

# World Tribune

No. 3122

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 17, 1997

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## Enjoying the Process

SGI-USA Women's Chief Wendy Clark Talks About the Upcoming Women's Commemorative Meetings, Feb. 27

SGI-USA Women's Day is Feb. 27. Each year, women in the organization commemorate the day in special ways. The World Tribune recently interviewed Women's Chief Wendy Clark, who shared her thoughts about this significant day.

**Q** How did Feb. 27 come to be SGI-USA Women's Day?

**A** On Feb. 27, 1990, women from across the country met with SGI President Ikeda at Soka Univer-

sity of America to make a fresh start in the SGI-USA. That was the day SGI President Ikeda gave us his well-known "clear mirror" guidance, which we have been studying every year since. It is also Mrs. Ikeda's birthday. Because of the significance of the day and the guidance, soon after we chose to call Feb. 27 SGI-USA Women's Day, and each year has been another milestone.

**Q** Will the "clear mirror" guidance again be the study material for this year's meeting?

**A** Each area can choose for itself what to study. We've been studying this speech for seven years now, and while it contains timeless concepts and encouragement, we are free to learn from any material at our meetings.

**Q** What's this year's theme?

**A** "Actively Closing the Gap" was designated as the women's action theme for the entire year. This

can be the theme for the meeting, or people can choose their own theme. But again, we haven't assigned any specific material to be studied. That will be up to each area to decide.

**Q** What special emphasis would you like to see women take toward this meeting?

**A** To me, preparation is the key. I'd really like to see women enjoying

PLEASE SEE CLARK, 4



Open houses, like this one in Ft. Lauderdale, are good ways to invite neighbors into the community center.

## Community Relations Involvement To Expand in '97

By DAVE MCNEILL

MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 8

How do local communities benefit from the presence of the SGI-USA? Does the community view the local SGI-USA organization as an asset? These are some of the questions posed to joint territories in the SGI-USA Community Relations Guidelines for 1997.

"We want to stimulate discussion and thought," Community Relations Director Al Albergate says. "We want people to start thinking about what it is we can do as an organization in our communities."

Historically, the SGI-USA has encouraged individual members to get involved and win trust in society by responding to the community's diverse

needs. While individual contributions will remain vital, the guidelines say, the public relations department is also asking that the joint territories themselves sponsor some kind of organizational activity.

The specific kind of action will be left to each joint territory to decide. The guidelines sug-

PLEASE SEE COMMUNITY, 4

## President Ikeda's New Year's Poems

From the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study magazine.

Bathed in the dazzling light  
Of the sun  
The glorious peak of Soka  
Soars majestically  
Embracing the world.

\* \* \*

The Castle of Soka  
Shines with ever-greater splendor  
Toward the new century  
As children of the Buddha dance  
To the melody of "Life Span."

\* \* \*

Friends from the beginningless past!  
Let us ride  
Serenely and joyously  
Throughout the three existences  
Upon the Great White Ox Cart.

— January 1

**VOICES**  
.....

**As a Buddhist, what do you do when someone on the street asks you for money?**

Members from L.A. #1 Joint Territory respond:



Respect that person's life and not treat them like scum like some people do. As to whether I will give them money, it depends on my situation and how legitimate I think they are. I usually find that trying to tell them about chanting doesn't work, but I still try to mention Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to them.

— LEONARD LANGBERG, Panorama City, Calif.



I prefer to deal with the overall situation of homelessness from the Buddhist perspective of getting at the root of social iniquity by deepening my own practice and spreading its message of compassion for all. Too many people are on the short end of the economic stick, and I will work to help further the movement of kosen-rufu

so that all people can have at least the basic needs of food, housing, clothing and medical care met. We need more of a social conscience in this country, and I see Buddhism as the way to establish it.

— MARGIE HOYT, Torrance, Calif.



I give them food. If I don't have food with me, I will go and get some if I can do it right then. Particularly if it's a woman with children, I will make sure to go and get them something.

— KIMBERLY SCOTT, North Hollywood, Calif.

I have to assess the situation carefully because some people are professional panhandlers, and I don't give money to them; and some of them have violent tendencies. But some people are used to being self-sufficient and have just fallen on hard luck. Sometimes I will give them a Nam-myoho-renge-kyo card wrapped in money. There was a woman who was near the community center who seemed to be sincere, and I did give her money. She would go to the community center and they would encourage her to chant, so she would. Ten years later, she started chanting steadily, and eight years after that she became my group chief. Some of our strongest members have been homeless, and overcame it by chanting.

— VALERIE ASHDOWN, Sunland, Calif.

I send my money to the Union Rescue mission, because I know it will be spent on food and training programs to get people off the street. If it's someone on the street, I will usually say I don't have any money, because I feel that would be the Band-Aid approach. But there are gray areas, too. If it's a person in a high life-condition, who is polite, who seems to be just down on their luck, somehow I will feel I want to give them something.

— BEVERLY BERMAN, Encino, Calif.

Each week (except when we run "Question of the Month"), members of one joint territory will respond to a question on life, Buddhism or the organization. If you have ideas for questions we can ask, please send them to "Questions," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401, or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

# Creating Our Own Milestones

## EDITORIAL

Did you make New Year's resolutions on Jan. 1? It's a time-honored tradition, but if you were to take a quick survey, you might hear: "Why bother? I never keep them anyway."

One of the most discouraging things about making resolutions — or targets or goals or dreams or whatever you may call them — is failing to achieve them. Sometimes it's because our discipline wanes; sometimes it's because our environment seems to take control and make it impossible. We think it's easier to not even try.

In the history of the SGI, however, goals have always been important. Why? Because every goal we set — whether for the success of a meeting or a home visit or to land a certain job or overcome some obstacle — ultimately is for the sake of our individual growth and development as human beings. And that's the purpose of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the first place.

What is the secret behind achieving our goals? Well, according to many successful people, there really isn't one. That is, except for our earnest, wholehearted and consistent effort.

Konosuke Matsushita, the Japanese industrial leader, once said to SGI President Ikeda: "People think business is a case of sometimes making a profit and sometimes taking a loss. But that's not waging an all-out struggle. You can't achieve victory if you sometimes win and sometimes lose. You have to continue to win."

And integral to that attitude is perseverance — to never give up, to continually set new goals. "[T]he only way to realize true success is to wage an earnest, all-out struggle to achieve your goals," President Ikeda concurred.

Goals also act as milestones that help us gauge our growth. That's why it's helpful, even encouraging, to establish what might be called "bite-sized" goals. For example, setting a target that's a year or more away may give us a false sense of complacency — "I've got plenty of time to lose weight, so I don't have cut back on my cookie ra-

tion yet." Instead, we can try setting our sights perhaps about six months apart, and treat them as "milestones," if you will, on the road to realizing our every dream. Two significant dates in the SGI calendar lend themselves very naturally to this function:

- May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, the anniversary of the inaugurations of Josei Toda (1951) and Daisaku Ikeda (1960) as presidents of the Soka Gakkai (and also the traditional month of contributions)

- Nov. 18, the anniversary of the establishment of the Soka Gakkai (1930) and the anniversary of the death of first President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1944)

Some people feel that targets — particularly those established by someone else — are simply being tacked on to an already overloaded schedule. The goal becomes another obligation, another burden, just one more thing to add to a too-long list. But when we remember that targets are tools, not burdens, they can actually help to invigorate our efforts. Targets help us to focus our efforts, gauge our progress and motivate our initiative.

Along the same lines, it is important to not wait until the last moment. We already know what targets are coming up; why wait until the week before, or even the month before? If May 3 is our target date to, say, get our finances under control, then we can start now to do something each day toward that target: balance the checkbook, make a budget, study what Buddhism teaches us about the meaning of making contributions. Then, when May 3 or Nov. 18 comes around, we can celebrate it with the joy of personal victory.

"Our daily activities may not always be glamorous or exciting," President Ikeda has said, "but through each effort we make, we are building a 'palace of the people' that will stand eternally... a palace that we will adorn with the most precious treasures of the heart."

And that's how we will achieve our goals, our dreams, our targets — day by day and brick by brick.

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *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 response and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401, or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### Makiguchi Died for Us

I read with great interest Eric Freedman's letter ("Clarifying Makiguchi's Death in Prison") of Dec. 13, taking Jim Johanssen to task for asserting, in his essay "The Soka Gakkai Turns 66," that President Makiguchi "died to ensure" the advancement of kosen-rufu. While I appreciate Mr. Freedman's call to expository exactitude, I think that the need for "clarification" applies more to his argument than to its object.

Describing Makiguchi's heroic terminus as "an inspiring example" of no further significance is, in my view, incorrect and rather disrespectful. While the first president didn't accede to imprisonment with the idea of dying, at age 73 he certainly knew that he was putting his life on the line for the sake of the Mystic Law. Moreover, he surely did so for his disciples and for the future of the Daishonin's teachings.

Although his death in prison does not mathematically equate to the Gakkai's survival and subsequent flourishing, I feel it is a grave mistake to ponder it with other than the humblest reverence.

In the final analysis, rhetoric, expository or otherwise, is extremely cheap. The idea that President Makiguchi's bravado and selflessness are some accident of Buddhist history that any number of those with "shared beliefs" would emulate is, in my view, rather myopic and extremely cavalier.

So let us squabble amongst ourselves over the best way to propagate the Daishonin's teachings with deep love and devotion for our founding patriarch.

