

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

FEBRUARY 7, 1997

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Ads Focus on Japanese Tabloid Practices

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

In an effort to raise awareness about Japanese tabloid media practices, the SGI purchased quarter-page advertisements in *The Asian Wall Street Journal* for a five-day period last December. The advertisements targeted the general public in Japan and Asia, sponsors of Japanese tabloid magazines and the foreign media in Asia.

Each advertisement carried the headline "Should You Be Concerned?" with new in-

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The Associated Press covered the campaign, interviewing SGI spokesperson Rie Tsumura, who said that "all we're asking is for Japanese society to be more conscious about accurate and fair media coverage."

As the *World Tribune* has often reported, SGI President Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai

members have for many years been subjected to irresponsible and sometimes libelous reports about their activities in the Japanese tabloid press. For instance, President Ikeda has endlessly been portrayed as a seedy character — even a rapist, as when last year a former Hokkaido women's division leader alleged in the *Shukan Shincho* magazine that President Ikeda assaulted her three times. The collusive relationship that exists in Japan between the press and political authority has led

PLEASE SEE TABLOID, 4



Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI President Welcomes Cuban Delegation

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Jan. 16

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Dr. Vitier had previously sent President Ikeda materials that showed Martí's interest in Shakyamuni's perspective on the fundamental sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death, the nature of negative influences within human life, as well as the priesthood's corruption after the Buddha's death.

Dr. Vitier was in Japan with the Cuban Minister of Culture Armando Hart Dávalos. Both received received honorary doctorates from Soka University. To commemorate the occasion, Dr. Hart lectured to the student body and university faculty on the role of ethics and spirituality in the modern age.

President Ikeda and the Cuban dignitaries also discussed the subject of bilateral exchange between Cuba and Japan. To that end, Dr. Hart said that although people may differ in their culture and thinking, at the most essential level human beings are the same. He then

PLEASE SEE CUBA, 4

Memphis Center Relocates

(Above) Members applaud the opening of Tennessee Territory's newly relocated community center in Memphis. The 3,800-square-foot building, formerly a bank, is nearly twice the size of the previous center, which opened in 1988. The new Memphis center, which houses a 250-seat Gohonzon room, is the only community center in the territory, which spans Tennessee, Arkansas and the northern part of Mississippi. Bands and choruses help celebrate the opening on Jan. 26, SGI Day.



? QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *'What does it mean to you to live as a Buddhist?'*



What it means to me to live as a Buddhist is to be more optimistic and less pessimistic in my life. I also have more confidence than I used to. More compassion for others and understanding. I have learned to appreciate more than ever the little things in life. I have changed so much.

— ARLENE BROOKS, Sierra Vista, Ariz.

For me to live as a Buddhist means: To live a life of value to others as well as myself and to create value from adversity. To be helpful and compassionate to others. To have a stand-alone spirit and always continue the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism no matter what. Faith equals daily life, and I would always want to live that equation!

— JB BATES, San Luis Obispo, Calif.



It means to wholeheartedly show compassion and tolerance toward others and take part in their development as human beings. To display a vast life-condition when dealing with society and adversity and tackling whatever situation head-on. To possess an inner core that is so strong you will not succumb to anything.

— EREK CLACKS, Fort Stewart, Ga.

In the past it was getting off of social security disability and getting a job. Now it is correcting the wrongs of society, fighting injustice wherever I am, and taking good care of my members, my family and myself to the best of my ability, in the highest possible life-condition. To me, this is what it means to live as a Buddhist.

— THEODORE ANDREWS, Philadelphia



To me it means to view each day or any given moment as a chance for a fresh start, a renewal process of the heart as it were. I pray today I will be a better person, wife and mother that I was yesterday — and tomorrow better than I am today.

— PAMELA SELEZ, San Marcos, Calif.

I found that the answer to the question "What does it mean to live as a Buddhist?" depends solely on the purity of one's perception. As Nichiren Daishonin said, the evil or good of a land lies in the minds of the people. To me, this says that every human has a choice to be happy. The way we view society is totally up to us. It can be our heaven or hell. We can be happy no matter where we live, with the thought in our minds that "faith does equal daily life!"

— CHRISTINA MULLIGAN, Newburgh, N.Y.



Living as a Buddhist to me is waking up early in the morning to chant lots of daimoku — winning. Arriving at work with a smile, an open mind and a sense of compassion. Working through the day with professionalism and enthusiasm. Interacting with others yet staying away from gossip and negativism. Leaving work with a sense of fulfillment and appreciation.

— CELESTE LINARES, Phoenix

To me I believe that I have an opportunity to change negative things that are in my life. No other religion can do that. I can chant to raise my life-condition and advance every day in my life. Practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has

given me the courage to battle against my negativity and win. It has taught me that the only devils are within myself. I'm entering my 14th year of practice and I'm going to continue no matter what. I appreciate what the SGI has done for me; this practice has shown me where I really need to change.

— CARL D. MANDLEY, Chicago



Now, after practicing for 21 years, I have total confidence that I am exactly where I am supposed to be no matter how it may look. With a deep appreciation for the ability to change poison into medicine, I live each day fearlessly fighting my darkness and nurturing my light. Daimoku first. Word.

— SHARON SANFORD O'CONNOR, Riverdale, N.Y.

A pebble is worthless, but a gemstone is precious and everyone wants it. What I needed to do to change from a pebble to a shining gemstone was [chant] daimoku. Have courage, honesty and patience. Buddhism has polished me from a pebble into a gemstone.

— UNHUI BOARDMAN, Goldsboro, N.C.



The only thing I'm conscious of when I think of myself as a Buddhist is that I do gongyo and daimoku. But this means that I'm connecting daily with the fundamental power of the universe, which allows me to function with more joy, wisdom and compassion. One of the results has been that I've taken more responsibility by doing such things as taking care of my mother after she had been in a car accident. Also, I am becoming more active in the local chapter of the

United Nations Association.

— ROYCEANN MATHER, Overland Park, Kans.

To live and practice as a Buddhist, I am always accompanied by persecutions, difficulties and agonizing ordeals. All the more reason that I should be certain in my heart that sacrificing my life for the Lotus Sutra is like "trading rocks for gold" or enigmas for friends.

— LYNDA CHRISTOPHER, Tucson, Ariz.



To me to live as a Buddhist is reflected in this poem, "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley:

*Out of the night that covers me
Black as the Pit from pole to pole
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstances
I have not winced or cried aloud;
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.*

*Beyond the vale of doubt and fear
Looms but the terror of the shade
And, yet, the passing of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.*

*It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

In living as a Buddhist, I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul.

— AHMED SHAHEED, Oak Park, Ill.

Thanks to all who responded!

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

'How and when do you tell others about this Buddhism?'

Please be specific and limit your responses to 50 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401, or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Stirring Stories

Thank you for printing the experiences of Diane Nelson of South Carolina (Dec. 20, 1996, *World Tribune*) and Teshia Bey of Cleveland (Jan. 17 *World Tribune*). These articles gave me encouragement to challenge my life and are reminiscent of those that appeared over five or six years ago on a regular basis in the *World Tribune*. I have been missing these stirring human revolution stories.

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that I set down to pen this letter on the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. I am so grateful to be in an organization [where I can] practice with African Americans who in this lifetime have come to prove the greatness of the Gohonzon. Their hardships and personal challenges are far beyond anything I have ever experienced. These stories give me courage and I am humbled by the strength of these members. Their experiences have brought me to tears.

Thanks to all those who help bring these experiences to the readership of the *World Tribune*.

— LEAETTA WACKER, Albany, Ore.

Not Happy With the 'Official Version'

The smiling face of Conover Hunt on the back page of the Dec. 27, 1996, *World Tribune* does not alter one atom the conviction of thousands of people in this country and countries around the world who do not accept the official version of events surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy. My initial response is anger and disappointment on seeing the *World Tribune* placing a stamp of recognition, as it were, on the official version. The last word has yet to be spoken on this tragedy.

I feel you are trying to be topical and up-to-the-minute in creating the ["Worldview"] feature. This much is good and gets my vote! But this time you blew it. I believe you will get a lot of adverse mail from Preston Richard's article. [Editor's note: For the record, we have received two letters about the article, this one and the one we printed in the Jan. 24 issue.]

As people committed to seeking peace, we must not allow ourselves to be duped by the media into accepting comfortable lies.

But talk is cheap. If my livelihood depended on my silence, would I have the courage to speak out?

— ESTHER O'BANNON, Venice, Calif.

Fire Safety

I have noticed over the last week a number of articles [in other publications] pointing out some problems with halogen lamps. Specifically, they are very hot with temperatures reaching 1,000 degrees. The popular floor lamps have caused fires when they were too close to curtains or when the bulbs exploded, knocking the lamps over.

Many members use halogen lamps as spotlights to illuminate the Gohonzon. I think extra care should be taken with these lamps. If they are too close to the Gohonzon, the high temperatures could cause damage to the Gohonzon or, worse, cause a fire.

Safety groups warn people not to leave lamps near any combustible materials like drapes or bedding and not to keep the lamps on while unattended.

Once the bulbs come in contact with something flammable, fire can strike suddenly and powerfully. One solution is to switch to an incandescent or fluorescent lamp; they are much cooler and safer.

— DAVID B. CAPUTO, Sewickley, Pa.

**The Buddhist Perspective
Yields Hope and Confidence**

PERSPECTIVE

By MAUREEN PIETOSO
CINCINNATI

When we view our lives with the eyes of a common mortal, our problems may seem overwhelming and our lives very confusing. But when we look at the same lives with a Buddhist perspective, an entirely different picture emerges. A picture full of hope, confidence and wisdom.

