

Father's Childhood: In His Own Words



The hills in the vicinity of Father's place of birth; the highest one at the back is Myodu Mountain, where Father met Jesus in prayer.

The following is the second chapter of an English book about True Father's life. The book was prepared (at some speed) from a collection of autobiographical excerpts from True Father's speeches over the years, which once collected were arranged chronologically. The book was not published generally but was prepared for the benefit of the True Children in their younger years. The content has been edited for Today's World.

When I was young, I thought, "What's the name of that mountain? What might be on that mountain?" When I started thinking this way, I actually had to go there and find out. I always clearly knew what was within twenty *li*¹ of where I lived. At that time, I knew everything above and below ground. If there was a mountain in front of me, I just had to go and find out what was beyond it. That's the kind of boy I was.

I was involved in a broad range of activity. There was nowhere within the field of my sight that I had not gone. If there were mountains, there was no peak I had not climbed. I even had to go beyond that point. If I hadn't gone there, I wouldn't even have felt like looking at it.

Therefore, I never stayed in one place. All those natural places in my hometown—with water and trees, land and spring breezes—were where I cultivated my emotional sentiment for faith. All of my past is still vividly alive inside me.

A hometown is a place that provides abundant materials for us to grow internally. As a Korean, I used all the natural elements in my Korean hometown. For example, I used all the animals and the plants as a textbook for internal growth. This is why I always miss the mountains, fields and streams of my hometown. I truly love nature.

Observing the plants and climbing trees

When I was young, there was no flower in the mountains I had not touched. There was no flower that I wasn't aware of. Because nature is so great, when I went to a field I always spent

time out in nature until sunset, without going home. When I became tired, I fell asleep and woke up in the middle of the night. There were many times when my parents came looking for me and took me home. I loved nature that much.

I collected several hundred different kinds of plants and studied them hard to find out which were poisonous and which medicinal. I studied their structure as well. I therefore know all the edible wild greens growing in those mountains. When I went to pick wild greens with my older sister or with neighborhood mothers, I always went ahead of them and picked the edible wild greens first.

When I was young, there was always some tree close to my house, for example, a chestnut tree or an acacia tree.... When an acacia tree's flowers bloom, their fragrance is so delicate, isn't it? I did not merely stand there viewing even that tree. I had to climb that tree, stepping on each of the branches.

When there was a tree so high in my village that no one had ever climbed it, I just had to climb it. Even if it meant going without sleep at night, I had to climb it.

Near my house, there was a large chestnut tree.

It was about two hundred years old, and it was very beautiful. Because I was born in the year of the monkey, I used to climb and step on every branch of the trees. Whenever there were chestnuts [Father laughs], I made a cane out of a branch and knocked them down with that. It was a lot of fun. I knocked down hundreds of chestnuts like that because those chestnut trees were very large.

I also loved Korean white pine trees. Trees should bear fruit, shouldn't they? Korean pine trees yield fruit. In order for the seed to sprout, it first freezes and bursts. A leaf of that tree has five parts. Centering on the east-west-south-north, there is one centerline. In this sense, I love those trees. Also, they grow very well. They grow straight up and the root grows straight as well. The buds grow straight up, too.

Observing the life of birds

When I was young, I was very interested in seeing beautiful



1 One Korean *li* equals 393 meters, or about a quarter of a mile.

birds. What does that bird eat? Where does it build its nest and hatch its eggs? Even if it took several days, I had to find those things out by quietly observing the birds.

Everything I could see in the mountains, all the birds that came within my sight, were all still able to fly after going through my inspection. Once, I remember seeing cute migrating birds for the first time. I wanted to find out what the male bird among them looked like and what the female looked like. Was there a textbook I could study to find that out? I had no choice but to go to those migrating birds and study them myself. I waited there a whole week without eating. [Father laughs]

One time, a magpie laid an egg, and I was so curious about it day after day. I couldn't sleep at night without finding out how it was doing. [Laughter] I went up to have a look during the night, and again early the next morning I had to sneak up to look before the magpie came. Because I went up to look day after day, I became friendly with the magpie. At first the magpie scolded me, but since no harm was done each time I approached, the magpie later stayed calm even when I came near. [Laughter] In that way, I was able to observe what the magpie fed its youngsters and everything it did for them.

