

Testimony to Jon and Sandy Schuhart

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Sandy and Johan Schuhart circa 1972

I was nineteen years old when I met Jon and Sandy Schuhart in December 1966 through a mutual friend who was taking a music theory class with me at Los Angeles City College. He was also studying the Divine Principle with Jon and Sandy at their center called The Unified Family, in Hollywood, California, close to my parents' home where I lived. Knowing that I liked to sing, my friend invited me to come and sing with friends of his who were rehearsing Christmas songs to be performed for troubled youth in a low security prison. Jon and Sandy were leading this group at the center.

When I met Jon and Sandy I was so enamored of Jon's charismatic and caring personality and Sandy's quiet deep maternal character that I continued visiting them about once a week after we finished our performance. I talked mostly about myself, about difficulties with my parents, spiritual phenomena - I was greatly interested in this - and so many other things. Jon and Sandy always patiently listened to me, never judging, but encouraged me to study the Divine Principle with them. They were the father and mother figures that I was yearning for, yet I didn't commit to hearing the Divine Principle. Each time I came to visit Jon and Sandy, I was always enthusiastically welcomed me back. Befriending me and keeping the door open was very important to them.

It was the 60's where young people throughout the country were searching for meaning and value in their lives and true love. While I continued to visit Jon and Sandy, I also regularly visited a coffee house on Hollywood Boulevard on the weekends after late night babysitting. Coffee houses were a popular gathering place where young intellectuals and nerdy-types went to philosophize and debate about the meaning of life, play chess and hook up with other like-minded people. I thought that if I hung around this place long enough and listened long enough to the philosophical debates, I too would become an intellectual.

One Saturday after a babysitting job, I returned home around 3:00 am from the coffee house and my strict Cuban father, who didn't know where I had been, confronted me. In the altercation that ensued, it became clear that I had to immediately move out. Who could I turn to for help? From a phone booth down the street, I tried calling my girlfriend from high school who was always there for me and always answered the phone. I called her over and over but there was no answer. I hadn't called the Schuharts because I didn't know them as well and didn't want to burden them. But finally, I did call them. Without any hesitation, Jon said he was coming to pick me up. With my meager belongings I waited by the phone booth and within twenty minutes, Jon came barreling down the street driving an old car that was painted light blue with flowers all over and the words, "The Kingdom of Heaven is Here" and a phone number. Jon drove me to the center where Sandy, Margie Stahon and Ray Barlow, all warmly welcomed me. I was distraught, not knowing what was to become of me, but Jon and Sandy, reassured me not to worry about my future, to make myself comfortable and to stay as long as I needed.

During that week at the center, I felt I owed it to Jon and Sandy to listen to The Divine Principle so I listened to Jon's lectures. But everything he taught me went in one ear and out the other, as I was still emmeshed in the trauma of suddenly leaving home and not knowing what was to become of me. As a strictly brought up Catholic girl, I had never lived apart from my parents.

One evening Sandy privately shared her deeply moving testimony with me. Afterwards, I burst out crying realizing that God had led me to The Unified Family. I finally found my true family. I could listen to The Divine Principle and really hear and accept it. In February 1967, I became an official member.

I quit college and completely embraced center life. Like the other members, I got a job, my first real job, in downtown Los Angeles with a music publishing company where I met Susan Miller, my co-worker, who joined our LA center shortly after. Susan later witnessed to her cousin Wayne Miller who was visiting from the east coast. Both Jon and Susan taught Wayne The Divine Principle. Then Jon taught Keith Cooperrider who was passing through L.A. who joined our center in WDC as did Wayne. Gary Fleisher and Gary Jarmin also joined in Los Angeles. Our center was thriving. Jon had an organized system when, after dinner, on certain days, we would go out witnessing and other days we would give lectures. If there weren't any guests, we practiced our lectures in front of each other and critiqued each other's lectures. Jon and Sandy always had a wonderful welcoming demeanor no matter the circumstances. And I always looked forward to Saturday nights when our warm contacts were invited to have dinner with us, sing songs, including Jon's originals, "Let's Move America" and "Gonna Build a Kingdom", listen to his silly puns and watch The Twilight Zone and The Outer Limits together. Those programs were scary.



Sandy and Johan Schuhart circa 2015

1967 through 1969 were the formative years of my life of faith and were the happiest years living in the center. Under the wonderful and loving leadership of Jon and Sandy, those years formed the strong and deep foundation of my faith that I would need in the coming years as I experienced many hurdles. Not once did I waiver in my faith, and there were plenty of opportunities to waiver. I don't know how Jon and Sandy did it... raising their own very young physical children, Arthur and Jonna and their spiritual children at the same time in the same house. In hindsight, Jon and Sandy emulated True Parents' love for their spiritual children at the sacrifice of their own children.

In February 1969, I was privileged to witness Jon and Sandy's Blessing at Upshur House. Six years later I was blessed in Korea at the 1800 Couple Blessing with an intellectual and nerdy Japanese husband named Harumi Take. And when we started our family, my father became an associate member and was the best grandfather to our five children very smart children.

Thank you, Sandy. Thank you for not giving up on this silly love-starved nineteen-year-old Catholic girl who needed so much attention. We live in an imperfect world but you and Jon were perfect for me.

Love,

Lisa Martinez Take