Hotel in Luxembourg City but got fed up and sought something else.

**1992 April:** In March I had answered a very small advertisement in the Luxemburger Wort newspaper for a job as custodian-guide in the Luxembourg American Cemetery, which is maintained by the US government agency American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), and contains the graves of over 5,000 American soldiers who died in this region in World War II, including the very famous US Third Army commander General George S. Patton, Jr. I was one of 8 or 9 applicants, and after two interviews with then-Superintendent Bill S. and his assistant Carl W. I was lucky to be chosen for the position, which I went on to hold for nearly 24 years until I retired at age 65 in February 2016.

Another boy was born to us in July 1994, and a girl in July 1996.

[Also see: [erwinlux.com/2020/04/16/leader-or-follower/](http://erwinlux.com/2020/04/16/leader-or-follower/)  
and: [erwinlux.com/2020/07/03/why-i-cannot-go-back-to-my-previous-faith/](http://erwinlux.com/2020/07/03/why-i-cannot-go-back-to-my-previous-faith/) ]