

Nikken Testifies in 'Seattle Incident' Libel Trial
Under questioning by his own lawyers, Nikken admits leaving hotel and getting drunk; denies Mrs. Clow's claims. Cross-examination set for Feb. 2.

BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR
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After years of requests by Soka Gakkai attorneys, Nikken finally made his first appearance in the "Seattle Incident" trial on Dec. 22 (Dec. 21 in the United States), testifying for an hour and 40 minutes.

Although only Nikken's own attorneys questioned him in this 19th session of the trial, Soka Gakkai attorneys were satisfied that at last their efforts to bring him to court had paid off. Nikken's attorneys had long tried to keep him out of court — even though this suit was initiated by Nikken and even after other witnesses to the incident had testified.

Soka Gakkai attorneys are scheduled to cross-examine Nikken on Feb. 2.

During the Dec. 22 testimony, Nikken, quoting from a previously undisclosed diary, said that he left his hotel and got drunk the night in question, March 19–20, 1963. The diary entry he introduced read:

In the evening, for the first time since I arrived in the United States, I took a walk by myself here and there, ending up with the whiskey glasses I longed for. Since I have not had any alcohol for such a long time, I got drunk.... Now I am going to sleep. It's 1:00 p.m. now. [Nikken explained that he sometimes mixes up p.m. and a.m.]

Soka Gakkai attorneys have often pointed out that Nikken in 1992 publicly declared he never left the hotel that night but in 1995 began saying that he had after all. Until the Dec. 22 testimony, no explanation for this discrepancy was forthcoming from his side. Nikken claimed in court for the first time that in March 1995 his wife discovered the diary in a box when he was moving into a new residence in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo.

It was only when he read this diary, he said, that he remembered leaving the hotel. "This recollection came to me as a tremendous shock," he claimed.

The testimony also saw a significant change in Nikken's story from documents he submitted to the court in 1995 regarding the hotel where he stayed. It was not the Olympic Hotel, after all, according to Nikken's testimony—an assertion that puzzled Soka Gakkai lawyers.

"It is beyond our comprehension that the plaintiffs, who brought about this litigation, have made one change after another to crucial parts of their story," commented Soka Gakkai attorney Morio Miyahara.

Nikken also refuted the testimonies of Hiroe Clow and former police officer Ronald Sprinkle. He denied in court that he had any involvement with prostitutes, that Mrs. Clow had come to his aid, and that the police had ever picked him up.

After completing his testimony, Nikken reportedly sent a message to all temple members thanking them for their daimoku and announcing that his appearance in court had crushed the "Soka Gakkai conspiracy."

SGI General Director Eiichi Wada also responded to the testimony: "Nichiren Shoshu will surely announce that Nikken's innocence was proven today. But, actually, the climax of the Seattle Incident trial will be on Feb. 2."

Attorney Morio Miyahara also expressed confidence about the Feb. 2 cross-examination, saying that "Nikken's testimony today was based on the contents of a diary that in no way could disprove that his altercation with prostitutes occurred."

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