

Happy New Year!

World Tribune

No. 3120

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 1, 1997

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YMD PAGES

Two new series debut: 'Young Daisaku' and 'Learning from Shijo Kingo.'

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Photo by KIRK CONDYLES



A sense of mission to teach children about their practice of Buddhism has been developing in the SGI-USA.

New Study Curriculum for Children To Begin This Year

By WENDY DeORE

DALLAS BUREAU CHIEF

Jan. 1

One day the 5-year-old son of a Dallas member came home from school trembling and full of wide-eyed questions. Someone had asked him: "Do you believe in God? 'Cause if you don't, you're going to hell!"

The boy's mother struggled for an explanation, a struggle that put her squarely in front of the Gohonzon — and ultimately resulted

in the development of a study curriculum for children at the Dallas Culture Center last summer. This member's efforts were met with enthusiasm and a sense of relief by others whose children were having similar experiences.

In fact, a sense of urgency and mission that we must teach our children to understand and speak with confidence about their practice of Buddhism has been developing over the past several years throughout the SGI-USA,

from the grassroots up. The combined efforts of concerned members has resulted in an exciting new study curriculum for the Boys and Girls Group, which is now available nationwide.

Spearheaded by Palma Odano, one of the national coordinators for the Boys and Girls Group, and supported with feedback from Boys and Girls Group representatives in every joint

PLEASE SEE BOYS & GIRLS, 5

SGI President's New Year's Poems

The following waka (poems) by SGI President Ikeda to commemorate the new year appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun*. (See page 3 for another New Year's poem.)

*Stand courageously
Advance boldly
In the great undertaking
to spread the Law
Assured of the protection
Of the Buddhas of the
three existences.*

...

*The unity of comrades
Ten million strong
Standing proudly
Many in body, but one in
mind
Is eternally indestructible.*

...

*Brilliant shines the
pledge
We made together
In the infinite past
Noble comrades in faith
Who have emerged from
the earth.*

— January 1

SGI President Discusses Courage of Plymouth's Pilgrims

COURTESY SGI NEWSLETTER

Tokyo, Nov. 22

"If the core people of a group are brave, responsible and considerate of others, then the entire group will without fail be victorious," SGI President Ikeda said today at the first session of an all-Japan representatives conference. To emphasize this point, the SGI leader spoke of the 102 Pilgrims who, in 1620, braved a perilous 66-day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from England to Amer-

ica aboard the Mayflower, a small three-masted cargo ship.

They then established the first permanent colony at what is today Plymouth, Mass. One-third of the travelers were Puritans seeking religious freedom in the New World.

Mr. Ikeda explained that most of the settlers came from small villages and were not among the socially elite. They were instead ordinary people with little or no status.

Their leader was 30-year-old William Bradford, who eventu-

ally became the colony's governor, serving a total of 31 terms. Like the other Pilgrims, he was neither a cleric nor college-educated. He was, however, a man of unshakable character — a trait, the SGI leader said, Bradford developed by challenging a host of obstacles from early childhood.

Mr. Ikeda asserted that the SGI is also supported by ordinary people. On a daily basis, with their feet firmly on the ground, they face numerous difficulties and triumph over them.

The Pilgrims suffered untold privations, not the least of which was exposure to an inhospitable environment, cold and disease. As a result, only half of them survived the first six months. While constantly encouraging one another, they fought so desperately to survive that they didn't even have the luxury to complain.

Noting that opinion remains divided on the historical significance of that first colony, Mr.

PLEASE SEE PLYMOUTH, 4

? QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *What was your greatest victory in 1996 and what is your determination for 1997?*

I accepted the opportunity to be a district men's division leader because last year started out for me as one of comfortable complacency. My 10-plus years of practice had hit a plateau. I had been active but was not pulling forward, so I accepted this responsibility. The new direction of the organization has helped me to recommit myself to the growth of the district and to reaching out to the community to build those bridges of friendship.

—CHUCK TURNER, Louisville, Ky.



My greatest victory this year (and it was a long time coming) was that I finally got tired of mistreating myself and of living in denial. I began to truly listen to my heart. Consequently, I committed to a lifelong dream of mine — to succeed as an actor. I joined a very challenging acting class and attracted the attention of some prominent people in my field. I have never felt this focused and hopeful, and I'm determined that 1997 be a year of conspicuous breakthrough in which I create roles in film and television that ultimately shine light on the human condition.

—RICHARD CASSELMAN, West Hollywood, Calif.



I successfully passed the Elementary Exam given this year by the SGI-USA. That was truly a wonderful thing for me. I was fortunate and had several other victories in 1996: retiring as a teacher from the state of Louisiana after 30 years; realizing a lifelong dream to move to the state of Florida; there being accepted as a middle school classroom teacher; and thus not having to give up one of my greatest loves, teaching children.

My determination in 1997 is to do

more daimoku, concentrate on gongyo and to increase my faith, study and practice. I plan to use my talents as a teacher to advance the cause of kosen-rufu and try to create value.

—JOSEPH J. NECTOUX, Lake Mary, Fla.



My greatest victory in 1996 was leaving my job of 10-and-a-half years with the same company and moving into a new career in non-profit work. I felt my work in my prior job to be totally devoid of any real joy, especially since it wasn't contributing to kosen-rufu. It was very scary to move into a field where I have little experience and where the pay is less. My confidence in the Gohonzon combined with my passion for helping people enabled me to face my fears and overcome my karma. I now love my new job. I love it!

—MINA RHODEN, Marin County, Calif.



My 1996 determination was to have friendship with my only sister. After many years of painful separation, I was able to acknowledge and take responsibility for past actions that caused her to suffer and severed our relationship. I also overcame my judgmental attitude toward her lifestyle, and I finally apologized to her with hope for reconciliation. Though I have yet to receive her response (we've been writing), I feel the victory of my human revolution through the transformational power of the Gohonzon. This has been my greatest victory.

—REBECCA TOROSIAN, New York

One very satisfying victory for me in 1996 was to rid myself of a serious personal enemy: television. In January I decided

that I should be able to defeat this depression-enhancer once and for all. Through chanting and action, I can confidently state that I no longer am remotely interested in television. Not only do I feel better, I have more time for worthwhile things. As a Buddhist and long-time business owner, time is a precious commodity. In 1997, I intend to use it wisely.

—ERIC J. THOMPSON, Portland, Ore.



My greatest victory was overcoming breast cancer: discovering the lump by accident, getting a mammogram that showed nothing, but having the Buddha wisdom to proceed. Some of the most significant guidance I received: "You must overcome this victoriously since we can be victorious in both life and death and show the validity of this practice with confidence that no prayer goes unanswered." In the end, the lymph nodes were clear and no chemotherapy was necessary, only radiation treatments. Through daimoku, and from my leaders and friends, I learned what it means to fight at that crucial moment, and I am now fully recovered.

—IRIS HOFFMAN, Woodland Hills, Calif.



My greatest victory was receiving the Gohonzon on Sept. 13. I first encountered the practice almost three years ago, but it wasn't until the end of 1995 that I decided to become a member. It seemed that obstacle after obstacle arose in my pursuit to join the organization. Through sheer determination and lots of daimoku (along

with the support of many wonderful members), I proudly received the Gohonzon along with other members.

As 1997 approaches, I have determined to develop my faith and practice and make them as strong as they can be.

—MICKY PIZARRO, New York

I am a 19-year-old sophomore at Iowa State University and have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for just under a year. My greatest victory of the past year was overcoming, through Buddhist practice, the break-up of a long-term relationship. I am determined to practice and study strongly throughout the coming year, following the guidance of SGI President Ikeda to never give up, no matter what. I am also determined to build the SGI-USA on my campus and to share the benefits of this faith with everyone I know, advancing toward the dawn of the new century together.

—RYAN SCHWARTZ, Ames, Iowa



My resolution for 1996 was to become really rich. My greatest victory was that, in spite of not making my goal, I continued to fight my devils. (Sort of like working without a paycheck!) I had to spend a lot of money on health — mine, my son's, my mother's and my car's. Plus a lifelong friend died, and my best friend in faith moved 3,000 miles away. Through it all, I gave 100 percent of myself to activities in the SGI, my family and community. I cut expenses in creative ways, and I continued to strive for a cheerful attitude and victory at all times. Not giving up under the circumstances was a victory!

—NATALIE BLISS, Philadelphia



Thanks to all who responded!

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

'What does it mean to you to live as a Buddhist?'

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

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SGI President Ikeda's New Year's Poem

Dawn's Light: Toward an Age of Buddhist Renaissance

*A new first morning!
In every language of the world,
the new year is celebrated.
From friends in 128 countries
benedictions can be heard.*

*Radiant, on the horizon of the
century — the sun,
the Buddhist Renaissance proclaims
the dawn
as did that other Renaissance
create a new spiritual kingdom
and augur the way to a new world.*

*The new world's theme —
the human being and the humane self.*

*Find now the bronzed ideal for the
rebirth
of those who would create value
in the person and in the thought
of the Soka Gakkai's first president.*

*Find in Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
a great teacher for humanity,
the light that is the human being,
the brilliance that is the human self.*

*Find in his thought education,
not for war but for the individual
and peace,
the light of his originality
and the brilliance of his faith.
He alone did not retreat,*

*did not retrace a single step.
Standing firm against
totalitarians —
the many who would sacrifice the
one —
he eyed the multiplying armies and
believed,
believed in the advent of a human
age.*

*Awakened to human rights, to
liberty,
never stooping to the varied uses of
evil power,
a new populism flexes
unprecedented strength
heralding an era with the people as
protagonists:
Hope marches forward in a new
Renaissance.*

*My mentor, Josei Toda, left his
words,
"Live your own life."
Shakyamuni Buddha also told us to
live after his death
true to ourselves and the Law he
taught us.
"Rather one lion than a thousand
sheep,"
said Makiguchi.
Like a lone rock, unyielding, jutting
out from the sea,
meet the turbulent vortices of the*

*world
and pierce them through, living as
you believe,
polishing that which is most truly
you.*

*The spiritual victory over
barbarism —
that is Renaissance.
The power residing within revealed
to breach the walls of oppression
imposed from without —
this is one's human revolution
and the true meaning of
Renaissance.*

*Rock-solid individuals:
They are a bastion against the
barbaric
and a bridge from Buddhism to the
mundane.*

*The shadows cast by chaos
when evil dresses itself as justice
are deep,
but not a thing to dread
in the light of Emerson's words,
"Pythagoras was misunderstood,
and Socrates, and Jesus,
and Luther,... Copernicus,...
Galileo,....
To be great is to be misunderstood."*

*To let one's true self shine and, for
that,*



SGI President Daisaku Ikeda

*to discover one's happiness
in the happiness of others;
spreading the joy of the
bodhisattva's way,
let us join forces
to shoulder the way a few steps
forward
toward the new century.*

*Building bridges of thought,
to sublimate into brotherly love the
differences
among people's places and beliefs
that this land, that region may
flourish —
throughout the world
I too will continue this task
and then
the renascent century will open wide
in ravishing splendor.*

— January 1

GENERAL DIRECTOR FRED M. ZAITSU

What Is The Best Way For Us To Grow?

My heartiest wishes for a happy and healthy new year! I am looking forward to working with you as we individually and collectively make important strides this year. In the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century I hope each of us will grow in faith and expand our lives.

