

# Tainted

## 'Brainwashed' by Moonies; families say lives altered

By Joan Herman  
Of the Emerald

This is the second in a four-part series examining the Unification Church.

Annie's picture holds a prominent position atop her family's mantelpiece. With long, blond hair and an attractive, wholesome face, she looks like the all-American girl. And she is, say her parents.

But Annie's involvement with the controversial Unification Church breaks away from this stereotype. The "girl next door" almost became a "Moonie."

Annie's mother, Helen, requested that she and her family remain anonymous because she feared possible retributions by the church. Their names have been changed.

Annie's short, yet intense, involvement in Rev. Sun Myung Moon's church — often dubbed a cult by skeptics — follows a pattern typical of most "Moonie" followers.

home voluntarily.

Four years later, Annie's two-week experience with the Unification Church continues to have far-reaching effects on her life, Helen says. "There's still some unfinished business. I don't think she ever thought it through — about leaving, about the deception of this group. She is aware on a surface level of what they really are, yet she won't read any (negative) material about them," Helen says.

Robert Grudin, a University English professor, had a similar experience.

Grudin and his wife, Misha, were living in Southern California during the summer of 1978 when they learned Misha's German cousin also was there. After some "good sleuthing," Misha traced her cousin's whereabouts to a Unification camp.

The person they met was not the bright, energetic young man the Grudins remembered.

"We met someone who was completely spaced out, and he couldn't focus on us," Grudin says.

From their observations, Misha's German cousin was living without free will or thought. "But he was euphoric. He believed he was in the kingdom of God.

Yet he was also arrogant and believed his way was the right way," Grudin says.

"At that point, I realized we'd better do our damndest to get him out." Like Annie's family, Grudin formed a family coalition in Pasadena, which meant an overseas trip for the parents. For his efforts, Grudin says he was "invoked as the devil incarnate" at a Unification Church service.

A "deprogrammer" then was flown down from Oakland and spent the day talking with the young man. The deprogramming process involves a "mirror image" experience of the initial brainwashing, Grudin says.

As with Unification weekend retreats, the "Moonie" is never left alone during deprogramming sessions. The counselor and parents continually reassure their children, yet also attack all their assumptions about the Unification religion. The counselor repeatedly asks the same questions about their new religion. The critical moment, Grudin says, is when the followers begin to question their new religion.

"Deprogramming is not a violent sort of thing except that (the followers) are held," says counselor Adrian Greek, who has worked extensively with families of children in the Unification Church. "Something will trigger a deeply held value or feeling, and at that point they will begin to break through."

Greek and his wife, Ann, run Portland's Positive Action Center, an affiliate of the national cult awareness network, Citizens' Freedom Foundation.

The Greeks bring a personal experience

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with the Unification Church to their counseling. Both their son and daughter were involved in the organization, and they resorted to a court order to remove their son from the church. Their daughter still is in the church, and they do not know where she is. Greek says the church has changed his daughter's name and moves her about constantly to keep her parents from finding her — as they do with many followers, he says. Their last phone conversation with her was in 1979.

When counseling former "Moonies," Greek says one must realize they are

much like a little child. "It's not like you have to start all over with them, but it's very hard for them to make choices about what they want. It takes a long time for them to sort out what was good and bad. It takes a few months for them to talk about the Moonies

and say 'them' without saying 'we.'

Many people are baffled by how one organization drastically can alter an intelligent person's character, usually in a matter of weeks.

Grudin compares the Unification Church's brainwashing methods with those used by the North Koreans on prisoners of war during the Korean War in the early 1950s. He calls it a "programmed nervous breakdown" that begins full scale at the weekend retreats.

The retreats center around religious lectures and the new member is "love-bombed" by the new "family." A highly structured schedule leaves no time for discussion or creative thinking, and followers are told it is sinful to question the spiritual lessons. They never are left alone, not even to go to the bathroom. They are fed high-sugar, low-protein diets and often allowed little sleep, Helen says.

Finally, everything takes its toll. New members' minds literally overload, and to survive, they relinquish their free will, Greek says.

Despite the common stereotype of "Moonies" as being fringe members of society, the new followers are usually bright, attractive, intelligent, young people, often in college. They usually come from middle- and upper-class families. Their religious backgrounds are usually Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, but not fundamentalist Christian.

They tend to be idealistic people searching for answers to a confusing world, Greek says. Often, their recruitment coincides with a difficult time in their lives, as with Helen's daughter, Annie.

"All of us are susceptible at certain times in our lives, when we are lonely or depressed. And intelligent people are as much if not more susceptible than less intelligent people," Greek says.

The Unification Church, says Grudin, wants people who are "hungry in spirit," as many young adults are. They don't want emotionally strong people who ask questions, he says. Instead, they look for people who've personally experienced the breakdown of the American family and disenchantment with organized religion.

"They size up who it is they're dealing with, and whoever that person is, attack their sensibilities," Greek says. "If that person is a skeptic, they'll challenge their skepticisms. If they're a follower, they'll get them to follow. And within a few days, they can have you hooked."

Contrary to the church's self-proclaimed Christian status, Grudin says the "inner sanctum" of high-level church officials "jettison Christ" for Moon — the "armed and militant messiah."

Yet to attract followers, the church must "deceive young people and pull them by their heartstrings, or else they wouldn't come in."

"I'm as much an anti-communist as

**'All of us are susceptible in certain times in our lives, when we are lonely or depressed.'**

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— Robert Grudin

Coming from a small town and a close-knit family, Annie felt isolated and lonely in San Francisco, where she spent her freshmen year in college. Because her parents lived several hundred miles away, the transition from home life to college life was even more difficult.

The once bright, active student became depressed and despondent. She had difficulty adjusting to a rigorous class load, and her grades dropped dramatically.

So when she was invited to dinner by a friendly, clean-cut man who said he was from a group called the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, the idealistic, trusting young woman jumped at the offer.

CARP is one of many front organizations of the Unification Church, says Helen and many others knowledgeable about the church, yet Annie's "friends" never told her this.

The initial invitation to dinner was followed by others. Finally, Annie was invited to spend a weekend retreat in the country with her new friends. At that point, Annie's parents caught wind of what was happening to their daughter and made a quick trip to the college.

What they found, Helen says, was an "altered personality, a depressed personality and one that wasn't speaking to us like our own daughter. It was very frightening," she says.

The parents' first impulse was to drag their daughter away from campus and back to the safe family nest. Yet they soon realized an authoritative statement would only widen the rift. Finally, after endless discussions with her parents, Annie came

Moon is, but I still think he's a very wicked man," Grudin says.

Although the Unificationists say their objective is to bring followers to Christ, their main goal is to amass money and power, according to both Greek and Helen.

"They tell a story about changing the world through the Unification movement, yet they don't act on it at all," Helen says. "They talk about having built for the edification of poor people. They can't point to one thing they have built. They take in uncounted millions of dollars that are never reported, counted or taxed," she says.

Four years later, Annie is back in college, yet she is undirected, Helen says. She still is searching for absolute answers, which makes her mother angry.

"I still get angry that she wants easy answers. I love her so and I want her to be happy. But you can't make someone happy. You have to let them be free. So I let her do her thing."

As a parent, Helen often wonders if there's anything she could have done to prevent her daughter's involvement with the Unification Church. The "battle taints your life," she says, and the memory of the experience "haunts you."

"It certainly is something that never will be erased from her. It's a part of her life experience, it's a part of ours. I guess I don't spend much time regretting 'if only we'd done this.' We did what we did. We are here. We survived — and I'm more interested in the future than in the past."

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