Oh yes! The maternal and paternal love of animals toward their youngsters is great. At times when I think of this, I feel they are greater than I.

I could study many aspects of nature. For example, with a bird, I could study its life in relation to all other birds, by comparing them each to that particular one. Take the nest of a nightingale, for example. It hangs down from a branch like this. It's very odd when you look at it. Where do they get that silky thread...? Nightingales don't build nests on ordinary branches. Their nests are very high in the tree, in dense areas found usually on older trees. The insect nightingales most like to eat is the pine caterpillar.

When a lark builds a nest, it builds it this big and sits ten meters in front of it. Since larks build nests in fields, you'd think they'd be easily found, but larks build them between fields, on perimeters. Ordinarily people cannot find them easily. You would not notice one even if you stood beside it. They are triangular; they make one side like this with two entrances, like this.

If you look at sparrows—you wonder who taught them—the male and female meet and make their nest and rear their young. The mother doesn't eat what she brings, but gives it all to her baby birds. Who was it who taught her to feed them? Who could have explained that to her?

Hunting and fishing

Since I lived in a rural area, I caught many insects. I caught so many that I think there isn't a type that I haven't caught. There also aren't any animals I haven't captured. Oh, no, that's not right; I've never caught a tiger. I've caught everything from wild cats to rabbits and raccoons. Interestingly, I thought that these animals lived all alone, but they all had partners. They were all in pairs.

In those days, when it snowed, we went out even at night to a field, several tens of *li* wide, to hunt weasels with canes. During the day, I often hunted rabbits. When there didn't seem to be any rabbits, I used village dogs as hunting dogs. I made them bark and track and hunt rabbits, while I shouted, "Hit the rabbit from behind!" [Laughter]

The meat of a sparrow is very tasty. There isn't any type of meat I haven't tried. Do you know water rails [a marsh bird]? From water rails to pheasants and snakes—I caught everything. I caught every kind of snake I ever saw, whether it was

poisonous or not. When a poisonous snake bit me, I bit it back. [Laughter]

There are indeed many different kinds of bird egg. When I wanted to try to eat a certain egg, I took one home, cooked it and ate it. [Laughter] I treated chicken eggs and all other bird eggs the same. No matter what eggs they were, they got the same treatment.

If you go to a rural area, you will find a large green frog. Children there sometimes caught the measles and became skinny, being unable to eat because of a high fever. I would catch several of those frogs and.... The legs of those frogs are very fat. You peel the skin off, wrap it in a pumpkin leaf and cook it. If you wrap it with three or four leaves and cook it, not more than two leaves will burn. It's almost as if you had steamed it. You can't imagine how tender the meat is. It tastes superb. You do not know how good it feels to catch a frog and eat it when you're hungry. There are so many things you can eat. If you live alone, you need to prepare food.

Chongju is my hometown. If you walked about ten *li* from my village, you could see the Yellow Sea.² If you climbed up a high mountain, you could see everything. In between, there were ponds and brooks. The fish in that area changed every season. If you want to learn about the sea, during a vacation period, go out to the sea every day as though you were going to work each morning. I went to ponds near the sea that were smelly with mud and did many things—from catching eels in sacks to searching for crabs inside holes. Once you clearly understand these kinds of things, you could go out fishing. I was the champion at catching things like eels.

When a customer came and said he wanted to eat steamed eel, I was able to prepare it in thirty minutes or an hour. I was very fast at running as well. I ran a long way, and within about fifteen minutes, I might catch five eels in a pond.

Farm life as it was then

In those days, we had to feed our cow, which I really hated doing; so, I used to tie the cow up in a field on the other side of my village. After several hours, the cow would moo because the person who was supposed to feed it had not come. A cow does not attack its master even if he doesn't come out to feed it. Even if I went to it very late, the cow welcomed me happily. Having witnessed that behavior, I felt that is how I should behave when carrying out the providence.

You should go and see a slaughterhouse. When I was still young, I visited a slaughterhouse many times. It's very interesting. There was a slaughterhouse about four kilometers from my village. When I heard a rumor that someone was going out to catch a cow for butchering, I went to the slaughterhouse and waited there from morning. A butcher came with an iron hammer this big. As soon as a cow came in, he killed it in an instant. When I looked at the cow, it was already dead. The cow was sacrificed. It was so miserable.