I believe one of the most important meanings of *advancement* is to resolve to grow as human beings. Philosophers agree that the spirit to continually learn, expand our viewpoints and polish our characters leads to a life of satisfaction and fulfillment.

What is the best way for us to grow? Buddhism teaches that a life of contributing to others is the noblest and, in the end, happiest life. As SGI President Ikeda says, "To do, create, or contribute something that benefits others, society and ourselves, and to dedicate ourselves as long as we live to that challenge — that is a life of true

satisfaction, a life of value."

On the other hand, when we focus only on our own problems, it is easy to become discouraged and lose the life force to overcome them. To expand our lives to care about others as if they were our own children, is the way of the bodhisattva, the loftiest way of life.

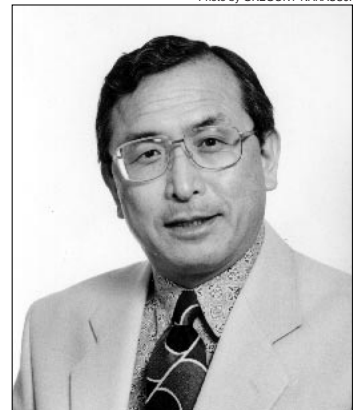
This kind of growth can be painful. Fortunately, we all practice in an organization full of people willing to help us along the way. And nowhere is this love and support more evident than in the districts. The relationships formed among district members are some of the most beautiful and lasting ones I know of.

The district is at the heart of our organization. It is here that we can learn to love and care for others. Here we learn a compassionate spirit that we can take back with us to school, work or our families. I hope that this year, more than ever, the members of each

division will make the district their top priority.

Relationships aren't always smooth within the district, however, for a variety of reasons. One is our diversity, which will be one of our top challenges this year. I and the national divisional chiefs will be meeting monthly with the Diversity Committee formed last year. I hope that each of us can begin or continue to learn about racial, ethnic and lifestyle issues in our areas through dialogue. To support that dialogue, this issue of the *World Tribune* contains a special pullout reprinting some of my thoughts based on President Ikeda's view of diversity. With strong prayer, mutual respect, courage and honesty, the SGI-USA must lead the way in supporting diversity.

The SGI-USA is the hope of our nation. Each of you is a precious Bodhisattva of the Earth, destined to bring the light of Nichiren Daishonin's



Fred M. Zaitzu

teachings to your communities. Based on our advancement as individuals, let us make this new year something special, always remembering President Ikeda's guidance that "a Buddha is somebody who continues to fight, continues to grow."

With my prayers for your health, happiness, prosperity and safety, I wish you the happiest of new years. ❧

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

The 'World Tribune' Makes a New Start

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

By **DAVE McNEILL**
MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 1

On behalf of the *World Tribune* staff, I'd like to wish all our readers a happy, healthy, prosperous and safe new year.

This Year of Advancement will be especially exciting for me as I become your newspaper's managing editor. Ted Morino, under whose leadership we've published over the past 11 years, will become the executive editor. Working closely with Ted, new Assistant Managing Editor Lisa Kirk and the other staff all under the direction of the publisher, Fred Zaitzu, I look forward to the challenge of producing a newspaper that continually meets and exceeds the readers' expectations.

A newspaper's soul lies in its relationship with the readers. Over the years, many people have told me how this "Experi-

ence" or that "Perspective" has moved them. The *World Tribune* does indeed have a crucial mission for our peace movement.

People have also pointed out the paper's shortcomings. I know there's no way that every article can please every person. But I'm determined that the paper's appeal will continue to expand, and I hope you'll help us do it. Your voices mean more than they ever have.

In fact, beginning with this issue, a special feature of your voices appears on page 2. We have other innovations in mind, too, and I hope you'll let us know how we do.

Not enough can be said about the behind-the-scenes dedication of the volunteer bureau chiefs and correspondents throughout the country. Without them, we'd have no paper. I'm honored and humbled to work with them all.



(L-r) Lisa Kirk, Ted Morino, Jeff Farr, Don Sanders, Dave McNeill, and Fred Zaitzu.

Our small staff is hard-working and devoted. We're happy to listen to you anytime, as are the

volunteer correspondents in your area.

Thank you for your continued

support over the years. May the new year see us all advancing in health and happiness. ❧

PLYMOUTH, FROM PAGE 1

COURTESY SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Nov. 22

"If the core people of a group are brave, responsible and considerate of others, then the entire group will without fail be victorious," SGI President Ikeda said today at the first session of an all-Japan representatives conference. To emphasize this point, the SGI leader spoke of the 102 Pilgrims who, in 1620, braved a perilous 66-day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from England to America aboard the *Mayflower*, a small three-masted cargo ship.

They then established the first permanent colony at what is today Plymouth, Mass. One-third of the travelers were Puritans seeking religious freedom in the New World.

Mr. Ikeda explained that most of the settlers came from small villages and were not among the socially elite. They were instead ordinary people with little or no status.

Their leader was 30-year-old William Bradford, who eventually became the colony's governor, serving a total of 31 terms. Like the other Pilgrims, he was neither a cleric nor college-educated. He was, however, a man of unshakable character — a trait, the SGI leader said, Bradford developed by challenging a host of obstacles from early childhood.

Mr. Ikeda asserted that the

SGI-USA STUDY GUIDELINE FOR 1997

Study Guidelines Adopted for 1997

While each member is encouraged to earnestly study SGI President Ikeda's speeches and other study series in our publications, the Study Department has established the following basic study programs for 1997 (as presented to and adopted by the December 1996 CEC).

1) Bi-monthly Goshō Study: We will continue to have a bi-monthly Goshō study. *Living Buddhism* (formerly *Seikyo Times*) will continue to publish selected Goshō passages and reference

material. Local organizations can determine how to use this material, for example, whether at large or small meetings.

2) Curriculum Study: Each joint territory will determine how to support and continue to provide study opportunities for members at each Study Department level (Entrance, Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced and Post Graduate).

3) General Lectures: General lectures are optional. They can be held as bi-monthly Goshō study meetings or periodically

throughout the year on any topic chosen by the joint territory.

4) Topics for Discussion: Each month, *Living Buddhism* will publish excerpts from President Ikeda's Goshō lecture series and additional reference material as "Topics for Discussion," which can be used to conduct dialogue at monthly discussion meetings.

5) Study Conference: A nationwide study coordinators conference is scheduled to be held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in March 1997, to discuss

the direction of the SGI-USA's study movement.

6) Entrance Exam: Subject to the outcome of discussions at the above-mentioned conference, an Entrance Exam may be held in the fall of 1997.

In this way, the Study Department will continue to seek to establish a solid study rhythm that is beneficial to each member's growth in faith and the organization's progress in its effort to expand the kosen-rufu movement in the United States. ❧

SGI President Talks With Russian Scholars

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Nov. 29

The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences bestowed an honorary membership upon SGI President Ikeda today at the Seikyo Shimbun Building.

Following the ceremony, Dr. Yuri A. Petrosyan and Dr. Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, director and researcher, respectively, of the institute's St. Petersburg chapter, held a lengthy discussion with Mr. Ikeda.

Dr. Petrosyan said that the people of Russia are now grappling with the most difficult challenge in their history. Empathizing with him, President Ikeda affirmed that no nation or race of people can avoid what Buddhism terms the "four sufferings" — birth, old age, sickness and death — or the "four kalpas" — formation, continuance, decline

and disintegration.

Expressing his conviction, though, that winter always turns into spring, the SGI leader said that despite its trying present circumstances, Russia will definitely open a new page of prosperity if its people do not give up.

When Mr. Ikeda asked Dr. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya what she found especially attractive

about the Lotus Sutra, which she is an authority on, she answered that it teaches how people can lead a more fulfilled life through developing themselves.

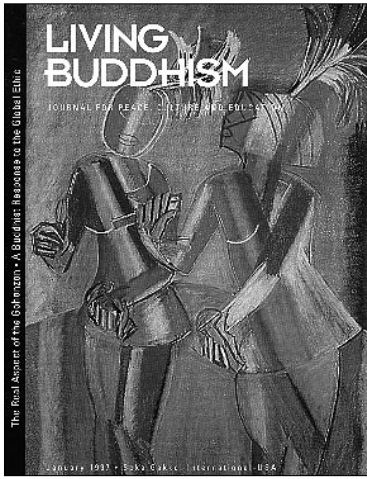
She also said that it expounds gender equality.

Mr. Ikeda agreed that the Lotus Sutra teaches the equality of all living beings and also honors individual differences.

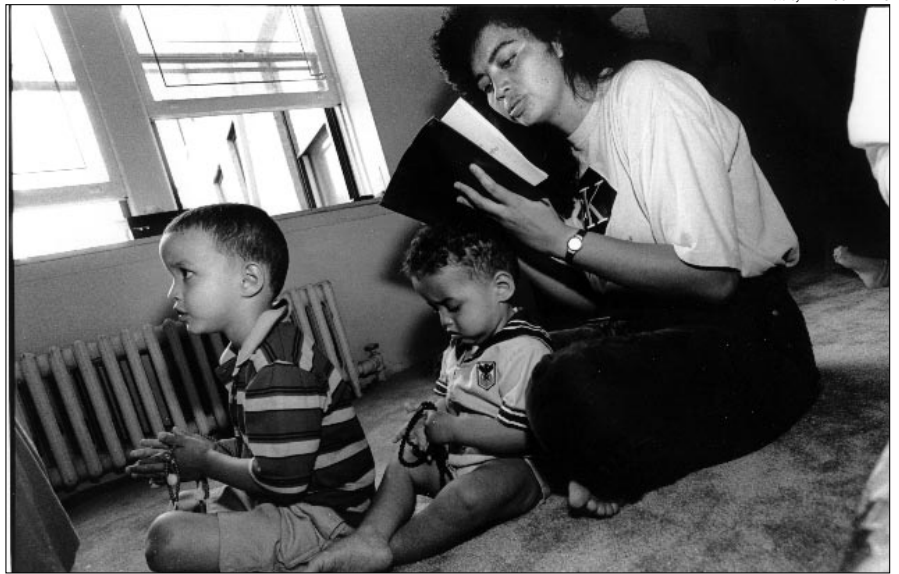
It offers a philosophy, he said, with which people of different races and cultures can, based on mutual respect, grow to understand how to live peacefully together. ❧

Mr. Ikeda discussed the equality taught in the Lotus Sutra.

Now Available!



The first issue of 'Living Buddhism' (formerly 'Seikyo Times') is now available, featuring BRC Executive Director Virginia Straus' perspective on the global ethic and the Goshō for February, 'The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon.'



To grow up as a Buddhist is a challenge that requires the support of others.

BOYS & GIRLS, FROM PAGE 1

territory, a suggested outline for study with plenty of support materials drawn from SGI President Ikeda's lectures, *The New Human Revolution* and the Goshō will be implemented beginning this month.

The outline and packets of information (which will be sent to the joint territories on a monthly basis) comprise a suggested, yet flexible, model to be utilized as best serves the needs of each area.

According to Mrs. Odano, each joint territory will have the opportunity to research a particular month's study focus and then develop the materials for the entire country.

Suggestions from the children are also being gathered and a request for their input will appear in the "Friends for Peace" pullout section, which will now appear monthly in the *World Tribune*.

