
Bringing God's Highest Truth to a Land Governed by Fear – Part 2

· November 9, 2016



*The three Uganda missionaries
By William Connery*

In February 1975, American member William Connery was selected as one of a large group of new missionaries that would pioneer many of the world's nations that, until then, had no Unificationist presence. Each nation was to receive one missionary from Japan, one from the United States, and one from Germany. William accepted a posting to the East African country of Uganda. At that time, Uganda was governed by President Idi Amin, who is remembered as one of the cruelest dictators in modern history. William's story, told here in his own words, affords us insight into the faith, resilience and love — under adversity — of those who strove to bring the Principle to people all over the world. ([if you wish to see Part 1 click here](#))

On June 6, Ulf [the missionary from Germany] and I attended our second Balokoli meeting at the Anglican Cathedral on Namirembe Hill. The Balokoli (Luganda for “saved ones”) were still meeting every Friday evening, as they had since the Revivals first swept Uganda in the 1930s. I soon discovered that the Saved Ones had had a mixed reception. Some ridiculed them because of their strict life style: no drinking, no dancing, short hair for men and women, no bell bottom pants; members would often start confessing their sins publicly in a crowded bus and ask people

to accept Jesus in their lives. But when Ulf and I went there, we could see many of the brothers and sisters, some who were now elderly, having dedicated themselves to the Lord during the original 1930s Revival.

During the month of June, I continued singing at the Catholic church on Sunday and attending the Protestant Revival meeting on Friday. On June 10, Ulf and I decided on three immediate goals: find our own accommodation; receive definite word about jobs; and witness to at least three people a day.

Through the Friday Fellowship, I was able to meet Mr. K., headmaster of Nakasero Secondary School. I visited him on June 11; he offered me \$40 a month to teach at his school (if I was accepted by his Board of Governors). Later that same day I met the headmaster of another school — he told me to return later in the week.

On June 13 all meetings were canceled in the afternoon because President Idi Amin was giving a speech in City Square Park. It was my first chance to see the most hated — and beloved — man in Uganda, depending on which tribe you belonged to and whether your family had prospered under Amin's "Economic War" of kicking out the Asian merchants; or whether some family member had been killed by Amin's Security Forces.



Idi Amin, President of Uganda 1971-1979

It is worthwhile here to mention what Brother Andrew [a Catholic seminary student to whom William witnessed] wrote about Idi Amin in 1977:

The architect of this tragic new Uganda is a man who likes to be addressed as His Excellency Al-Haji Field Marshall Dr. Idi Amin Dada, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., Life President of Uganda [Editor's note: Amin had received none of the three military medals he credited himself with]. To the rest of the world he is Big Daddy Amin. To many Americans and Europeans, he is a cartoon character — a joke. It is easy to laugh at him from the detached comfort of the Western World. But to Christians in Uganda, there is nothing funny about Idi Amin. ... Like so much of the violence in Africa, the Ugandan persecutions spring partly from tribal rivalry. Amin's small Kakwa tribe, known for its fierce, warring history, is a traditional enemy of the Acholi and Langi tribes, which include most of the country's better educated business and professional leaders [e.g. Dr. A. Milton Obote, the Ugandan president overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971].

The Acholis and Langis are also predominantly Christian; the Kakwas, largely Muslim. ... Amin

was always been sensitive to his negative image in the world community, and reacted violently to criticism of his regime. Yusuf Lule, the man who replaced Idi Amin in April 1979 [as provisional president, for just over one month], wrote in 1977:

The system Amin has built up reflects his own background and peculiar talents. He comes from the far north-western part of Uganda. He is a member of the Kakwa tribe, which is based only in part in Uganda. There are Kakwa in far larger numbers in Zaire and in Southern Sudan. The basis of his power lies with the Southern Sudanese, who are recruited in large numbers to staff his police force and army. Many of these Southern Sudanese have lived in Uganda itself for several generations, forming a community known as Nubians. ... (These people) have no interest in Uganda's people or the future of the country. They owe personal loyalty only to Amin, a loyalty bought with imported luxury goods and the loot of their victims. They exercise a foreign tyranny more vicious than anything dreamed of by European imperialists or modern white minority governments in Africa.



General Idi Amin (pictured here at the wheel) took over power in Uganda in 1971

Finally, Amin's Minister of Health, Henry Kyemba [who fled Uganda in 1977], had this to say about his former boss:

Amin's extraordinary sadism and cruelty have often been said to be a direct result of syphilis, which in its final stages affects the brain, driving the victim insane. Amin's records show that he has indeed suffered from syphilis. ... It is rumored that the disease is progressive in Amin and that he will eventually succumb to it. I have seen no medical evidence of this. But even if it is true, in my judgment it cannot explain his behavior. His extreme brutality is not the result of brain damage but a long-term phenomenon. His orders are premeditated and consistent. I have seen him dangerously angry. I have heard him lash out in apparently uncontrollable rage, ordering indiscriminate arrest and death. But he knows well enough how to stage-manage his rages. The

most telling example of this occurred in mid-1973 when, for the benefit of a French television crew, he exploded in rage, threatening to shoot all recalcitrant ministers. He behaved like a wild animal. The tribal scars on his temple — the three vertical marks which have earned the Kakwa's the nickname 'One-Elevens' — stood out sharply, as they always do when he is angry. Yet immediately after the television crew left, he joked about his performance. "How did it come out?" he asked me, laughing.