There was also a dog I always loved. You can't imagine how clever this dog was. He knew when I was coming home from school. He was very smart. He was better than a person. Thirty minutes before I came home, he came out and waited for me. Sometimes, when I would be coming home late, he understood that beforehand and waited until late to come out. He always followed me and ran circles around me. Looking at the dog, I felt, "Wow; what's love? Do I love anyone that much?"

I was interested in seeing when a pig delivers her piglets, so I

2 An inlet of the East China Sea between China and the Korean peninsula, less commonly known as the West Sea

went to watch. When the pig pushed once, a piglet came sliding out easily and after another push, another came. [Laughter] It's true! You don't know how interested I was in this. I've also seen cats having kittens and dogs having puppies. It's because I love them all.

We kept bees, too. Honey is indeed delicious. The honey of bees that feed on the flower of the acacia tree is so good. Bees sit on acacia flowers, stick their heads into the flowers and suck out the nectar. They support their body and legs like this. When a bee is sucking the nectar out, if you were to pull the hind end of the bee with tweezers, the hind end would come off, but the bee would keep on sucking! Do you realize how terrible that is? Anyone who pulls on the hind end of a bee until it separates from the rest of the body is terrible, but a bee that enjoys the taste of nectar and does not stop sucking is more fearsome. [Laughter] I told the bee, "I learned from you. I should be like that, too." [Laughter]

Around a farm, there is nothing I'm not good at. I'm good at tilling paddy fields; I'm good at plowing; I'm good at rice planting, and I'm also good at weeding the fields. The most difficult place to weed is a millet field. Usually the field is weeded three times. When it is weeded the third time, the big weeds are taken out. After millet fields, the most difficult to weed are cotton fields. I know very well how I should weed in order to make good peas, good rice or good corn. When I see sweet potatoes that have been dug up, I know whether they were grown in mud, or not, simply by looking at them. It is not good to grow sweet potatoes in mud. Sweet potatoes grown in a mixture of two-thirds sand and one-third mud are very sweet.

I'm also very good at rice planting. Usually rice is planted in rows here, right? [Yes.] Farms in places like Pyong-an Province, North Korea were very developed, more so than in South Korea. This is because the Christian civilization arrived there first.

I eat anything easily, even uncooked cucumbers. I have trained myself to eat uncooked corn and potatoes. I'm a person who has even trained himself to eat uncooked peas. Uncooked peas are actually delicious.

When I was young, while playing around at my mother's family's house, there was a vine stretching out. When I asked

what it was, they told me that it was from a sweet potato. I asked, "What's a sweet potato?" I had never heard of it. "How do you eat it?" They told me you dig it out of the ground and steam it. After hearing that, I tried a steamed sweet potato for the first time. Oh, what a taste that sweet potato had! How tasty it was! I said I would eat them all by myself, and I took the entire basket of sweet potatoes and ate them. From the next year after that, as soon as sweet potato season came, I often said to my mother, "Mom, I'll be back soon," and I went on a twenty-li marathon to eat sweet potatoes....

I always wore socks and other clothes I had knitted myself. When it became cold, I even knitted hats in a flash. I taught my older sisters how to knit. I made Korean socks for my mother. My mother said, "I thought you were just trying to make them as a joke. How did you get them into the shape of a sock? It fits just right."

Also, at times, I went to use the toilet in a rural Buddhist temple. When I used their toilet, I kept quiet and listened to the sound of my feces dropping; it sounded poetic. Combined with the sound of the wind chimes in the temple, it was very poetic. There were times when I sat for thirty minutes, an hour, or even two hours. It was very interesting.

A suffering environment

When winter came, I brought food to birds and dug wells for them. I worked sincerely to dig out spring water. I said to the birds, "Birds! You should come here and drink this water." They actually responded, came and drank it. They ate what I brought for them and did not fly away even when they saw me come and go. They naturally came to like people.

