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Practice With Passion

I've been practicing Buddhism to this great Gohonzon since the spring of 1974. At the time I joined, I remember hearing SGI President Ikeda talk about the Gohonzon as being a cluster of blessings given to us by Nichiren Daishonin. Today, I can say with all my heart that this is absolutely true. On New Year's Day 1997, I made a list of my goals for the coming year. I still have the list — with everything checked off!

One of the goals I made at the start of 1997 was a determination to leave behind all the pain of the divorce I went through in 1995. Part of this pain related to my relationship with my children.

My time with my children — whom I love very much and, until my divorce, had never been away from — was limited to sparse, court-ordered visitations. After dropping my children off at my former home, I would return to the exile of my new home many miles away and cry and chant for hours.

At the beginning of 1997, I determined to chant with all my heart for my children's happiness, no matter what.

After chanting this way, I received one of my first benefits of 1997 with regard to my children. On May 18, 1997 — my deceased mother's birthday — two of my children, Candice and Jeramy, came to live with me. Two weeks later, my other daughter, Holli, also came to live with us. What a blessing. The Gohonzon's power is truly mystical. The fact that this happened touched my heart.

The year had still more in store for me. In May, I completed electrical school with "great honor of mention" for perfect attendance for the entire four years. I completed this program while working full time and experiencing the emotional upheaval of a divorce.

Then, on June 6, 1997, I took and passed the State Journeyman's Electrical Test. I cried all the way home. I reflected on the difficulty of my first years of study and the divorce. I realized that I could have easily given up at any time. Because of the Gohonzon, however, and the support of SGI-USA members, I accomplished something of which I could be proud. By coincidence, President Ikeda had been here in Denver exactly one year earlier — on June 6, 1996. Also, I had received the Gohonzon on June 6, 1974.

I still recall some of the encouragement that two of my first chapter leaders gave me: "No prayer goes unanswered," and that I should always practice with passion. Because of encouragement from leaders and friends in the SGI, giving up was never an option. What a benefit to belong to such an organization where I can chant to shine like a star for world peace.

The story continues...1997 was truly amazing! To allow my children to stay in the same schools with their friends, I had to find a house in their school district. We found and bought the perfect house, the first one we looked at. We needed a \$7,000 down payment, and we got it! What's more, my father asked me to come to his home. He was tired of seeing me drive around in my rusty old 1979 Datsun king cab, so he gave me a Honda Accord LXI.

After Thanksgiving, just when I thought the Gohonzon's benefits were exhausted for the year, I met Carol Ann. Our relationship was a great benefit right from the start. Our spirituality was the same and, despite the newness of our relationship, it felt like we had been together forever. The love she has given me is so special that I am overwhelmed with joy.

On Jan. 25, Super Bowl Sunday, I asked Carol to marry me. She said yes! And of course

the Denver Broncos won the Super Bowl, too. On that day, every time “congratulations” flashed on the TV screen, Carol and I felt as if it was a message to us.

My advice to the readers of the *World Tribune* is to make a list of your desires and practice with your whole heart. If you do, I’m sure you will win in your life. On my list for 1998 is: get married, go to Disney World, and take a cruise. It sounds so great, I feel like a movie star!

This experience would not be complete without thanking all my SGI leaders and friends with all my heart for their encouragement and daimoku. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

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