— MAURICE PATRICK McCARTHY, Daly City, Calif.

In regards to Mr. Freedman's statement that "[President Makiguchi] did not go [to prison] wanting to die for us...": According to the Bible, Jesus did not want to die a painful death either; who would? At one point he prayed to God to take the bitter cup (of his probable crucifixion) away from him, if at all possible. However, I think what set him, President Makiguchi and other martyrs apart from the average person is not that they wanted to die but rather that she or he was willing to die for his or her beliefs.

Personally, the concept of someone dying for the sake of future generations does not make me automatically think of Jesus, but at the same time, I can respect Jesus as a great humanitarian who willingly and singularly gave his life for a very noble belief, something that few Americans have the opportunity to do today, and that fewer still would actually do if the opportunity arose.

Perhaps what bothers Mr. Freedman is the Christian idea that Jesus died "for our sins." To me this idea is illogical, unless it is merely a figurative way of illustrating the concept of a martyr dying to preserve a teaching for the future. As a Buddhist, I realize that each person is solely responsible for his or her own karma. But I am only guessing that the concept of a person dying for another's sins is Mr. Freedman's real sticking point, because he didn't mention it in his letter.

— LAVORA PERRY, East Cleveland, Ohio

Obviously, Mr. Freedman has much to learn about the spirit of pioneers of this organization. Without the dedication to the future felt by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, which compelled him to maintain his faith and composure under continuous interrogation and torture by the militaristic Japanese government officials, we would not have the opportunity to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism today. To deny our debt of gratitude to Mr. Makiguchi for maintaining the pure heritage of this organization is the epitome of selfishness.

— JIM JOHANSEN, Arvada, Colo.

Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune.

## The Joys of a Home Page

### PERSPECTIVE

S. DIXON #41761  
BELLEVUE, WASH.

Since the first time I chanted, I have prayed to propagate this Buddhism with my photography. This single determination has carried me through tremendous trials and tribulations. But, as anyone involved in any means of expression knows, the hardest part is being able to share your work with others.

Well, the Internet has helped solve that problem. I recently finished my Web page, which consists of photographs, some graphics, and writing I find inspirational. This experience has been wonderful. It has enabled me to show friends, other photographers and artists a small sample of what I'm doing, and, most important, to make new friends. I have also viewed many other artists' and photographers' work, and gained from knowledge so generously shared.

Shakyamuni said, "Having good friends and advancing together with them constitutes not half the Buddha way, but all of the Buddha way." And President Ikeda stated: "The value of friendship cannot be overemphasized. World peace begins with friendship."

Some of the people I have met are:

- John, who lives in Wisconsin and travels around North America recording wonderful images of petroglyphs, which he displays on his Web page. We have shared our interest in Native America history and love of nature.
- A man in Japan who said I have a Japanese mind (but I really think it is a Japanese stomach from my wife's good cooking).

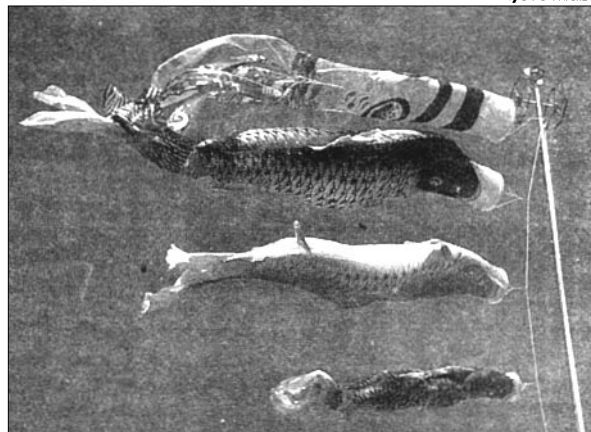


Photo by DIXON HAMBY

Photos from Nara, Japan, are featured on Dixon Hamby's Web site.

- Yoshizo, from Osaka, who takes beautiful nature photographs.
- Melissa, a community college teacher with an interest in Japan.
- Paul, an educational consultant in California.
- Niko, a graphic designer from Barcelona, with a common love of his local sports team.
- Kimika, from Nara University of Education, who thanked me for taking pictures of her beautiful area.
- The Soka Net staff in Japan, who by the way have a great Web site, and with whom I was able to share tips.

I also reconnected with SGI members in Japan with whom I had made friendships during exchange meetings. Without this means of communication, we wouldn't have been able to touch one another's lives.


President Ikeda said, "Art is a weapon for realizing peace." and Brenda Ueland (author of *If You Want To Write*) stated: "Why should we use all our creative power...? Because there is nothing that makes people so generous, joyful, lively, bold and compassionate, so indifferent to fighting and the accumulation of objects and money."

I have found this to be true on

the Web. People freely share information, unite over common interests, entertain and amuse, display their hard work, and inspire and challenge others. Talented individuals who may never be seen in galleries or publications can put their work out there for all to enjoy. It seems to be a real democratization of the art world. Galleries and the powerful corporate media no longer control what gets shown and where. People of different cultures can be exposed to the work of others.

In *The Human Revolution* President Ikeda writes: "The basis of genuine world peace will be formed by fostering mutual understanding through grass-roots exchange that transcends distinctions of race, nation, and ideology. To this end, exchanges in art and culture will be indispensable. Music, dance and art occupy a dimension that transcends borders."

I feel the Web is helping to fulfill this dream. It is a place where knowledge and art are freely shared, and language and geographic borders are all but broken down.

Oh, and if you want to see my work and maybe even become a new friend, I can be found at: <http://www.oz.net/~dixon/>. 

## What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune. What articles do you like or don't like? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make us better? Do you have questions you'd like answered? Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at: Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI

## CLARK, FROM PAGE 1

the process of preparing for this meeting.

I recently reread and was touched by an interview of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the psychology professor at the University of Chicago who wrote the 1990 bestseller *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. One of his ideas is that people are happiest when they are actively involved in something — that is, enjoying the process, not the result. One example he used was of Olympic athletes, who he said are most happy in the process leading up to winning a medal. But once they've got the medal, the happiness soon fades until they get involved again.

**Q** What specific preparation do you have in mind for the women's meetings?

**A** Home visits. Our organization begins and ends with human relationships. Buddhism is about encouraging one person at a time. I'd really like to see women doing lots of visits and talking to friends and neighbors about this Buddhism. We should talk and listen to people to the point they may say, "Because of talking to you, I've been able to deal with my difficult situation better..."

Often, so much energy is put into decorating the meeting



Women's Chief Wendy Clark urges women to make closer friends toward the Feb. 27 commemorative meetings.

place or organizing the meeting itself that the human touch gets lost. There's hardly any time to visit and talk with other women. I'd like to see home visits be the priority in preparing for this year's meetings.

**Q** One of General Director Zaitso's six challenges for this year is to make the districts priority No. 1. How do you see these women's commemorative meetings enhancing the districts in February and beyond?

**A** Often, when women get together to plan these meetings, they come up with many exciting, innovative and unique ideas. The creativity is boundless, and I appreciate it so much.

But these great ideas take a lot of time and energy to pull off. Women virtually disappear

from their own district activities because they're so busy preparing for their commemorative women's meetings.

This year I'd like to ask everyone to keep in mind what our priorities are and to be honest about what they can reasonably accomplish in the time they have.

Challenging ourselves to make a good meeting is one thing, but let's not get side-tracked and spend too much time on superficial details. Let's make a conscious decision to stick with the most important aspect of these meetings: human relationships.

Again, home visits are the key. If women concentrate on encouraging dialogue leading up to the meetings, then the entire district will benefit. In this way we can make districts priority No. 1.

Our women's commemora-

tive meetings are the end result or the flower. It's temporary.

But if we concentrate on home visits and develop close relationships with other women — now that's something that's more permanent. I'd hate to see a fantastic meeting but nothing lasting remain afterward.

**Q** Will all the meetings be on the district level?

**A** No. We've left that detail up to each joint territory to decide.

But even in those areas that decide to have meetings on the territory or headquarters level, districts can still be made the focus if we all make home visits the priority.

**Q** What is your vision of the ideal meeting?

**A** Where everyone is excited to come to the meeting because it is a celebration. It goes back to the idea of the process; that we enjoy the process, then enjoy the meeting itself.

With that said, I'd also like to see the leaders challenge themselves to create inspiring meetings. Talking about his attitude at meetings, Shin'ichi Yamamoto said in *The New Human Revolution*:

I'm not doing anything special. I just always exert myself with the burning resolve that "I must not let any of the precious children of the Buddha become unhappy" and a keen awareness that "now is my only chance to lead these people to happiness." This unwavering determination is the power that opens people's hearts. (vol. 1, p. 138)

When we have this same attitude, then the substance of the meeting will be inspiring and people will be encouraged. Experiences are especially important, for when a woman shares her life's story based on faith, people are moved. At the same time, these meetings are great opportunities to invite our friends and neighbors and show them the support and warmth that exist in the SGI-USA.

All in all, my greatest wish is that every woman enjoy the process and that this meeting be the catalyst for making closer friends. W

## Community Relations Efforts To Strengthen

### COMMUNITY, FROM PAGE 1

gest that each area consider having one or two activities in the coming year under three general categories: community involvement, United Nations education and support, and interfaith relations. Community involvement may include community center-based activities, such as SGI-USA exhibitions or open houses.

The guidelines were left purposely general, Mr. Albergate says, because each area is so different and the needs of the community vary greatly.

