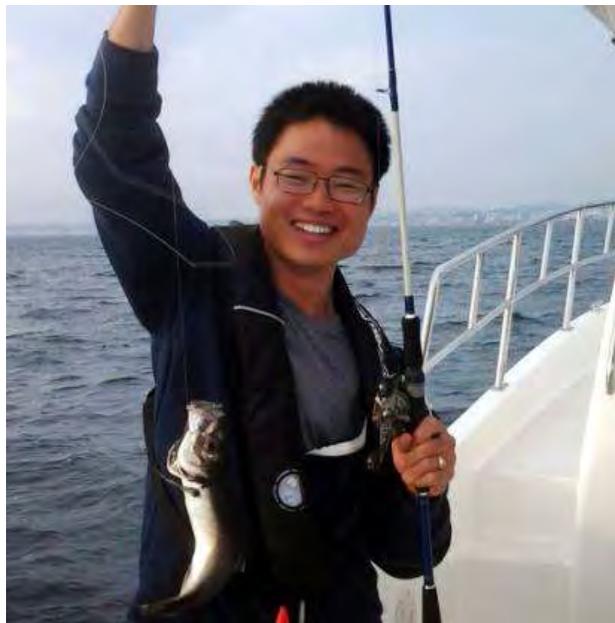


Homage to Shigemune Mori

Thomas Ward
July 2, 2016



Shigemune Mori is cherished by us as a young man with a pure heart, a bright smile and a willingness to be honest and vulnerable. He was filled with the desire to make the world that he experienced and knew a better place. His passing is painful for Yoshi, for his children, for his mom and sister, for Mrs. Loew, her sister who joins her for Mr. Loew and his brother and family who also join us: for our community and also, I am sure, that it is painful for God.

One thing that moved me when I encountered the Unification movement was to learn that God was not an Almighty God, that in the process of creation and in the process of humankind growing to perfection, which was delayed for millennia because of a tragedy of history known as the Fall, God put aside his omnipotence because his desire was not to relate to us based on his power but

based on Parental love and for us to build a relationship based not on fear but on that parental love.

As Charles Darwin studied the secrets of nature and the mechanics of evolution, he lost his faith at some point. He asked himself, "How could God allow for thousands of offspring to be born to some species and yet only one or two survived?" I asked this question to Dr. Sang Hun Lee, who worked on Unification Thought with Reverend Moon. Dr. Lee answered that we were made as God's Co-Creators to perfect ourselves and were the ones to address the imperfections of nature and reduce suffering of this type through genetic engineering. As time goes by, humankind will be able to address all the unpredictable dimensions of nature, including those of the sea, not by magic wands but by advances in detection equipment and advanced resuscitation methods. I am sure that today it is painful to God that we are not there yet.

If you visit my office and look in the agenda of my scheduling book, you will see that my first scheduled meeting on Monday June 13 (the day after his disappearance) was at 10 AM with Shigemune.

It was to have been an important meeting because it was about plans to complete the little work that Shigemune needed to do to wrap up his Masters degree.

Meetings with Shigemune were never just about picking classes; He could think out loud about how Japan could comfort Korean "han because of the past. He bared his heart, shared his anxiety, self-doubts and his empathy for others and for our suffering world. A meeting with Shigemune was never boring or predictable.

My many conversations with him led me to recognize that he was born with a strong sense of calling to correct past wrongs, to build bridges where there were none and strengthen those that existed. I believe that God planted that in Shigemune.

Shigemune was a model student. After completing his first years of study at Sun Moon University he went on the University of Bridgeport where he studied World Religions and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a 3.9 average. He could have gone on like so many of our other second gens here to a place like Harvard or Yale and I told him as much but he and Yoshi had their family.

Shigemune wanted to take time to build a financial foundation before he went off anywhere to study. Believe it or not, after graduation, he took lessons to learn to drive tractor trailer trucks. He wanted to put aside money quickly for his family before he pursued further study. Somehow Shigemune did not become a track driver and "Thank God!" for that.

When Shigemune and Yoshi decided to settle in Bridgeport, I mentioned that there was the possibility for him to receive a scholarship to our Masters program in East Asian and Pacific Rim Studies. There he maintained very close to a perfect 4.0. He was loved and admired by his professors and students alike for his sincerity, his kind heartedness and his scholarly demeanor.

Yet Shigemune was not just interested in developing technical or academic skills, he was impassioned by the spiritual side as well. My wife Alexa tells me that when Mitsy's mom, Mrs. Kimmyo Anncey, conducted a WFWP Study of True Mother's Life Shigemune was the only man came every week, participated fully and he asked deep questions. He was also among the first to join Professor Perrotet's online Unification Philosophy course. While in Jordan, Shigemune participated in Ramadan (how hard no food and no water all day in the sweltering heat of Amman). But he did it to understand that faith as well.

As you are aware Shigemune spoke Japanese, Korean and English fluently. He invested more than a decade in developing his English and Korean skills in addition to his Japanese. While at UB he also studied Chinese and Arabic and, not surprisingly, he earned straight As in these languages as well. I believe that he also studied Spanish on his own.

In 2010 I traveled to Amman, Jordan and visited Princess Sumaya University where a group of UB students were studying for the summer. I asked the Director of the Program how our students were doing. He said that they were at different levels of proficiency but one student stood out from all the others. That was Shigemune.

Shigemune spent much of his time with the Jordanian students; he also made friends with campus security, the drivers and the cleaning staff. His very clear focus was to master Arabic. He deeply moved the faculty and staff at Princess Sumaya University. He came to appreciate them and they came to appreciate him.

Shigemune also loved the United States. He spoke to me of how impressed he was by the many things that Americans did well and he felt strongly that the skills that Americans possessed were uniquely suited to help solve the world's problems.

Shigemune also deeply understood the suffering that Korea had endured, especially at the hands of Japan during the period of Japan's occupation of Korea. I was very moved by Shigemune's heart to help to reconcile Korea and Japan and we spoke about that in my office on a number of occasions.

I had encouraged Shigemune to consider doing doctoral study in this area because of his very mature understanding of the hurt that needed to be addressed. I recommended that Shigemune to establish contact with Dr. Alexis Dudden, a Professor of International Relations at the University of Connecticut, who spoke Korean and Japanese, and had a deep understanding of Korean dissatisfaction with Japan's apologies for the period of occupation. Shigemune had had some preliminary communication back and forth with Professor Dudden. He was thinking seriously about pursuing doctoral study after completing his studies at UB.

True Father, Dr. Sun Myung Moon, loved the name "Bridgeport" and explained that the term "Bridgeport" combining "bridge" and "port" represented the point of convergence of the physical and the spiritual realms.

I think that that term "Bridgeport" takes on an added meaning for us today because of Shigemune.

If God wills, it, Shigemune can help to bring together the physical and spiritual in in a setting where students from the world's nations and religions gather and speak the languages that Shigemune knew and studied: English, Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, Korean and Spanish, a place where people from all religions gather and spend time and then go out to the world.

Shigemune's life on earth is a model for young people of what one must do to prepare to serve the world. Like the motto of the Little Angels School where he studied in Korea, Shigemune was someone who showed an example of how to "love Heaven, love Humankind, love Country."

Thank you, Shigemune, for your sincerity, for all of your efforts to connect to others and make the world whole. Thank you for being, in every sense, a most qualified representative (and more) of what Rev. Moon envisioned when he explained the meaning of "Bridgeport."