Another time, I dug a small muddy pool. I thought fish survived wherever there was water. I left some fish in the pool, but the next morning when I came to look, they were all dead and lying outside the water. I did not feel good when I saw the dead fish. I thought, "Why did you die? I did my best to keep you alive, so why did you die?" That was what I thought without knowing why the fish had died. When I remember this, it occurs to me that I'm indeed a person with a lot of heart. Even about a fish I thought, "Oh, I'm sure your mother will cry." I cried looking at those fish. I told them, "I will cry for you," and I cried all by myself.

When I was young, what my father hated most was the hunting of dogs. Nevertheless, some neighbors caught the dog of ours that I loved the most. When I came home from school, they had caught my dog and were hanging it upside down. Although it was almost dead, my dog looked at me and still looked so happy to see me. I hugged the hung dog and burst into tears. When I think of this, I feel people cannot be trusted, but dogs can.

I'm not an insensitive person. I'm a very soulful person. I'm filled with tears. I'm a very sympathetic person. When I was young, even when I fought with an annoying boy who was harassing a friend of mine, when that boy's clothes ripped, I took mine off and gave them to him. I'm a person with that kind of heart.

Maybe it was because of my nature, but after seeing a freezing beggar pass by, I couldn't eat or sleep that night. My personality was like that. I asked my mother and father to take that beggar into our room and to feed him well. Don't you think God loved me because of this characteristic?



Fairs drew people to the Chongju market, a town then of less than 10,000 on the main rail line between Busan and Manchuria.

When I heard a rumor that someone in the neighborhood was starving, I couldn't sleep at night. How could I help that person? I asked my mother about it. My mother and my father asked me, "Are you going to feed all the people in our village?" I took rice out of our box anyway and gave it to the starving person without my parents' approval.

In March, when spring comes, village people prepare for a feast. Can poor people afford to eat rice cakes? They have nothing. I took meat and rice to make rice cakes and took them to those people.

When I learned of the difficult situation of the people in the village, I brought food to the poor people or sometimes to women who had given birth but who could not eat because they had no rice or seaweed.³



Chongju, Father's hometown, during the time of Japanese colonial rule; from her clothing, the woman cleaning the street appears to be Japanese

Helping others and getting scolded for it

When I was about eleven years old, I announced to my father that I would sell a huge bag full of rice (about eighteen liters' worth) to help someone. I remember even now carrying that enormous bag of rice on my back and walking a distance of twenty *li*. I should have had a rope or a cord to make it easier to carry such a large bag, but I just carried it on my back. My heart was quivering. [Father laughs.] My heart was beating fast and I had to go huh! huh! many times. I still remember that, even now. I'm sure I will not forget it for the rest of my life. All of these things allowed me to be in a position to go the way of the providence.

Our family was not that poor at that time. We were keeping bees then. We had several hundred beehives. In rural areas, there were places where people had no light because they had no oil for their lamps. I could not give them gasoline, so I gave them candles made from beeswax. At least then they could have candlelight. After doing that, though, I couldn't stand it because my heart was still not at ease. So I broke open most of the beehives to make beeswax and distributed it to all the villagers. Do you have any idea how much money that was worth in those days? I was only a child at that time; how could I know? My father severely scolded me over that. [Laughter]

Centering on our family, there was this kind of relationship with our neighbors in my home village. Did only Moons live in that village? No. People with other names such as Lee and Kim also lived there. As it happened, though, all the elders of the Moon clan tried to exclude other people because the majority of the people in the village were Moons. If, however, my father or my grandfather would not lend anything to someone, I always took it and gave it to the person.

When one of my poor friends brought a lunch box with only cooked millet or wheat in it, I could not eat my own lunch by myself. I exchanged lunch boxes with him and ate his lunch. Also, if one of my friends' mother or father was sick but did not have the money to go to the hospital, I went to my parents and begged them in tears to pay, so that they would be able to go to the hospital. I asked my parents, "Will you pay or not?" If they said no, I would tell them I was going to sell this or that thing and to please understand that I was in need of money.

³ For some weeks after giving birth, a Korean mother traditionally eats seaweed soup to recover her strength.

If you go to a Korean rural area, they often make *beombeok* rice cake [made of mixed grains with the consistency of thick porridge] using a steamer. They put the steamer in a high place with a branch on it so that dogs or cats can't touch it.