The guidelines are part of the SGI-USA movement's natural evolution.

For the past several years, the organization has been broadening its focus from internal growth to its place in the larger community. The friends of the SGI idea is a case in point.

"With the start of that movement, we realized that our ap-

proach to kosen-rufu should include not just those people who practice Buddhism but those who supported our movement," he said.

Another idea coming to the fore is the idea that SGI-USA community centers are part of and perhaps should be open to the larger community where appropriate.

An impetus for this idea is the story of the opening of a new culture center in Argentina last year.

SGI President Ikeda suggested that the culture center be a center for the entire community. In fact, a chorus and an orchestra from the city played at the opening ceremony, helping the local SGI organization celebrate the new building.

The tone of the guidelines makes it clear that this is not a mandate.

"We simply want people to consider having activities, and we understand the great differ-

ences in each area," Mr. Albergate says. "Some areas are more experienced than others with community involvement. For those areas with little experience, perhaps they could start with an open house or hosting an SGI-USA exhibition."

The important part, he emphasizes, is discussion and building consensus to the point where everyone is comfortable and enthusiastic about the specific project before they get involved.

Based on this consensus, the public relations department hopes that members in each area can ask themselves how they can become more involved in the community, with the understanding that, as the guidelines say, "good community relations are a necessary element in the creation of a peaceful world."

Copies of the 1997 guidelines have been sent to each joint territory office and public relations committee. W

## Children's WORLD

### Jean Saito, New Orleans

I've been chanting all my life. My parents are both members. One of my experiences is when I started to come to Boys and Girls meetings.

Jerome, the person who is in charge of our meetings, encouraged us to start chanting. I started to chant every morning with my father before I went to school. Ever since I started, I've been doing better and better at my work. Chanting has really helped me. Chanting works! W



I was born in 1932 in the slums of New Jersey, and was the oldest of five children. Our front yard bordered a sewage dump. We were all exposed to tuberculosis, and when I was 5, as a result of it, my mother died.

We were placed in an orphanage for the next few years. Eventually, my father took us home and saw after us with the help of a succession of housekeepers. By the time I was 9, I was the primary housekeeper and caregiver for my brothers and sisters.

Beatings were a common way to control the children. All the adults I knew at that time considered it proper discipline to physically and emotionally abuse children.

In spite of my upbringing, I did well in my studies. This was largely due to my father, who could not read or write but insisted that his children be excellent students.

I always felt left out and unliked; I craved affection, and would go out of my way to please people. I married at 17, but by age 24, I was divorced and the mother of a baby girl.

I ended up becoming a nurse and teacher and as a result earned a good income. As my daughter grew, we always did things together. By the time she had her own daughter, we even shared drugs. Although I felt guilty about this and asked her to quit using drugs with me, neither of us could stop. Because she knew my payday, she would call and invite me to share crack cocaine with her. Once I started smoking it, I would binge until my paycheck was gone. Sometimes I would spend as much as \$2,000 in a day.

Because of my low self-esteem, I seemed to need to punish myself. I denied my severe drug problem for a long time, telling myself that because I never missed a day's work and lived comfortably, I was all right. It was during this time, in February 1987 at age 55, that I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I continued my drug habit while learning about Buddhism. One day I looked in my bathroom mirror and for the first time, because of the self-awareness I was gaining as a result of practicing Buddhism, I saw how drugs were destroying my appearance. I was devastated. I haven't abused drugs since.

In 1991, my daughter was strangled by her common-law husband in the midst of a drug-related argument. I not only had to deal with my grief, I was given custody of her two children. My oldest granddaughter was no problem, but her sister immedi-

TESHIA BEY, CLEVELAND

## The Challenge: To Live and Change My Destiny



Teshia Bey learned to contribute to world peace 'just as I am.'

ately befriended a group of delinquent youths and began engaging in undesirable activities. She was held back in the seventh and eighth grades in spite of being very intelligent. She resented my advice and became verbally abusive and physically threatening. I resented her activities and attitude but was unaware that I was showing my true feelings.

At the same time that I took custody of my grandchildren, I was also forced to leave work for health reasons. Severe diabetes was affecting my eyesight, feet and kidneys. This was complicated by high blood pressure and a possible lump in my breast. On top of the pressures of my new parental responsibilities, illnesses and drastic drop in income, I carried a heavy sense of guilt because I knew in my heart that I didn't want to take care of my grandchildren. All I could think was, "Why me?" I felt as if I were being squeezed to death.

I sought guidance from various seniors in faith. In 1992, while my eldest granddaughter was excelling at the University of Toledo, my youngest one continued to treat me abusively. I wanted her to move out but was encouraged to chant for her happiness and to change the situation. I received this kind of guidance often, but one time after hearing it I felt totally frustrated and angry with the seniors who gave it, thinking: "What do they know? They don't have to live with my granddaughter. Besides, all white people have it easy!"

Soon after, I was diagnosed

with severe high blood pressure and kidney failure. I could barely see or walk and was told that if I didn't go on dialysis, I'd be dead in less than a year. I began receiving dialysis for several hours three days a week and was added to the list of potential kidney transplant recipients.

My granddaughter's behavior took a sharp turn for the worse during this time. She began to come home red-eyed very late at night, if at all. She would spend hours in the bathroom and be visited by all sorts of rowdy youths at all hours of the day and night. She wouldn't eat regular meals but instead stole food to take to her friends. She became more violent and threatening toward me. Because of my weakened physical condition, I felt helpless.

I started chanting earnestly. Instead of arguing with my granddaughter or striking out at her, I just faced the Gohonzon and chanted. When she left the house, I'd be chanting. When she came home, I'd still be chanting. She would mock me and say "Namyoho-enge-kyo" in jest.

I continued to chant while struggling with feelings of whether it was my responsibility what this child was doing to herself and our home. Also, I was trying to show her the love I was never given and therefore never learned how to give. This was very difficult for me.

Then, one summer night in 1994, my granddaughter and I had our first meaningful conversation. We talked until long past midnight. Toward the end of our conversation, I suddenly lost con-

trol of my bowels, and I couldn't make it to the bathroom. What a mess I had to clean up.

Afterwards, I had a profound realization about my relationship with her. It seemed as though the uncontrollable bowel movement was a catharsis, sloughing off my negative karma!

I realized I was harboring resentment and anger and showing this to my granddaughter. I was walking around with a martyr's attitude, thinking I was being such a good person and sacrificing so much. I wasn't enjoying caring for her. I was angry that she was not showing me appreciation or respect. I didn't show her understanding or compassion or recognize the pain she felt over the loss of her mother. All I could think about was my own suffering over my upbringing and the loss of my mother and my daughter. Yet I expected my granddaughter to give me the emotional support I was not giving her. She was reacting to what I was putting out.

I made a conscious change in my behavior toward her. I tried to understand how much pain she had inside. I talked to her more gently, treated her with more trust and respect and took the time to get to know her friends. In turn, she started to become caring toward me.

Very soon, I was notified that a compatible kidney had been located for me. It was unusual to receive a kidney within a year of being on the list; there are people who've waited for longer than 20 years. But thanks to my Buddhist practice, I zoomed to the top of the list based on the compatibility of the donated kidney. The surgery was successful, and my new kidney has been working ever since.

As a result of using the practice to develop a never-give-up spirit, I have progressed from being totally bedridden to using a wheel chair to walking with a walker and then a cane and finally to walking unaided.

My granddaughter's attitude improved greatly for a while, but she eventually fell back into her old patterns. I continued to chant to improve my relationship with her and also sought counseling for both of us.

Finally, I received guidance that, based on a sincere practice, we must sometimes make tough choices for the sake of those whom we love. Working along with social services, I decided to send my granddaughter to a home for troubled youth. She has flourished there. Her grades have dramatically improved, and our relationship is better than it has ever been. We both look forward to seeing each other when I visit.

Although I have received great actual proof of the power of faith, I felt frustrated that I still was not totally independent. I chanted with the attitude of "What can I do for kosen-rufu?" I desperately wanted an answer.

One day, after hearing an experience about chanting 10 million daimoku in five years, I decided to start a 10-million-daimoku-in-one-year campaign in my district. I used oversized daimoku charts shaped like trees to record the daimoku. Members began calling me weekly with their personal reports, and I'd fill in the leaves of the trees in assorted colors representing each member. I felt so good to be providing this service to other members. I challenged myself to chant four to seven hours a day so that I could fight for kosen-rufu just as I am. This was important to me because I still wasn't in perfect health and relied on others to assist me daily. But I never imagined my latest benefit.

Years ago, I had befriended a younger cousin from Georgia. He arrived in New Jersey with no place to go and ended up staying with me and my new husband in our tiny apartment. He went to school, educated himself, joined the army and became one of the top recruiters in California. On Mother's Day last year, I was feeling lonely so I decided to call relatives I hadn't talked to in a long time. He was one of them. He was surprised and pleased to hear from me — I stood by him, he said, when he had nothing. He plans to take me to visit relatives in upstate New York and then on to California to see if I want to live there where he has property. And guess what? One of his daughters has been practicing Buddhism for the past year and a half!

I'm happy to say that Southwest District has chanted nearly nine million daimoku in less than seven months, and now even members from California and the British West Indies are reporting daimoku to me via their families in Cleveland.

I am determined to continue chanting as much daimoku as I can so I can further change my negative attitude and not be so angry. I'm also determined to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism and life and to become more self-confident and joyful.