Mrs. Odano and the national committee have been working steadily over the past year to complete the curriculum with two major challenges in mind. The first is to support the adults' efforts to make each child feel that he or she is a vital part of the community center and a treasured member of the organization.

"We can hardly blame the older youth who may not feel like being active," Mrs. Odano said, "if, as children growing up in the practice, they were primarily told to be quiet and stay out of the way." She emphasized President Ikeda's guidance to "speak to the adult" that exists within every child and to "never treat children casually or patronize them because of their young age."

The second major challenge for the committee is to find ways to help children understand their practice and develop confidence in speaking about their beliefs. In school, at ballet lessons, on the soccer team and in countless other situations, Boys and Girls Group members experience the pressures and often the difficulties of belonging to what may seem to their peers an exotic and even strange minority.

One longtime Dallas member tells a story that speaks to this point: She recounts her difficult childhood, growing up in one of the few Jewish families in her community, remembering the constant risk of facing cruelty and ostracism that so often accompanied her identity as a Jew.

As an adult, she became a Buddhist and raised two children in the practice. When she asked her now-teenage children how, as Buddhists, they responded to their friends' questions about their religion, her children answered: "Oh, it's no problem, Mom. We just say we're Jewish."

It is indeed a challenge for our children to grow up Buddhist here in the Bible Belt — or anywhere in the United States — and it is a challenge that requires the effort and support of each member.

The implementation of this study curriculum for our children is intended to help them appreciate the history, basic principles, inclusiveness and spirit of tolerance of this great religion.

As Mrs. Odano said, "It is joyful to teach these children about this great philosophy, to see them catch President Ikeda's vision, and to know they will have such a great impact on our society."

Boys and Girls Study Curriculum

January:

Diversity (appreciate each other)

- Different types of religions and their respective beliefs

February:

Sense of Responsibility

- Concept of *esho funi*

March:

Cause and Effect

- Concept of karma
- Concept of benefit

April:

The SGI

- Concept of global citizenship
- Worldwide organization
- Peace, education, and culture

May:

Courage

June:

Concept of Mentor and Disciple

July:

Seeking Spirit

- Include the importance of education; wisdom
- Incorporate President Makiguchi's theory of education, the purpose of which is to make people happy

August:

Friendship, Respect

September:

Three Basic Practices of Nichiren's Buddhism

- Gongyo — larger booklet for children/rewritten silent prayers from SGI

gongyo book specifically for children

- Explanation of why we do gongyo (using President Ikeda's lecture on the "Hoben" and "Juryo" chapters)
- Gohonzon — what is a Gohonzon; what's written on the Gohonzon, why we focus on it, etc.
- Using the ten worlds to explain the Christian concept of God versus the concept of Heaven/Hell
- Concept of birth and death
- Explanation of "symbolism" in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism (for example, the bells, candles, beads, etc.)

October:

Appreciation

- Appreciation for our lives, for others, our surroundings
- The U.N. International Children's Education Foundation (UNICEF) celebrates its founding

November:

History and Important People

- Include basic history outline of Buddhism to present time
- Important people in Buddhism — Presidents Ikeda, Makiguchi and Toda, and Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin, and others

December:

Conviction and Determination

- Believe in yourself
- Self confidence
- Never give up

Note: These units of study (12) will be based on the Goshō, SGI President Ikeda's lectures and Buddhist parables.

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 5, Chapter 3

Victory

Translation of parts 42–44 of the ‘Victory’ 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 1961.

Thus the Tohoku members unveiled their new song as scheduled at the completion and Gohonzon-enshrining ceremony for the new Headquarters Building in Sendai.

After the celebrations, Shin’ichi Yamamoto attended a discussion with the Tohoku leaders. Perusing the lyrics of their new song one more time, he asked: “As it will be sung by members throughout Japan, why don’t we rename it ‘Song of the New Century’? And how about changing the words ‘suffering comrades’ in the first verse to ‘suffering friends’? I think that would make it easier for people to relate to. What do you think?”

There was a burst of approving applause from the group of youth who had been involved in the song’s composition. This is how the “Song of the New Century” was born. Its lyrics go as follows:

*In the vast unfolding sky
young eagles soar
following their mentor, the pillar of
Japan
filled with pride as Bodhisattvas of
the Earth
working to aid suffering friends.*

*Whales leap with majesty
in stormy seas
advancing in energetic response to
the powerful call
to accomplish the great dream of
uniting the world
as they boldly travel the seven seas.*

*The lion’s courageous roar
shakes the earth,
as the magnificent vanguard of
kosen-rufu
defeats falsehood with the sword of
truth
and ushers in a brand-new century.*

After staying overnight in Sendai, Shin’ichi went for a walk the next morning at the ruins of Aoba Castle. Josei Toda’s widow, Ikue, had attended the completion and Gohonzon-enshrining ceremony of the Tohoku Headquarters and Shin’ichi wanted to show her around Aoba Castle where he had walked with Mr. Toda seven years earlier.

Shin’ichi climbed the stone steps as he talked with Ikue and gazed around at the moss-covered stone walls. His thoughts filled with memories of visiting this site with his mentor. A number of Tohoku youth division leaders and student division members had also made their way to Aoba Castle that morning. Now Shin’ichi invited all of them to join him in touring the grounds. Pointing to the castle’s stone walls, Shin’ichi said:

“Look at this. Large stones, small stones — all kinds of stones have been piled neatly and carefully on top of each other. That is why these walls are strong and solid. They are a symbol of unity. While it is natural that we all make efforts to forge

and strengthen ourselves, this alone is not enough to accomplish such a great undertaking as kosen-rufu.

“Like the stones in these walls, we have to unite solidly and support one another. A castle of capable people actually means a castle of *united* capable people. Unity is power and that is why the Soka Gakkai is strong.

“Let’s build a stronghold of capable people in Tohoku. Just as the lyrics of ‘Song of the New Century’ say, please strive wholeheartedly to build a brand-new century of the people with your own hands.”

The youth’s eyes sparkled with fresh resolve.

Shin’ichi stood at the ruins of Aoba Castle and recited an impromptu poem:

*Further strengthening my resolve
to build a castle
of capable people,
I stand at Aoba,
my mentor now departed.*

Echoing forever in Shin’ichi’s heart were the words of his mentor, Josei Toda, calling on him to build a castle of capable people for the future.

Shin’ichi’s creative ideas for kosen-rufu arose from his sole desire to realize his mentor’s vision. He continued to freely, unerringly envisage a brilliant future for the spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism precisely because this essential point remained steadfast and unchanging.

He was deeply gratified and overjoyed to escort Toda’s wife, Ikue, to this spot, a place that held such fond memories of his mentor for him.

Shin’ichi returned to Tokyo that day and stayed at the Gakkai Headquarters until late that night attending to paperwork. Some of the directors and a handful of Headquarters staff also remained.

As the hands of the clock approached midnight, Shin’ichi asked, “Any word on their arrival yet?”

One of the staff nearby replied, “No, they’re not scheduled to arrive at Haneda until around 2:00 a.m.”

“That’s right.... I hope everyone’s fine.” A group of members from the United

States was scheduled to arrive in Japan early the morning of Nov. 22. Kiyoshi Jujo, the Gakkai’s vice general director and America General Chapter chief, had gone to Haneda Airport to meet them. Shortly after 2:30 a.m., Jujo phoned Shin’ichi to let him know the members had arrived safely.

“A group of 59 arrived at 1:58 and they were joined by seven from Hawaii and two from Los Angeles who arrived on a separate flight, making for a total of 68,” he informed Shin’ichi. “We have two buses ready to take them to the Tokyo No. 2 Headquarters Building in Kamata, where they’ll rest until morning.”

“Great,” said Shin’ichi. “Thank you for looking after them. By the way, is everyone feeling all right?”

“Yes, they’re all fine and in the brightest of spirits,” Jujo assured him.

“How old is the eldest among them?” Shin’ichi asked.

“Eighty-two. A woman named Tomino Okada.”

“Ah, isn’t that the mother of Fumie Shearing, who let us use her home for the discussion meeting in Washington, D.C.?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“OK then,” said Shin’ichi, “please see that everyone gets to bed without delay. And please convey my warmest regards to all. Tell them that I’m looking forward to seeing them at the Headquarters.” That said, Shin’ichi put down the receiver.

The American members arrived at the Gakkai Headquarters later that morning. When they saw Shin’ichi, they cheered and applauded loudly, clapping their hands above their heads in a heartfelt expression of joy.

For Shin’ichi, there were many familiar faces: Kiyoko Kuwano, Los Angeles Chapter women’s division chief, and Kazuko Ellick, who had initially been put out over not being appointed to that posi-

tion, were both present. Fumie Shearing, Washington, D.C., Chapter chief, and Mitsuru Kawakami from Hawaii were there as well.

“Welcome to Japan!” Shin’ichi said. “Thank you so much for coming. I’m so happy to see all of you.”

They had been beaming brightly, but when Shin’ichi spoke, tears welled in their eyes. Soon, nearly everyone was crying out loud.

Many of the members were Japanese women who had moved to the United States with their American husbands. Most had been wracked by hardship and financial difficulty in their adopted country. And while feeling terribly homesick, they had despaired of ever returning to Japan.

But they had begun to think differently after hearing Shin’ichi’s guidance on his visit to the United States a year earlier. He told them that America was now just a stone’s throw from Japan, both lying virtually in each other’s backyard. “Let’s meet in Japan next year,” he had told them, and this had become their new goal and source of hope.

Thereafter, these members from America had devoted themselves earnestly in faith and practice, aiming for the day they would visit Japan. But going to Japan was no easy matter. They would have to take time off from work and raise the money for their plane fare.

They had flown to Japan by jet and the round-trip airfare from a place like New York was around ¥310,000. Although there was a substantial difference in the price of goods in Japan and the United States, a dish of Chinese noodles in Japan at the time cost around ¥50. The airfare then was well beyond the immediate reach of most of them.

In the year since Shin’ichi’s visit, they had struggled to save money by working part-time jobs in restaurants or doing ironing. Some of them took out loans, which they repaid in 10 or 20 installments. Despite these many hardships, the members had eagerly wished to travel to Japan to meet with Soka Gakkai President Shin’ichi Yamamoto and their fellow Japanese members and to come in direct contact with the dynamic energy of faith of the Gakkai in Japan. With a passionate seeking spirit, the members worked and toiled, cutting down where they could on their daily expenses to save money.

“Let’s go to Japan! Let’s fulfill our pledge to President Yamamoto!” — with this determination they crossed the Pacific.

(To be continued)

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DIVERSITY

People often express their amazement at the diversity of the SGI-USA membership. African, white, Asian, Latino, men, women, young and old people practicing side by side

inspire hope that people of diverse backgrounds and lifestyles can get along, that justice and harmony for all is possible.

Indeed, diversity strengthens our organization. And it also presents challenges. While we all share the same "primordial roots," as SGI President Ikeda says, we each blossom uniquely in this present existence, like the "cherry, plum, pear and damson."

Being human, our differences can present problems in understanding. Each of us sometimes lets our prejudices get in the way. And being Americans, our turbulent history of relations among diverse peoples can make open discussion about past and present injustices too emotional for constructive dialogue.