It was and still is that Buddhist perspective that has seen me through many difficulties.

In May 1993, my husband and I opened a restaurant in St. Louis, full of hope and determination for a successful business. For two years, on a daily basis, we struggled to make our dream a reality. We chanted so much daimoku, we received guidance, we supported each other and others in practice and yet nothing seemed to work.

Every day, the business was worse and our partners more intolerable. And yet every day, we awakened with renewed hope and determination to make this business a success. We constantly questioned ourselves: What else can we do? What do we need to change in our lives to turn this around? Absolutely nothing worked, or so it seemed.

SGI President Ikeda tells us that in Buddhism no effort is

wasted. I knew that even though the answers were not apparent in our lives at that time, the seeds of the solution were planted and would manifest when the time was right. This Buddhist perspective gave us continued hope, patience and the wisdom to know that our lives were unfolding as they should.

In May 1995, two years later, we sold the business, breaking even financially. When that door closed, another opened — the opportunity to open a restaurant in Cincinnati. We sold our home, uprooted our family, gave up excellent jobs in St. Louis and relocated to Cincinnati in October 1995. We didn't have loan approval for the business, but we had a lot of determination and confidence. During my 15 years of practice, these words have never failed me: "You make the decision first, and then make it right with daimoku."

To make a long story short, we again faced many obstacles, but our restaurant, Nicola's, finally opened on April 15, 1996. Every prayer we had for the first restaurant has been answered in the second. The business is steadily growing and we are receiving wonderful feedback from customers every day. A couple months ago, we received an award from *Cincinnati Magazine* for making the "Best in Cincinnati" list.

And then, a few months ago, something happened that made

me see the real benefit, the real reason we came to Cincinnati. It was something that made me understand that, just as the problems of the first business were temporary, the success of our second is, too.

We originally found out about this business opportunity through my niece. She relocated from Toledo, Ohio, to work with us at the restaurant as our pastry chef (she makes to-die-for desserts). I have always loved my niece, but we really didn't know each other well. Over the past months, we have developed a deeper relationship and friendship. My niece and I have had many philosophical discussions.

A couple months ago, she hit a very low point in her life. We spent hours talking about Buddhism. Erin went home with a stack of *Seikyo Times*, and less than a week later she had read them all and wanted more. She started chanting every day and feeling a positive change in her life. It has been so wonderful to see her life open to Buddhism and experience the benefits it provides.

And this is what I realized, more clearly than ever before: My happiness is not based on the success or failure of a business, but rather on the Buddha nature within me. And the true benefit I've experienced is seeing someone I love open up to the Buddha nature inherent in her life — that will never leave. ❖

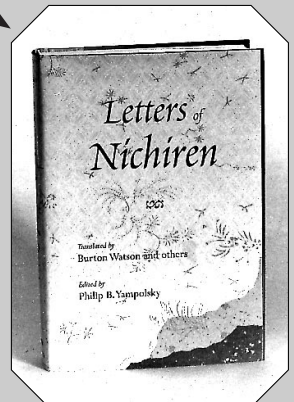
**ENJOY LIFE!
STUDY MORE OFTEN!**

(Hardcover)

**Translated by Burton Watson and others
Edited by Phillip Yampolsky**

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Always Work Toward Your Dream, Youth Chief Urges

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

By **RON BAIRD**
BUREAU CHIEF

San Francisco, Jan. 18

"If you have a dream, every day you should go to the Gohonzon and chant about that dream," SGI-USA Youth Division Chief Ed Feasel said at the San Francisco Youth Division Kickoff today.

"I grew up in this practice and learned from my mother about the amazing power of the Gohonzon," he said. "While in the Brass Band I developed a great dream about going to college. Even though my family was poor, I chanted for that dream."

Mr. Feasel enthusiastically told how he gained a full scholarship to Yale — and how he almost flunked out. A senior in faith urged him to dream bigger. "He told me to become an ambassador from America to Europe, so I started chanting about that fantastic goal," the youth division chief said. "One month later I met with him again and he told me to become a university president. I became overwhelmed with such tremendous goals. Finally it dawned on me that what I was lacking was a dream of my own."



Ed Feasel, SGI-USA Youth Div. Chief.

He explained that once he got to Yale he had no dream for the future and ended up floundering in his practice and his studies. "I discovered that it's crucial to always have a dream," he said. "SGI President Ikeda encourages us to climb the mountain where we are and to be victorious. As a result our legs become stronger. Then when we get to the top of the mountain we can see an amazing vista and see which mountain is next."

The youth division chief also explained how to use the Buddhist practice to help others. "This is the hard part," he said. "Recently President Ikeda said it's impor-

tant to remember why we practice and to really treasure the members. The heart is everything — the heart to help people become happy. This is the essence of Buddhism and kosen-rufu.

"The next four years are like a runway for generating a strong momentum into the 21st century," he continued. "The 20th century has been a century of war, with the atomic bomb, massacres and killing. But the 21st century should become the century of humanity and of human rights. For youth, the crucial point is how much we can develop the heart to help people become happy.

"Sometimes we may feel that 'I'm really struggling myself; how can I possibly help someone else?' or that 'If I can just focus on my problems, I can solve them,'" he said. "But in Buddhism when we strive to help others become happy, we make the greatest cause for victory in our lives. During this year of advancement, let's work together to develop our dreams for the 21st century while also striving to help others practice and to create the century of humanity." ❧

CUBA, FROM PAGE 1

SGI President Welcomes Cuban Delegation

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In the past, the Soka Gakkai has challenged many of these libelous articles in court and won financial awards. But compared to

similar cases in America, the awards the tabloid publications must pay in Japan are extremely low — \$10,000 is considered the average.

A recent example of this, not directly involving the Soka Gakkai, concerned Nobuyuki Shiroyama, a Hokkaido Soka Gakkai member who in December won a libel suit against *Shukan Shincho*. In September 1994, the magazine falsely reported that Mr. Shiroyama had killed a Nichiren Shoshu priest in a head-on traffic collision, although the police and an insurance company had already cleared Mr. Shiroyama of any liability before the story ran. The Sapporo District Court

awarded him \$10,000, while a similar case in the United States could potentially reap millions for the defamed.

The potential financial gains in printing sensational yet slanderous articles far outweigh the potential financial penalties. In fact, SGI Public Relations officials explain that Soka Gakkai libel suits against the tabloids have become a cottage industry for the tabloids, allowing them to publish further sensational stories on the libel suits themselves — and to make more profits.

And even when the Gakkai wins, the tabloids sometimes reprint the lies a few years later. In 1983, the Soka Gakkai won a libel

Expressions

Untitled

My finger no longer points toward you with blame. It was I who took my power and placed it in your name.

You — the villain dragging me into the abyss to dance with anger, hunger and hell to dance with loneliness.

Hey you, the villain, You're getting clearer. I see you now In my mirror.

The devil never carries so much clout as when I feed it with self-doubt.

My Buddha nature Are you in there? I'm struggling to find you amongst my tears.

I was told many years ago to call the Buddha's name. I did and I waited, But my savior never came.

Now, in the midst of this swamp — This battle — I refuse to give up this time. I hear someone calling me from somewhere inside. I hear a voice getting stronger I will ignore it no longer.

As I call the Buddha's name My heart answers to the same.

— HEIDI BERGMAN,
Santa Monica, Calif.

Correction

The Jan. 24 and Jan. 31 issues listed the wrong chapter numbers for those installments of *The New Human Revolution*. They should have indicated chapter 3 and chapter 4 respectively. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 5, Chapter 4

Lion

Translation of parts 4–9 of the 'Lion' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

Shin'ichi continued: "I hope that with this sense of commitment and responsibility, you will take the initiative to creatively plan and carry out your activities. Our yearly and monthly activity guidelines are clear. With these as your basis, I hope you will discuss with your members the best way to proceed. Please pool your wisdom, promoting activities in a way that makes the most of the local flavor of your area.

"Leaders mustn't have a passive attitude, simply waiting for directions from the Gakkai Headquarters. It's crucial, of course, to work closely with the Headquarters, and some activities will involve the Gakkai as a whole. Nevertheless, the key to victory is to give full play to the initiative and unique creativity of the members in each local organization.

"Leaders preoccupied with protecting their status and image tend only to do things according to the same old tried and tested formula. They don't want to take responsibility for any failures, so they try to do everything by the book. Then they effectively snuff out everyone's eagerness and enthusiasm to achieve great things. Please make every effort to ensure that all members are given a chance to show initiative and participate freely in organizing and running activities."

Shin'ichi's remarks at the head temple and the Headquarters New Year's gongyo were intended to clarify the basic attitude and requirements of Soka Gakkai leaders. The fate of an organization — whether it will flourish or decline — hinges on the quality of its leaders and central figures. Shin'ichi's greatest fear was that the Gakkai would eventually become bureaucratic, regimented, narrow-minded.

The Soka Gakkai's impact on society was also growing with each passing day. Consequently, unless its leaders seriously worked to educate themselves and grew to be truly outstanding individuals, they could inadvertently discredit the Gakkai. Shin'ichi was always strict with leaders for this reason and devoted all his energy to their development.

Yet Shin'ichi was harder on no one more than himself.

