

Exhibit Planner Gains Inspiration From a Passionate Crusader By Mary Worthington, Los Angeles

IT seems as though most Americans have either never heard of Linus Pauling or think of him as “the Vitamin C guy.” I knew he was a scientist, and I remember him as a peace activist, but I too knew little about him when I began this project.

As I researched for the exhibit script, I learned more about Pauling and his remarkable life. I began to understand why President Ikeda thought that Pauling was such an admirable man, and why he felt that it was important to do an exhibition about Pauling so that new generations could learn about his life, his scientific discoveries and his work for peace.

Pauling was a brilliant scientist, a charismatic teacher, a humanitarian and a tireless crusader for peace. Above all, it seems to me, he was a man of extraordinary courage. As a world-renowned scientist, he could have stayed comfortably in his laboratories doing the work he loved. Instead, urged by his wife, Ava Helen, he chose to devote more than half of his time in the 1950s and '60s to what the Paulings called “peace work.” He spoke out publicly and often about the dangers of atomic fallout and the immorality of war in an atomic age.

This was an incredibly risky time to take such a stand—the country was in what the exhibit calls an “atomic panic.” People were building bomb shelters in their backyards, and the Army McCarthy hearings set a tone of hysterical, anticommunist witch hunting. Pauling risked his career and his reputation, but he continued in the face of great difficulty and persecution.

Courage was just what I needed in my own life as I began this project. I was ill, depressed and exhausted. I had left my museum administrative job for uncertain work as a private consultant because I love working on exhibitions and dreamed of making that a full-time job. But jobs were scarce and I often had to scramble for unrelated projects in order to get by.

In the process of working on the exhibit, I was hired by the Japanese American National Museum to develop and write a major exhibition for their new 85,000-square-foot expansion pavilion. This was my dream. It is exactly what I want to do: work on value-creating exhibits (and be well paid to do it!). Deeply moved, I understood that the dream came true because of my Buddhist practice and my work on the SGI's exhibitions.

I hope, most of all, that visitors to “Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century” are inspired by Pauling's life, as I have been. He had insatiable scientific curiosity about the nature of the universe and went fearlessly wherever his curiosity took him. He took risks and stood up for his beliefs. He was passionate about living. The exhibit ends with his words: “I love this world. I have had a good life.” □

Mary Worthington is an SGI-USA member and a museum exhibition and education consultant. She was associate director of the Los Angeles Children's Museum and since 1992 has worked with the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. There she was responsible for the original design of the Museum's Legacy Center,

an educational and interactive exhibition space, and was also the museum's director of public programs. She has been involved in the SGI-USA's exhibition program since its inception, beginning with "Humanity in Education: The Soka School System," which opened in 1991 and toured fifteen cities, followed by the "Ecology and Human Life" exhibition in 1993. She shares the following thoughts about Linus Pauling and her work as exhibition developer and writer on the SGI's exhibition about the scientist's life and accomplishments:

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