

**PERSPECTIVE: As This Chapter of Life Gets Under Way**  
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It's one of those nights when sleep isn't easy.

One of our dogs is, without doubt, descended from Genghis Khan's dog. A cable channel recently ran a documentary on old Genghis, and there, among the Mongolian nomads of today, was a dog that looked just like Bandit. The narrator called it a Mongolian Shepherd.

Anyway, Bandit roused me and nearly roused June. Bandit and the other dog, a usually quiet, docile Border Collie, were fighting, whining and yelping, so I got them in from the deck.

They are happy now, having achieved their goal of getting into the house. And I am wide awake, sitting here writing.

Good. It's something I needed to do.

We moved to Knoxville a year ago, so that I could take a job with the local public radio station as development director. Three months ago, thanks to internal politics and my posting an e-mail message to a group by mistake, I lost that job.

Looking back, I know it's going to be for the good.

First, doing that kind of thing — saying or writing the wrong thing at the wrong time in the wrong place — has been one of my biggest obstacles in life, totally self-created, as many obstacles are. Lesson No. 1: I need to change something in myself.

Second, the environment was unhealthy. If, as it turned out, a valuable employee would be fired simply by voicing an opinion that did not sit well with another better-connected employee, then that's an unhealthy environment. Not just for me, for everyone there.

Third, the deeper level: changing poison into medicine. This relates to the first. On a deeper level, I have — we all have — some kind of innate poison or negativity we seek to overcome through our Buddhist practice; that central poison or negativity colors everything we think, say and do, and is the principal barrier to our happiness. Everybody has one, different for each of us. Mine is anger.

On the surface, I'm not an angry individual. But inside I store up those little moments, push them down and sit on them. Sooner or later, they collect and bubble to the surface, like a pocket of natural gas that floats up and ignites when it hits the surface. At those explosive moments, I do and say the most remarkably stupid things.

Realizing this — I mean really, really seeing it — has been a huge benefit.

I've had the chance to chant a good bit and do quite a few activities, more than I probably would have if I hadn't lost my job. June and I have gotten a lot closer, and worked through a number of things, and the entire family has gotten closer.

It's really true what SGI President Ikeda says about adversity strengthening your practice.

Am I confident of the outcome? Yes and no.

The yes: I am confident that whatever I am supposed to be doing will become apparent, that whatever enables me to spread Buddhism with my life will become clear. In *The New Human Revolution*, volume 1, Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells a Brazilian member: "Prayer in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism means to chant daimoku based on a pledge or vow. At its very core, this vow is to attain kosen-rufu." This has been a large part of my daimoku in recent weeks and months.

The no: What I am not completely sure about is just how my mission will unfold at this point in my life. It looks very much, though, like writing will be my new career or at least a

very important second career. I have a computer. I have e-mail. I have a telephone. I've found myself getting a lot of assignments from *Radio World*. While still at the radio station, I called to suggest a story to them. I didn't intend to write it, but by the end of the call, the editor had given me some freelance work. He's given me more and more as the months have rolled by.

Is the universe sending me a message? Not wanting to send the universe a busy signal, last week I went out and picked up a copy of *Writer's Digest*, a trade magazine for freelancers, novelists, screenwriters, etc. Turns out there's plenty of work available.

So, pardon the literary pun, as this chapter of life gets underway, I'm moving from the theoretical (writing for expression) to the actual (writing for expression and to earn a living).

Central to this for me is to make my writing somehow also spread Buddhism. Not by writing directly about it — which in most venues I couldn't do, anyway — but to somehow reflect the Gohonzon and the humanistic values of our faith. Hmmm.

Better get started. But it's 3:00 a.m. now. I should get a little sleep. Thanks to sitting down and just, well, writing it all out, I have a stronger determination about it all.

That daimoku earlier tonight helped a lot, too. And the dogs — well, I guess they helped, too. At least they're asleep now.

**WT**