When winter comes, the *beombeok* rice cake is allowed to freeze. If you put that frozen rice cake under the lid of a rice cooker and simmer it there, it becomes very soft and tender. I took our *beombeok* rice cake and gave it to the village children. We made enough to eat for a month, but it was gone in a few days. I was scolded because of that too.

I helped many friends and others. In doing so, I become very well acquainted with people. Not only with the people in our village but with people within ten *li* of my house. I was well aware of how various people lived.

When I was twelve years old, I was also good at gambling. After three games, I would win all the money. After the first game, I might win 120 won. During the time we were under Japanese rule, 120 won was a large amount of money. At that time, university tuition was 80 to 120 won a year and a cow sold for seventy to eighty won. A bag of rice was ₩1 and ten *jeon*.⁴ For poor, miserable village children, I made a final bet and used the money to buy a container full of starch syrup, all of which I gave to the children to eat.

I had an uncle who was very selfish. There was a melon field beside the road where the village children often went. All the children were crazy about the melon smell. My uncle made a lookout shed, so that he could look over the melon field. He also never picked even one melon for them. So, one day I said, "Anyone who wants to eat melons come with a sack." When midnight came, I told them to pick every melon in every row. [Laughter] I then hid the melons in a field of bush clover and told them when to come and eat them. The children came even before daylight and ate until their stomachs were full. After that, there was a big fuss. I was the only one who would do such a thing. [Laughter]

Also, I had an agreement with my sisters' husbands that whenever they came, no matter how much money I took and used from their wallets, they would accept it. They told me to come to their homes often. When I visited them, I had already

⁴ A defunct monetary unit equal to one-hundredth of a won

made that agreement with them, so I was able to take money whenever I needed it. I bought candies and grain syrup for the poor children in the village. This was not a bad thing to do.

A stubborn personality

If I started crying, I kept on crying even for more than an hour. My nickname was the all-day-crying baby. They gave me this nickname, because I would cry on and on. Old men and women in the neighborhood all came and watched me cry. When I cried, I was so noisy that I woke up people sleeping throughout the whole village. When I cried, I did not just sob; I cried continuously as though something serious had happened. My throat swelled, my voice became husky and later I completely lost my voice. [Laughter] Also, I did not just sit there crying. Because I jumped up and down so much when I cried, I cut myself and started bleeding and the room became all bloody. You can now understand what kind of child I was.

Also, I never gave in. I would not give in even if my bones broke. I would not give in even if I died. Before I reached the age of discretion, in other words, before I reached my teens, if my mother scolded me for something that was clearly her mistake, I always replied, No! Even if she told me that she was right, I stood up to her and argued with her. Isn't that incredible? Once, I was spanked so many times that I fainted, but I still refused to give in.

I was like that to my grandfather as well. I would give advice to my grandfather. When he tried to teach me a lesson and he was holding his [tobacco] pipe. I asked him, "When you scold your grandson, should you be doing so with a pipe in your hand? Is that the tradition of our clan?" In that way, I threw my grandfather's words back at him. What could he say? In the beginning, he underestimated his small grandson, but later he said, "You're right. I should put this away." In ways like this, by the time I was twelve years old, my grandfather, my mother and father and my brothers and sisters were all under my thumb.

When I was young, when I fought a person, I could not sleep for three or four months if I could not make him surrender to the point that not only he but his parents also gave in. I did not leave that family alone. I'm a very tough man. I'm a person who absolutely hates losing. I've never lost. I did anything to win. I've never even imagined losing.

People said, "The younger son of that family that came from Osan, once he determines to do something, he will definitely do it." ... If I said I would do something, I did it. People all knew that. If I got involved, for anyone who stood against me, there was no alternative but to give up. My mind was satisfied when three generations, including the person's grandparents, submitted to me. ...

Once, someone made my nose bleed and then ran away. I waited in front of his house for thirty days and at last, his parents gave in to me. They gave me a steamer full of rice cakes, which I took home. [Laughter]

People of my generation, in those days, played *Ddak-ji*⁵ a lot.

5 A still popular children's game where cardboard is folded, akin to origami, to form flat squares (with a printed design indicating front and back). The squares are slammed down on top of opponents' squares.



