

Sun Myung Moon speaks to 10,000 on July 4th at Belvedere Estate

Joy Schmidt [Pople]
July 4, 1974



Forty thousand red, white and blue fliers advertised a free fireworks display and international singing at the Unification Church's Belvedere Estate in Tarrytown, New York on July 4, 1974.

An estimated ten thousand men, women and children flooded the Belvedere grounds in anticipation of a "bigger and better display than last year." Several thousand more were turned away because there was no more parking area.

New York area residents who have become increasingly more aware of Reverend Moon and his projects jumped at the opportunity of hearing him speak at the program, his first public speech in New York since last October's Carnegie Hall Day of Hope programs. Preceded by patriotic band music and about an hour of international entertainment by Belvedere leadership trainees and New York Unification Church members, Reverend Moon spoke strongly of each individual's responsibility to live for others and of America's responsibility to the world.

"My message to you today is that God created man to live for others, to serve others," he spoke. "Today America celebrates a birthday. It was born in the Christian spirit, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. All throughout the Bible we are taught to serve others, to give ourselves for our fellow man."

Reverend Moon recounted some of the blessings God has bestowed on America, but warned that blessings never come without a responsibility. America can only survive by serving other nations, he added.

"I came here to bring this nation closer to God, and I pledge my entire heart and soul to that purpose," he said. "The destiny of America depends on how much closer this nation moves toward God."

Reverend Moon's 45-minute speech was interpreted by Col. Bo Hi Pak, who flew in from the Louisville, Kentucky Celebration of Life program for the occasion. Reverend Moon's theme was similar to that of his "God's Hope for America" speeches during his 1973 Day of Hope tour and his Watergate Proclamation of November 30, 1973. On a day honoring the long tradition of independence and individual freedom in America, Reverend Moon issued a serious challenge to the audience to live for others and for God. Each person who came was given a copy of Reverend Moon's speeches, "Christianity in Crisis -- New Hope," and an invitation to the Madison Square Garden program on September 18. Those who had attended the July 4th program last year had been very impressed with the dramatic fireworks display, the singing, Reverend Moon's talk, and the kindness of the young people, and many returned this year with their friends.

A small dinner party for special guests last year was expanded into a gala reception and Korean-style

banquet for about fifty local dignitaries, including the mayors of Tarrytown and nearby Hastings-on-Hudson, a state assemblyman, a state senator's representative, several professors, and a judge. As during last year's dinner, Reverend Moon sang for the guests and several, caught up by the spirit, spontaneously sang solos in return. Dinner guests received gifts of corsages and boutonnieres, ginseng tea, and the chopsticks from their plates.



Much hard work on the part of the Belvedere trainees and national staff members from Washington, D.C. created the stage, singing, refreshments, decorations and logistics which made the event pleasant and successful for the thousands who came. Bobby Wilson, general manager for the Belvedere Estate commented, "It's really beautiful. I feel a connection with all the people working; the carpenters worked day and night to construct the stage. In lectures we learn the truth, but on this project we are being taught to grow."

All the arrangements for the celebration were coordinated by Keith Cooperrider, executive assistant of Unification Church president Neil Salonen. Mr. Salonen shared with early celebrants his vision for the evening: "We want to show our spirit for America. People will sense our happiness for God and for America, and our love for each other this way." Door prizes of a potted plant, a three-month supply of ginseng tea, and matching Korean marble vases were given just before Reverend Moon's speech.

In introducing Reverend Moon, Dr. Joseph Kennedy reminded the listeners that 198 years ago, people gathered here because they had a need -- a psychological, political, economic, and spiritual need -- for freedom. "These men gave their lives that a nation might exist; they gave their lives for the cause of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that had never been known anywhere else."

"We have come here as guests of a man who believes in America," he added, explaining Reverend Moon's first-hand experience of the threat of Communism and his "forgive, love, unite" campaign. "Someday when you travel around the world," Dr. Kennedy went on, "people will ask where you are from. When you say 'Tarrytown,' they will answer, 'Oh, that's where Reverend Moon is from!'"

The spiritual celebration was climaxed by the long-awaited fireworks display. In what may become a yearly tradition in the New York area, the fireworks emblazoned the sky with unbelievably dazzling shapes, colors and roars. The Tarrytown newspaper the following day took due note of the "rousing display" and "appreciation of the crowds."