I lovingly appreciate all the people who have help me along the way. I'll forever be grateful to the SGI for protecting, maintaining and propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. ☐

As told to Ginna Girino and M. LaVora Perry

Photo by DON HODGSON

B. KATHLEEN SLATTERY  
L.A. #3 JT. TERR. BUREAU CHIEF

For seven years our Wilshire District has struggled to maintain unity and to grow amid winds of adversity. Shortly after I began practicing, the temple issue swept away half our district. A year or two later, we were excommunicated and were unable to help others who were suffering receive the Gohonzon. For one reason or another, the members kept going away, including one small wave of members who left to join a new headquarters. By then, our district was so small, one member leaving reverberated.

For seven years, our district leader, Dorothy Rhodes, struggled to hold our district together. She voluntarily embraced her responsibility to serve and protect the members whom she treated as her young and fragile children in faith. Our numbers continued to dwindle, yet with her leadership and the free environment she inspired in which we could practice, we continued to grow from within and to embrace friendship among us. Her primary focus in life was that each member derive happiness and fulfillment from his or her practice.

For the last four months or so of 1996, we chanted one, sometimes two, days a week together. Sometimes only three members came out. Sometimes only one member came out for discussion meetings. At times, we were so discouraged and angry; our prayers seemed to go unanswered. It seemed that the more we fought for growth — to expand the Buddha's forces — the more we dwindled in size and morale.

Yet we continued to face together the challenges that our lives presented. Over the last few years, four members' mothers have died. Everything about our mortal lives signaled loss and good-byes.

On the night of our general meeting in November, which was to begin at 4:30, only a predictable three members were present. I fought to hold back my tears. Our guest leader, SGI-USA Women's Division Secretariat Chief Kazue Zaitzu, had been unexpectedly called to Japan. Concerned, she called us



Kathleen Slattery (left) credits Wilshire District leader Dorothy Rhodes (center) with teaching her 'it is OK to be myself.'

## Because of Dorothy

*A woman who prays and whose actions match her words*

from Japan to tell us she would not be able to attend.

I vowed to the Gohonzon that I was done. Everything I had tried here with my leader Dorothy simply hadn't worked. Little did I know that while I had my head bowed, trying to contain all the negativity in my life, Dorothy was promising the Gohonzon that after that night she would step aside as district leader so that someone more qualified could take over, someone with whom the members would feel more comfortable.

I thought about how President Ikeda has spread this Buddhism around the world; wherever he travels, the membership grows. He has a Midas touch, I thought, and whatever magic he possesses, I didn't. I proceeded to berate myself for being a poor excuse of a disciple of the Daisshonin and my mentor in life, Daisaku Ikeda. My heart was wrenching, and I continued to chant. I thought about all the times I'd been disappointed, just like tonight. I was finally defeated.

Gongyo was almost complete and still the members did not come. I thought of Nichiren Daisshonin, and how he was the first one to chant. I was groping for anything to lift my spirits so I could help create the joyful and warm meeting for which we had prayed so fervently.

Suddenly, five of our leaders came. I could not hold back my tears another moment. Then the members started to arrive with many guests, eight in total — fellow human beings seeking the Gohonzon. We had never had so many guests at a meeting. One member, who has not been attending SGI functions this year, brought five guests with her, including two women from Jamaica and a 7-year-old girl name Selema. Suddenly, Dorothy's house was packed with people.

In my first month of practice in 1990, I remember giving my experience to a house full of members. This gathering, reminding me of that night, made me think that perhaps we've come full circle.

Though tired, exhausted in the struggle to see our prayers realized, I feel these past years paid off this night. We broke through our deadlock and were victorious. Dorothy said she felt a deep sense of gratitude in that her prayer to see members coming out to enjoy themselves was again actual proof of the power in not giving up.

We don't know what lies in the future for Wilshire District. We love one another like only a family can — a family built on faith — with a mother in all her humanness who selflessly devotes her life to our welfare and growth. Dorothy loves us and lives up to her promise to the Gohonzon — to devote her life to kosen-rufu. She is a woman who prays and whose actions match her words.

I love my district leader for raising me these past seven glorious, difficult, heart-wrenching years. I have seen her sorrow. I have felt her joy. I witnessed her chanting when she was happy and sad. I have caused her a great deal of grief and I'm sure an arduous human revolution. Because she

has always been honest about who she is — void of any facade of perfection — and possesses a forgiving heart, her greatest gift to me is that she taught me it is OK to be myself. It is OK to show my weaknesses. I don't have to pretend I'm perfect to qualify as a human being who wants peace for myself and others. Nobody has ever done that for me before. She helped to liberate parts of myself that I had been too ashamed to acknowledge.

Through her example I learned about the power of a long-term practice. I've seen her buy a huge house on a prayer with horrendous credit; I've seen her change her job situation (three institutions, including one that had fired her, told her they'd be honored to have her work for them); I've seen her wage a painful battle to mend her relations with her six children (the other day, her oldest son urged her to chant for his brothers).

Life and our movement for world peace are always changing and evolving. I know this. In our district, we are friends in faith. Our connection runs deep like Earth itself, and no matter where we go or what obstacles assail us in the future, our district leader, Dorothy Rhodes, has helped to teach us one fundamental truth: Never give up.

I am grateful because of Dorothy. WT

## SIGN POSTS

APPLYING  
NICHIREN  
DAISHONIN'S  
WRITINGS TO  
DAILY LIFE

### Remember What a Good Thing We've Got

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

And yet people fail to understand this principle [that the Lotus Sutra is supreme] or to examine the matter, but instead seek worldly reputation or give way to suspicion and prejudice, thus forming the basis for falling into hell. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 28)

Leaving the Chinese Theater in Hollywood one night, I saw all the movie stars' signatures and footprints in the cement there. A woman's name caught my attention: Jean Harlow, the sexy, wise-cracking blonde who was a big star in the 1930s and signed her name then. None of the young people exiting the theater that night seemed to know her, though. I watched them step on her name, not even noticing it, as they made their way to Eddie Murphy's footprints.

This reminded me of just how fleeting fame is. The Daishonin laments how even people who have been lucky enough to meet this Buddhism, to start practicing it, sometimes forget what a great thing they've got — a practice that lets them accomplish human revolution.

In *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda relates the story of a woman obsessed with the idea of her husband becoming the third Soka Gakkai president. Her focus shifted from kosen-rufu to fame and profit; in the end she suffered.

Often, it seems, people get confused and seek happiness in things that won't last, like fame, or give way to other pitfalls like the "suspicion and prejudice" the Daishonin mentions. We are all susceptible when we forget that doing human revolution is the greatest happiness.

Of course the Daishonin is not saying that worldly success is to be shunned. He is putting it into perspective, reminding us that what matters most is our awareness of what happiness is.

Whether famous or not, with appreciation for our practice we'll always be on the right track. ☐

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH

## How Can I Deepen My Perspective on the Gohonzon?

By TED MORINO  
SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF

**Sometimes I feel that the Gohonzon is nothing more than a paper scroll. How can I deepen my perspective on it?**

Ultimately, how we view the Gohonzon is a function of our life-condition. The crucial challenge for each of us is to perceive the essence of the Gohonzon as Nichiren Daishonin intended us to.

The Gohonzon's essence extends beyond what we can perceive ordinarily through our senses. To understand it, then, I believe we must make extraordinary efforts, efforts that reach beyond those stemming from habit and formality. We must make a conscious effort to trust the Mystic Law more and more. As Nichiren Daishonin says in "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon": "The Gohonzon is found in faith alone. As the sutra states, 'Only with faith can one enter Buddhahood'" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 213)

The important thing is to chant daimoku with a clear prayer to more fully awaken our inherent Buddha nature, to experience a deeper sense of enrichment in our lives.

At first it may be difficult to focus this way, but what counts is that we try. After all, Buddhism involves "practice." We are in the process of developing our Buddhist expertise. Eventually, we will come to experience the power of our Buddha nature more and more, as the Daishonin describes.

In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" he also writes: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 213). At times, it might seem beyond us to believe that the Gohonzon, which embodies the fundamental Law of the universe, exists within us. We may be tempted to give in to feelings of inadequacy or doubt.

Nevertheless, enlightenment exists at the core of our lives. Awakening to this reality is a natural process. We deepen our faith in the Gohonzon the moment we see enlightenment functioning in our lives — something that can be as simple as experiencing joy while chanting or feeling genuine compassion when praying for a suffering friend. Recognizing this enlightenment in our lives, we at the same time perceive the essence of the Gohonzon. As a result, we begin to embody the wisdom, courage and hope depicted on the Gohonzon.

In his "Letter to Horen" Nichiren Daishonin writes:

As for the characters of the Lotus Sutra, a blind person cannot see them at all. A person with the eyes of a common mortal sees them as black in color. Persons in the two vehicles see them as void. Bodhisattvas see various different colors in them, while a person whose seeds of Buddhahood have reached full maturity see them as Buddhas. So the sutra states: "If one can uphold this [sutra], he will be upholding the Buddha's body." (MW-7, 112)

Our perception always affects how we interact with our environment. Accordingly, the Daishonin understood

But after studying for a few years, the student begins to see some logic behind the haze, even recognizing specific stars and mapping galaxies in his mind. Eventually, the student may become involved in advanced research, having developed a passion to uncover the principles at work in the universe.