A downtown street in Shinuiju (the capital city of Father's home province of North Pyong-an), near the Korean–Chinese border, in 1924

Do you know what *Ddak-ji* is? [Yes.] I played it very well. Also, penny pitching. You pitch coins against a wall and whichever one goes the farthest from the wall wins. I used to play using a hole in the ground with the winner being the one whose coin got into the hole or closest to it. I was a champion at that.

When I was young, when I arm-wrestled with anyone my age, I never lost. I never lost at wrestling either. If a man can do those things, he is very useful. Don't you think so? [Laughter] To give you an example, there was a boy in my village who was three years older than I. I wrestled with him once but lost. I'm sure those who have experienced living in a rural area would understand. When spring comes, acacia trees suck up water, and if you peel the outside layer, it peels off completely just like pine tree bark. The peeled off layer of that tree is very tough. With the guy who had beaten me in mind, I wrestled against an acacia tree, saying, "Oh that guy! I'm not going to eat until I sit on him." For the next six months, I couldn't sleep well until I had knocked that boy down and sat on him. Until then, I forgot about eating and sleeping. I'm that kind of a determined person.

A sense of justice

When I was young, I often fought in one place or another. If I came across a big boy punching a small boy in my village, I exchanged places with the small boy and fought for him.

Whenever I came across boys fighting, I watched them fight for a while. If the bad boy was winning, I went in and fought for the losing boy. I went into the fight saying, "Hey you! You are wrong." If I thought it was the right thing to do, I was a person who would fight at the risk of my life. Everyone in my village was afraid of me....

Before I was ten years old, all the kids within twenty *li* were my followers. I said, "Hey, I'm going to be in your village on such and such a day," and with all the other kids we went and had a group fight. We engaged in that kind of roughhousing. If a boy came to me in tears, saying he had been beaten up and told me who was responsible, I went, "Oh, yeah?" and confronted the bully myself, even if it meant having to go without sleep that night. When I found him, I'd call him out and protest against his behavior. "Hey, you!" I'd say, "You beat up my friend, didn't you? How many times did you hit him? I'll teach you!"

The object is to overturn others' squares and claim them for oneself.

When young unmarried men harassed young women passing by, I stood up to them. I'd say, "Could you guys do that if she were your sister?" ...

I had a very impatient and stubborn temperament. If I thought I was right, I never hesitated. I could only sleep if I had settled everything I'd intended to. If I hadn't, I just couldn't sleep.

Full of curiosity

When I was twelve years old, I visited the grave of my great-grandfather. I saw his corpse when it was dug up and moved to a different location. I was very surprised. I thought, "When a person dies, he becomes like that. The eyes and flesh have all disappeared, only the bones remain."

You have all seen a skeleton, right? When I saw the skeleton, I felt, "Oh, are those the bones of a human being? My parents or my grandparents explained to me what my great-grandfather had looked like, but looking at the bones, he looked terrible. I thought that if my parents look like that, I must also look like that. I agonized over this a lot.

If an old man in the village died, I had to ask why he had died. I just could not live without knowing. If I did not know why he had died, I was so curious about it that I always went even to the funeral and asked how he had died. That sort of behavior led me to know very clearly what was happening in the village.

I was so curious about everything that was going on. When I went to another village and saw an old man shoveling dung, I did not just pass by. Other people all held their noses because of the smell, but I was curious to know what kind of nose the old man had that kept him from being bothered by the smell. What had happened to his nose? I was so curious about that. I thought it was strange, so I had to go and ask.

When my mother gave me an apple or a melon, I always asked where she got it. My mother would say, "From where? Your brother brought it from somewhere." Then I'd asked, "Which field did it come from?" If he had brought it from a field, I'd ask if an old woman had picked it, a man, a young man, or a young woman? I was so curious about these things.

I had many sisters. There were six of them. There were six young women in my family, and they each had a bag. [Laughter] We all lived in the same house, but they all had individual bags. My elder sister's was the biggest. It was this big. The younger they were, the smaller the bag. I was in the middle. It was so interesting to find out what was inside those bags. [Laughter] If you look inside an owl's house, everything is there. My sisters' bags were just like that.

An eight-year-old matchmaker

When I was small, if I said it would rain that day, it did. Once I sensed that someone in our village would die within a week, and an old woman from the village actually passed away. There were many episodes like this.