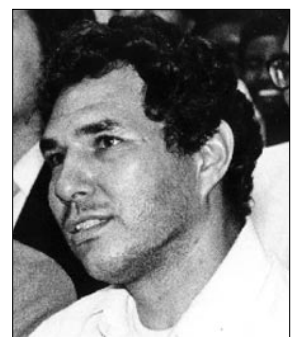
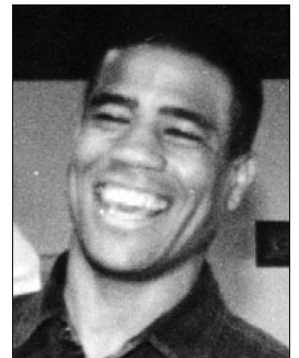
Nevertheless, we must forge ahead. First we must admit that problems exist within the organization when it comes to diversity issues. Only when we see the problem can we fix it in the spirit of

changing poison into medicine. As someone once wrote: "Don't fear [racism]; discover it; uncover it; even stir it up if necessary. Then we can begin to deal with it. If we don't do that, then we'll soon be right back at the same old place... 'we have no problem' ...again!"

This is also the spirit General Director Zaitzu expresses in the January *Living Buddhism*. He writes of the importance of facing up to reality and praying for mutual understanding and respect, ending with a call to action. "Let's be the first to practice what we preach," he writes.

As a practical step, a special committee on diversity was formed last year, which plans to meet monthly with Mr. Zaitzu and the other national leaders. If you'd like to give your input to the committee, please write to: Diversity Committee, c/o Greg Martin, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 (Fax: 310-260-8917).

And to support dialogue in each area, we are providing here excerpts from President Ikeda and Mr. Zaitzu on the subject of diversity. The talks may be long and sometimes painful, but the future of our country and the world depends on our success.



EXCERPTS

Learning From ‘The Sun of “Jiyu” Over a New Land’

The following is excerpted from General Director Zaitzu's book *My Reflections*, pp. 58–85. In this section, the general director explores SGI President Ikeda's guidance on diversity, which is found in his poem "The Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land."

Up to this point, we have been concerned with the poem's introduction to its message. Now we are coming to the most important part.

*My treasured friends,
There is no question that
your multiracial nation, America,
represents humanity's future.*

The theme on which President Ikeda has based the message of the poem is that the key to the happiness of the human race in the future lies in the solution to this central issue of our time — diversity, or the multicultural character of modern society.

The United States has been a mixed society since its inception, and is not becoming less so. Japan, on the other hand, a nation known for its homogeneity, is undergoing a radical change in its composition, as every year more and more foreigners are going there to live. America is the leader of this trend for the whole world.

*As this century draws to its close,
the soul of your idealism
grieves at the stark realities of racial
strife.*

We know that the [1992 Los Angeles] riots were steeped in hatred. But was it necessarily those who hated the most who suffered the most? In fact, it's always the common people who suffer. They are the ones who work hard, pay the taxes, but in social upheaval, they are the ones who suffer the most.

This is why President Ikeda is always on the side of the common people, why he says the Soka Gakkai must always help the people.

*On what can we ground
our efforts to open
the horizons of such a renaissance?*

Serious discussions about diversity and the difficulties faced by members of different races trying to live and work side by side have led to new hope for unity in Los Angeles and, if success can be achieved here, for other parts of the world, more and more of which faces very similar problems.

Buddhism leads us to the fundamental solution. Nichiren Daishonin wrote a famous thesis, the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," on the subject that misery and unhappiness are fundamentally caused by confusion in philosophy and the way people think. Hence a change in the underlying philosophy, which allows kosen-rufu to develop, will bring about beneficial changes in society. Bud-

dism benefits society. As Buddhism prospers, so does society.

*Your land holds secret stores
of unbounded possibility....*

President Ikeda's viewpoint is always

other — looms as a major question to which we have yet to find the true solution. We face the challenge of finding a way for people from diverse backgrounds to support one another and live peacefully side by side, instead of trying to hurt each other. How we as SGI members can take the lead

from opposite sides of the globe; yet I could feel the bonds of our shared karmic link.

Fundamentally, the approach of humanism is to respect others regardless of differences. This is especially important to understand here in the United States, where so many cultures and subcultures



Five-year-old Mandy Hoffman, center, has become nearly fluent in Spanish since the beginning of the school year. The River Glen School she attends in San Jose, Calif., has a two-way language immersion program to prepare children for a multicultural future.

from a perspective of encouragement. He sees a vast potential in the United States for transforming the negative aspects of society into positive ones. If we can take what are popularly seen as the undesirable and difficult aspects of dwelling in a diverse society and convert them into a sense of trust and respect for individual human beings, this will create great energy.

We can find the key in daimoku. Theoretically, *jiyu* is our awareness, but to actualize it, we chant daimoku to change our life-conditions and polish our characters. Buddhism is humanistic. It enables us to make ourselves better human beings through the principle that faith manifests in daily life. Ultimately, we will cause our society to change through each individual's human revolution and convey the importance of always thinking about and working for other people's happiness, for this is the bodhisattva's heart.

Not only in the United States but all over the world, what causes neighbors to fight — to not care about one an-

in doing this is the very subject of President Ikeda's poem.

People tend to fear and mistrust that which looks different. This fear in turn leads to suspicion and hatred. Therefore, we have to find a way to annul the fear. This is the purpose of dialogue — to try to understand what others are thinking. Society tends to judge things superficially, especially by appearance. Dialogue is our effort to get to know what is beneath the surface and to compare it with our own experience.

This reminds me of the Gosho passage "All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 23). Respecting others is not always easy, but between fellow SGI members it can become less difficult because we share a common karmic relationship as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. I experienced this recently when I had the opportunity to spend time with members in the Caribbean. On the surface, we were totally different, coming

exist side by side. To create harmony amid such diversity requires a strong will. As President Ikeda said in his speech at Harvard University in 1991:

Obviously, cultures do not always react amicably toward one another. Intercultural contacts on levels that probe and bring into question unique cultural practices deeply rooted in people's daily lives can easily evoke reactions of aversion or even hostility. Never is a deep, inner-generated spirit of restraint and self-control so required of people as when they are confronted with the confusion and tensions brought about by a collision of cultures. True partnership cannot be attained unless the effort to create it is based on mutual self-control at this inner, spiritual level.

*Past, present, future...
The causes and effects of the three
existences
flow ceaselessly as the reality of life;
interlinked, they give rise to all
differences and distinctions.
Trapped in those differences*

KNIGHT-RIDDER

human society is wracked by unending contention.

Viewed from the standpoint of past, present and future, superficial differences — and the hatred and *onshitsu* (slander) to which they give rise — vanish. When “human society is wracked by unending contention,” people have a tendency to just fight it out. In our organization, on the other hand, when difficulties come up we make efforts through guidance and discussion to find a solution.

Inevitably there will be likes and dislikes. These are not necessarily the basis for what we call *onshitsu*. However, hatred and holding a grudge against someone is *onshitsu* and will hinder your practice and lower your life force.

Talking about relationships within the organization, President Toda used a humorous analogy of cleaning potatoes by shaking them together in a water-filled barrel. Mr. Toda would say that one potato points to another potato which, like itself, is filthy and grubby, covered with dirt and scraggly pieces of skin. As the shaking continues and the potatoes rub against one another, all the dirt and old layers of skin come off and they become smooth and glistening. Then the once dirty potato sees its fellow potato and says, “Look at you, you’re all clean and shiny!” The other replies, “So are you, you look wonderful!”

This, said President Toda, is how we help one another in the organization to become beautiful human beings.

*Awaken to the life of jiyu within!
When the bright sun of “True Cause” rises,
the stars and planets of
past cause and effect grow dim
and the supreme world of
harmonious unity emerges —
the unity of friends and comrades,
each manifesting the life-condition
of Bodhisattva of the Earth,
offering timeless proof that indeed,
“The assembly on Eagle Peak has not
yet dispersed.”*

With this verse, we reach the heart of the poem, where President Ikeda makes it clear what he truly wants to say to us. Up to this point, he has been talking about diversity and the challenges we face living in a multicultural society, and that the solution to them lies in our developing the life-condition of *jiyu*. But, we may ask, how are the two connected in reality? From a practical point of view, what are we supposed to do? From this stanza on, he tells us exactly what to do.

First, we have to awaken to the life of *jiyu*, or Buddhahood. This *jiyu* is inherent in everyone as the inalienable, most fundamental right of the human being. We have to arouse it to solve the problems we have in daily life. Once we realize we innately have this life of *jiyu*, we can sense our own great potential. Our ability to create solutions, then, lies in the fundamental ability to awaken to the life of *jiyu* within.

In sum, the great discovery of Buddhism is that the source of happiness lies within each human being, that *jiyu* is the great potential everyone possesses. The problem is that people are hardly aware of this great potential. Many people tend to be negative and think they are incapable

of manifesting their potential. This leads to the tragedies with which we are all so familiar as people; especially the youth, who turn to drugs and crime, severely diminishing the dignity of their lives.

How can we enable people to understand that they do have great potential inside so that they can respect their own lives? We can accomplish this through dialogue. Your compassion and conviction will allow others to realize that the human being has great power.

According to Buddhism, life is a microcosm. Human life itself is the cosmos — in essence it is the same as the universe. And because the universe is unlimited, life must be unlimited as well. This is what we are trying to realize, not just theoretically, but so that we can actualize its promise.

The practical point is how to tap into it. For example, when we become sick, we actually possess the innate power to heal ourselves. Medicine helps to activate this function of Bodhisattva Yakuo (also known as Bodhisattva Medicine King) to work within our lives, and we become well. Or take poverty, which tends to cause us to depend on others. As long as we are seeking help from the environment, we cannot change our financial karma fundamentally. It would be like following a powerless teaching. The power to overcome the poverty is within.

First, we have to get energy and confidence to challenge the situation. Nichiren Daishonin wrote many times throughout the Goshō that great joy can be experienced in challenging a great hardship. The times when we fight are the best times. But when we lose the spirit to challenge, we cannot create fortune, and these become the worst times. The function of *shōten zenjin* does not work well when we are in a low life-condition.

Therefore, the fundamental solution is to elevate our life-conditions. In *The Human Revolution*, President Ikeda writes that strong prayers are the first step in achieving victory:

But are fervent, single-minded prayers enough? No, they are not. Listen carefully—so you won’t misunderstand. Chanting is only the first step. The second factor is to use the best strategy and the most effective action. Without this second part we can never gain the initiative to win. Neither the first nor the second factor alone is enough. Only when both are perfectly harmonized can the impossible become possible.

We should not chant daimoku for a miracle, but for the wisdom to determine the best action to take, which will activate the *shōten zenjin*.

*the unity of friends and comrades,
each manifesting the life-condition
of Bodhisattva of the Earth,
offering timeless proof that, indeed,
“The assembly on Eagle Peak has not
yet dispersed.”*

The Ceremony in the Air continues to exist within our own lives, and will exist permanently, manifested in each of us as Buddhahood. The Gohonzon depicts the Ceremony in the Air, which arose from the assembly on Eagle Peak. Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra in three ceremonies in two places — first at Eagle Peak, then at the Ceremony

in the Air, and once again at Eagle Peak.

Discussing the genesis of the Lotus Sutra in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” his lecture on the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin made the profound revelation that as we practice, carrying out the original pledge we made during the assembly at Eagle Peak, we continue to take part in the Ceremony in the Air.

