

Interview of Grandmother Sae-hyun Oak who began following Father in 1946 - Part 1

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An early photograph of Father, with Grandmother Oak seated to his left.

Oak Sae-hyun (whom we sometimes refer to as Grandmother Oak) joined Father in 1946, before the Unification Church existed. Without any special mission title, Mrs. Oak carried out her mission as a historical mother of faith of our church.

In 1977, at almost 80 years of age, she gave an interview in Korea about her earliest years with True Father. The interviewer noted that despite her advanced years, and despite the wrinkles on her face gained from overcoming adversity for the will of God, Mrs. Oak looked young.

Mrs. Oak was born in Pyongyang. She was a member of one of the established Christian churches, where she served as a deaconess, while her husband served as an elder of the church. They had two sons and four daughters.

This interview was translated from the original Korean.

Question: What was your situation when you first met Father?

When my first son was 22 years old, studying in Japan, World War II broke out, so he was forced to go to the battlefield. I prayed very much for him. Around 1945 when Korea was liberated from Japan, many kinds of spiritual phenomena were occurring, and I also received a revelation, by which I could know where Father was. In the revelation, God ordered me to go to a mountain for prayer. But because of my housekeeping duties, I put off going from day to day. Owing to this, I suffered from fever as heavenly punishment. On November 11, 1946 I was able to meet Father.

Question: How did you get along after meeting Father?

I was a deaconess in an established Christian church, and my husband was an elder in the same church. Some deacons from the Christian churches gathered together centered around Father, and we held prayer meetings and Sunday services. Because we were moved so much by the gracious atmosphere of these meetings, we shed many, many tears of repentance and thanksgiving to God.

From this time, we were persecuted and accused by established churches; sometimes we were detained at

the police station.

We experienced spiritual phenomena like what happened in the upper room in Mark's house on the day of Pentecost, 2000 years ago. My family was also persecuting us.

Question: I've heard that the police detained Father at the police station...

Yes. There was a Christian sect in Pyongyang called Bokjungkyo ("Inside the Belly") Church, whose leader was Mrs. Huh Ho-bin. They were keeping beautiful garments for the Lord of the Second Coming in a big room. Eventually this rumor reached the police, who detained the leader and confiscated the garments.

Because the police thought our meetings were also the same sect, they detained Father at the police station for three months. In prison, Father sent a secret note to the leader of Bokjungkyo Church in which he wrote, "Please temporarily deny your Bokjungkyo Church! Then you can be released."

But because this secret letter was found by a prison guard, Father was severely tortured with much bloodshed and three teeth broken. On his release, Father was at first cared for at one Mr. Nah's home, but later moved to Kim Jong-hwa's house.

Father guided us to make special conditions of fasting. After three days, we received a special revelation from God. God testified to Father's identity. At that time, Father was 27 years old. When I returned to my family's home after being away doing five days of fasting, my family began to really persecute me. Although I was the wife of a Christian church elder, and a deaconess of the same church, I had come back home after five days without any explanation of what I had been doing.



Houses similar to the one in which Father began writing Principle in 1951.

Question: How did the established churches see us?

They were very badly confused. In 1946, we had about 30 members; the greater part of us came from the established churches, so we had suffered much persecution. At that time, we were persecuted greatly by Mrs. Kim In-joo's family, because Mrs. Kim had joined us. (Mrs. Kim was Kim Won-pil's aunt. Her testimony was carried in this series a month ago.)

One day I had a special dream in which I saw Father's crucifixion, so I rushed to the house in which Father was staying and found that he was sitting in utter exhaustion because of a severe beating he had received. At that time, Father was staying with his aunt. I met him there many times.

Question: Didn't Father meet with more suffering soon afterwards?

Mrs. Ji Seung-do (one of our famous Grandma's) came to us and made preparations for a heavenly feast on 3.1 by the lunar calendar in 1948. Because of this, the established churches accused us and the police also persecuted us. One day a woman came and said, "I'm a religious person and my mother is also a very religious person." Because of this then we had deep conversations. Afterwards, we discovered that she was a spy. The next day, because of my spiritual thirst, I visited the church and found that Father, Kim Won-pil and two other sisters had been taken to the police station by police detectives. Mr. Kim Won-pil was released after four days, and the two sisters also were released after two days. Because we didn't give the police the materials prepared for the feast, some sisters, including myself, were also put into the prison. Two days after my imprisonment, Father's hair was shaved off. Five days after his imprisonment began, the police announced the list of his crimes:

1. Being the spy of President Syngman Rhee of South Korea [the division of Korea had already occurred at the end of World War II]
2. Trying to exploit money from wealthy women
3. Confusing society

At that time, anyone who was recognized as a political spy should be shot without mercy. I was terrified, rolling on the floor in fear. After these spiritual phenomena stopped, policemen came back and asked me when I had begun to follow him? They interrogated me. After nine days' imprisonment, I was released because of my nephew negotiated with the police.

Question: What was the result of the trial?

Because of the unfair treatment our group received, I hired a lawyer and protested. Because of the newspaper coverage of the trial, many established Christian church members came together and mocked us, shouting, "What kind of a crown does he put on his head? He should be executed."

At last, the judge sentenced Father to five years of imprisonment. I met Father in the courtyard and gave him some food. Though we appealed to the highest court, Father's term of imprisonment was not reduced. Father was later moved from the local jail to the labor camp at Hungnam.

At this time, most of the 30 members left the church. Many times, therefore, I visited the prison alone in order to meet Father.

Question: Please tell us about Hungnam prison.

Three days before Father was put into the prison, one of the prisoners, young Mr. Kim Won-duk, had a special dream, in which God told Mr. Kim to serve and attend Father. So he followed, served and attended Father.

But at first, I received no news about Father, so I waited anxiously to hear from him. One day I received a letter from him, from Hungnam, in which Father said he desired that I should visit him. After one night on the train (it is 400 kilometers from Pyongyang) I arrived at Hungnam. I was a typical Korean housewife (by the Korean tradition at that time, a housewife didn't travel so far), so it was very difficult for me to reach the unfamiliar Hungnam labor camp. But because I knew of Father's suffering at the prison, I could overcome any difficulty on the way. After taking a room at an inn, I visited the prison.

I saw that groups of 40 prisoners were chained together in a line as they walked, and they all had blue prison clothes on. I was shocked when I recognized Father.

I had to wait in the visitor's reception room until Father returned from his heavy daily labor. One part of me was very happy to meet with him, while another part of me felt heartrending anguish at seeing him in this situation.

Question: What kind of conversation did you have with him?

He asked, "How are the other members?" From the desire to comfort him, I replied, "All are very well."

I gave him cooked rice flour, which we can eat with water, a kind of an emergency food. Even on the train on my journey home to Pyongyang, I wept as I thought of Father's loneliness and suffering in the prison.