For instance, on New Year's Eve, he stayed up late into the night preparing and sending messages to be read at New Year's Day gongyo meetings for leaders being held at each regional headquarters in addition to the one at the Gakkai Headquarters. Having given careful, detailed thought to the situation of each area, Shin'ichi included in each message important direction that could serve as a basic guideline for activities in that area over the coming year. This sprang from Shin'ichi's deep commitment and resolve to work for the members' happiness.

After attending the New Year's gongyo meeting, Shin'ichi Yamamoto spent the next two days at the head temple for the New Year's pilgrimage.

Things were back in full swing at the Gakkai Headquarters on Jan. 4. On Jan. 7, the Study Department held Entrance Exams and Promotional Exams for teach-

and enjoy taking it. Even so, there are bound to be questions that even today's religious scholars would not know the answers to. But all of you here have been studying diligently, despite your many work responsibilities and personal commitments. This in itself is truly remarkable. I wish you all good luck on the exam."

At another location, Shin'ichi said: "For those of you who feel you cannot pass today's exam because you didn't study enough, please tackle it with the resolve that you will take it as many times as you have to until you pass. Simply studying the Daishonin's Buddhism is a source of great fortune, so it's important to take pride and joy in this fact."

More than 220,000 people across Japan took the Entrance and Promotional exams that day. Study of Nichiren Daishonin's life philosophy was steadily gaining momentum, becoming a movement that was spreading broadly among ordinary people.

With activities for the year off to a smooth start, Shin'ichi flew to the snow-bound northern island of Hokkaido on Jan. 13. That evening, the Hokkaido young women's division was to hold a funeral service for their former young women's division chief, Haruko Arashiyama. A leaders meeting for Hokkaido General Chapter was scheduled for the following day.

Haruko Arashiyama had passed away one month earlier, on Dec. 14. When the news had reached Shin'ichi at the Gakkai Headquarters, he felt a sudden, overwhelming sense of loss. He had wanted to fly to Hokkaido immediately to attend her funeral, but his tight year-end schedule did not permit even a moment to do so.

Instead, after discussing the matter with the Gakkai directors and young women's division leaders, it was decided that

Shin'ichi would attend a funeral service for Arashiyama, conducted by the Hokkaido young women's division, on Jan. 13.

Whatever deep karma had caused her to die so young, it tore at Shin'ichi's heart to think of Arashiyama's untimely passing in the midst of her journey for kosen-rufu.

That evening, Shin'ichi chanted daimoku for her eternal peace and happiness. Nothing caused him greater suffering than the death of a young comrade in faith.

Since the previous June, when Shin'ichi had advised her to concentrate on recovering from tuberculosis, Haruko Arashiyama had tried to rest and recuperate. As a result, she seemed to regain her health somewhat.

But Arashiyama apparently couldn't stand being confined to bed for long. On Nov. 12, she traveled all the way from Hokkaido, with Hokkaido Young Women's Division Vice Chief Yoshiko Urushibara, to attend the 9th Young Women's Division General Meeting at the Mitsuzawa Sports Arena in Yokohama.

Shin'ichi had sent her a message in advance through Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki, urging her not to overexert herself, to skip the upcoming meeting. But she had obviously found it impossible to stay put.

On her arrival at Ueno Station in Tokyo the day before the general meeting, however, her condition took a turn for the worse. She was so exhausted that she didn't even have the strength to walk, barely making it by taxi to her inn in Yokohama.

Nevertheless, the next day she could walk unaided and attended the lively gathering without incident. As Arashiyama sat quietly observing the meeting, her eyes were more brilliant than the clear autumn sky above.

After the meeting, Arashiyama went to visit the Gakkai Headquarters, having to stop a number of times to rest along the way. But her desire to meet with President Yamamoto — for even a moment — and report to him her recent progress gave her the strength to go on. Unfortunately, Shin'ichi was out when she finally arrived. After waiting for a while, she had to leave to catch her train back to Hokkaido without seeing him.

When Shin'ichi returned to the Headquarters, the leader who had received Arashiyama told him of her visit and the state of her health. Hearing this, Shin'ichi murmured: "Why did she overexert herself like that? She promised me that she would take it easy and recover..."

Yet Shin'ichi understood all too well what Arashiyama was feeling. Had he been in her shoes and heard about the general meeting, he undoubtedly would have attended. His heart ached when he



ers and assistant teachers at 156 sites in Japan and in Naha City, Okinawa. Shin'ichi made the rounds to a number of sites in Tokyo that day to encourage examinees before the exams began. Everyone was surprised and delighted to see him, welcoming him with shouts of joy.

To ease their anxiety over taking the test, Shin'ichi told them: "The questions on today's exam were prepared so that everyone can answer them. Please relax

LION, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

thought of Arashiyama coming all that way and waiting to see him in spite of her ill health. Had he only known she was coming, he could have met her and given her a word or two of encouragement.

Shin'ichi was extremely concerned about what effect the long, jolting, overnight train ride back to Sapporo might have on Arashiyama's health.

Upon returning to Sapporo, Arashiyama decided to continue her recuperation at home, but her condition worsened. Finally, around the end of November, she was forced to enter a hospital.

When Shin'ichi heard this, he immediately sent her a telegram to encourage her, to let her know that he was praying for her recovery.

As Arashiyama sat in her hospital bed, tightly clasping the telegram, she vowed through her tears that she would become well.

Shin'ichi chanted daimoku every day for Haruko Arashiyama to recover. And encouragingly she was growing healthier and stronger as the days went by. Whenever a young women's division leader came to visit her in the hospital, she asked about activities and encouraged her with her whole heart.

Ten days after being admitted to the hospital, her cough and fever were gone. Though she was painfully thin, a healthy color began to return to her cheeks.

One morning, the doctor informed her of her latest test results. "Miss Arashiyama," he said, "it's very strange, but your tuberculosis is cured. Your heart seems to be a little weak, but if you keep regaining your strength at this rate you should be out of here in about a month."

Arashiyama happily shared the good news with the young women's division members who came to visit her that day.

"I made a solemn pledge to President Yamamoto that I would get well," she said. "Now I can keep my promise. I'm so glad. It's really wonderful!"

But only a few days later, on Dec. 14, Arashiyama died from heart failure.

Her death seemed to verify that she had completed her mission in this lifetime — winning her battle with tuberculosis and thereby eternally overcoming her karma to suffer from illness.

On her last day, she encouraged the young women's division members who visited her, greeting them with a warm, generous smile. Soon after the young women left, Arashiyama closed her eyes and died peacefully, bringing to an end her short life of 26 years.

Shimmering snowflakes danced in the night air outside the window of her hospital room, as if paying tribute to Arashiyama's faith, which had been as pure as fresh snow.

The funeral service for Haruko Arashiyama, conducted by the Hokkaido young women's division, was held at the Nichiren Shoshu temple in Sapporo on Jan. 13 at 5:00 p.m.

From his car on the way to the temple, Shin'ichi looked out at the snow-

covered streets of Sapporo. The image of Arashiyama cheerfully making her way through this desolate landscape would not leave him.

In addition to Shin'ichi, General Director Koichi Harayama, Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki and senior young women's division leaders were present for the solemn service. They joined some 1,000 local young women in wishing Haruko Arashiyama a final farewell.

As Shin'ichi rose to offer incense, he gazed for a long time at the large photograph of Haruko on display at the altar. Her expression was sweet, still showing traces of a childlike innocence.

Through her actions, this one young woman inspired countless others to stand up with faith and contributed incalculably to the development of kosen-rufu in Hokkaido. Like a Joan of Arc of the Mystic Law, she dedicated her life to her friends' happiness and gave her all to the spread of the Law.

After several eulogies by young women's division leaders, Eisuke Akizuki and some of the other top leaders attending spoke.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto pondered the meaning of Haruko Arashiyama's death. Her life, ending at age 26, had been all too short. Yet he felt certain that she had completed her mission in this lifetime. She had left behind for future generations a brilliant example of selfless, pristine faith.

Her passionate spirit to seek Buddhism, her warm compassion and her concern for her friends would never fade. Indeed, they would come to shine even more brilliantly as time went by, serving to inspire the countless Haruko Arashiyamas certain to appear in the future to carry on in her footsteps. The bonds that exist between comrades in faith, comrades who dedicate their lives to the mission they were born to fulfill, are eternal.

Shin'ichi recalled a passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writing "The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas Throughout the Three Existences":

To conceive of life and death as separate realities is to be caught in the illusion of birth and death. It is deluded and inverted thinking. When we examine the nature of life with perfect enlightenment, we find that there is no beginning marking birth, and therefore, no end signifying death. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 563)

Right now, Shin'ichi felt unbearable grief and sadness over Arashiyama's death. Viewed from the perspective of

Buddhism, however, her life itself had not ended — it would continue eternally, at one with the universe. Mulling deeply over this passage, Shin'ichi became strongly convinced that the day would come when Arashiyama would be reborn somewhere close by and



again work energetically in the vast arena of kosen-rufu.

After greetings by the leaders, the Hokkaido Fife and Drum Corps, which was established under Arashiyama's leadership, performed the Hokkaido young women's division song. Local young women's division members had composed the music and lyrics and, at their request, Shin'ichi had reviewed and made a few revisions to the lyrics before the song's completion. As such, it was a song that held fond memories for Shin'ichi as well.

*Striving onward through the tempest
Hands joined in the selfless pursuit
Of spreading the Mystic Law,
We, young women, champions of faith,
Advance with the purest of hearts,
Cherishing boundless hope for tomorrow!*

Many times, the melody was almost lost as the fife players were overcome by tears of sadness, unable to continue. Tears also streamed down the faces of the young women who sat quietly listening to the performance. These tears, like so many sparkling gems, reflected the Hokkaido young women's division members' beautiful pledge to carry on Arashiyama's spirit.

