

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 52

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"The Iliad" is a favorite read among the old Marines in my life. Homer captures the rivalries, the fury, and the tragedy of war. We see heroic action and mutual respect between enemies, but also terrible cowardice and the violation of age-old standards of decency, as when Achilles desecrates the body of Hector after killing him outside the walls of Troy. Achilles' furious anger arose from the death of his soulmate Patroclus at the hands of the heroic Hector. Later, King Priam, the father of Hector, secretly enters the tent of Achilles, sets aside his royal bearing, and begs for the return of his son's body for ritual burial. In his recounting, Homer captures the universal sorrow of war, portraying a desperate parent seeking the remains of his child, a broken king kissing the hands of the warrior who killed his son. The two men then break bread together. Later in the night, Priam, with his son's body and Achilles guarantee of safe passage, returns to the walls of Troy and the eventual resumption of war.

What Homer captures most poignantly is the bond of heart shared by these soldiers. And this is what speaks to old Marines. I grew up surrounded by men who had served together in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as in lesser known deployments in Lebanon or the Dominican Republic. They had experienced the killing of their closest friends, written letters home to grieving parents, and literally helped piece together fragmented bodies of those lost in action. They had also witnessed the fury of revenge and been shamed by sight of wanton desecration. All of these memories would surface, usually late at night after an elegant dinner, rich in cigar smoke with voices mellowed by port. Drinking songs borrowed from the British Marines served as a sort of catharsis... "Away away with rum by gum, with rum by gum, with rum by gum / Away away with rum by gum, the song of the Salvation Army! / I never eat fruitcake because with rum it is laced / And in my experience there's no greater disgrace / Than a man in the gutter with crumbs on his face!" And so on.

When I first read of Achilles gathering the body of Patroclus from the field of battle, how could I not think of my own father flying from Virginia to escort the body of his close friend, Lt. Col. Jack Spaulding, home from Vietnam? Though nearly 3,000 years separated the two events, the bond of heart was the same. There's a final picture of them, sitting in a Saigon bar, their bodies turned towards the camera. I sat with my father and watched the Ken Burns series on Vietnam. We spoke of these things and unburdened ourselves.

We veterans of MFT, "we fortunate few," understand this "strong bond of heart." We share it with each other. We conceived of ourselves as warriors, daily fighting on the front lines, moment by moment creating the conditions for the salvation of America and the world. Every person we met was a meaningful encounter we felt. We struggled to connect with both open and hardened hearts, striving with

our most sincere effort to break through and move the spiritual world. We worked in the smallest towns and the largest cities; we appealed to the rich and the poor; we witnessed heartrending sights and experienced profound inspiration; we endured rejection, contempt, injustice, jail, threats, and even violence to ourselves; we sailed through our days meeting every manner of person, expressing the heart of God; Jesus and the saints joined us as we ran house to house or shop to shop along dusty highways or streets lined by urban row houses. We seemed to singly fight our daily battles but in truth, we always remained together in heart. No wonder we still remember each other with love, and feel close even after years of separation. We have earned the "strong bond of heart" we share. True, it is the gift of God and True Parents, but we have owned this heart through our sweat equity.



A memory. It's Georgia in the summer. We had fundraised Columbus on Friday and stayed out late, hitting all the bars outside the Army Base at Fort Benning on payday. We pulled our van into the parking lot of a 24 hour grocery store after finishing our blitz around 3:00 a.m. We slept in our seats, exhausted. I awoke around 6:00 a.m. as the sun began to heat up our van. I remember turning around in the driver's seat and surveying the members still deep asleep - among them Cynthia Gibbs Hiromitsu and Gwenn Bair. In the morning light, I felt the deepest peace and joy, an overwhelming gratitude. In those moments, I prayed for each member and I prayed for our day. The grace and love of True Parents filled the van.

Of all my memories on MFT, this one recurs the most. When I think of "strong bond of heart," my mind returns to this early summer morning, warmed by the Georgia sun, our spent and tired bodies embraced in the love of God.

This is MFT. Time or distance, geography or years, can never erode these eternal bonds of light and love. I have no doubt that when we enter the spiritual world, Homer will sing of us as he did Achilles.