

How I Got to Know Father at the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury - Part 2

Bill Sheppard, as told to Laura Reinig

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Part 2 of an interview that Laura Reinig, Today's World Magazine associate editor, had with Mr. Bill Sheppard at the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, USA, in July 1986. Bill Sheppard became a close friend of True Father's during their time together in prison.

We talked about everything imaginable. We laughed an awful lot. We talked about our families, we talked about the history of the church. I knew certain things about his life. I knew he had been in prison before. I asked him about that, about the death camp. He did not wear it as a badge; you had to coax certain things out of him. He didn't go into too much detail about it, but he did explain what he had to go through in that camp in order to talk to people. You could only talk to people when you were getting food or going to the latrine or something.

One of the strange things was the analogies Father made. I told him my birthday was August 13, 1945, and he said that I was born right at the time the church started. He found that to be very interesting. There were a lot of other coincidences. He would ask me questions about my life and when I told him he would look stunned as if to say, "Well, that's very odd!" We used to laugh. He talked sometimes about the brainwashing thing - that type of thing. A number of times we talked about the bad publicity, but that was something he never dwelled on - how bad things sometimes were.



Father-son talks

At times Father would reprimand me for not being serious, and at other times for not understanding his humor. He was very serious about his humor! And I would try to understand. I'd see him looking at me once in a while or vice versa. You do that as you develop a relationship until the point that you have some deep trust.

We discussed my relationship with my wife and my daughter. He'd talk about my daughter as if she were part of the world-not just as mine. We talked about some other tragedies in my past that I had gone through, and he was very concerned. We had a lot of father-son talks, that type of relationship.

Kami and Father talked about going to pledge service. Of course that was a big thing. I thought to myself, "Pledge service?" I asked, very openly, "What is this that you're doing? What is this three o'clock in the morning thing for?" Respectfully, I mean. I could talk this way to Father and he would respond, knowing where my heart was coming from.

Sometimes Father and I would miss dinner. I would mess up. We would be walking outside talking and then I'd realize, "Oh, gee, it's dinnertime." And then we'd have to run. I would get so involved in the conversation that I would forget. There was always one more page Father wanted to read or one more point he wanted to make to me personally about something. Father would say, "Wait a minute! Forget

about dinner. This is more important. This is the rest of your life."

We talked a lot about business - about ethics in business. I learned about things that were happening with the church, with Ocean Church, with CAUSA, or whatever it might be. I remember Father telling Kami about the speeches and videotapes that were going to be sent out. He let me know about everything. I wouldn't talk about these things with anyone else.

I met Mother a couple of times, and I met Father's children, Peter Kim, Rev. Kwak, and a number of people who came up. Most of the time we didn't have the same visiting day. It was an odd/even system, so only occasionally did we have visits together. And it was good because I didn't want to intrude.

My belief in Father

I don't really know how our relationship developed. I know it developed over time. My belief in him just grew. Father and I connected very quickly in how we felt about some things - very quickly. I had many of the beliefs that he had, and I believed in him. I was called a hard-nosed skeptic by some, that's very true, but I knew I wasn't being given a sales pitch by Father....I knew that I could trust my own judgment about Father.

Father expressed himself very physically to me. When he made a point he'd poke me in the chest, hard. Boy, physically he's strong! He's in good health. We'd be sitting on his bed and we'd be talking about something and he'd poke me and almost knock me over. That's exactly how it was; that was the type of close relationship we had developed.

Sometimes I read different things in magazines about Father and he comes across as not being real. But he is very real - physically and spiritually very real. He makes a conscious effort to be very close. I was fortunate enough over the period of time he spent in prison to get close enough to him to know that he's not an act. He is who he is. He certainly didn't put on any show for me. Because we didn't expect anything to develop. Many of the things I read about him are amazing to me.

People ask me, "How could you be involved with this man?" Oh, because I know him. Had I not known him, it would not have been like that. The only way I could have believed the things I believe now is because I met him.

As time went on, Larry [Evola] and I would both spend time with Father. We're not the same type; we're completely different people. People would say about me, "What is going on with this man?" I mean, I took a lot of heat, which was okay. We had a couple of arguments. "You're making a fool of yourself," some people would say. I had attended Catholic services, Protestant services, Jewish services, all different kinds of services, and people were wondering, "Who the hell are you?"

It would bother people. It didn't make any sense to them - how I could be into these different religions and also spend time with Rev. Moon. Especially when it became a lasting thing. It wasn't a fad. No profit was going to come out of this; I knew he would be leaving.

Certain inmates were upset that I had developed a relationship with Father. Father had to tell me just to stay away from them; let them be. But I had no problem talking to them about him. It just made them so upset. Most of the time I had to turn the other cheek. I explained in the simplest terms that I had become closer to Father than I had to my own father. I'm sure this kind of thing happens to many people. That's the type of relationship we had developed. "Yes, he's my friend. That's where it's at. I'm not afraid to stand up for a friend. That's our relationship." To me it was very easy.

I don't have instant recall about many things I did with Father, but I can give you my feelings. Many things I won't go into because they were highly personal. Not that it would embarrass him. That is an absolutely amazing thing. After living with him for a year, there isn't a thing I could tell you about anything Father said or did that would embarrass him or would be contradictory to any of his speeches or to the Principle. If nothing else, that's a quality I could testify to. No question about it.

He did his time admirably. He never complained, and I mean never. And it wasn't an act. If I could describe only one thing about him to people in the outside world, I'd tell them, "This guy is for real. He is not what the media keep saying. It isn't a facade."

Father wasn't pompous. He wasn't what you'd think a person of his standing would be like. How can I convey this? I think all too often we who were close to him don't do the job right - we're just not conveying what he stands for or what he is really like. You have to realize that he had a family while he was in here too. He had a lot of responsibilities. He went through a lot of suffering while he was in here. If members put him on too high a level they might think it was simple for him: "Oh, it's easy for Father to go through suffering." But let me tell you, being here was just as difficult for him as it would be for anyone else. It wasn't any easier.