

**Jane Tennyson, Houston**  
**Anger Into Determination**  
**As told to MAUDE O'DONNELL, Houston correspondent**

Today I am enjoying many inconspicuous and conspicuous benefits in my life. My children are doing well, and our difficult relations have been resolved. I live in a quiet and safe apartment complex for seniors in Houston. I can use Metro taxi and Metrolift for medical appointments and grocery shopping. I have a computer, television, microwave, and my pets are happy and well fed.

But things have not always been so peaceful for me. When I began practicing Buddhism, I was one of the displaced workers of the 1980s. My situation was compounded by advancing age, impatience, self-pity, resentment, fear and especially anger, which eventually lead to poor health.

I had worked in airline reservations with a major company that went bankrupt. The class action lawsuit to regain our pensions, health benefits and investments was settled under an agreement requiring that we accept early retirement and a reduced benefits package. After years of working and supporting my family, I was suddenly unemployed.

I began chanting with the hidden expectation that these words, *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* (if they worked), must be witchcraft or some form of magic. I sure wasn't getting anywhere with the usual job search. I was down to my last pennies and had to resort to selling anything of value in order to eat.

When I started practicing Buddhism, things began to change. I accepted a string of low-paying and temporary jobs while I looked for something more suitable. At one point, things got so bad that my lights were turned off for non-payment. My leaders came to my dark, steamy apartment, and we chanted for five hours. Early the next morning I received a phone call from a stable company in my field where I had previously applied. They offered me a position with an excellent salary and full benefits. Of course I accepted, and a hire date was arranged.

My excitement knew no bounds. I was finally going to solve all my problems. Or so I thought. As I came through my apartment on my way to sign for the loan to keep me going until this new job started, I staggered, blacked out and fell right in front of the Gohonzon. A neighbor saw me through the patio door and rushed to my aid. I thought that it was only the heat that had gotten to me, but it was a heart attack. I was hospitalized and could not use the telephone for more than a week, which was well beyond the starting date of the new job.

The job was denied, I was evicted, and many of my belongings were confiscated. What little money I had was stolen and to top it off, the doctors told me I was inoperable and would not live.

When I couldn't speak, I would imagine the Gohonzon and chant silently. When I could get the words out, I would do gongyo. The Gohonzon was the only object that I had held on to, and for that I was extremely grateful.

But I was on the street and penniless. Homeless, with a cat and a dog, a few sticks of furniture and, if I believed the doctors, dying. One SGI leader arranged for someone to gather up my belongings and take me to a friend's house who allowed me to stay in a spare bedroom. Then I faced again what seemed like endless temporary jobs, struggling with doctor's appointments as well as numerous heart medications and tests. Some of the medications made my thoughts fuzzy, and I had a hard time thinking clearly. I applied for Social Security benefits but was denied, so I reapplied again and again. Finally, they documented that I was eligible.

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Now I look back and realize eight years have passed since my heart attack and, despite the doctor's prediction, I'm still here. My daily life is financially comfortable, and I am only taking one medication. My mind has cleared, and at my last heart evaluation, the doctor was surprised to see that my body is building its own bypass. For 67 years old, I'm in pretty good shape.

Through all this, I have come to realize that this practice is a lifelong process of growth and refinement, not magic. I can't truthfully claim that I have grown patient, just slower. Resentment has changed into gratitude and my anger into energy, strength and determination. I may not have arrived at all my goals, but I will. The key for me is to NEVER give up and continue to chant NO MATTER WHAT. Isn't that the same simple instruction I received so long ago?

**WT**