The astronomer that was once a student now has an intuitive feel for how the universe operates, yet maintains a deep sense of awe and appreciation for his environment. His passion came from within, even though his understanding was fostered through interactions with professors and colleagues, by his personal experiences and by reading scientific literature.

In the same way, we elevate our life-conditions and broaden our perception of the Gohonzon by chanting daimoku with the determination to refresh our lives, combined with opening ourselves to growth through friendships in the SGI, experiences in life and study of Buddhism.

As we continue to practice, we come to understand that, in a sense, the Gohonzon is the purest form of life. It embodies the life, or the fundamental law, of the universe.

The Daishonin's object of worship is unique in Buddhism. President Ikeda once explained:

Traditionally, the objects of worship in Buddhism were most frequently images of the Buddha....

The common people...aroused faith in the Buddha and reverence for him through such works of art.

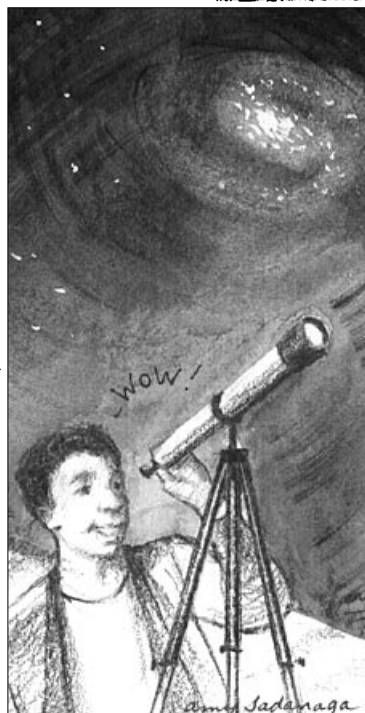
But Nichiren Daishonin's basic object of worship consists of writing, of words. Rather than worshipping a graphic image, the Daishonin made the written expression of the world of the intellect, the great and lofty wisdom of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, the object of the highest reverence.

In this respect alone, the object of worship of the Daishonin is fundamentally different from that traditionally worshipped in Buddhism (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, pp. 44-5).

The more we develop our innate Buddhahood, the more we can sense the truthfulness of the following Goshō passage: "To be 'endowed with the ten worlds' means that all the ten worlds without exception are contained in the one world of Buddhahood. That is why the Gohonzon is called a *mandala*. *Mandala* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'perfectly endowed' or 'cluster of blessings.'" (MW-1, 213)

For further explanations of what is written on the Gohonzon, please refer to the article "The Gohonzon: A Treasure Map of Life and the Universe," in the May 12, 1995, *World Tribune*. ☐

Illustration by AMY SADANAGA



that the Gohonzon takes on a different meaning according to our changing life-condition.

Therefore, it is necessary to open our hearts and constantly seek to broaden our lives to grasp the essence of something as profound as the all-encompassing enlightenment embodied as the Gohonzon. We accomplish this through our day-to-day actions in faith; it is an ongoing process, the same as any field of study.

Take a young student who has determined to study astronomy. Glancing up at the sky on a clear evening, the heavens might at first seem to be a flat, inanimate object, a huge movie screen illuminated by a billion lights.

# My Recollections



Liao Chengzhi, Late President of the China-Japan Friendship Association

By SGI President Ikeda

I am just an ordinary foot soldier," said Liao Chengzhi. At the time, he was president of the China-Japan Friendship Association and a member of China's Central Committee. Long a key figure in the core group that had carried forward China's revolution, he had been tapped just before his death for the position of Central Committee vice president.

I remarked: "You have cut a path through the thorny wilderness. For the sake of friendship between China and Japan, please take care of your health."

He replied: "You honor me. As far as the improvement of friendly relations between China and Japan is concerned, I am just an ordinary foot soldier, following the lead of Premier Zhou Enlai."

He remained loyal to the premier even after the latter's death.

"You are too modest," I said. "But if you are indeed a foot soldier, it is important to remain strong and vigorous, or you cannot fight. Please continue with the struggle, as the great 'foot soldier' that you are." His face crinkled into a huge smile and his large frame shook with appreciative laughter. Madame Deng Yingchao, the widow of Zhou Enlai, greeted our exchange with applause and smiles.

How I miss the warm expressions of Madame Deng and President Liao, now both dead. The meeting I describe took place in September 1978 in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, during my fourth visit to the People's Republic of China.

One of President Liao Chengzhi's great virtues was to make all who met him feel comfortable and totally at ease. He was a man of myriad dimensions, combining firmness, gentleness, smiles, stern authority and so many other characteristics. He was a leader who embraced the people with his magnanimous spirit.

While very aware of history, he always looked first and foremost to people's feelings, to the human heart. He valued the subtleties of human emotions, and he always treated others with utmost sincerity. In



Liao Chengzhi looks on as SGI President Ikeda speaks to a young woman.

this, he was much like Premier Zhou Enlai.

He loved the people of China, and he loved the people of Japan as well. Without President Liao, progress in the friendly relations between China and Japan would probably have been impossible. We in Japan owe a great deal to him.

On my first visit to Beijing in May 1974, the first person to greet me was President Liao. In those days, there were still no direct flights from Tokyo to Beijing, so I had flown to Hong Kong and taken a train from there to Canton (Guangzhou), where I caught a plane to Beijing. Though I arrived at the airport at nearly 10 p.m., more than a dozen people were waiting to greet me. I was sorry to make them come at such a late hour. As I descended from the plane in some embarrassment, who was the first to greet me but President Liao, who stood at the front of his party with an enormous grin. Of strong physique and warm demeanor, he was every inch a great man.

"Welcome, and thank you for coming!" he said in Japanese so fluent that I was astonished. When he shook my hand, the warmth of his firm flesh communicated his sincerity and

commitment to friendship.

President Liao was born in the Okubo district of Tokyo in 1908. He often referred to himself as the "Tokyoite of Beijing." His father, Liao Zhongkai, was the righthand man of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Wen), renowned as the father of modern China. His mother, He Xiangning, was a supporter of Sun Yat-sen's wife, Madame Song Qingling, and a leading activist for Chinese women's rights.

The entire family fought passionately to save the Chinese people. They fled China for Japan together with Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who often held meetings at their Tokyo home. A famous photograph shows President Liao as a small child sitting on Dr. Sun's lap. He was truly a child of the revolution.

Though President Liao made many friends in Japan, not all of his memories of those days are pleasant ones. Many Japanese were afflicted — as many still are today — with a kind of sickness that led them to look down on their fellow Asians. President Liao recalled an experience at school: "Though our teacher was a self-professed Christian, he looked down on the Chinese as an inferior race, and when I couldn't answer one of his ques-

tions in class he would say, 'Of course you don't know, you little Chinese pig.' I got angry, and I refused to answer any more of his questions. Then he would rage: 'Everyone knows that the Chinese are as stupid as pigs! We Japanese are different!'"

When Liao Chengzhi was only 16, his father was assassinated by a political enemy in Canton — right in front of his mother's eyes. After that she displayed a banner at the gate to her home emblazoned with the words, "The Spirit Never Dies!" Though the mortal being can be destroyed, the spirit is undying! This fiery passion flowed through President Liao's entire life.

After Liao Chengzhi's own death in 1983, his son Liao Chun said to me: "In his lifetime, my father was arrested seven times and was in prison for 11 years altogether. During China's Cultural Revolution, he was under house arrest for another four years. During the Long March, he was accused of being a spy, and he made the entire journey in shackles." The Long March was enough to test the endurance of the strongest, but to do it in chains! And all because he had dared to point out an error in the strategy of a local army leader. And he was re-

leased afterwards only when he finally met up with Zhou Enlai. During the Long March, Liao Chengzhi recorded his feelings in poetry:

*Do not lament  
Though friends turn their  
faces away  
And you know not what  
will happen  
After the chrysanthemums  
fade  
The universe is vast  
The stars are many  
The earth is hundreds of  
millions of years old  
And the hundred years of  
human life are but a  
fleeting moment  
Laugh, laugh, laugh!  
Why do you complain with  
glaring eyes?  
If your mind is clear, your  
thoughts will be open  
If your spirit is  
magnanimous, your  
heart will be filled with  
light  
Though I may not hold the  
reins nor the sword in  
my hand,  
One hundred years from  
now,  
I will have someone who  
carries on my ideals.<sup>2</sup>*

President Liao's wife, Jing Puchun, said: "During the Cultural Revolution [specifically, the four years starting in 1967], not only was my husband forbidden to continue his activities, he was prevented from having any contact with others. He was completely isolated, and not even I, his wife, could see him. Thanks to the efforts of Premier Zhou Enlai, I was finally allowed to visit him once a week."

Highlighting the madness of the times, large posters were put up in Beijing, crying: "Burn Liao Chengzhi to Death!" and "Throw Liao Chengzhi in a Pot of Boiling Oil!" Furthermore, his captors refused to allow him to be treated for the heart disease he suffered — indeed, they did not even permit him to be examined by a doctor.

But in spite of all these harsh persecutions and hardships he

PLEASE SEE CHENGZHI, NEXT PAGE

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

CHENGZHI, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

endured, President Liao did not become embittered in the least. He continued to embrace humanity and to be open-hearted. His sense of humor, his ability to make others laugh, remained undiminished.