On returning to the Hokkaido Headquarters Building after the funeral service conducted by the young women's division, Shin'ichi addressed some of the young women's division members: "When the snow thaws and spring arrives, let's plant a cherry tree here at the Hokkaido Headquarters in memory of Miss Arashiyama. And when you look at that tree, I'd like you to remember her spirit. I'd like you to strive together to become people who can stand proudly be-

side her in the sphere of faith. I'll definitely come to attend the tree-planting ceremony."

Shin'ichi, of course, had made this proposal to honor Arashiyama, but he had also wanted to give these young women, now overwhelmed with sadness, a fresh spark of hope for the future.

A blizzard hit Sapporo the next day. Nevertheless, members came from all parts of Japan's vast northern island, braving the bitter cold and driving snow, filled with pride and joy, to attend the Hokkaido General Chapter Leaders Meeting. Some 12,000 participants packed Sapporo's Nakajima Sports Center where the meeting was to be held.

The schedule began a little after 10:00 a.m. The spirit and enthusiasm of those inside seemed strong enough to repel the blizzard outside and melt the deep snow.

Hokkaido General Chapter Chief Masaharu Miyagi expressed a rousing determination to make great strides in propagation in the months ahead. His words reverberated with Hokkaido's valiant spirit to take the lead this year, the Year of Victory:

"I believe this year, designated the Year of Victory, marks a crucial juncture in our journey for kosen-rufu. Now is the time to win. This year, this month, this moment is everything. If we do not win in the present moment, we cannot achieve victory in the future.

"So right now, let's decide that this year's victory is crucial on all fronts — in our personal human revolution, in positively transforming our daily lives and in accumulating good fortune — and then work for great success in all our activities in the coming year."

Thunderous applause rocked the hall.

Miyagi, who was in his late 40s, had taken on the responsibility of general chapter chief the previous August. He had started out as a member of Tokyo's Bunkyo Chapter and had been serving as the Yokosuka Chapter chief when Shin'ichi recommended him for the position of Hokkaido General Chapter chief in a move to strengthen the Hokkaido organization.

Miyagi's wife, Hatsuko, meanwhile, had been appointed Hokkaido General Chapter women's division chief. In a sense, the entire future of the Hokkaido Soka Gakkai rested on the Miyagis' shoulders.

Shin'ichi had worried whether they could gain the confidence and support of the members on this vast northern island. But when he saw the enthusiastic way the members responded to Miyagi's speech, his mind was put at ease. He was confident that Hokkaido would definitely be victorious.

(To be continued)

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 2nd session of the Nationwide Representatives Conference in Japan, Nov. 23, 1996.

Just as a ceaselessly flowing river is clear and pure, the life of a person who continuously takes action and advances will always exhibit true beauty. Buddhism is victory or defeat, and kosen-rufu is an eternal struggle. Precisely for that reason, leaders must continue to take action with the spirit to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for the happiness of all humankind.

In the Goshō, the Daishonin says, "[The generals in a tumultuous age] develop strategy behind drawn curtains, and victory is decided thousands of miles away [from the field of battle]" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 183). It is important that leaders always ask themselves: "What can I do to advance kosen-rufu in my community?" "How can I encourage and protect the precious members in my organization?" These points should be the constant focus of their thoughts and prayers. It is also vital for leaders to gather to discuss matters in earnest; to be united, openly sharing information and pooling their wisdom. Such efforts will pave a fresh path toward victory. Leaders must carefully weigh the various issues confronting them and act appropriately.

Voltaire's Conclusion on Life

Our local communities represent the True Land.¹ We are deceiving ourselves if we think that we can advance kosen-rufu and practice Buddhism correctly while neglecting the community we live in.

The French writer and philosopher Voltaire (1694–1778), whose ideas greatly influenced the French Revolution, wrote the novel *Candide*, a tale of life's vicissitudes. He closes this work with a passage that could be said to sum up his philosophy: "We must cultivate our garden."²

The French word *candide*, which is also the name of the story's protagonist, means "naïve" and "ingenuous." Upon reaching adulthood, Candide faces a succession of bitter ordeals. First, he is driven from the fine castle in which he grew up and is later arrested in a foreign land. He manages to escape his captors, but no sooner has he done so than he is shipwrecked in a ferocious storm. And then when he thinks at last he has been saved, the town where he has taken refuge is rocked by a sizable earthquake. He is flogged by an officer of the Inquisition and, after fleeing to South America, is forced into a nomadic life, wandering from one place to another.

Candide experiences love, war and illness; separations and reunions; philosophy and doubt. After overcoming these many travails, what conclusion does he reach? They are the novel's last words: "We must cultivate our garden." In other words, rationalizations are all very well and good, but life doesn't always go according to well-ordered logic. It is impossible to know what the future may hold, or how the world may change. That is why he avowed that it is far more important to diligently tend the garden of one's life.

'We Must Cultivate Our Garden'



The French writer and philosopher Voltaire (1694–1778).

Make Your Mark Here and Now

From our standpoint as SGI members, the communities in which we live, our areas of specialty, our occupations, our families — all are our garden of kosen-rufu. We must cultivate and develop this garden. By so doing, we cultivate our lives and enrich ourselves in body, heart and mind.

Elsewhere, Voltaire relates his conviction that he will never be discouraged by sickness or old age. He declares that he will still leave behind a lasting achievement, even though he might end up cultivating a grove of no more than 20 trees.

The world we live in drifts along like duckweed floating down a river. We should not allow our lives to be swept along aimlessly. We are developing an eternal golden path, the true greatness of which will definitely be recognized 200 years hence.

Pioneering takes steady, dedicated effort; it is advancing surely one step at a time. True Buddhist practice lies in such activities as visiting members, giving personal encouragement, talking to our friends about Buddhism and introducing others to faith.

It is not enough to simply gather a lot of people together and give a speech. Buddhist practice is about taking action. How many members do you take the time to visit and encourage in a month? In a year? True pioneering lies in making precisely such efforts. Our challenge is to deepen the understanding of friends and fellow members toward the philosophy and activities of the SGI through our encounters with them.

A certain large company has this motto: "Treat everyone as you would a customer." One way they put this motto into practice is seen in their reply to unsuccessful job applicants. If an applicant fails the interview

screening, then the manager responsible writes a courteous letter informing the applicant of the decision so that he or she is not left in the dark or with hard feelings toward the company. The continuous effort to treat people with consideration and respect has enabled the company to establish a solid foundation of trust.

All you have to do is to show a little consideration and sensitivity. Someone who has genuine concern for others is great. An organization whose leaders have true compassion for the members will produce solid results. Where the leaders are always ready to offer encouragement and spare no effort, there is growth. Where the leaders are idle, decline is inevitable.

Incidentally, Voltaire was also well-known for the disdain in which he held the clergy. There is a scene in *Candide* where the protagonist arrives at the fabled South American land of Eldorado. There, struck with wonder at the fact that there are no priests, Candide exclaims: "What! You have no monks to teach, argue, govern, intrigue, and burn at the stake everyone who disagrees with them?"³

Likewise, in the Eldorado of the human spirit that we are striving to create, there is absolutely no need for any nefarious clergy.

'When the Skies Are Clear, the Ground Is Illuminated'

Japan is presently in the middle of an economic recession. In the Goshō, the Daishonin writes: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 82). Citing these words, the second

Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, once offered this encouragement:

We who embrace faith in the Gohonzon should not simply lament the poor economic conditions. Rather, we should strive to break through these difficulties by manifesting great life force, carefully considering what we need to do and working hard. This is what is meant by the Goshō passage: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs."

Quite often, people take the easygoing view that, just because they embrace the Gohonzon, their business will definitely flourish without making any efforts or thinking about such things as sales technique. This is a grave mistake. Irrefutably, such an attitude is a form of serious slander against the Law....

Not noticing the weak areas or deficiencies in your business or realizing the need for improvements, for example, might be excused in the first one or two years of practice. But if the situation continues after three or four years, it is cause for serious reflection. You must constantly study and make tireless efforts to ensure the success of your business.⁴

The Power of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds

The Lotus Sutra talks about a bodhisattva named Perceiver of the World's Sounds (Jpn Kanzeon). Broadly speaking, this bodhisattva represents the wisdom and vitality to be able to keenly sense changes in the world and people's feelings and to respond swiftly to their needs. By chanting daimoku, we can develop the power of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds in our lives.

Faith means making 100 percent effort ourselves — in our daimoku and in our actions. When we practice in this way, the Buddhist gods will lend us their protection. We mustn't have a complacent, dependent attitude in faith, chanting haphazardly without definite goals and making only halfhearted efforts in the belief that we'll automatically be protected.

Depth of determination and unshakable character are vital. Those possessing these qualities are second to none in faith. This is something I learned from President Toda. Accordingly, the SGI is strong and self-reliant. If we depend on others, then we ourselves will be unable to grow.