I was already different. Sitting in my village, if I sensed that some old man from a particular family from the upper village was not feeling well, he would become sick. I was right. I knew everything.

Since I was eight years old, I've been a champion of matching people. If someone brought two pictures for me to look at and if I predicted that the couples' lives would not go well were they to marry, it proved to be correct. When I threw a picture away, it was because that couple's fortune was bad, and they would go wrong. If I just put it down, it meant things would

go well. Those who married all had children and lived a good life.... I have been doing this since I was eight years old. I'm now close to eighty, so I must be a professional by now, right? Just by looking, or smelling, I understood. By simply looking at how a person sat down or smiled, I understood everything clearly.

How other Moons saw Father

I was the younger son of a family from Osan. I was the second son, born as Heaven's beloved who would be the savior and pride of the Moons. If you asked anyone, everyone knew this.

Not only our immediate family, but even my uncle respected me more than his own children. My uncle said, "Where's Yong-myung?"⁶ Where's that good singer, Yong-myung?" My uncle loved me more than he loved his own children. When we came home from school, my uncle wouldn't buy candy for his children even if they asked him to; instead, he would take money that might have gone for candy and put it in my back pocket without my noticing. When I asked, "What's this?" He said, "What do you mean, 'what's this?' I'm giving it to you for your tuition." So I asked, "Why? You are not even able to give your children an education." And he replied, "Yeah, well, my children are like this, like that, but if you do well, my children will be blessed." He thought that they would be blessed through me.

Moon Gyung-chun was my father's cousin. He lived next door to us. He was short and fat. My father was the oldest son in his family, and I was his second son. That cousin of my father's always said, "That young kid was born in the wrong age. That kind of a boy could only become a king or a traitor. He can't become a king nowadays, so there's nothing left for him to become but a traitor." Relatives of mine still sometimes tell this story too, right? [Yes.]

1926–1932: Studying Chinese Classics

When I was ten years old, I had to read a book a day at my village school. I finished it in thirty minutes. If I concentrated, I could get everything into my brain within thirty minutes. I then had to recite it in front of my teacher. If I could memorize everything in thirty minutes, how could I sit all day long in class reciting what Confucius and Meng-tzu⁷ had said? [Laughter] My teacher often used to take a nap during the day, so after finishing everything, I used to go and spend time in the mountains while my teacher was sleeping.

Originally, Korean life was close to Confucianism. I read *The Analects of Confucius and Meng-tzu*. I was a person talented in all directions. I was good at drawing pictures, too. When I was twelve years old, I drew stylish Chinese characters for my village school.

When I went to the village school when I was small, my teacher gave a lecture on several verses from *The Analects of Confucius and Meng-tzu*. The next morning, we had to recite that lecture back to the teacher. If we could not, we were punished. I remember being punished.

1933: Unyong Institute

In those days, there were prep schools for entering higher schools, such as college. Mine was in Wonbong-dong. You could go to a prep school before the government assigned you to a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22....FATHER'S CHILDHOOD

6 True Father's name at birth

7 A Chinese philosopher (circa 371–circa 289 B.C.); he is also known as Mencius, which is what he was called in Latin.

higher school, but you had to go and take a test before going being assigned to the higher school. A prep school was an in-between educational institution. I encouraged my cousins to go to prep school.

We did research before choosing a school. In April, we all had to go to school. My parents had paid all the money for tuition to this village school, but I wanted to escape from that school without even going there for a year. I had persuaded my parents, my grandfather and even my uncle by saying, "When other people are building airplanes, I can't just be studying Confucius and Meng-tzu." I laid the foundation of my arguments in that way.

I was a very ambitious person. I thought I would die if I could not get three doctorates in my lifetime. However, I now think of a doctorate as among the easiest things to get. ...

1934: Osan Elementary School

I studied at Unyong prep school and then entered what was called a general school, Osan elementary school. I took an examination to transfer and entered the third grade there. I studied so desperately that my grades for the year were good enough for me to be permitted to skip to the fifth grade.⁸

At that time, I walked twenty *li* to school. This was when I went to the Osan School. How far is that? [Eight kilometers.] I walked eight kilometers to school every day. Because I always passed the houses of other children who lived on the way to school at exactly the same time every day, if they left home with me, we were never late for school. It was almost scientific. Children were therefore waiting for me on every mountain pass. [Laughter] When I walked, I walked very fast. I walked the eight kilometers in an hour or even forty-five minutes. Those following me were working very hard! [Laughter] There are many stories like this about me.