The fact that each of us is realizing the life of *jiyu* daily and keeping other people’s happiness constantly on our minds — the fact that we are working to create a peaceful world — is proof that the Ceremony in the Air has not yet dispersed. The SGI movement itself is the Ceremony in the Air. We pledged to carry out our movement for peace and now we are putting our promise into action.

People cannot live entirely alone. Even the most isolated individuals have relationships necessary for existence or survival. Relationships are important in the context of Buddhist practice because through them the dignity of human life can be discerned, an understanding essential to awakening one’s mission for *jiyu*.

*The waves of egoism
eat away at the shores of
contemporary society.
The tragedy of division
wraps the world in a thick fog.*

Egoism is a word we hear used a good deal these days. It means that as long as you are happy, everything’s OK and you don’t need to care about other people. But this type of thinking is fallacious, for actually, happiness stems from the relationships you have with others. In the Western world, a general philosophy of life grounded in individuality allows such concepts as freedom, democracy and our modern civilization to emerge. But at the same time, it has created problems that are now seen as stemming precisely from people’s egoism.

Egoism by definition is a lack of consideration for others. Its opposite is compassion, a concern that others may be unhappy. Why is it necessary to have compassion for others? Essentially because egoism leads to hatred. As human beings, we are dependent upon each other. Once people recognize their underlying connection to everyone else, they realize that happiness itself is deeply related to others. President Ikeda calls this the process of “the ‘Me’ generation becoming the ‘You’ generation.” We could sum up the purpose of our SGI movement as the drive to let people know the importance of awakening an altruistic spirit. As we continue to influence society toward recognizing the dignity of human life, gradually egoism will turn into altruism.

In the few verses preceding these stanzas, we reached the meat of President Ikeda’s message. Now we cut through the meat to the bone, from the theoretical to the practical. From here to the end, President Ikeda tells us how we can take action.

The need for action is familiar to us as Buddhists, for we know that Buddhism itself is practice. Understanding without action is useless.

*First you must break the hard shell
of the lesser self.*

This you must absolutely do.

I feel these lines are his personal guidance to each one of us. We must break — smash, in fact — the hard shell of the lesser self. This lesser self manifests itself in the attitude “only me.” Breaking this shell is the most important thing to do, and President Ikeda urges that we must do it. All of life’s problems and disappointments, our complaints and negative life-conditions, arise from the lesser self. When people don’t realize that their own lesser selves cause their problems, they tend to blame others.

In the original Japanese version, the word President Ikeda chose for *break* is very strong and is followed by a string of exclamation points. It is a very strong and direct statement, which stems from his deep feelings for us. He is always straightforward and often talks about how important it is to be straightforward.

*People can only live fully
by helping others to live.
When you give life to friends
you truly live.*

When we develop our Buddha nature, we naturally start to think about others’ happiness. If you are concerned about other people, you can avoid becoming self-centered or arrogant. Learning to care for others is how we do our human revolution.

Why does it seem to be so hard to respect or care for others? In the Goshō, Nichiren Daishonin wrote about Ashura, who personified the life-condition of Anger, which is characterized as solely pursuing one’s own interests. As long as we dwell in the lower four worlds, we can only exhibit the lesser self with all its ego and self-centeredness.

However, as our encounters within the SGI organization allow us to polish our lives, it becomes easier to realize that the real benefit of practicing is to attain enlightenment. This means to perfect our character, develop our personalities fully, reveal our fullest potential and enrich our life-conditions to the greatest degree. In other words, to become people who are great in the true sense will inevitably contribute to the happiness of society.

*And blossoms in delightful multitude
exude the unique fragrance
of each person, of each ethnicity,
in precise accord with the principle of
“cherry, plum, pear and damson.”*

When we develop ourselves, we develop our uniqueness in a positive way. Each person displaying his or her own intrinsic value is the meaning of the concept “cherry, plum, pear and damson,” the Japanese aphorism for which is *o bai to ri*.

As all people are different, when they come together without attempting to develop themselves, no real value can be created. They often end up fighting one another because of their differences. They may be trying to “bloom” but cannot.

With a foundation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, diversity can work. As everyone makes efforts to improve themselves, to develop their greater selves, *o bai to ri* is revealed. In this way, we can take pride in our unique heritages, trying to do our best, appreciating those of other ethnicities. In this verse, I believe, we can see President Ikeda’s expectation most clearly. ☸

Why was Shakyamuni able to employ language with such freedom and to such effect? What made him such a peerless master of dialogue? At essence, it was the embracing expansiveness of his enlightened state, utterly free of all dogma, prejudice and attachment. The following words, attributed to him, are illustrative: "I perceived a single, invisible arrow piercing the hearts of the people." This "arrow" could be termed the arrow of a discriminatory consciousness, an unreasoning emphasis on difference. The India of his time was in a period of transition and upheaval, in which the horrors of conflict and war were an ever-present reality. To Shakyamuni's penetrating gaze, it was clear that the underlying cause of this conflict was attachment to differences such as those of ethnicity and nationality.

—Harvard University on Sept. 24, 1993: "Mahayana Buddhism and 21st Century Civilization"

Ikeda: Diversity is power. The united efforts of people with different backgrounds produce creativity, and unity creates flexible wisdom. A creative movement supported by diverse individuals captures the hearts of the people and generates great waves of sympathetic feeling. Therefore, nothing is nobler than freedom and nothing is greater than unity.

Mandela: Life is also diverse. This diversity can lead to contradictions. We must fight against these contradictions in life and in society. In this regard, the challenge I have now is very worthwhile.

Ikeda: I have the utmost respect for those fighting against the contradictions in society. Such courageous individuals can clearly overcome contradictions within their own lives as well.

—From a dialogue between SGI President Ikeda and Nelson Mandela in Tokyo on Oct. 31, 1990, Nov. 12, 1990, World Tribune

It should also be noted that dialogue is not limited to the kind of placid exchanges that might be likened to the wafting of a spring breeze. There are times when, to break the grip arrogance has on another, speech must be like the breath of fire. It was the occasional ferocity of their speech that earned Shakyamuni and Nagarjuna, whom we typically associate only with mildness, the sobriquet of "those who deny everything," from the powers-that-be of their respective eras.

—Harvard University on Sept. 24, 1993: "Mahayana Buddhism and 21st Century Civilization"

Reverberating from such a relationship is the resonance of individual personalities associating and interacting in earnest and in harmony as complete human beings. The form of trust created in this way is precisely what has been called "virtue" since antiquity. It seems to me that this is where we must seek the underlying, fundamental cause for the rising misbehavior, crime and other problems we observe among modern youth: the lack of fully human interaction between individuals. We cannot expect our various treatments for the symptoms of this "dis-



EXCERPTS

SGI President Ikeda On the Diversity Challenge

ease" to work effectively at least until we clearly address this underlying need.

—1994 Peace Proposal: "Light of the Global Spirit: A New Dawn in Human History," April 1994 Seikyo Times

Indeed, the "invisible arrow" of evil to be overcome is not to be found in races and classes external to ourselves, but embedded in our own hearts. The conquest of our own prejudicial thinking, our own attachments to difference, is the guiding principle for open dialogue, the essential condition for the establishment of peace and universal respect for human rights. It was his own complete release from prejudice that enabled Shakyamuni to expound the Law with such freedom, adapting his style of teaching to the character and capacity of his interlocutor.

—Harvard University on Sept. 24, 1993: "Mahayana Buddhism and 21st Century Civilization"

Looking for compromises in the area of religious doctrine will probably end in failure. The first priority is that people learn to get along with one another as fellow human beings, for them to understand one another and form friendships. As people learn to exist harmoniously together, they start to see one another's good points. This opens the path to learning about one another. We have no choice but to begin from here.

—From "Conversations With Youth On Buddhism, Life and History" [1], May 1994 Seikyo Times

The Lotus Sutra embodies a philosophy that most highly respects, fosters and harmonizes human diversity. The

Mystic Law is the source that enables us to manifest our unique brilliance against a backdrop of mutual understanding and appreciation of one another's differences; to create a lush garden of "cherry, plum, peace and damson" blossoms.

—At a gongyo meeting with representatives of the New York joint territories at the New York Culture Center, June 15, 1996

The earth belongs equally to everyone. It revitalizes all human beings, transcending racial, ethnic and national distinctions, and supports the flourishing of culture. A vibrant wellspring of pure altruism, of compassion, surges forth from its soil. If everyone were to awaken to their missions as bodhisattvas of the Earth and take action based on it, there would not be the slightest doubt that we could build true world peace and human harmony.

—From The New Human Revolution, vol. 1, p.157

A person with a closed heart is one who is shut up within a self-imposed shell of selfishness and complacency. This sad and pointless act of severing "self" and "other" bears the hallmark of "evil" as I have attempted to define it here. This deep-rooted tendency, which has persisted throughout human history, is manifested in a singular way in our time, perhaps a fateful feature of 20th-century civilization.

—1993 Peace Proposal: "Toward a More Humane World in the Coming Century"

One of the most important Buddhist concepts, dependent origination, holds that all beings and phenomena exist

or occur in relation to other beings or phenomena. Everything is linked in an intricate web of causation and connection and nothing — whether in the realm of human affairs or of natural phenomena — can exist or occur solely of its own accord. In this view, a greater emphasis is placed on the interdependent relationships among individuals than on the individual in isolation.

—At Harvard University on Sept. 26, 1991, "The Age of 'Soft Power' and Inner-motivated Philosophy"

There is no doubt that nationalism, ethnic identity, and other much used and abused slogans today have been perfect objects of this easy credibility and fanaticism. This is because concepts of "race" and "ethnicity" are in large part fictitious, and ethnic identifications have typically been artificially constructed by one means or another. This may sound rather extreme, but I believe the circumstances warrant candid words; in a world where ethnic and national identity have become the source of such brutal violence, a definitive revision of our understanding of these concepts is critical.

—1993 Peace Proposal: "Toward a More Humane World in the Coming Century"

The "greater self" is the key, I believe, to the realization of the tolerance that makes genuine dialogue possible. And tolerance can help us create a new epoch of coexistence, shining the light of hope into the dark shroud of fin-de-siècle pessimism.

—1995 Peace Proposal: "Creating a Century Without War Through Human Solidarity"

Buddhism describes the connective threads of "dependent origination." Nothing in this world exists alone; everything comes into being and continues in response to causes and conditions. Parent and child. Husband and wife. Friends. Races. Humanity and nature. This profound understanding of coexistence, of symbiosis—here is the source of resolution for the most pressing and fundamental issues that confront humankind in the chaotic last years of this century.

The Buddhist scriptures include the parable of "Two Bundles of Reeds," aptly demonstrating this relation of dependent origination. Only by supporting each other can the two bundles stand straight—if one is removed, the other must fall. Because this exists, so does that; Because that exists, so does this.

... First you must break the hard shell of the lesser self. This you must absolutely do. Then direct your lucid gaze toward your friends, fellow members. People can only live fully by helping others to live.

—From "The Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land"

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Teaching Others Means To Learn Ourselves

By SHIN YATOMI

YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE CHIEF

You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 95).

The purpose of "teaching others" is to help them understand Buddhism and inspire them to take faith in it. To do so, we first must have confidence in what we say about Buddhism. Our confidence is what fundamentally empowers our communication.