Hope that leaders will earnestly pray for the prosperity, safety and happiness of the members who are all so infinitely noble and praiseworthy. May you also never forget to develop yourselves and pray to become people who are liked and trusted by the members and who can work unstintingly for the members' happiness and well-being. 卍

1. True Land: the "Life Span" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra clarifies that the strife-filled *saha* world is itself the True Land in which the Buddha has always dwelt and taught the Law.
2. Voltaire, *Candide, or Optimism*, trans. Robert M. Adams (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 77.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Trusting His Creative Instincts

Duncan Sheik Finds a Big Audience for His Songwriting

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The first time I heard Duncan Sheik perform was at an American University Group talent show at Soka University of America two-and-a-half years ago. He has come a long way since then. Now I hear him every day on the radio; his song "Barely Breathing" is an international hit, and his first CD, Duncan Sheik, is gaining much

iversity at the time. I was kind of studying Eastern religions in general. I went to visit my aunt, Mari Gorman — she's a pretty well-known L.A. Buddhist figure; she's been practicing for close to 30 years now. So she taught me how to chant and brought me from the world of theory to the world of practice. She got me in front of the Gohonzon.

JF: After you graduated from Brown, then you started pursuing your musical career?

JF: How did your current deal with Atlantic come about?

DS: Basically what happened was that through Immortal I got signed to a publishing deal with BMG as a songwriter. I wrote many, many songs and recorded a lot of songs during 1993 and 1994, which came to the attention of people at Atlantic. On the strength of those songs, they came up to the house I was living in at the time, in Laurel Canyon — the president of the company, the general man-

sense about what I'm doing, it helps enormously. I think it also keeps me in touch with that universal human sensibility to really reach out to people.

JF: What was the hardest time in your career?

DS: The first three or four months I was in Los Angeles before I got the first record deal. They were pretty lean. I didn't have a job, I didn't have a lot of money — you know, the same old story. Then luckily I got the first thing, and it gave me some money to keep my head above water.

And after that, about six months later when the excitement of that died down, it got tough again because I didn't know if I was ever going to get to make this record. There was a period of a year there where nobody really knew what was going to happen. But I did a lot of Gajokai activities and was very active in my district. I was definitely practicing hard.

JF: What do you like about doing Gajokai?

DS: I've had my own struggles with doing Gajokai and Soka Group ever since the day I started them. I think they were struggles with my own ego — of having to dress up in silly outfits and having to stand around feeling like a complete idiot. But ultimately, looking back on it, I think they really helped me to be not such a self-conscious person.

I went through a real struggle when I first started my career because I could not sing in public at all. I was so self-conscious about my voice. And I think through doing Gajokai and challenging myself in that way I was able to overcome that, become much stronger and say, "No matter what, I'm going to perform the best I can — no matter how ridiculous the situation may seem."

JF: You must be very busy now.

DS: It's getting crazy. In fact, since right after New Year's it's been nonstop because the first single has become a big radio hit and it's on MTV in active rotation. The whole nine yards is hitting me at once at this moment, so I'm just trying to take a deep breath and get ready.

There are definitely a lot of days where I'll have to chant at 5:00 in the morning because I have to go do some local TV news show at 6:00, or I won't be able to do gongyo until 1:00 in the afternoon because of whatever crazy reason. There's no routine — every day is a new day.

JF: In your CD you thank SGI President Ikeda. How has President Ikeda's guidance encouraged you in your career?

DS: There are many things that he has written about being a creative person and what it means to manifest your artistic creativity. There's a very strong, general sense that I get from him of how important it is to move other people's hearts. Whatever it is that you're creating, it's important that it's not just a selfish endeavor but that you're really able to reach out and move other people through your art.

Realizing that was a very important turning point for me, because I think for most of my life playing music was a self-involved activity. Of course I always wanted to make records, but it was always kind of just for my own benefit. Now I see the importance of creating value for other people as well.

JF: Do you meet a lot of fans who have been touched by your songs?

DS: Every day, at every show that I play. There is always someone coming up to me saying how spiritual my CD sounds. A lot of people will come up to me and say: "Do you practice? Are you Buddhist?" That's a really enjoyable part of the whole process.

JF: What would you say to others who have the same dream you did?

DS: The important thing is to trust your instincts and trust what's in your own musical heart, so to speak. I don't think you can be really commercially minded or pop-minded and make great music. I think you have to do something that moves you and is powerful for you. And that way I think it will ultimately be very powerful for other people.

Trust your instincts, no matter how crazy they may seem at the time because time will prove you probably to be correct if you just go with your heart in any creative matter, no matter what it is. I think the important thing is not to sell yourself short and not to copy other trends but to blaze a new trail.

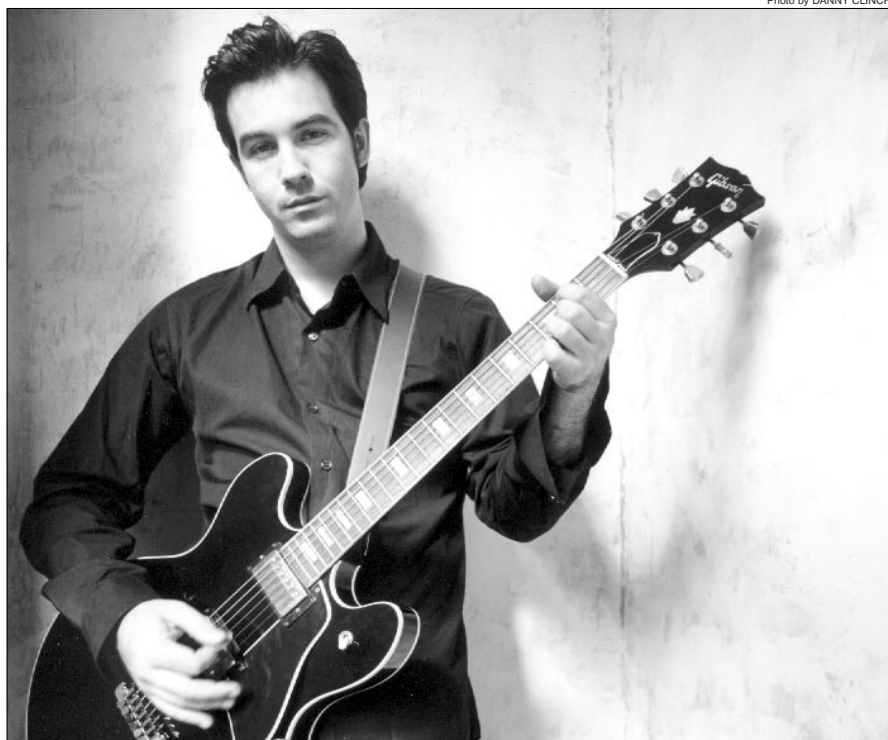


Photo by DANNY CLINCH

Duncan Sheik overcame his fear of singing in public to become a pop star.

attention in the press. I had a chance to talk to him recently about his start in music and how his Buddhist practice has helped.

JF: Was your original dream to become a musician?

DS: Yeah, since I was a little kid, actually. Since I was 9 years old I've been playing guitar and the keyboards and anything I could get my hands on really.

JF: When did you join the SGI-USA?

DS: It was the summer of 1989. I was going to Brown Uni-

DS: Yes. Actually, while I was at Brown, my sophomore year, I played guitar for Lisa Loeb. But I was still recording my own music and doing my own thing as well. When I graduated from college in 1992, I moved to Los Angeles and started doing a lot of Gajokai activities and practicing hard.

That's when I got signed to my first record deal with Immortal Records, part of Epic. It was an inappropriate place for me to be, but it served its purpose in that it kept me afloat. Then I was in business limbo for a couple of years. In 1993 and 1994 I was wondering whether or not I was ever going to get to make the CD.

ager and some A & R people — and I just played a show for them in my living room. They signed me a month after that.

JF: Were you nervous when they came over?

DS: Yeah, it was rather a tense night for me. But the show went very well. I was luckily able to pull myself together.

JF: Does your Buddhist practice help you with writing songs?

DS: Definitely. Anything that you do, in general, goes better if you've done gongyo first. So, of course, in terms of my creative energy and having a positive

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Life is an Unending Battle

But still I am not discouraged.
(*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 166)

By SHIN YATOMI

SGH-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMM. CHIEF

The letter of which this passage is part is dated Aug. 3, 1276. By the time he wrote this letter, Nichiren had already gone through severe persecutions one after another. Immediately before this passage, he describes his stormy life in this way: "Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed" (MW-1, 166).

Shortly after his first remonstrance with the government in 1260, Pure Land sect zealots attacked him. In the following year, he was exiled to Izu Peninsula. In 1264, he was ambushed on his way to see his ailing mother. In 1271, after its failed attempt to execute him, the government exiled Nichiren to Sado Island and started to crack down on his followers.

Indeed his life was constantly assailed by hardship. Yet his spirit never broke. Thinking of his severe circumstances, I sense here the strength and resilience of a man who had gone through torment and agony yet triumphed. His is not merely the detached calmness of a saint.

When those of us who have been practicing for a long time face an unexpected obstacle, we may sometimes ask ourselves, "Why me after all these years of practice?" or "Didn't I get rid of all my negative karma?" But no matter how many years we practice, we cannot say for sure that "I will no longer suffer from my karma."

In this sense, our lives may be compared to an unending battle against destiny. After all, no one leads a life free of problems and worries. What is most important, then, is that we never allow our faith to bend before an obstacle. When we regard hardship as a chance to strengthen our faith and establish unshakable happiness, we can tap unimaginable strength and hope just as Nichiren did.

So when I face difficult circumstances and feel like giving up, I say this passage to myself over and over until my heart echoes back: "But still I am not discouraged." ■

'ARISE, THE SUN OF THE CENTURY' — FEBRUARY 26

The Time Is Right

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

When SGI President Ikeda wrote the poem "Arise, the Sun of the Century," the 21st century was still 14 years away. Now that those 14 years have dwindled to four — as President Ikeda says in the poem, "Time surely flies like an arrow" — it is an interesting time to revisit the poem.