A victim of Idi Amin's murderous rampages

A librarian I had met at the Catholic Church, Mr. M., attended the speech and helped interpret for me. President Amin spoke mainly about forming a liberation army, to liberate Palestine from the Israelis and South Africa from the whites. In other speeches, Amin had applauded the slaughter of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics; praised Hitler's genocide of the Jews; and called for the extinction of Israel as a state. Most of the people cheered and applauded, especially where there were soldiers standing nearby. But I also noticed that some people on the fringes were snickering or trying to hide their laughter.

During that speech and on other occasions I heard many different opinions about President Idi Amin. Some people considered him a great leader who had brought Uganda recognition on a world-wide scale. While I was in Uganda, he had himself proclaimed Field Marshall and people said he considered adding the title "Son of God" to his list. He was a Moslem, but he claimed that one of his relatives was a Catholic priest and the man who became head of the Anglican Church of Uganda, Sylvester Wani, is his uncle. To others Amin was a clown or buffoon.

By the time I arrived in 1975, most people had grown sick of the bloodshed that kept Amin in power and were just praying for the day that there would be a "change in the wind." Quite a few people said they would be willing to admit the British colonialists back into power—at least in those days there had been a strict code of law and order. Nowadays anyone could just disappear at any time. Ulf and I felt a sense of helplessness, which grew each day. As our circle of friends grew, more people told us stories of the beatings and killings that were taking place. Our hands were tied: if we did anything to help our friends we could be easily kicked out of the country. Our only solace was the word of God we could teach people through the Divine Principle.



The City of Kampala

I continued my desperate search to stay in Uganda as a high school teacher. I had never taught in any school before, but I'm always willing to try something new for the sake of God. But most of my contacts were dead-ends. I probably visited every high school in Kampala but with little luck. When I did have a lead, it usually resulted in a bureaucratic circus: Headmaster (A) usually said I couldn't teach at his school unless I had a teaching permit from the Ministry of Education (B). The Ministry of Education refused to give me a Teacher's Permit unless I gained a Work Permit from the Immigration Dept (C). Then the Immigration Dept. refused to give me a Work Permit unless I had a Teaching Permit and an official letter of recommendation from the school. I had to play this circular game several times in June and July, 1975.

My hope was to become a history teacher, since that had always been my favorite subject in school. But I had studied only United States and Western European History: my knowledge about Africa was next to nothing. So I made time to study African history, with a focus on East Africa and Uganda (one headmaster specifically turned me down because he believed I couldn't learn and teach history at the same time). On June 24, the Ministry of Education rejected me for teaching in government schools. This only left the few private schools, of which Nakasero Secondary School was the most hopeful: on June 25 I visited Mr. K. there and he promised to bring my case before the school Board of Governors.

The end of my first full month in Uganda was quite a momentous time for me. On June 30 I was able to finish the Divine Principle to one high school student, David S. And the next day, I was able to meet John-Patrick M. and his brother, David K.-M., who became two of our most faithful brothers. On July 2, I went searching for a young man I had met at the Catholic Church. Two other young men served as my guides as I went through a small village beyond Kibuli Mosque. They said I was extremely lucky because people were often killed around there "like chickens."

On July 4, I began a Friday afternoon practice that was to continue for three years. Between 1:00 – 2:00 I visited Mr. M., the man who had interpreted for me during President Amin's speech. I stayed in his office in his school's library for some hours, sharing the Divine Principle with him. He was a married man with several children, and a lay-leader in the Catholic parish in a village outside Kampala. I left him about 4:30 in order to attend the Revival meeting at Namirembe. I would see many people come and go during my three years, but very few kept such an open,

concerned and keen mind as Mr. M.



Amin expelled 80,000 Asians from Uganda

July 19 was the fourth anniversary of my joining the Unification Church. On that day something happened that Rev. Moon had spoken to us about on March 20, 1975. He had said: A real father and mother are willing to risk their lives for their children. Are you ready to die for your children? If you reach that stage, you'll love these people, even risking your life. Then you are standing on God's side. ... If you maintain the heavenly attitude, the spirit world will mobilize people, and show them to you in dreams. They will even come to you, saying 'I saw you last night in my dream.' 'I saw you in a vision.'

On that day, Leonard, a young man I had been teaching Divine Principle, visited me and excitedly told me that he had seen me in a dream and wanted to join the Unification Church! I remembered Father Moon's words and felt the hand of God working.

On July 22 I visited Nakasero Secondary School. For some reason, they were losing two history teachers. I was hopeful that word on my appointment would be coming soon. I continued my daily schedule of prayer, history study, Divine Principle teaching, and visiting various schools and also many friends I had made by that time. On July 25 Ulf was able to get a three-month extension on his tourist visa.

Little did we realize that the most serious test—to both our mission and our lives—was just around the corner.



William Connery and Hideaki Kamiyoshi witness to a new contact