His brother-in-law Li Shaoshi was killed in an assassination attempt on Zhou Enlai's life in 1946 in Chongqing (formerly known as Chungking, the wartime capital of the Kuomintang — the Nationalist forces). Li was a kind of secretary to Zhou Enlai at the time, and the assassin mistook him for Zhou. Though he was terribly shaken by this tragedy, President Liao drew a humorous picture to cheer up his little niece, who was grieving over her father's death. The sketch was of someone winking mischievously. Underneath the picture, President Liao wrote: "Revolutionaries should not be too sensitive. They must have nerves of steel. They must laugh, be positive and never lose their spirit for a moment." Here is an optimism honed and tempered by having faced and triumphed over death time and time again.

In our conversation, the subject of being completely surrounded by enemies came up. President Liao said, "When I'm surrounded on all sides, that's when I show my true strength."

In the year following our first meeting, I visited the great land of China two more times. My second visit was at the end of the same year (1974) and my third was in April of the following year (1975). I had decided that the groundwork for building a golden bridge of friendship between our nations should be laid in one great, intense initiative. Each time President Liao and I met, our friendship deepened.

Around the same period, I visited the Soviet Union twice — in September 1974 and May 1975. I wanted, in whatever way I could, to forge a common will for peace between these two great nations. During that time, one of the dignitaries I met in the Soviet Union happened to say: "President Liao is a remarkable person. Is there anyone like him in Japan?" This admiration for a Chinese leader, given the strained relations between the Soviet Union and China at the time, made a deep impression on me.

President Liao was a genial and warm person, never conceited. When I remarked, "You are a great leader of your country, while I am just an ordinary

citizen," he quickly replied, in great earnestness: "No. I am just an ordinary person, too."

Despite his good-natured, easygoing disposition, President Liao could be quite strict with his family members, and when one of his young grandchildren treated the family cook rudely, he made the child write an apology and read it aloud.

The words he chose, when I asked him to write a piece of calligraphy, were "Always strive for self-improvement" — a motto that exemplified his spirit.

In his attitude toward others, he was always open and sincere, and he had a gift for bringing harmony to any situation. In his work, he was indefatigable yet considerate. Even when he was in prison, he won the hearts of his jailers with his humanity and dignity. He never failed to listen humbly to the opinions of others, even when they differed from his. If they were valid, he would act upon them. And his humor and talent for entertaining guaranteed a constant chorus of cheerful laughter around him.

He energized others with his enthusiasm and drew people to him like a magnet. Such was his talent for inspiring others that he was dubbed a master of the art of struggle.

President Liao shared the same spirit and commitment as Premier Zhou Enlai, and I always regarded him as an emissary of the premier.

On the last night of my second visit to China in December 1974, President Liao approached me and said in a low voice: "I have something wonderful to share with you. Please come with me, President Ikeda." It was about 9:00 in the evening. We got into a car. I had no idea where we were headed. But the smile on President Liao's face put me totally at ease.

Finally, he turned to me and said: "The fact is that Premier Zhou is waiting to see you. He is ill, but a special meeting has been arranged." And, just as President Liao promised, Premier Zhou was waiting for us at the hospital where he was being treated.

The moment we met, I felt a great bond of understanding between us, though we had as yet said nothing. For the previous 10 years, the premier had been communicating with me through intermediaries, sending me messages. Of course, he knew of my 1968 proposal to restore diplomatic relations between China and Japan and conclude a peace treaty. He was also well aware of the furor this had stirred up in Japan and



'I am just an ordinary foot soldier,' said Liao Chengzhi, following Premier Zhou Enlai, pictured here in 1972.

the subsequent persecution of the Soka Gakkai.

But what aspect of the Soka Gakkai piqued Premier Zhou's interest in particular? Lin Liyun, the interpreter at our meeting and a member of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, later said: "Premier Zhou believed that the Soka Gakkai is important because it has a broad base among the people. That is what he said." And Sun Pinghua, the current president of the China-Japan Friendship Association, has publicly stated, "Premier Zhou said, 'China must build friendly relations with the Soka Gakkai.'"

Presidents Liao and Sun — two early pioneers of post-war China-Japan friendship — often reported to Premier Zhou Enlai. From the early 1960s, they said, the premier had been proposing contacts with the Soka Gakkai. I also later learned that in December 1970, Premier Zhou questioned the Japanese university professor Masahisa Suganuma about the Soka Gakkai. He wanted to know whether the Soka Gakkai transcended national interests, because his concerns, too, went beyond national interest. He focused on the hearts of the people.

The restoration of truly friendly relations is not simply a matter of treaties between governments. Mere paper agreements do not always withstand the raging gales of history. Only when the peoples of the two nations are linked from heart to heart in relationships of trust, respect and alliance will there be true China-Japan friendship. It was his sense of responsibility for the far-distant future that led the premier to this conviction.

And at the root of that conviction was the iron determination that the hellish experience of the Sino-Japanese War must never be repeated. For many Chinese, the mere sight of the Japanese flag filled them with terror and nausea, opening the horrible wound of wartime suffering, when their homes were burned and their loved ones massacred. But Premier Zhou believed that the Japanese people, too, were victims of Japanese militarism. He proclaimed the importance of China-Japan friendship, deciding not to seek reparations for wartime activities, which would only cause further suffering to ordinary Japanese citizens.

I know that Premier Zhou clearly appreciated the indomitable spirit of peace upheld by the Soka Gakkai, a group that

had fought against Japanese militarism during the war and been driven almost to the brink of destruction as a result. He selected the Clean Government Party, which we supported, as the intermediary to restore friendly relations between China and Japan. And while he was in the very midst of pursuing top-secret initiatives aimed at restoring diplomatic relations between China and the United States — before these initiatives were even made public — Premier Zhou sent a telegram to Japan welcoming Clean Government Party representatives to China. The visit by the Japanese delegation took place in June 1971.

In the spring of 1972, Premier Zhou realized that he had cancer. The improvement of China-Japan relations was the last great diplomatic project that he undertook, and he was determined to accomplish it before he died. While continuing his struggle against the Gang of Four, he made every effort to shield and succor those who were endangered. Though ill, he stood like a mighty tree sheltering all — devoting himself for the sake of billions of fellow Chinese citizens.

PLEASE SEE CHENGZHI, 12

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

# Friendship and Perspectives on Life During Youth — Part 2

*This is the 6th installment of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing high school division members. They were joined by Kansai High School Division Young Men's Chief Isao Takemura in this installment.*

**Kimura:** I think everyone feels that friendship is important. Many, however, discover that friendships with schoolmates only last as long as they attend the same school, are in the same class or involved in the same extracurricular activities. Once they move on, such friendships tend to fizzle out. Some, therefore, complain how difficult it is to find a lifelong friend.

**Ikeda:** There are many kinds of friendship. Some friendships last a lifetime. But there are also friendships that endure only for a certain time — it might be 20 years, five years or one year. Sometimes your feelings may not change, but the other person's do. You don't have to be obsessed with the idea that friendship must last a lifetime. A friendship still has meaning even if it lasts only a short while. The main thing is that you respond with sincerity to each encounter.

Your classmates are your peers, the people you will graduate with, so I hope you can truly enjoy the time you spend with them, without worrying how long your friendships will last. Deep friendships are a rare thing. Cultivating them is like growing a mighty tree — a process that involves a different method of cultivation than that required for growing small shrubs and plants.

If you remain sincere in your interactions, you will one day naturally come to find yourself surrounded by good friends. And from among those people, I'm sure you'll forge lifelong friendships that are as strong and unshakable as towering trees. Don't be impatient. Please work first on



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

**'Deep friendships are a rare thing. Cultivating them is like growing a mighty tree — a process that involves a different method of cultivation than that required for growing small shrubs and plants.'**

developing yourself. Rest assured that an infinite number of wonderful encounters await you in the future.

**Takemura:** Is there some secret to making friendships last?

**Ikeda:** You many think that friendships just happen spontaneously and then develop by themselves, but they must be infused with and supported by the eternally youthful spirit to grow and advance — an unflinching commitment to always be there to encourage and help one another as you work toward your respective aims and goals in life. To have some ambition — such as graduating from a university or making a meaningful contribution to society — is important. Friendships among people who lack a clear, positive purpose or direction in life tend to be complacent and dependent in nature. Friendships among people who cheerfully encourage one another while striving to realize their dreams are the kind that deepen and endure.

What is friendship? It is not simply a matter of being favorably disposed toward someone because he or she spends a lot of time with you, or lends you money, is nice to you or because you get along well and have a lot in common. True friendship implies a relationship where you empathize with your friends when they are suffering and encourage them not to lose heart — and where they, in turn, empathize with you when you're in the same boat and try to cheer you up. A friendship with those qualities flows as beautifully as a pure, fresh stream.

In fact, the purest and most beautiful stream that can be found in human existence is friendship. When the clear and unspoiled streams of the friendship of two people converge, they will create an even broader, deeper and purer river of friendship. It will inspire all who see it to exclaim at its beauty and clarity and to want to drink from its waters, too.

**Igeta:** It would be truly wonderful if we could all develop that kind of friendship. Ultimately, it all comes down to the individual, doesn't it?

**Ikeda:** Yes. The key lies in creating a beautiful stream of friendship in your life as you strive together with your friends toward your respective dreams — struggling and growing together, sharing one another's problems and hardships and always encouraging and supporting one another.

If your friends share the same feelings about the friendship as you do, then it is likely to last a long time; but if they decide to opt out, then it will be short. You yourself may unintentionally let a friend down, causing a rift in your relationship.