On Feb. 26, 1987, as the last activity of a monthlong visit to the United States, President Ikeda commemorated the 30th anniversary of the American kosen-rufu movement with a meeting in Los Angeles. Saying that the gathering was actually a departure into the next 30, 50 or 100 years, he introduced "Arise," which carries on this theme:

*Let us aim for the summit of eternal
happiness
In the new century
Shining beyond the vast prairies.
This day, this very morning,
With great pride and conviction
Have we boldly launched*

*On a voyage toward a fresh
beginning.*

And what a voyage it is. Buddhism teaches, as President Ikeda says in "Arise," that only our determination for kosen-rufu can open "the door to the journey toward the future."

Nichiren Daishonin, in his letter titled "Thus I Heard," writes that "although I may not be worthy of this teaching, I expound it because the time is right" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, pp. 247-8). Nichiren Daishonin created the time himself — that is, made the time right — by first deciding in 1253 to share Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with others.

Over the last 10 years, one thing among many that our voyage has taught us is that it is also up to us to create the time — make the time right.

Recently I read David S. Reynolds' *Walt Whitman's America*, in which he argues that Whitman is another person who created the time. Whitman liberated the poetic line, wrote about sex, showed that all people are equal and brought poetry to the common people of

America and the world — all revolutionary ideas in the 1800s.

Whitman changed the way people think and thus changed the world. In "Arise" President Ikeda calls us "the Whitmans of kosen-rufu," expressing his hope that we be similarly progressive in our lives and our kosen-rufu activities. *Progress, progressive, progressiveness* — these words appear many times in his poem, asking us to create the time.

This Buddhism also teaches how we can create the time at any time. President Ikeda explains the phrase in the Lotus Sutra "At that time..." in this way: "'That time' is the moment you resolve from the depths of your heart: 'Now I will stand up and fight!' From that instant your destiny changes. Your life develops. History begins" (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p.33).

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the American kosen-rufu movement — after 10 years of great change in our organization and our lives. It is a time to look toward the next 10 years, toward the next century and all the time yet to come. ■

WINNING IN LIFE: THE BASICS OF THE PRACTICE OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

Knowing a Benefit When You Have One

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

At a recent kosen-rufu gongyo, SGI-USA Senior Vice General Director Danny Nagashima shared a moving experience of his mother's death last year. It was emotional, but he made it warm and funny, too. An earlier experience that night from a headquarters member, also moving, was as well about his mother's death. So in the middle of his experience, Danny suddenly asked, "This meeting has too many experiences about death, doesn't it?"

Everyone laughed. You wouldn't think experiences about death could be so encouraging — but both experiences had clearly shown the benefit of this practice manifested in the two mothers' states of life at the time of death and how both families dealt with their grief.

But how could death ever be a benefit? Wouldn't a benefit be if no one ever got sick and everyone lived forever? This raises the question: What is a benefit anyhow?

Nichiren Daishonin writes in "The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," "*Ku of kudoku* [benefit] means happiness" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). He also says that "*ku* means to extinguish evil and *doku* means to bring forth good"

(*ibid.*). While there's nothing wrong with seeing benefit in a down-to-earth way — like the material benefits we get from the practice — Nichiren Daishonin says true benefit is extinguishing evil in our lives.

In other words, the Daishonin teaches that we should rid ourselves of the inner weaknesses that hold us back in life.

Former SGI-USA Vice Youth Division Chief Robert Uruma's inner weakness was not studying. "Have you ever heard of Japanese high school baseball tournaments?" he asks. "Baseball is a crazy sport there. And people who play baseball in high school in Japan just do not study. I was one of them. I was a very bad student — the worst."

After high school, Robert went to a technical college for aircraft engineering, but never having studied before he just did not know how to. He was about to drop out when his Soka Gakkai leader encouraged him to start chanting seriously, doing gongyo regularly and of course studying a lot. On the next exam he was No. 3 in his class. "When I graduated from the college I was the No. 1 stu-

dent!" he remembers.

Temporary benefits, like being No. 1 in class, are called conspicuous benefits. They're nice, but they don't last forever. The more lasting benefits, like learning

how to study — or learning how to do anything that you hate to but really need to — are called inconspicuous benefits.

SGI-USA Youth Division Advisor Melanie Merians' weakness was depression. At the time she started practicing, she would often lapse into deep depression. "Over the years, through practicing," she now says, "I honestly don't feel I suffer from depression anymore. I used

to get into a depression for two months; then it kind of shrunk to three weeks, then a week. Now it's frankly like a couple of hours or even a couple of minutes."

This kind of true Buddhist benefit, this satisfaction found in overcoming our weaknesses, is something we can't necessarily see. Nevertheless, to those who experience it, this feeling will always be something tangible. Perhaps the best things in the long course of life are feelings like these. ■

*The more
lasting
benefits are
called
inconspicuous
benefits.*

By SHIN YATOMI

YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE
CHIEF

LEARNING FROM SHIJO KINGO — 2

Achieve the Seemingly Impossible

Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other. Then, just as the sutra says, "All enemies are crushed." These golden words will never prove false. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246)

In this letter, dated Oct. 23, 1279, Nichiren expresses his heartfelt delight in hearing of Kingo's survival in an ambush laid by his enemies. He explains that Kingo survived because of his strong faith and good fortune. Then he teaches Kingo that he should first use "the strategy of the Lotus Sutra" to be victorious in any situation.

The strategy of the Lotus Sutra is our faith in the Gohonzon. When we face an obstacle, we must first pray to the Gohonzon to tap the wisdom, strength and good fortune with which to

win in our challenges. SGI President Ikeda once said:

We must pray and make efforts. Then it is important to have the unshakable confidence to leave everything else to the Gohonzon. When we genuinely devote ourselves to the Mystic Law, we can bring forth infinite wisdom and strength, making the impossible possible.

In any case, our prayer is fundamental. When we resort to methodology, forgetting to pray first, we end up spinning our wheels and eventually coming to a deadlock.

When we encounter a difficult problem or situation for which there seems no solution, we must first decide that "I will overcome this problem" or "I will resolve this situation" and then pray earnestly to the Gohonzon. It is important to set aside all methodology and offer a resolute prayer first.

This is the strategy of the Lotus Sutra, that is, faith. As we chant daimoku in this way, we tap abundant wisdom from which to derive the best plan — as well as the powerful life force with which to put the plan into action.

Furthermore, as we exert our ingenuity and make further efforts toward the problem's resolution, people and things in our environment will come to our aid; this is the meaning of what Buddhism calls the protection of the Buddhist gods. As a result, we can make things that seemed impossible before become possible now.

When a crisis arises, instead of reacting with "I'm in trouble! What should I do?" we must first go to the Gohonzon with the attitude that "I'm in trouble! I'll pray to the Gohonzon!" Although we may

wish to overcome an obstacle, if we immediately resort to methodology, our efforts often become futile.

Buddhism explains that all the causes of our suffering lie within our lives, as do our solutions. When we begin everything with our prayer to the Gohonzon, we are seeking a solution to our problem within. But when we resort only to methodology, we are seeking a solution outside — a mistaken view of life leading us to further confusion and suffering.

SGI President Ikeda once stated, "By doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, we allow our supreme wisdom to shine forth and we walk along the path toward victory in life." Our intellect may be limited, but, at the same time, all of us are intrinsically endowed with unlimited wisdom.

The strategy of the Lotus Sutra is the key to free our innate Buddha wisdom, so that we may win in seemingly impossible circumstances. ❖

It's Up to Us To Redream a World of Peace

YMD VOICES

By CRAIG GREEN

LOS ANGELES

Toward the beginning of each year, we begin to see images and hear speeches about world peace. I wonder: What

would it be like if we lived in a safe and harmonious world? What would it be like to live in a world where there was peace? With less than 1,500 days left before the beginning of the next millennium, what can be done to bring about such a change? What can we do to ensure that the next century — the next millenium — is a peaceful one? "The only way to create

peace is to prepare for peace," SGI President Ikeda recently wrote. "The only way to establish the garden of peace is to plant the seeds of peace."

Peace is a process of understanding ourselves, appreciating others and striving to create an environment where people can live in harmony. We must understand that the establishment of world peace is up to us.

It is not up to the world's political officials and military advisors. It is not up to the world's stock markets, conglomerates and financial wizards. It is up to the common people and our everyday dreams.

Ben Okri, a Nigerian author, writes in *The Famished Road*: "We must look at the world with new eyes. We must look at ourselves differently. We are freer

than we think. We haven't begun to live yet. The man whose light has come on in his head, in his dormant sun, can never be kept down or defeated. We can redream this world and make the dream real."

If, toward the next century, those of us in the SGI, the body, move toward peace, the world we live in, the shadow, will have no choice but to do the same. ❖



DO YOU HAVE IDEAS

FOR THE "YMD PAGES"?

Comments?
Photos of your activities?

Send them to the World Tribune
c/o Jeff Farr

Commitment Generates Support

One young conductor's refusal to give up on his dream results
in music supplies for South Africa

YMD EXPERIENCE

By HENRY MOODIE
NEW YORK

I grew up in South Africa, where I studied music ever since I was a child. But one of the things I never had in all my music classes at school was records or a record player.

When I was old enough to start borrowing records from the public library, I would take home as many as I could. I lost myself in different worlds of music — especially opera.

