

How we supported the Unification Church in the 1950s

Lee Su-kyung

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Lee Su-kyung joined in Busan in 1953.

Korea has quite a successful business foundation. But that was not always the case. Even in very early times, True Father himself worked hard to earn money to live on - to conduct the earliest activities and pay for travel expenses. In the mid-1950s, Father began the Tongil engineering business with just one machine at the old Cheongpa-dong church. From those very early days members devoted efforts to earn money for the church to expand. One such testimony comes from Mr. Lee Soo-kyung, who joined our church in Busan in 1953. He remembers even those times when Father himself was laboring to earn a living together with the small group on the hillside in Busan. Once the church established itself in Seoul, he realized there was something he could do to help. This testimony was translated from the Korean to English, and is perhaps available to English-language readers for the first time.



True Father, Kim Won-pil and other members (and American guest) at the small hut they built as refugees in Busan.

Father and Won-pil Kim were the first fundraisers

When we joined the church, Teacher Kim Won-pil was making a living with the money he earned by drawing portraits. At the time, there was the US Army Unit 8069 in Busan, and it was a shift unit that rotated from the front line to the US and from the US to the front line. Since there were no color photos at the time, the job was to take the photos of American soldiers in the morning after resting there, draw them into full-color portraits overnight, and deliver them to them in the morning. The soldiers were rotated every day, so the work could continue.

Father set up the canvas (a wooden frame about 20 cm wide and 30 cm long, with white cloth attached and covered with glue), drew lines with a pencil on the background to set the composition, and erased the pencil sketch after coloring. I did it after my family joined the church. I sat down with the lamp on and worked all night. This is because the pictures must be delivered before shift time. Usually, he completed about 8 to 12 portraits in one evening. Teacher Won-pil Kim wrote down the color of his hair, eyes, clothes, etc. and brought it home to color. I remember it was around \$4 per sheet. Father also worked as a carpenter in Unit 8069 for a short time, and I also got a job as a painter painting the walls of Unit 8069 and worked for a short time.

Father himself made and sold sugar-coated flour dumplings, which he named 'Seonghwa-tang (成和糖).' That was when Father gave the name 'Seonghwa (成和)' for the first time, and today this name is used in relation to many places: Seonghwa Youth Association, Seonghwa Publishing, Seonghwa Student Association, Seonghwa Alumni Association, etc.). Also, through the arrangement of Father's friend, Mr. Kim Moon-yang (a wealthy man in Anak, Hwanghae Province) who was in charge of transportation at Busan Central Pier, he received bread and sold it as snacks for drivers at the Central Pier. At night he continued painting portraits.

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I decided this is what I must do

From the day after I came to Seoul, I could feel that although my heart was in heaven, it was hard to have enough to eat every day. In that situation, I thought, "Ah, this is the way for me to serve the Will right now." What I did was to solve the problem of our finances.

Once I made the decision, though, I was left bare-handed, with no business or capital to start. Recalling the time we painted portraits in Busan, I thought of coloring black and white photos with paint to create full-color photos. But where do you get brushes and paints, and where do you get sample photos! I ran to Naanseong because I remembered my older brother who had gone to see Father a month after we joined the church. I collected dozens of portraits. At that time, I felt proud as if I had won 10 million dollars. When I think of my older brother, who passed away from illness a few years later and left a note saying, "Mr. Moon, I am sorry for not being able to establish a church," tears fill my eyes.

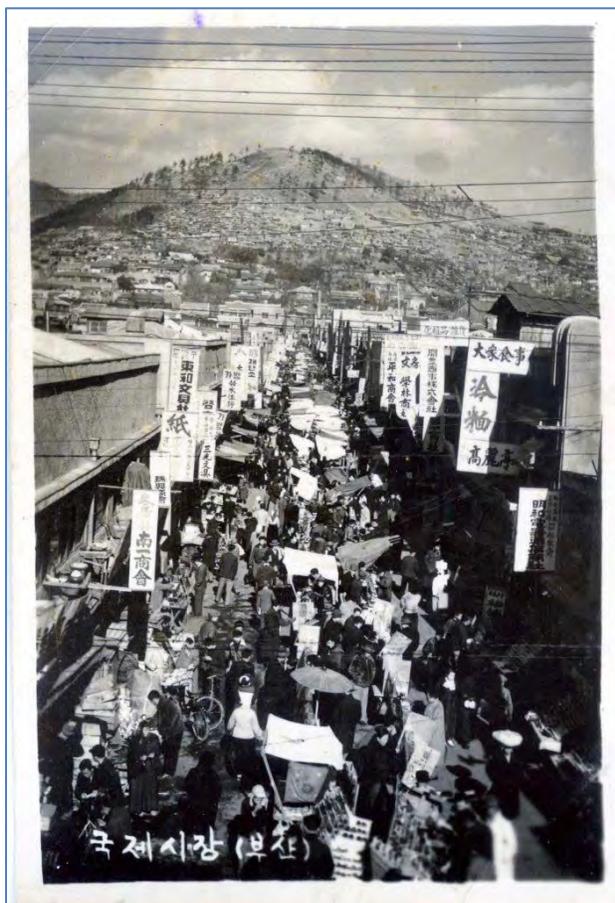


Bulguksa Temple, one of the black and white photos that they sold and would have made into color photos if asked.