Furthermore, teaching is more than regurgitating what knowledge we have. Of course, we ourselves should be clear about Buddhism. I often come to the painful realization that I don't really know what I thought I knew when I try to share Buddhist concepts with others. After my explanation, some people ask me, "So what?" and an awkward silence follows. So, whenever I study Buddhism, I ask myself, "What does this have to do with my life?" My uncertainty about the answer sometimes leads me to think that I have indigestion of Buddhist knowledge!

So knowledge alone is not enough. If we wish to help people to understand Buddhism and inspire others, we must understand who they are and extend our thoughts to their various circumstances. This necessitates compassion.

"Teaching others," as the Daishonin encourages us to do in this passage, is no easy task. But the Daishonin is not telling us to wait until we become great Buddhist scholars or leaders.

When we rack our brains as to how we can best teach Buddhism to this person or that person, when we struggle and pray to deepen our faith in the Daishonin's teachings, we ourselves learn. When we try to "teach others to the best of our ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase," our actions become a cause for our growth. ❖

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

Learning How To Live

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

This new series will cover the basics of Buddhist practice. Included will be some background on Buddhism and its basic concepts, the spirit we need to continue practicing, the significance of participating in SGI activities and the problems that can come up in the course of practice. The experiences of various seniors will be sought; questions and suggestions from readers are always welcome.

Because Nichiren's Buddhism is such a profound philosophy, the more we deepen our understanding of it, the more we can gain from practicing it. In this process, we also prepare ourselves to share our practice with others.

All of us struggle at some point, aware of Buddhism's profundity, to explain it so that friends or family members can understand. It can be a great struggle to get the words to come out right. And sometimes we even struggle to explain Buddhism to ourselves! This struggle is a

positive thing, though — it is actually the way we deepen our understanding.

The term *Buddhism* originally meant the "Buddha Way" or the "way of the human being," in other words the way we should live as human beings. Pursuing the lifetime process of learning what Buddhism is all about, then, simply means to keep learning how to live as a human being.

Ted Morino, the SGI-USA Study Department chief, says one way he deepened his understanding was by making friends in the organization. "I was so fortunate to be surrounded by very strong Gakkai friends who were of the same generation when I started," he remembers. "They were way ahead of me in terms of faith. Through such relationships, I grew unconsciously in faith."

The Buddhist writings we study, like Nichiren Daishonin's *Gosho*, are very important, but without also learning from people around us, from seeing how their lives progress, we cannot completely understand how Buddhist teachings translate into a better life. Mary Suggs, a 77-year-old Kansas member, explains: "It's

important to listen to what other people say in meetings. Their experiences or ideas will help you understand some fraction of your life.... By having an open mind, you can get real insight into your life."

Mr. Morino also emphasizes having experiences in faith. "In my case, the biggest one was the university entrance examination which I had to challenge," he says. "After two years of study and devoted daimoku, I passed the exam and became a student of the Osaka University of Foreign Studies. It was a great experience through which I really felt the power of this practice."

In deepening our understanding, it really helps to keep these kinds of Buddhist basics in mind, which is what this series will be all about. Having friends in the organization and creating our own experiences are two of the basics, but the most basic of all is understanding Buddhism's starting and ending point — human life, our lives. Every teaching in this religion relates back to how human beings can live the best of lives. This is the Buddha way. ❖

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH

Can I Practice Without the Gohonzon?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF

Debating in this issue, the World Tribune will offer a regular question-and-answer series on vital issues of faith. Readers are invited to submit questions concerning the doctrines of Buddhism and the formalities of our practice to the World Tribune office, to be answered by SGI-USA Study Department Chief Ted Morino.

Q Can I practice without the Gohonzon?

A Yes. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law of the universe and it has the unique ability to awaken and fuse with the inherent Buddhahood of anyone who chants it.

In a broad sense, this fundamental core of the universe and innate Buddhahood within our lives are the same as the Law depicted on the Gohonzon.

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the desire to embrace this Law, our lives open to the boundless potential of the universe. That's how we awaken the qualities of a Buddha.

The benefit we derive from chanting, therefore, stems from our faith in the Mystic Law that is embodied in the Gohonzon — not from the fact that we merely possess the Gohonzon.

In this vein, the Daishonin asserts that "faith alone is what really matters" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246).

SGI President Ikeda portrays the first time Nichiren Daishonin chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, years before he inscribed the first Gohonzon, in *The Human Revolution*, vol. 6:

There must have been a sunrise in his heart, as well as the richest life condition that was ever realized. A man and nature — a man and the life of the universe itself — were fused into one.

So before he inscribed the Gohonzon, we can say that the Daishonin chanted daimoku to the universe, with reverence for the Mystic Law he had found in the depths of the Lotus Sutra.

The important point for us to realize is that the Gohonzon is the ultimate gift from Nichiren Daishonin to each of us who holds faith in the Mystic Law.

The Gohonzon is a means to bring about the happiness of all humanity

through the Mystic Law. In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin states:

Now, over two hundred years have passed since the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. How awesome that Nichiren was the first to inscribe this great mandala as the banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra, when even such great masters as Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo were unable to do so! This mandala is in no way Nichiren's invention. (MW-1, 211-12)

Fortunately, through the auspices of the SGI organization, the Gohonzon is widely available to all who want to sincerely practice to it.

Of course there will always be some circumstances when we cannot chant to the Gohonzon, such as when we are traveling or visiting relatives.

At such times, though, if we open our hearts to the Daishonin's profound sentiment in inscribing the object of worship for the happiness of all people, we can experience the same benefit as if we were sitting directly in front of the Gohonzon. We can thus awaken the joy, courage and energy to advance in our lives at any time. ❖

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PETER LERNER, CHICAGO

Playing Music With Heart and Soul

When I was a child, my mother would play guitar and sing us (my brother, sister and me) to sleep at night. As I listened in the dark with my eyes closed, I fell in love with the sound of the guitar and her voice. At age 5, I would sneak away with her guitar and play. At age 7, I began writing my own songs. Music and the guitar have always been my life's passions. I cannot ever remember a time without them.

I grew up in the racially mixed area of Hyde Park on Chicago's South Side. Hyde Park was a bastion of political activism, and my parents were very involved in the movement for peace and civil rights. I remember Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Black Panther leader Fred Hampton all being at functions at our home. My dad, who is a pediatrician, worked at a Panther free clinic on the westside. My mother, also a pediatrician, risked her life, not to mention being deported (she was a native of Czechoslovakia), on more than one occasion.

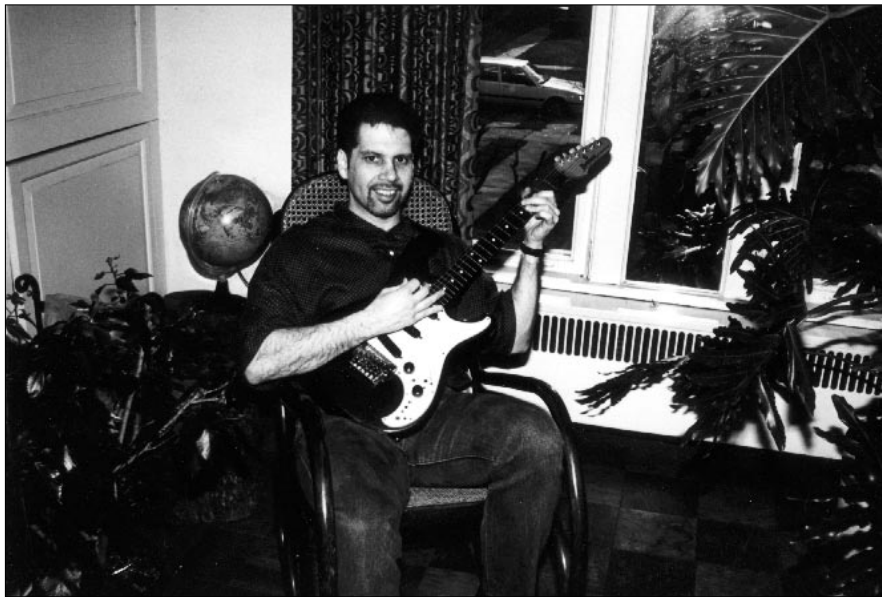
Even though I loved and respected my parents, I fought with them constantly, especially with my father. I was a very sensitive, angry, troubled young man and was the center of turmoil in the family. My father was an atheist; my mother an agnostic, and I was basically raised without a religion. Yet, I had a strong spiritual yearning.

I sought to fulfill that yearning with drugs and relationships. My searching led me to Ohio, where I studied philosophy. Soon I realized this was not the path for me. I became very depressed and came home to Chicago.

Then I decided to pursue the dream I had avoided for so long: that of becoming a professional musician. All this time, I had been self-taught and was afraid I wasn't good enough. But I was determined: "If I am not good enough, I will become good enough." I vowed that I would walk the path of a musician even if I should be penniless and alone.

I began music school, and while there I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by a fellow student.

Almost immediately, I began to practice diligently. I felt liberated. I had finally found what I was searching for. Now I felt it was my turn to fight for the peace and happiness of humanity, but this time with the Gohonzon.



Peter Lerner's dream has come true — to be a professional musician.

After one year of practice, I lost the urge to get high. After two years of practice, I became a young men's division chapter chief and Chicago Joint Territory Brass Band chief, all the while pursuing a double major of classical guitar and composition at the American Conservatory, teaching guitar, and gigging with various bands around the city, not to mention practicing with my guitar seven to eight hours a day.

The '80s were the time I built my foundation. The Chicago Brass Band played every day for three years straight at "Super Morning Gongyo." I would work till late at night playing in clubs, get up at 5:00 a.m., be at the community center by 6:00 a.m., rehearse the band, perform after gongyo and then lead a young men's division study group. I did this every weekday morning for three years.

During this period, my life was very hellish. I lived in bad neighborhoods on about \$150 a week. I had a series of abusive, hellish relationships with women. I remember coming home from activities or work, laying on my broken mattress on the floor, staring up at the crumbling plaster, tears streaming down my face, wondering if my life would ever change. I chanted, sought guidance, introduced others to the practice, studied, did many activities and, as a result, was able to persevere.

My first big benefit came in 1985 when my father received the Gohonzon. He is now a group chief. My sister joined soon after

and is now a member of the SGI-UK. Then, my mother began chanting. She's the daimoku champion of our family as she now chants two to three hours of daimoku a day.

In 1988, I joined a jazz fusion group that got a recording contract on the same label as guitar legend John Scofield. I wrote a song on the album that went to the top 10 on jazz playlists all over the country. The first time I heard it on the radio, I was with my mother and we both cried tears of joy.

Soon after, I joined another group put together by producer Butch Stewart, who had produced the O'Jays, Ramsey Lewis, Ashford and Simpson and members of Earth, Wind and Fire. I fulfilled another dream by playing on many jingle and other recording sessions, which led to work with other clients. In August 1988, I traveled to Japan with Butch to play a monthlong engagement at the Yokohama Bayside Club.

As quickly as my life had opened, by 1990 it closed. The fusion band fired me, Butch began using another guitarist, and other clients all of a sudden stopped calling. I was very discouraged and confused. Why, after all I had done, was this happening to me?