My parents never had the need to prepare school things for me. I did everything by myself. Even when I had to take an oral examination in front of the headmaster, I arranged everything myself. I was a pioneering type.

Dukhung Presbyterian Church

I was born in a very stable Confucian family in a northern province of Korea. When I was a little over ten years old, my entire family converted to Christianity. Converting was for me deeply moving. I really loved my new faith, and I loved Jesus more than I had loved anyone else in my life.

When I was small, whenever I was late for a service, I could not raise my head. Without repenting for several days, I could not walk with my head raised. I still remember this clearly. I always felt that if I arrived late, it would inconvenience all the other people attending the service, so I always tried to arrive at the service a little before it began. I tried to be as helpful as possible.

I'm sure you all know that Korea then was a small, miserable Asian country under Japan's control. I did not grow up in an independent, sovereign state. I grew up under Japanese sovereignty, Japanese tyranny. That was how it was until I was twenty-five. I recall gradually beginning to understand the world during that important stage of my life, my youth; it was a time when as a Korean without independence I came to understand all of life's difficult circumstances. If I look at the situation from the providential viewpoint, I grew up within my

nation's difficult circumstances. The misery of my people who were living under another nation caused feelings to arise from deep in my heart. My memories are of a youth spent thinking of how to deal with the situation of my country.

Transferring to the Fourth Grade

The Osan School prohibited the use of Japanese. We weren't allowed to speak that language. Lee Sung-hun, who was one of the thirty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence from Japan, had established the school. With that kind of tradition as the school's foundation, we simply could not speak Japanese.

When I thought about it, I felt we needed to understand our enemies very well. Unless we thoroughly understood our enemies, we could not prepare to fight against them when we had to. For that reason, I took a transfer exam for Chongju General School, a public elementary school, where I had to enter the fourth grade, which I otherwise would have skipped. I learned to speak Japanese fluently there, and I was graduated from there. During this process, I was thinking about all the difficult questions and basic problems of life, such as the proper way of faith.

At school, we all had to learn Japanese. It seems like only yesterday that I studied *hiragana* and *katakana*.⁹ I memorized everything in one night. I also memorized all the books of the first, second, third and fourth grades like a thunderbolt in just two weeks. After doing that, my ears were used to it.

At this school, for the first time, I hung up pictures I drew. I hadn't even been taught how to draw, but I knew it already. Before I began drawing, I divided the picture into thirds. I measured whether the picture fitted within the divisions of a plane. Based on the center point, I measured it. If my drawing paper was three times bigger, based on the center point, I drew dots first in the places that matched. That's how I drew.

In my early years, when I used a notebook, I did not start writing where the lines were. I always started from the white area at the top of the page. At times, I even wrote on top of what I had written before. In that way, I was able to write more things in a single notebook. We must appreciate the value of things.

From the time I was an elementary school student, I watched the school principal's behavior and continuously trained myself to live as he did. Even now when I pray, I focus on things I learned back then.

Have you all seen a kerosene lamp? [Yes.] It seems like yesterday that I studied while pouring the kerosene in like this. When I studied until two or three o'clock, my parents would say to me, "Hey! Go to sleep. You're going to ruin your health." They always talked like that. In those days, my closest friends were the night insects. I made friends with them during the hot summer season.

I still remember what happened at the Chongju Elementary School graduation ceremony. Many fathers, brothers, teachers and supporters came to Chongju to celebrate on graduation day. At that time, Chongju was a town. At the graduation ceremony there was a speech by the headmaster and then a congratulatory speech by a guest. After that, I volunteered to go on stage and speak. I gave an anti-Japanese speech. I still remember this very clearly. I can still see myself giving that speech in front of all those people. When I think about that, I realize I did not have the temperament of an ordinary boy.◆

8 This was Father's first Western-style education after seven years of Confucian-style schooling.

9 Japanese alphabets