I had the great fortune to come to the United States two-and-a-half years ago to study with a great conducting teacher at the Juilliard School. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, near the Juilliard, became one of my favorite hangouts. And one of my favorite events there is their annual sale of secondhand books and records.

Each year, I would see the quantity of stock left over after

the sale and think to myself how much I would love to send it all back to South Africa. This was a daydream in the beginning, and I thought it would be impossible to organize.

Well, I'm happy to report that last December an air delivery was made to Johannesburg of 12,000 records and approximately 2,000 books and copies of sheet music. When I chanted daimoku and took action based upon my desire, the protective forces came to my assistance. I chanted, telephoned, spoke, had meetings, faxed, pleaded, negotiated — then started the whole cycle over again — and finally achieved a victory.

In the end I managed to rally the assistance of the Public Library for the Performing Arts, South African Airways, the media in South Africa — *The Cape Times* covered the story — and various foundations and sponsors.

I also learned that obstacles will arise in the most unexpected places. Sometimes the greatest obstacles come from within oneself or one's sur-

roundings. For instance, I had asked a friend, a fellow member, to help out at the crucial last stage of the project — and we disagreed on many things. But I was determined that we would not be defeated.

In any case, the materials are now being distributed to about 400 schools in South Africa. It is my fervent prayer that a new generation of musical leadership for my country will arise based on the distribution of these materials.

In "On the Buddha's Behavior," we learn of the Daishonin's unwavering determination even in the face of the severest obstacles. On his way to be executed at Tatsunokuchi, Nichiren tells his disciple Shijo Kingo: "Tonight, I go to be beheaded. This wish I have cherished these many years" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 181). I have often wondered about this particular quote. Now I realize that Nichiren was expressing how he was prepared to make the biggest sacrifice ever. By making that commitment to the Lotus Sutra, the universe came



Henry Moodie takes action for his homeland, South Africa.

to his assistance.

The lesson for me is that when I made the commitment to do what I thought was impossible with this project, the forces of the universe also came to my assistance. I believe that it was only with that

sort of fierce determination — and my daimoku coupled with action — that I achieved my goal. I am determined to continue our mission toward creating world peace using every opportunity — possible or impossible. ❖

YOUNG DAISAKU (2)

Questions About Life and Death

By KEN SARAGOSA
PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL CHIEF

Daisaku Ikeda spent his childhood in a part of Tokyo called Kojijya. The area has since been filled with concrete, and the shores of Tokyo Bay that Ikeda grew up along have been filled in with land. "Before the area became a heavy industry zone," Ikeda writes, "the entire span of the Omori coastline looked like a fishing village. There was no smog. The water in Tokyo Bay was clear blue" (*My Recollections*, pp. 1-2).

His childhood, however, was not "clear blue." The once prosperous family business fell on hard times — and in 1935, when Ikeda was in the second grade, his father, who had long suffered from rheumatism, became bedridden. Except for brief periods of remission, Nenokichi spent most of the rest of his life in bed.

Eight children, a bedridden father, a declining family business and an economy stretched almost to breaking — these circumstances brought the Ikeda family to its knees. But Ikeda remembers the strength and per-

severance his parents showed amidst such adversity.

Mrs. Ikeda bore the burden of sustaining the family business and raising the children almost single-handedly. "She never took a holiday," Ikeda writes. "She did her utmost to serve her incredibly obstinate husband.... She had eight children of her own, seven boys and a girl. On top of that she looked after two children of relatives. As though she hadn't enough to do around the house, she did her share of the chores in our family business" (*ibid.*, p. 7).

By the time Daisaku was 10, the Japanese military had begun inducting his brothers so he also bore an increasing share of the family's burden. His daily routine began at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., when he would help harvest seaweed for the family business. Then he began his paper route, which brought in a few extra yen

each month for the family, followed by school. After classes, he came home to clean seaweed and then delivered the evening newspapers. This was his routine for three years.

Poverty, however, was not the only factor in young Ikeda's life. Perhaps even more central to his later views was that he was plagued by illness. Doctors' visits and medication were a constant feature of his youth and though they drained the already meager family resources, his parents were determined to do whatever they could to help their son. The extent of Daisaku's illness would become clearer as he grew older, for when he was a teenager he was told that he would die within a few years.

But even before this diagnosis, Daisaku spent a great deal of time pondering death: "The fact that questions about life and

death never left my mind during my youthful years apparently had, as you may well imagine, some connection with the truth that I was constantly in poor health. As I awakened from a nightmare, drenched in sweat, I found myself wondering, 'What happens to people after they die?' (*ibid.*, p. 14).

Despite these facts, however, Ichi tried to instill in her son an optimistic, hopeful attitude. It was not only the hardships Daisaku experienced that enabled him later to appreciate and understand the struggles of others, but the love and attention his mother showed him — even when circumstances appeared bleakest. It is clearly due to the memory of all this that Ikeda holds mothers, especially those women who must bear alone the burden of sustaining a family, in such special esteem. ❖

'I Knew Things Would Get Better'

By CAROL CHASTANG

WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

Vernon Baker said that as a young first lieutenant during World War II, he had a job to do and he did it. Being honored for it never occurred to him. On the morning of April 5, 1945, Baker led 25 American soldiers to an Italian hillside castle occupied by enemy forces. He destroyed four machine gun posts, killed nine German soldiers and drew enemy fire to enable his comrades' escape.

When he received the Medal of Honor from President Clinton on Jan. 13, Vernon Baker of St. Maries, Idaho, gave a verbal salute to the six other honorees who did not live to share this moment of glory. "The

only thing that I can say to those that are not here with me is thank you, fellas, well done," said Baker, who at age 77 became the first and only living black man to receive the nation's highest award for bravery during World War II. It was not until 1993 that Army investigators responded to requests from

In spite of everything, he maintained his dignity and did his job.

black veterans and examined army records; the climate of racism in America, they concluded, was the reason the extraordinary heroics of these men were ignored for so long.

After the ceremony, Baker told *The New York Times* that he was an angry young man 50 years ago. He was serving in a segregated army for a country that denied rights to millions of its citizens. Yet in spite of everything, he maintained his dignity and did his job.

"My personal thoughts were that I knew things would get better," he said. "And I'm glad to say that I'm here to see it." **WT**



KRT

Blacks receive Medal of Honor for WWII

Retired Lt. Vernon Baker becomes the first and only living black man to receive the Medal of Honor for service in WWII. Six others will be awarded the medal posthumously.

Many served, none honored

■ 1.7 million African-Americans served in WWII (10% of total troops); 432 Medals of Honor awarded, but none to blacks

■ Study by military historians showed racism prevented blacks from being honored

Posthumous recipients

- Staff Sgt. Edward A. Carter Jr., Los Angeles
- 1st Lt. Charles L. Thomas, Detroit
- Pvt. George Watson, Birmingham, Ala.
- 1st Lt. John R. Fox, Boston
- Pfc. Willy F. James Jr., Kansas City, Kan.
- Staff Sgt. Ruben Rivers, Tecumseh, Okla.



KRT

Vernon Baker (above center) in the East Room of the White House on Jan. 13, during a ceremony where he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Seven World War II veterans, of whom Baker is the only still alive, became the first black soldiers of that conflict to receive the award.



for Peace

Friends



SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION

FEBRUARY 7, 1997

(Right) Philadelphia boys and girls spend a day at the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. (Below) Anna and Danny Kaufman.



Boys and Girls Explore 'Family Matters' at Art Museum

By ANNE MARTIN

Dec. 22, Philadelphia

The Boys and Girls Group met today at the Philadelphia Community Center to do gongyo led by Danny Kaufman.

They then carpooled to the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. There was a special exhibition they were going to see, "Family Matters."

The paintings and sculpture in the exhibition were all by

members of artistic families: fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, entire families, husbands and wives, and more.

Anna Kaufman, who is 6 years old, said she enjoyed drawing pictures and eating the snacks, and she never wanted

to leave!

Danny Kaufman, who is 9 years old, enjoyed drawing families of monsters. He also said he liked the statues in the snack room. He said he was reminded of "how important my family is to me."

FP

Seattle Children Greet Everyone in the New Year

By TOM MEYER

Jan. 6, Seattle

After a four-day delay caused by record snowfalls and low temperatures, the members of Seattle Territories #1, #2 and #4 met today at the Seattle Culture Center to celebrate New Year's Day 1997.

As more than 900 members filled the Ikeda Auditorium, the Boys and Girls Group met together in the small Gohonzon room and did a vigorous A and C gongyo led by one of the kids. Then they prepared a surprise presentation for the large meet-

ing. As the Boys and Girls Group topic for January is diversity, the group had decided to offer New Year's greetings in several different languages.

The kids excitedly practiced their greetings and then headed for the auditorium. When their time arrived, the 40 boys and girls went up on stage; then 11 individually wished everyone "Happy New Year" in French, Spanish, Czech, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Italian, German and Vietnamese. The whole group then vigorously shouted "Happy New Year" in English as 128 helium-filled, SGI-colored balloons



were released from just below the stage in front of them.

Everyone was totally surprised and impressed by this diverse and heartfelt New Year's greeting from the Boys and Girls Group.

These young children are the future of the kosen-rufu movement in the Seattle Joint Territory. And they successfully began the new year by learning their happy greetings in some of the many languages of the SGI.

FP

Joey Brawer-Smith

Arlington, Va.

I am 8 years old. Last night I chanted for 15 minutes on the way to bowling. I got a great game. I made 102 on the first game.



Chris Jakob

St. Charles, Ill.