The early '90s were a very dark period for me. My attitude became one of complaint. I began to question everything, which led to a tremendous doubt that was like a nasty, disgusting stain on my life. I gained 30 pounds, be-

came more depressed than I'd ever been, moved back in with my parents and began seeing a therapist because I could not function with my depression.

I received guidance to chant abundantly, so I mustered my courage and began to chant two to three hours a day. I decided the prescription for curing my depression was to chant two hours every morning — and it worked.

I remember driving to activities with tears streaming down my face, shouting, "I will not be defeated!" Here I was, over 35, no gigs, living at home with my parents. But I was more determined than ever. The Gosho reads: "Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law.... This is my vow, and I will never forsake it" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 174-75).

I knew I could not forsake my vow. So I dedicated myself to the Chicago culture festival in 1995.

I became co-producer of the festival. In August, I traveled to gigs all over the Midwest, so I worked all week in Indiana or Iowa or somewhere else, traveled back on Saturday, worked in Chicago Saturday night, got up early to attend the culture festival rehearsal Sunday morning and drove hundreds of miles to a new destination Sunday night. I gave every ounce of myself, physically, mentally and emotionally. Immediately following the culture festival, I became Chicago Joint Territory Soka Group chief.

Because of these efforts, I totally revolutionized my life.

I dropped 30 pounds, found a great apartment and received two major benefits on the road to financial security.

One goal I've had since I began my practice was to teach at a university or college. I secured a position at Columbia College teaching rock and fusion guitar. After my first semester, my boss presented me with a letter that states: "I appreciate your contribution to Columbia and thank you for your efforts on our students' behalf. Their futures are brighter because of you."

Then out of the blue my friend Butch called me and asked me to come back as inhouse guitarist for his jingle and record company.

At the beginning of 1996, I made a strong determination to open my life and connect with SGI President Ikeda as never before. Within a three-day period, I got sick, my car broke down and I broke my foot. But the amazing thing was that I was happier than I'd ever been in my life. I was more confident and hopeful about my future than I had ever been.

The year 1996 then became a breakthrough year for me as:

- My brother began chanting. Now my entire family practices, and we are closer and more loving than ever.

- I found the perfect partner for me. I am happier than I ever dreamed I could be. We plan to marry this May.

- My career blossomed. For example, I toured the Midwest with the WGN Radio Noon Show Band, played for *Billboard* magazine's Dance Party Chicago with some of the top dance artists in the world; played with '70s recording stars the Fifth Dimension; played on the first fully staged production of Randy Newman's rock opera *Faust* with the same musicians who played *Tommy* on Broadway; performed the new theme music for *The Oprah Winfrey Show* with Patti LaBelle, as well as most of the incidental music on the show; and so on.

For the past 16 years, I have fought with my whole heart and soul to win in everything I have done. I recently graduated from the youth division. I did so without any regrets. I welcome the new challenges that await me, continuing to fight against my own weaknesses and never be defeated. WJ

Felix Unger, president of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, is a Club of Rome member. Yoshi Nagaoka, Seikyo Shimbun staff writer, and Jeff Farr, World Tribune associate editor, talked with him about various topics at the Club of Rome's annual conference in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on Dec. 1, 1996.

WT: We heard that you visited Soka University and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum.

FU: Last July I went to the university and the art museum. I must tell you that it was a wonderful experience. Frankly, I am very proud to have received the highest honor of your university. I think that the movement of the Soka Gakkai in these days we are facing now is very, very important.

I think we are all called upon to stand together and work together for a wonderful future. We have a future when we have a heart that functions well. From your heart you can reach out and you can stand together.

What I was so impressed about from the SGI is that you are putting importance, very strongly, on values. I think that this is the main uniting thing in the whole world — when people can work together on the basis of values.

WT: We were impressed by your statement at this conference that to do global revolution we have to change as individuals first. It's pretty much what SGI President Ikeda discussed with Club of Rome founder Aurelio Peccei in the book they published together, *Before It Is Too Late*.

They both used the same term, *human revolution*, saying only it can be the beginning of global revolution. What do you think about the potential of human revolution — to change individual lives first — toward affecting the rest of the world?

FU: I would say that the main danger for man is himself. I am very often asked when and who should start. And I say always: "I have to start myself. And I have to start immediately."

Only when you are doing things in the proper way can you motivate people to do it also in the proper way. I think it's very useless if you call on other people to make changes. We have the responsibility, and we have to start by ourselves.

WT: We appreciate that your academy has offered an honorary membership to our president. What do you think of President Ikeda's activities throughout the world?



Photo by LINDA ST. HILAIRE

Felix Unger recently visited Soka University in Japan and has invited SGI President Ikeda to visit Salzburg, Austria.

We Have To Serve the People

Felix Unger, President of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts

FU: We asked President Ikeda to become an honorary senator of our academy. This is the highest award we give. And it is in recognition of the fact that he is the president of a very, very important society. As I told you before, I think that we share the same ideas, based on values.

For us, as a European academy, it's very helpful to have somebody from the other side of the world so that we can demonstrate that we are bridging, that we are sharing ideas. As more people agree to share the same ideas, I think that we are going to build for our children a livable future.

WT: How can an organization like the SGI contribute to globalism?

FU: An organization like the SGI can tremendously help and assist people. Don't forget that in the world's governments we need a lot of ideas born from NGOs [nongovernmental organizations recognized by the United Nations].

The problem is — how I see

it in Europe — that at the present time we have a political system, with the presidents and the prime ministers and so on, that always comes down to [the politicians becoming overly concerned with getting elected again]. And elections are spoiling the ideas that people need in their daily lives. I think an organization like the SGI or our academy is extremely important to show that we are working for people and that we have the interests of the human being in the center of our lives.

WT: What kind of experience did you have that brought you to the conclusion that "I have to change first"?

FU: It was a very awful experience. In fact, I am a typical pupil of the classical medical schools. In all our medical schools we learned a lot of facts, but we did not learn what man is, who we are treating, what an illness is, what it means to be a doctor and so on. When I became a professor and the chairman

of my own clinic, I detected immediately that I had an enormous responsibility.

I realized that what I am doing, what my associates are doing, what I do with my patients and also what I have to offer as education for my students, what I have to tell them, is so important. And I saw in my life then that I had to motivate my students to be doctors. It was completely clear.

I have to make now this statement: We need natural science as a principle on which to base medicine. In other words, medicine is not only the selection and composition of facts; medicine is much more.

We have to pull together all our sciences to make them serve man. We have to serve man. This is the key issue which we did not learn in our medical schools. We learned that man is an object, which is completely wrong.

When you treat a patient, you need ethics. For me the greatest idea is for doctors to protect the patients. I went really crazy with this idea. I am always saying we have

to see the patient as a subject. And we have to serve the patient.

WT: President Ikeda has been conducting a dialogue with doctors and nurses, "Buddhism and the Art of Medicine," which has been running in the *World Tribune*. He is saying the same thing; he is arguing that doctors and nurses need to be more humanistic about how they treat their patients.

FU: For me what he's stating is completely true. Medicine, do not forget, is an art. You must have a correct attitude being an artist in this discipline because you have to serve and you have to understand the people and their problems, their environment. Don't forget, one of the main tasks of medicine is to serve humans, to cure them when they are ill, to assist them in coming back to society. And when it is not possible anymore, when destiny is coming, you have to help them to die with dignity.

WT: Many of our members don't know what your institute is about. Could you give us some background?

FU: The academy was founded after a long preparation on March 7, 1990. As I told you before, I was driven to form this academy by my misled studies in medicine.

This is the thinking behind the academy: When we are discussing the sciences we have to take into account that they are not just medical or mathematical sciences — you have much more.

And, in fact, we see that we have three types of sciences. One type is the relation of man to nature. From this is derived the natural sciences, the technical sciences and the environmental sciences.

Then you have the relation among people, the so-called inter-human relations. [This includes] the social sciences, the historical sciences, the language sciences, the trade sciences, jurisprudence and so on. And of course medicine is a typical example of the social sciences.

And then you have man's relation to the spiritual things, the metaphysical things. There you have philosophy, the arts and of course religion.

In this area we find a similarity between our academy and the Soka Gakkai. This is because the Soka Gakkai sees the world with the human being as the central interest and agrees that we have to serve humans.

When we are speaking among other religions — and I am Catholic — then we have a shared basis from our shared values. This way we can build a future for our children. WU

To Boldly Entrust Youth With the Future

Photo by LINDA ST. HILAIRE

By ED FEASEL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION CHIEF

Happy New Year! Last year was fantastic with the visit of SGI President Ikeda during the summer and the kick off of a new era in the youth division. This year, which has been named the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century, promises to be even greater. Let's put forth our full effort once again so that we will have no regrets.

We have started 1997 off in historic fashion by creating youth division guidelines that we can all, both young men and young women alike, implement together (Dec. 27, 1996, *World Tribune*). Based on these guidelines, let's take another step forward toward truly making the district our home base of activities.

In my discussions with youth division members throughout the nation, I can see that we all agree that revitalizing the districts is the key to creating a joyful movement of expansion in our organization. Let's each take personal responsibility for making our districts the most joyful places to practice.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Japan for the Nov. 18 celebration of the establishment

of the Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda was very healthy and in high spirits.

During my stay, I met with Soka Gakkai Youth Division Chief Yoshiki Tanigawa who told me that it is a Soka Gakkai tradition to boldly entrust youth with responsibility. He said that if we worry about a person's capability and, therefore, do not give him responsibility, then he will not grow. Instead, we should boldly entrust him with responsibility and do our best to support him in challenging his weaknesses.

Mr. Tanigawa went on to say that in Buddhism everything begins with self-awareness of our responsibility. When we challenge ourselves with this practice based on the awareness of our responsibility, we can draw forth the inherent potential in our lives. President Ikeda, of course, was given awesome responsibility during his youth and developed tremendous capability.

While I was in Japan I saw firsthand how the Soka Gakkai boldly entrusts youth with responsibility. For more than a year now, YMD members have been responsible for Goshō lectures at discussion meetings.

I attended one discussion meeting where a young man



(L-r) Student leaders Valerie Thomas and Jeff Farr, YWD Chief Reiko Groshell and Youth Division Chief Ed Feasel.

was delivering his Goshō lecture. He was terrified and during his lecture there were many moments of silence as he tried to figure out what he wanted to say. All the while, the members of the district sat smiling and encouraging him to continue.

At the end of his lecture, the young man made a determination to do better next time. The

whole meeting place burst into applause.

What a scene! I was so encouraged to see the amazing support the entire district was giving to raise this one young man.

As youth, let's seek out opportunities like this to take on more responsibility and then expand our capability. As President Ikeda has reminded us

time and again, youth is the period to challenge ourselves and grow.

With a great dream in our hearts, I'm sure we can challenge anything. So, let's have great goals and, together with our mentor, President Ikeda, create another page of history in 1997. Once again, happy New Year! ❏

By SHIN YATOMI

YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE CHIEF

Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo] is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people ("The Three Kinds of Treasure," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238).

Shijo Kingo received this letter from Nichiren Daishonin in March 1277. At that time, Kingo, a samurai vassal, was told by his lord to give up his faith in the Lotus Sutra. Otherwise, he would have his land confiscated.

Eventually, though, his lord fell seriously ill and Kingo, being knowledgeable in medicine, was asked to care for him. The Daishonin tells Kingo to challenge his circumstances without complaining. Then he urges Kingo to show proof of his Buddhist practice not only in the realm of Buddhism, but also at

his work and in his community.