In any event, should a friendship end there's no need to grow despondent. You don't have to beat yourself up, thinking friendship should last forever. The important thing is that you never forget the true meaning of friend-

ship and make it the basis for your interactions.

In the Goshu, Nichiren Daishonin talks about "a friend in the orchid room" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 36). This expression means that just as orchids in a room impart their exquisite fragrance to all who enter, we should strive to be the kind of friends who have a positive and uplifting effect on others.

All you have to do is become like the orchid. In the East, the orchid is symbolic of a person of lofty character. Therefore, please develop your character so that it exudes a beautiful orchidlike fragrance.

**Igeta:** Colombia, as I recall, is famous for orchids, which are its national flower. The South American country produces 10 percent of all orchids in the world and is home to about 3,000 varieties.

I remember hearing a story about your friendship with Colombia. You went ahead with a visit there in early 1993 at a time when the South American country was facing a major national security crisis. Because you were determined to keep your promise to your friends in Colombia, you went.

**Ikeda:** Yes. Colombia's President César Gaviria Trujillo and First Lady Ana Milena Muñoz de Gaviria also value trust and friendship most highly. In 1990, the Colombian people generously allowed us to hold the "Colombian Gold" exhibition at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum. We displayed for the first time outside of the Republic of Colombia one of the world's largest uncut emeralds [weighing 1,700 carats] as well as some 500 cultural relics. I will never forget this warm gesture of friendship expressed in the form of cultural exchange.

Actually, a short time before my departure, I received a message from President Gaviria's office asking whether I was planning to visit Colombia as

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scheduled. The drug cartels had been stepping up their terrorist activities, and a huge bomb explosion in the Colombian capital had just claimed the lives of many innocent people. Already, an important international conference in Colombia had been canceled because of concerns over security. Even foreign reporters were fleeing the country. Many people advised me to postpone my visit, but I didn't. I told President Gaviria's staff to rest assured that I would indeed travel to their country as planned, counting myself as one of the courageous and honorable citizens of Colombia.

I will always remember the conversation I shared on that visit with President and First Lady Gaviria, who warmly welcomed me to their country.

The Fuji Art Museum's "Eternal Treasures of Japan" exhibition, incidentally, which opened at the Colombian National Museum at that time, was also a great success.

**Takemura:** So the bottom line is that when our friends are facing difficulties, we should take sincere, heartfelt action on their behalf.

**Kimura:** Yes, there are all too many fair-weather friends in the world — friends who stay with us in good times but quickly disappear when some problem or setback assails us. That isn't true friendship. To be a good, reliable friend to others, we need strong conviction.

**Ikeda:** As the saying goes, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

I have noticed that other countries, particularly Western ones, take a much deeper perspective toward friendship than Japan. In the West, there is a tradition of viewing friendship as something profoundly noble and eternal. I find evidence of this in the novels of many Western writers as well as in real life examples. In Japan, friendship, on the whole, seems to lack such depth and noble purpose, being formed solely on the shallow criterion of "we get along well together."

I have a friend who was once an ambassador to Japan. He served in this post for many years and played a leading role in the diplomatic community here. He was also an important, influential political figure in his country. I had the opportunity to meet with him on three occasions and each time found him a truly outstanding individual of great humanity and profound insight. Several times he invited me to visit his country. He



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even wrote an essay about my activities, which he sent to people in various fields. To this day, I regret that circumstances prevented me from traveling there at that time. Later, in the wake of political turmoil that saw a new regime seize control of his country, the ambassador was forced to flee for his life. He lived in exile in the United Kingdom until his death.

Before this turn of events, I was invited to a dinner party hosted by the ambassador at the embassy. This was shortly before his departure from Japan. There he showed me to a room where the walls were decorated with portraits of influential leaders of countries around the world. And, then, there was one of me. I will never forget the ambassador telling me that my picture hung there because he regarded me as his lifelong friend and comrade in the cause of peace. He turned to the other photos and said, "These are all wonderful friends and comrades of mine"; and he shared with me something of the background and history of each person.

Pointing to one photo in particular of a friend from abroad, the ambassador explained as tears filled his eyes: "He is still in jail, a political prisoner. He is a person of conviction, but he may never again see the outside world."

I asked the ambassador if he thought dying in prison for one's

beliefs was a tragedy. Fighting back tears, the ambassador said unhesitatingly: "People such as my friend have given their lives to truth and justice. They may die in prison, but to die a martyr for the sake of one's beliefs is truly noble. Such a life is one of absolute victory." His words moved me deeply.

These prisoners of conscience could easily gain their freedom if they would but turn their backs on their convictions or hand their comrades over to the authorities. But they stand firm, never giving in, even though they may be betrayed by others and face death in prison alone. Such strength is the hallmark of true human greatness and genuine friendship.

**Takemura:** That reminds me of the undying friendship between David Rossi and Rocco Bruno, the protagonists of Hall Caine's novel *The Eternal City*.<sup>1</sup>

**Ikeda:** Yes. It's so important to keep the promises made to friends. This is the true meaning of friendship. To become a person who can do so, however, you must first learn to keep your resolutions — the promises you have made to yourself.

True friendship contributes to one's growth as a person and the creation of positive value in one's life. One cannot say the same of associating with bad influences,

where the only result is stagnation and negativity — this is just hanging out together, not friendship. As a well-known saying goes, "You can judge a person by the company he keeps." People are greatly influenced by the kind of friends they mix with. And as another old proverb says, "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled." I hope you will not be swayed nor led astray by negative and destructive individuals.

**Kimura:** President Ikeda, you have made friends all over the world. Just communicating with people in one's immediate circle of acquaintances is a challenge, so I think it absolutely amazing that you've made friends transcending the bounds of country, language, religion and culture.

**Ikeda:** I am very proud to have so many friends of outstanding character and ability throughout the world. Almost all of them speak frankly in our dialogues and never manipulate or exploit them for selfish ends.

In one respect, nothing is nobler or stronger than heart-to-heart bonds between people who share their hopes and dreams and are committed to working for society. Many years of experience have led me to this conclusion. Such people have deep-rooted conviction and solid philosophy. They strive to

lead a worthwhile existence and have a humble spirit to contribute something. Unity and cooperation between people of such altruistic aspiration is the highest ideal of friendship. If such lofty friendship ceases to exist, the world will be plunged into eternal darkness. In the same way, because of our friendships with people across the globe, the Soka Gakkai and SGI have always found fresh hope to break through the darkness into light.

**Takemura:** Expanding ties of friendship is the way toward peace, isn't it?

**Ikeda:** Yes, just as an exquisite tapestry is woven from many varied threads, if countless beautiful friendships are woven across the world, forming bridges that span the oceans to connect all countries, they will lead to the creation of a happy, peaceful world. Treasuring friendship is deeply meaningful in that it embodies the spirit of humanism and peace. It is the first step toward realizing an ideal society where people can live together in harmony.

Many have long noted the truth of the observation that "evil people flock together, but the good remain aloof." So it

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Premier Zhou often remarked: "The best way to die is to be hit by an enemy bullet. But when that is not possible, the best way to die is to work wholeheartedly for the people. In that way, one can use up one's life by giving it to the people." The restoration of friendly relations between China and Japan was achieved through such determined devotion, and President Liao inherited the premier's commitment, throwing his entire being into the struggle.

It was with a profound awareness of and resonance with Premier Zhou's selfless dedication

to the welfare and happiness of the common people that I declared to those who had come to see me off at Haneda Airport when I was embarking on my first visit to China: "We of the Soka Gakkai have achieved the phenomenal development we have through the efforts of those whom society has dismissed as 'the poor and the sick.' We have not relied on power or money to achieve what we have accomplished." We Soka Gakkai members have been the greatest allies of the suffering and the oppressed. That is a great source of pride to me.

Just being able to see the premier, meeting him, was suffi-

cient for me. Not wishing to tire him, I tried several times to cut my visit short. I would look at my watch and nod to President Liao, but each time he would indicate that it was all right to remain a little longer.

Twenty-two years have passed since that meeting. The compassionate faces of Premier Zhou and President Liao are eternally engraved on the left and right posts of the golden bridge of friendship connecting China and Japan. They both desired that China-Japan friendship should continue into the next generation and the next, growing ever deeper and broader.

President Liao's wife, Jing Puchun, composed a brief memorial for her husband in which she suggests that he has joined his beloved parents, and talks with them day and night. The memorial closes with the words: "Two generations, parents and child, dedicated their lives to carrying on the struggle of those who had come before them. Now they speak no doubt of the things that yet wait to be accomplished. May they put their minds at ease. For we who remain behind promise to accomplish them." In that spirit, I press my hands together rev-

erently in memory of Premier Zhou, his wife Madame Deng and President Liao.

President Liao was given the name "Chengzhi" by his parents because they wanted him to "carry on" (*cheng*) the "will" (*zhi*) of the revolution. His noble life was the perfect fulfillment of that wish. □

1. Translated from the Japanese: "Seishonen Jidai no Omoide" (Recollections of My Youth) from *Ryo Shoshi Bunshu* (The Selected Writings of Liao Chengzhi) (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1993), p. 16.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 511-12.

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goes without saying that when people of sincere intent do come together in pursuit of a lofty goal, something really beautiful and respectable takes place. This is the essence of true humanity.

**Takemura:** Yes. Morally corrupt people are easily drawn together by self-serving motives. People of integrity, in contrast, tend not to be motivated by self-interest.