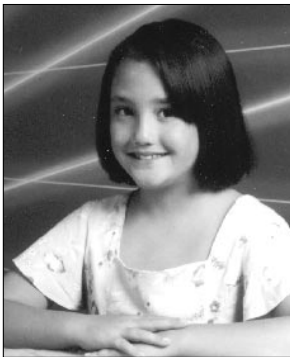
I am 10 years old. I was at school and our teacher had this play on videotape. Somebody lost it so we had to do it over again. The main character was John Henry and I really, really wanted to be that character. So I started chanting and, hey, I got the part.

P.S. I used to think chanting didn't work, but now I think it's pretty neat.



Jackie Estrella

San Francisco



Hi! I am 8 years old. I love to chant. When I first got involved in chanting my mom did slow gongyo with me. When I was little we did Nam-myoho-renge-kyo together. Me and my mom got in fights a lot but we chanted 5 minutes every day and it worked!!!! So that's my story about chanting that comes to tell you that chanting is GREAT!!!



chanting that comes to tell you that chanting is GREAT!!!

Lisa Utsumi

Long Island, N.Y.



Hi! I am 12 years old. This past summer, in August, I got a letter from an organization called the People to People Student Ambassador Program. It is a program that sends children grades 6-12 to different countries in the world. Being a 6th grader meant that I would be going to the

American Southwest, which consists of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona.

But in order to be accepted, I had to go to an interview and get three letters of recommendation. I got two of my letters of recommendation from my 4th and 5th grade teachers. The third I got from Diana McCray, the SGI's Long Island Headquarters leader.

The hard part was the interview. My parents and I chanted and chanted. Finally the day of the interview arrived. I was feeling pretty confident when I went in. When I came out, I felt even more confident.

The next day I got a phone call. YES! I was accepted! My chanting had finally paid off. This experience is showing actual proof of the Gohonzon's power and why I am practicing.



Sarah Kakusho

Fort Myers, Fla.



Sarah (left) and her sister, Erica.

I am 9 years old. I go to Edison Park Elementary School. I am in what they call the Major Work Area, which is a gifted program for very bright children. I'm in the third grade.

I chanted for good grades and I get 100's on my spelling tests. I chanted for a little sister, and now I have one. This



last Jun, I and my sister, Erica, got to meet SGI President Ikeda with all the other boys and girls. I felt very happy and excited to meet with him. I think he's a great president because he's funny. He told us always to take care of our moms first and then our dads second. This is a poem that I wrote:

THE TREE

I once had a tree.
Who loved my knee.
His mouth was stuck in the ground.
So he couldn't make a sound.
But he was happy
Under the sky.
He didn't even want to die.

"Friends for Peace" wishes to thank everyone who contributed to this issue for their assistance and support. Thanks also to Barbara Murphy and Diane Lauble of Chicago for designing the figures in the "Friends for Peace" nameplate. Please send us your experience (around 150 words), your comments, your questions or your news article to: "Friends for Peace," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

An Experience by Leilani and Jennifer McIlraith, Los Angeles

Our  Story  About  Lucy

Leilani: Three years ago, we had to put our dog, Nana, to sleep, because of her sickness. When we found out what had happened to her, we were so sad and cried. The whole family chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for Nana, so she will be at peace.

We missed her so much and ever since then, we've been wanting to have another dog. But, our mom says "NO!" To have a dog requires lot of work and responsibility, and to have a dog is like having another baby, and she didn't have enough time.

She knew that she is the one who will end up taking care of the dog. So, no matter how much we begged her, the answer was always "N-O, NO!"

Especially, last year we've begged her a lot, but she was stubborn.

Jennifer: On one early December day, I did a whole evening gongyo with my mom and the next morning, when my mom was taking me to school, we saw a stray dog in our neighbor's yard.

When she came home, the dog was in our driveway looking right at my mom. When my mom asked this dog if she was lost, the dog was so happy and came running up to her, jumping up and down, wagging her tail. Mom told the dog, "NO JUMPING, SIT!" The dog obeyed her command and sat. My mom

thought, "Wow, she is pretty smart, cute and well trained." (Remember, Mom is the one

Mom that she was there.

Leilani: Our dad and I were sick

our mom.

Finally, our dad called the SPCA. They said to bring the dog in, in case its owner may be looking for her. They said if no one claims her and if we want the dog, we have the first choice of keeping her.

Well, our mom told us we need to chant a lot if we want this dog; since she is a well-trained, well-behaved dog, someone must be looking for this dog.

But if no one claims this dog, we can have her on one condition — we have to take care of this dog; take her for walks, feed her, pick up her mess and, of course, pick up our mess. Then we may keep the dog. We both started to chant that no one would claim her and our mom would say "YES."


Jennifer: It was the longest week and a half. No one claimed her and she became our dog. We have named her Lucy.

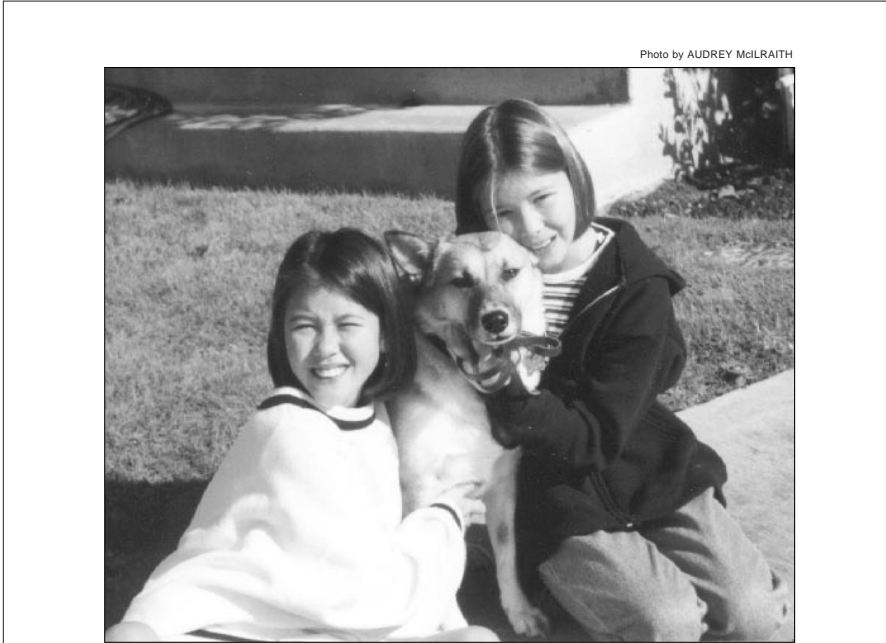
She was already house-broken, she won't beg for food and she won't eat unless she is given a command to do so.


She is well behaved and a little too friendly, but she can be a watch dog, too.

She came to us and decided to stay — she chose us!!

Lucy found our mom and she loves our mom and, best of all, our mom loves Lucy.

Leilani: Lucy is a wonderful part of our family. 



On one early December day,
I did a whole evening gongyo
with my mom, and the next morning,
when my mom was taking me to school,
we saw a stray dog in our neighbor's
yard. — Jennifer 

that needs to be convinced...)

The dog had a collar but no tags. She left the dog on the porch and came inside to get ready for work. The dog would bark from time to time to remind

at home that day, so I would peek through the window to check on the dog after Mom left for work. The dog sent our mom off to work from the porch and sat there for hours, waiting for

What a Show!

Boys and girls in Los Angeles #3 Joint Territory hold a Kickoff Meeting and Variety Show, Jan. 12, at the SGI-USA Headquarters Annex in Santa Monica, Calif. (Right) An exhibit of arts and crafts by children is displayed in the lobby.



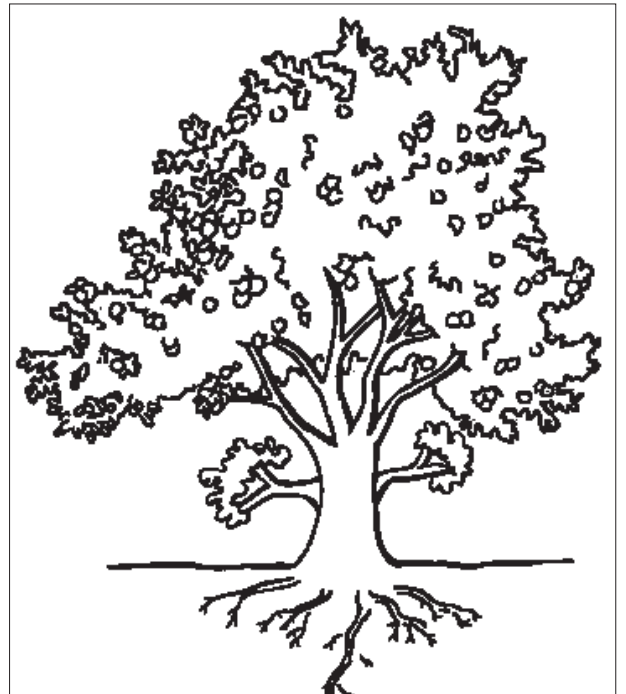
Look!

The Tree Is Like Me!

We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Trees breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen. We need one another to breathe!

In the drawing at the bottom, you can see that our lungs look like trees when you hold the page upside down and you can draw some leaves on the the ends of the "branches." In the picture of the tree, draw your face among the leaves.

(Reprinted with permission from "The Magical City Forest," published by the TreePeople, Beverly Hills, Calif.)



A Daimoku Chart For You

Connect one dot (in order) each day that you reach your daimoku goal.

My daimoku goal is _____ minutes each day.