What the Daishonin encourages Kingo to strive for here is something that applies to all of us. No doubt the Daishonin would expect the same from us as practitioners of his Buddhism: to make effort upon effort to excel at work while extending warm care and concern to those around us — whether they are Buddhists or not. (Note that Kingo's "boss" not only misunderstood his practice, but was also opposed to it.)

It may be easy to act as an exemplary Buddhist when surrounded by other Buddhists, but the real test lies in how we behave at work and in our community. People with whom we interact at work or in our community see us in terms of how

we act as humans, not as Buddhist leaders.

First Soka Gakkai President Makiguchi often said: "There are three kinds of people: those indispensable, those whose presence makes no difference, and those who cause trouble for others. Whether we are at work or home, we all must strive to become the first type — people who are needed." How then can we become those whose presence is appreciated at work and in our communities? Second President Toda once encouraged a youth who could not get the job he wanted, saying:

The real world, unfortunately, is not as easy as you would hope. There may be only a few people who get their ideal jobs.

In most cases, people have to take up a job that they least expected. The question is what to do then. In my opinion, youth at such times should never be defeated. Youth should strive to complete the task before them while studying and making further efforts.... Viewed in light of the principle that faith equals daily life, whether youth will succeed or not in the future depends upon whether they tackle their present work earnestly.

President Toda also encouraged members, saying:

I often see some members assume an easygoing attitude, believing that they can receive benefit without racking their brains about their businesses

or without making earnest efforts just because they have the Gohonzon. This is a serious mistake....

The Daishonin states that those who embrace the Gohonzon should come to understand how they can improve their lives and develop their businesses.... For this reason, we must continuously study and make efforts to improve our businesses.

In other words, the principle that faith equals daily life means that we should first pray earnestly to the Gohonzon to bring forth a strong life-force and abundant wisdom to make the utmost efforts. While tapping our ingenuity, we can prove the Daishonin's Buddhism at work and in our communities. Regarding the importance of ingenuity, President Toda also mentioned:

Earnestness is a fundamental virtue. But, without ingenuity,

PLEASE SEE CHALLENGE, NEXT PAGE

LEARNING FROM SHIJO KINGO — 1

Challenging Ourselves at Work and in Our Communities

YOUNG DAISAKU (1) A Life of Hardship Leads to a Life of Conviction

By **KEN SARAGOSA**
PHILADELPHIA JT. TERR. HIGH SCHOOL CHIEF

Daisaku Ikeda was born during one of the most turbulent periods in Japan's history, when that nation was in the midst of rapid industrial development and its transformation into a modern power. Throughout the early 20th century, Japan pursued a course of rapid industrialization and political westernization in hopes of attaining a status similar to the Western nations.

By the end of World War I, Japan was realizing its ambitions, and its sphere of influence throughout the Pacific was sig-

nificant. Furthermore, the fragmentation of political authority in China was proving irresistible to Japanese imperialists. By the late 1920s, the government was pursuing an even more aggressive agenda in China.

Daisaku Ikeda was born on Jan. 2, 1928, as Japan was well on its way toward war. At the time of Daisaku's birth his father, Nenokichi, was 41 and his mother, Ichi, 33. He was their fifth child (the family would eventually have eight children — seven sons and one daughter).

The family cultivated and processed *nori*, an edible form of seaweed. Even at this point, just prior to the Great Depres-

sion and before Japanese imperialism took its heavy toll, life was very difficult for the family. Merely surviving meant that the entire family had to work hard at its business.

After World War II began, Ikeda's family, along with most Japanese people, lost almost all its material resources and was plunged into poverty without the means to provide for itself. The family was, for a time, even homeless.

In general today, young people in Japan and other affluent nations enjoy much more privileged and peaceful lives. It would be nice to be able to say that the horrors of violence and poverty no longer plague the world, but it is a sad truth that the hardships Ikeda endured — growing up in illness, in poverty and during a major war — re-

semble the hardships many young people still experience. In the '90s, violence and destruction are commonplace in far too many neighborhoods. And the struggles of absolute destitution and virtual homelessness touch the lives of far too many people, even in our privileged and peaceful society.

President Ikeda has urged us to learn from the lives of great women and men, to make lessons of their lives. He has also said that "the way in which a person spends his or her youth will in large part determine the course of the rest of his or her life." Descriptions of this early period of his life are available in essays Ikeda wrote under the English titles *My Recollections* and *Glass Children*. Further descriptions are available in his novelized account of the Soka Gakkai's history, *The Human Revolution* and

The New Human Revolution.

In the coming months, I will be drawing from these sources to discuss more fully the circumstances of Ikeda's youth. In this series I want to think about how the severe hardships of his youth were a crucible to form his great character and conviction.

Great people are above all real people. Their greatness is not in their distance from humanity but in the decisions they made and the actions they took as human beings. I hope that we can glean valuable lessons and gain powerful inspiration from the youth of a great man of conviction whose experiences with the worst in life led him to seek the best, a great man of faith who, faced with experiences that ought to have driven him to despair, instead drove him to belief. **W**

CHALLENGE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

earnestness alone does not enable us to lead outstanding lives. Some people may be earnest, but, lacking in ingenuity, live only mediocre existences.... When we excel in a particular field of endeavor, then we can live a meaningful existence. If you are in business and want to sell something, you must understand the formula that earnest efforts plus ingenuity equals success.

Through this Goshō to Shijō Kingo, the Daishonin teaches us the importance of challenging ourselves at work and in our

communities. The people with whom we deal in these places are, in a sense, the strictest judges of our Buddhist practice. They see only the result of our practice — our behavior.

The Daishonin tells us here that our organization is not the only place where we practice Buddhism. Our workplaces and communities are equally important arenas of Buddhist practice, if not more so.

This new series on the Goshō written to Shijō Kingo will show how Shijō Kingo set an example for us as YMD members. He supported Nichiren Daishonin in his darkest hour of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution

and showed great proof of his faith in daily life. His life is a model of what a disciple's life should be like, and the Goshō written to him are at the same time a guide for us. SGI President Ikeda has said: "All the wisdom you need is contained in Nichiren Daishonin's writings. In these writings you will find the unlimited wisdom with which to fully live out your lives. Your efforts to read and practice even a single phrase or sentence of the Daishonin's writings amount to understanding the entirety of the teachings." With that spirit, I hope everyone will enjoy this series this year. **W**

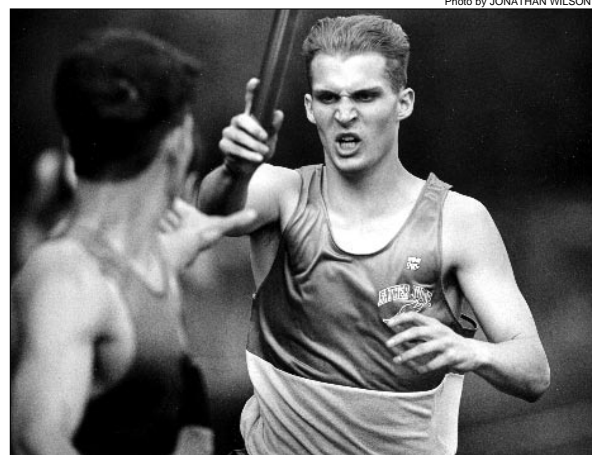


Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

The Daishonin teaches us the importance of challenging ourselves.

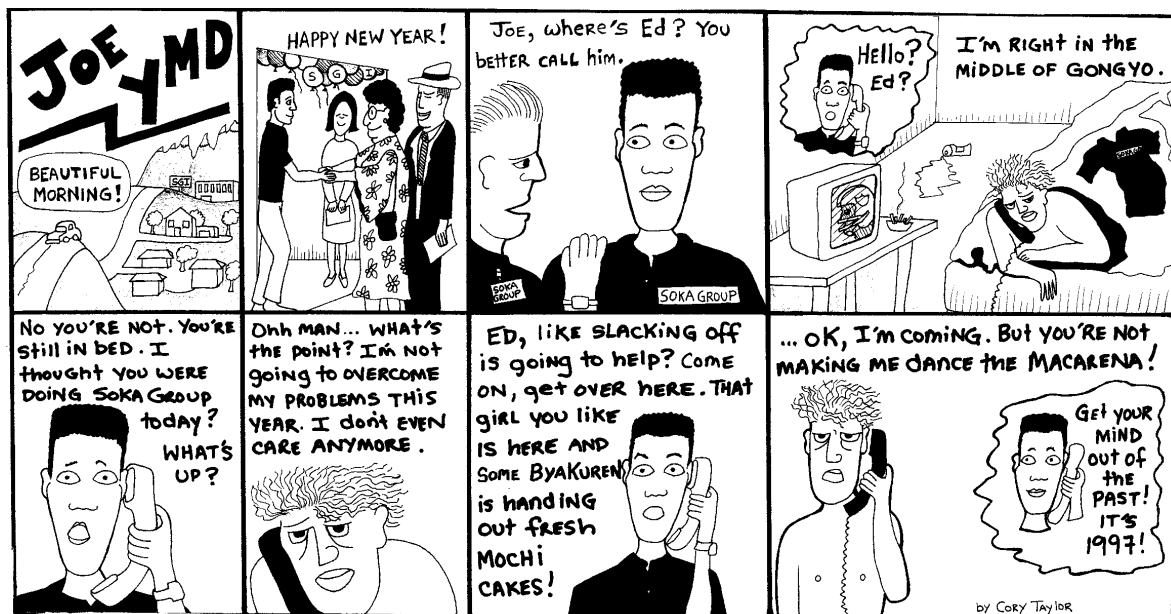
DO YOU HAVE IDEAS

FOR THE "YMD PAGES"?

Comments?
Photos of
your activities?

Send them to the
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by Cory Taylor

AP PHOTO/GREG GIBSON



Henry Ossawa Tanner's success inspired many artists of the Harlem Renaissance and he was the first African American elected to full membership in the National Academy of Art and Design.

Talent Will Transcend Prejudice

By MARK SULLIVAN AND CLAUDE LOMDEN
PHILADELPHIA CORRESPONDENTS

The history books are filled with many significant firsts, such as the first man in space, the first child to receive the polio vaccine, the first person to explain the law of gravity and so forth. But firsts in the field of human rights have not always received a lot of attention, especially when they first happened. In fact, a human rights first occurred several weeks ago in Washington, D.C., without drawing much media attention.

Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937) was an African American painter who grew up in Philadelphia. He began his career as an artist here, but lived most of his life in Paris. (There, African Americans were subjected to less racism.) Tanner's painting *Sand Dunes at Atlantic City*, completed around 1886, has just become the first by an African American to hang in the White House.

At a ceremony in the White House on Oct. 29 last year, Hillary Rodham Clinton said to a group gathered for the occasion: "From this day on, *Sand Dunes at At-*



CORBIS/BETTMANN

Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937).

lantic City will be on view for millions of visitors who walk through the White House. Each person who sees this magnificent painting will know that talent always has the power to transcend prejudice."

The search for a painting by an African American was initiated when a man who had toured the White House wrote to President Clinton asking why African Americans were not represented in the White House art collection. In his reply to Edward Bell, President Clinton wrote, "Thank you, Edward Bell, for asking questions, which is what we need our citizens to do." ❧