

A REMARKABLE MAN OF PEACE

AS featured in this issue (p. 42), the national touring exhibition “Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century” opened in San Francisco September 20. In preparing for my own participation in the opening, I decided to reread the discussion between the late Nobel laureate and SGI President Ikeda in their published dialogue, *A Lifelong Quest for Peace*.

In the opening pages, the two men share memories of their childhood. One exchange in particular struck a responsive chord with me. Dr. Pauling had just mentioned how lenient discipline was in his childhood home. In response, President Ikeda said: “It appears that American parents tend to be lenient. They seem to teach the basics of social living and to respect their children’s individual personalities and freedoms ... the traditional Japanese system is far less open and trustful.”

That passage reminded me of one of the most difficult episodes my wife and I shared in the raising of our children. Our family’s first real home in America was in Los Angeles, then in Seattle, Washington, where we lived for eleven years, from 1980 until 1991. My children were quite young when we moved to Seattle, which meant that after eleven years it was without question their home. For me those years spelled a brief interval in my life, but for my children, it was the most important period of growth in their lives. None of this entered my mind when I learned in June of 1991 that we would be moving to Los Angeles. Since our two sons were nearing graduation from the University of Washington, they remained in Seattle. But my daughter was just starting high school, so naturally she would have to come down to Los Angeles with my wife and me.

IT never crossed our minds how difficult a move this would be for a young teenaged-American girl. She would be leaving her friends, her home and everything she had known for almost her entire life. Nor did it occur to us to discuss the matter with her. Had we, we would have learned how much she absolutely hated leaving Seattle.

My wife and I decided to search out the best high school we could for her, again only discussing the matter between ourselves. As “traditional Japanese” parents, we thought that simply putting her in a better school would make her a better student than she had been in elementary school. But that wasn’t the case. She felt totally alienated and isolated at the school we had chosen for her. She wouldn’t go to class. Eventually she began to hang out with other students who skipped classes. One thing led to another and before we knew it, she was getting into trouble with school authorities. It was a very difficult period for us, but an excruciatingly painful time for our daughter.

Naturally we chanted a great deal during that period, searching for a solution to our family’s suffering. That is why reading the aforementioned passage in the Ikeda–Pauling dialogue reminded me of that time. We realized that not once had

we thought of our daughter and what her needs might be; we lacked consideration for her. In this case she didn't need the best high school, rather a school where she could enjoy studying. She was 16 years old, fully capable of having a point of view worth honoring. Instead we had blindly imposed our values on her. With deep apology, my wife and I increased our chanting sessions and we did our best to listen to what our daughter had to say. Eventually things began to change for the better. Our daughter realized that her choice of friends wasn't the best she could have made, especially since, on one occasion when the police became involved, her friends deserted her. Things moved from worse and worse to better and better.

TODAY of course, our daughter is close to graduation from the University of California at Riverside. That was a great challenge for all of us. But in the process our whole family changed. Now, looking back we have no regrets. Any change in our environment may give us difficulty and pain, but by challenging our circumstances based on faith, we can definitely make progress. It is hard, but we should not stay in our comfort zone in order that we can grow and develop happy and fulfilling lives.

Later in the Ikeda–Pauling dialogue, Dr. Pauling said: “Different people have different views of happiness. I consider true happiness to be a sense of satisfaction in living.” No wonder President Ikeda was able to form such a deep bond with this truly remarkable man. The depth and range of Dr. Pauling’s work over his ninety-two-year life is quite encouraging. □

Fred M. Zaitso
SGI USA General Director