

Regional Director Song Comes to New York

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I was in New York in the 80s, 1984 or 85, after staggering off MFT and doing a few months of IOWC. I was there, at first, to see if I could keep my fiancée from leaving the church. I failed at that, didn't really know what or how much I could do. Ultimately, I found that even God, Moses, Jesus, Buddha and Mohammed coming down couldn't make someone do what they decided they didn't want to do. Your own responsibility is what makes you an absolutely special, unique individual. It's also something no one else can do for you, in the end.

Anyway, we had different regional directors at the time, always Korean elders. Father always kept rotating leaders, no one stayed in the same position for a long time. Maybe only Mr. Kamiyama stayed.

We had one regional director, whose name I can't remember, but as my fiancée had just left the church and was talking of divorce, breaking the Blessing, I needed spiritual nourishment desperately.

This one leader, I couldn't find inspiration in his talks. He'd say things like "I'm sure you second generation prepared very well to see Father, you washed your hair 7 times. You should also brush your teeth carefully, 3 minutes, even if you're fasting." He was into the details, for sure.

Regional leaders came in all shapes and sizes. We heard we were getting a new one, Rev Song. I was at 43rd street, the national headquarters, and I was working in the kitchen sometimes and doing the front desk other times. I was on duty in the lobby one day when a very tall Korean man came by. He paused, sniffed the air and said something like "Spiritual smell, good." I was impressed until the smell of dinner wafted by again, and I realized he was actually saying "Pizza smell, good."

I had the overnight shift the next day, and at 3am Rev Song came clattering down the stairs, followed by Roddy Joyce, our general affairs brother. They were heading out to Hunts Point, the all-night wholesale food market, to buy a vanload of food.

Rev Song invited every member in New York to come to dinner that night. In those days, that meant a few thousand members. Rev Song drove the van straight to the New Yorker, where he set up his boom box in the kitchen and cooked all day. When we arrived that night, there was a long line snaking out of the dining room, moving very slowly.

When we got to the front, we saw why. Rev Song was serving each person as they came, greeting them and heaping their plates with food. I don't remember what was on the menu, just that it was pretty darn good.

Then we gathered in the Grand Ballroom, seated as always on the floor. There just wasn't going to be enough room for chairs, not for another decade or so.

Rev Song gave us a heartfelt speech, most of which I struggled to make out. It took time to develop an ear for his particular brand of English. Next he got things moving by asking every national group to come up

and sing a song. And if they weren't expressive enough, he'd ask for more.

At the time, there were so many groups of members in New York. I'm not going to get them all, but there were Christian Bernard folks selling high fashion, Master Marine folks making boats and inhaling fumes out in Long Island, Original World Products folks making butterfly domes, New York church MFT, fundraising every day and nodding off at Belvedere Sunday services cause they'd blitzed all night and come direct to Belvedere, German business groups who stuck together, Japanese members of all kinds, brothers who had an office with a brass nameplate in the New Yorker and wore 3 piece suits every day, people working at News World, members from all over here for 21 or 40 day workshops, international missionaries coming and going...just all kinds.

Crowded into a World Mission Center elevator with 12 others, "What's your mission?" was a favorite icebreaker.

I wanted to be one of those brothers with 3 piece suits and an office who could say "Well, my mission is to restore the Providence of blah blah blah of the blah blah, don't you know." Oooh. "And what's your mission?" "MFT" "Oh." A field worker, how nice you could visit the big city.

As an Oakland member, I sometimes got one ride to Belvedere but then had to scrounge a ride back. Usually you could just go up to a group in a van "Are you heading to the World Mission Center? Can I get a ride?" "Sure, hop in." One big family. But not always.

I remember once approaching a group in a station wagon, German brothers and sisters. "Hi, are you going to the World Mission Center? Can I get a ride?" They looked at each other, startled that I could contemplate asking them to change their plans, to have someone not of their group with them. "Ah, no, we have our own schedule. No." The passengers seemed relieved when the driver said no. There were many ice cubes in the melting pot, groups that did not connect with each other. Such was New York in the mid 80s.

Rev Song seemed determined to change that. would point to a group and say "Where from?" "Oceania!" "Sing song!" They'd come up and sing. Applause, then he'd pick the next group.

Here it's worth mentioning that Rev Song was the leader of a gang of boys around the hill in Pusan where Father and Won Pil Kim built the mud hut that was the first church building. Rev Song recognized something about Father, anyway, the steered his gang from jeering and throwing rocks to Father and Won Pil build.

"Japanese members!!" The churchy ones used to singing stood up, while others in business missions were shy and tried to hide. Rev Song would point and boom "ALL Japanese! Come sing!! Come come!!" They'd slink up to the stage, dying inside, and manage to sing, to great applause.

A group of European business members got up to leave. Rev Song wasn't having any of it. "Oy!! Where going?" "We have a business meeting." "Come! Sing song!!!" They came, sang song.

The atmosphere was something unforgettable. As Kerry Johnson put it later "It's like we were all drunk! The best party ever! We were laughing our heads off, totally high. But there was no alcohol!"

We were having a ball, howling till our stomachs hurt as Rev Song cajoled and ordered various groups to come up and sing. Stiff, dry business members who didn't sing except for holy songs on Sunday had to come up and show some style. It was hilarious. Rev Song just blasted through a lot of the barriers that different groups of members felt with each other.

Anyway, that was an example of the kind of intoxication you could feel at times. I know that our church looked crazy from the outside. Why do they smile all the time? Why do they run around all day? Why do they work so hard and have nothing?

But to experience laughing with Father so hard your stomach hurt, then crying and all the feelings in between, to experience the current of shared joy and sadness, it was an unforgettable, electric connection between all of us. Whether we could put our finger on it or not, it was a feeling of being connected with God all at the same time.

I have encountered people who met Father once, but could never forget it. Once I fundraised to a lunch table full of Nashville businessmen in white shirts and ties. 90% of the time you'd get a polite (or less) rejection. One man spoke up. "Are you with Reverend Moon?" Here we go, I thought. Here comes the extremely polite 'Hell, no.' "I remember a prayer breakfast in 197__, all of us in a circle holding hands and Rev Moon prayed for world peace. I've never felt a prayer like that. Here, I'll take two of them." His colleagues were speechless.