I used apple crates to make a table with folding legs, and a chair, and washed flour sacks to make a tablecloth. Imagine how shabby it was. However, feeling like a special envoy from Heaven, I went to the stream under the Cheonggyecheon overpass next to the Seoul Stadium. There was a tram garage next to the stream, and next to the garage was a narrow bridge that could accommodate three people. After going

through a lot of trouble on the street corner due to the aggression of the street vendors wanting to keep their spots, I found a place and sat down at my desk. And I took orders by shouting, "If you give us your black and white photo, we will make it into a color photo."

But what is that? I would say it was a luxury. From the first day, a woman who was the owner of the largest sample photo in a frame showed up and demanded that it be returned, claiming it was her photo. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't describe the feeling of despair I felt after returning the photo. It became normal to see me in the soup kitchen of Sejemun Church every evening. I didn't have enough money to cook for myself. My lunch was one or two donuts bought on the street.



A market in Busan, another black and white photos that they sold and would have made into color photos if asked.

Even so I would go back with all the money I had earned for the day.

The difficulties faced by street vendors were more than just one or two. Dust, the hot sun, glares from passers-by, and especially police crackdowns happening at least once or twice a day. Every time, I had to walk through the narrow alleys carrying my wares. I was shocked when a photo that had been ordered was splashed with water and paint. Think of the feelings of the owner of the photo, who had ordered the coloring. It was really hard to do the elaborate photo coloring, which had to be done safely at home in all that chaos. When crackdowns were severe, police officers hit people with batons and their upper legs were injured, and this happened several times. Every time, I would think about the meaning of my work, go back to church, bind up my cut leg, and go back out again.

One day, as usual, when I was attending to such an injury, Father looked at me and sadly said, "From now on, Soo-kyung, I will let you roam the world as you please, study as much as you want, and do whatever you want." I was able to read Father's passionate heart, and I went out into the streets again with the thought, 'It is Father himself that is doing this.' One day, Father came out with Church President Eu, his cousin Hyo-min Eu, and others and looked at me while I was coloring! I hurriedly got up, bowed, and greeted Father. I heard hundreds of millions of words spoken through his kind eyes, and I responded with my own eyes, telling him that I too live faithfully and purely. I tried to guess the depth of his feelings as I listened to him say, "Have good fortune!" as he went on his way.

I worked wearing a straw hat like those worn by farmers, but occasionally a relative recognized me. One time, a friend from my father's hometown recognized me and said, "Hey! There was a time when the grandson of Elder Lee Seung-ho bought me a bag of flour and said, "What are you up to?" I can't tell you how much Grandma Ok Se-hyun and Grandma Ji Seung-do enjoyed making sujebi with that flour for several days. It was a time when a sack of flour was so precious.

Around September, I moved to a place in front of the Seoul Stadium, and next to me was a man selling landscape photos of Bulguksa Temple, Anapji Pond, etc. (at the time, they were called bromide photos

and were sold a lot as collectible photos) and photos of celebrities. The pictures sold quite well, and in my spare time, the man asked me to color his landscape pictures to make them natural. I painted a few and surprisingly they sold very well! So, when there were no orders, I would color the man's landscape photos for a low fee, so I had more work to do. The way forward was starting to open up.

Business expands

However, as the number of street vendors increased on the narrow streets, police crackdowns reached a peak, and people were taken to the police station and had to write a letter of apology. As street vending became difficult, I made inquiries and went to a small alcove house in Wangshimni that produces bromide photos. I selected and purchased the best-selling photos there and colored them at Bukhak-dong Church. And in the morning, I visited photo street vendors all over the city, including Dongdaemun, Namdaemun, Seoul Station, Jongno 3-ga, and in front of Hwashin, persuading and exhorting them to sell the photos. As a result of consistent efforts, places that sold bromide photos also included my colored landscape photos. In this way, the business moved from a street vendor selling portraits to the second stage of a wholesale business in colored bromide photo sales.

In this way, I began the first public business work of our church began.

When True Father saw that my photos were selling better, he suggested that we try making landscape photos ourselves. Eu Hyo-min had photography skills, and with some difficulty he borrowed a camera (personal cameras were extremely rare at the time). He was able to travel around the country and take many good pictures of scenic spots and historic sites. I made a few photos as a test and began to put them into the sales network of colored landscape photos that I had secured so far. Little by little, retailers were secured. Selling was not an easy task, but through hard and continuous efforts, we were able to beat two or three photo studios and take the top spot in terms of sales. From then on, retailers even came to the Bukhak-dong church and bought our landscape photos. In this way, the bromide photography business was fully established by the fall. The business developed into a third stage of full-scale photo production.

From then on, our whole family became very busy. I hired a printing instructor and acquired developing fluid, and we started developing photos myself in a poorly constructed darkroom. Eu Hyo-young and I were in charge of developing and printing the photos, and other family members were in charge of cutting the printed photos with scissors. As the photos began to sell better, many family members had to help.

The time when I was running the photograph business was the time when Rev. Eu Hyo-won was diligently giving lectures on the Principle even while lying on his back and drawing diagrams on sheets of paper with a fountain. In the fall, professors and students from Ewha University joined the church. Father said that new members would not come until autumn, but when fall came, professors and students from Ewha University began to join.

The home of Professor Yang Yun-young (who wrote some of our holy songs) was a spacious house on a hill near Jangchung Gymnasium, and it served as an auxiliary church alongside the tiny Bukhak-dong church, and many meetings were held there. At every meeting, there were spiritual phenomena, and many times members prayed with tears and runny noses, raising their voices to God.