**Kimura:** I am struck by the fact that many Japanese lack generosity. They find it difficult to be happy for others' success. Jealousy seems to be the uppermost emotion, and anyone who dares to excel or stand out from the rest is likely to be the target of criticism and attack.

**Igeta:** How we Japanese love conformity! But such blatant disregard for individuality isn't what friendship is about, is it?

**Ikeda:** That's right. The generous spirit to respect those whose character and personality are different from yours is the very foundation of friendship. If you have a big heart, you will form many wonderful friendships. But a small, stingy heart cultivates nothing but a narrow, barren, lonely life bereft of genuine friendship.

**Takemura:** I see what you're saying. But what do we do about the people we just can't get along with?

**Ikeda:** Just as there are some foods that you find unpalatable, having people in your environment whom you dislike is an unavoidable part of life. While there's nothing wrong with not

particularly liking someone, it is wrong to put them down or be mean to them. They have every right to exist just as you do — and to have their own opinions and way of doing things. It's important to cultivate a broad-minded outlook.

**Igeta:** One student came to me with the problem that she had a hard time making friends because she was very shy and reserved.

**Ikeda:** Admittedly, our basic nature doesn't change easily.

There's nothing wrong with being a little too sensitive or insecure, although it's preferable to be strong and confident. Things like our personality and even sometimes our circumstances are difficult to change. That's why the way to victory lies in continuous efforts to develop and strengthen ourselves.

• Those who realize their shortcomings and then chant daimoku while striving to improve themselves will definitely see their lives change. Someone who is quiet and introverted, for instance, may come to shine as thoughtful and discrete. Usually, in the long-term, such people tend to develop closer, deeper friendships than their louder, extroverted peers, who may sometimes tend to act before they think!

**Takemura:** One student asked me how he could encourage a classmate whom he didn't know very well but who had stopped coming to school.

**Ikeda:** To be concerned about others' welfare is truly admirable.

If you want to help people, the best thing to do is chant daimoku for them. And then, in terms of concrete encourage-

ment, you could, depending on the situation, let them know that you're worried about them or that you're looking forward to seeing them at school again. You might pay them a visit, write them a letter, or give them a call. There are many ways to express your concern. The situation probably won't change immediately. But simple words like "I'm looking forward to seeing you back at school; it's not the same without you" can make it easier for them to return when they feel ready. The thing is, in other words, to smooth the way for them and make them feel welcome. Developing a warm spirit of mutual concern among your classmates also shouldn't be overlooked.

**Kimura:** Some people are envied and resented by others because of their good grades.

**Ikeda:** They should be proud of themselves. Outstanding people are bound to meet with envy and resentment. That is life. A famous philosopher once said something to this effect: "We live in a world where even if one has impeccable character, one will inevitably be slandered and criticized." Of course, I am not suggesting that you go around boasting about your good grades, either.

When I was in elementary school, there was one student from an affluent family who was always well-dressed and seemed so happy. I remember harboring feelings of jealousy toward him, and I wasn't alone. Today, such envy would surely make him the object of bullying at the hands of his classmates. But to succumb to such feelings is to be driven by animality. The brilliance of true humanity, on the other hand, lies in surmounting feelings of envy with

the resolute attitude "I'll create an even more wonderful life for myself." If you are jealous of others, you will not advance. You will only become miserable. Please do not be defeated or consumed by such emotions.

Isn't it far better to be envied by others than to be one who envies? I hope you can embrace others with warmth and understanding. I want to see all of

you become people with hearts as broad as a great river, as wide as the ocean and as vast as the blue sky. From such a big heart will unfold a grand and beautiful drama of friendship. □

(To be continued)

1. Hall Caine, *The Eternal City* (London: William Heinemann, 1901).

Expressions

My Song of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo

Lovely tune of *myoho*, it fills my heart with joy  
Kyo, the song carries me high above dark clouds into the clear sky  
Never give up when the dream is near united with those who are so dear  
No more dependent on valium and tears: I climb the mountain to conquer my fears.  
Discovering anew the child within dancing in the fields of golden memories.  
Curiosity and learning, nurturing and caring  
United as friends we walk together hand in hand.

I praise the Gohonzon to open the treasures of my heart  
So that I see the true cause of human misery  
No more confusion in this crazy and chaotic world  
I know what has to be done to stand up for justice and peace  
I will fight, no matter what the prize, against evil deeds  
Hold up the banner high for a kinder world where people will trust and not cheat, where the weak are protected and the young grow strong  
Where we believe in the human spirit and the equality for all.

— GABRIELE A. ROTH, Baltimore

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DWIGHT MANNING, ATLANTA

# Recognizing the Enlightened Nature of Music

Several years ago, I learned the story of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, which is described in the 24th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. As I have progressed in my career as a music performer and educator, I have found great encouragement from this story.

The story from the Lotus Sutra follows: In the remote past, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound offered 100,000 kinds of music and jeweled vessels to the Buddha known as Cloud Thunder Sound King. As a result, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound acquired mystic powers and can appear in 34 forms, such as a dragon, demon, human, god, etc., in order to save the people. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound chose to go to the *saha* world to make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha.

He was told: "You must not look with contempt on that land or come to think of it as mean and inferior. Good man, that *saha* world is uneven, high in places, low in others, and full of dirt, stones, mountains, foulness and impurity" (Lotus Sutra, tr. Burton Watson, chap. 24, p. 291).

The translation of the Lotus Sutra by Burton Watson states, "This Bodhisattva manifests himself in various different bodies and preaches the sutra for the sake of living beings in various places."

In a similar manner, music can appear in various forms and places to transform its listeners. I have chanted to reveal the spirit and nature of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound to my audiences, students and readers and can show much actual proof as a result.

I first learned of Buddhism as a disgruntled graduate music student. Musicians understand well the concept of mentor and disciple, often making career, educational, financial and travel decisions based on the promise of one teacher. The teacher I had selected for graduate study betrayed his career, students and employer in an unprofessional manner and was dismissed from his university duties when I was halfway

through my master's degree. It was at this difficult period that I began to chant. I discovered courage and found a true mentor, making it possible for me to complete my Master of Music in Performance.

Following graduation I moved to Chicago, arrogantly confident that my musical talent would be discovered and that I would become "rich and famous." It didn't happen!

I was floundering in a big, unfamiliar city, substitute teaching in the tough Chicago public schools, and getting only the occasional gig. Fortunately, I was apartment sitting for an aunt and did not have many expenses or debts.

After about six months of this career frustration, I discovered that I was living very close to the old South Side Chicago Community Center. The next day, I visited and soon started attending meetings and practicing gongyo more regularly. I remembered the words of my musical mentor that "there is a place for everyone."

I began chanting to find my professional place. Gradually I came to the realization that I might need further training and credentials to establish a successful music career. During this period, I was also in the right place at the right time to see a notice offering graduate assistantships in music at the University of North Texas, which has one of the largest music schools in the country. I applied for and was offered a teaching fellowship. Shortly after receiving the Gohonzon in 1984, I was admitted to the doctoral program there.

Soon after moving to Texas and connecting with local members, I was encouraged to shave, wear white clothes like the other youth division members, and spend my early Sunday mornings at YMD Brass Band practice. My rebellious nature surfaced, and I resisted from time to time.

My Brass Band leader (who is now a music professor at the University of Montana) displayed the patience of a Buddha with me

and my doubts. He told me that participation in the Brass Band would lead to career benefits. Of course, I was arrogant and skeptical, at first but have indeed found a direct connection in the last 10 years between contributions to SGI-USA music groups and advancement in my music career. I continued to participate in the Texas Brass Band as my schedule allowed during my doctoral residency.

First I began to notice that I was able to concentrate and focus with greater intensity and duration on goals and assignments. I was also able to manage a greater number of simultaneous projects, like a skilled juggler who can keep many balls suspended in the air. Then I realized that my musical performance skills were improving, and that I enjoyed providing a satisfying listening experience to my audiences rather than being terrified of appearing on stage.

In 1991, before completing the doctorate degree, I was fortunate to be appointed to a faculty position teaching oboe at the University of Georgia School of Music. Upon moving to Georgia, I became involved in the SGI-USA Atlanta Brass Band. Particularly in the last four years, I have experienced abundant actual proof of this practice in my professional and personal life. In 1994, I completed the Doctor of Musical Arts that I had been pursuing for 10 years at the University of North Texas.

Since 1992, I have performed or researched in four countries — Germany, France, Brazil and Holland. I traveled to each country at no personal expense. Each year, faculty in Georgia colleges and universities have received quality raises above minimum



Dwight Manning has developed his life through SGI-USA music group activities.

cost of living adjustments. This allowed me to purchase my first home in the fall of 1995 and to host our monthly local district meetings. I was personally invited to perform at the recent international conference in my specialty field and presented a world premier performance in June 1996. I have published five articles in professional music periodicals. My former and current students are making progress and many are interested in applying for admission in coming years.

Also, I have contributed to four music CDs featuring a variety of musical styles. These include: The Georgia Woodwind Quintet collection of new chamber music written for our group by living American composers, a collaboration recorded in Brazil last year of chamber music by Brazilian composers and two pop CDs recorded in Athens, Ga., by an internationally recognized recording engineer.

The August 1996 Fife and Drum Corps/Brass Band Friendship Exchange Meeting was very encouraging and invigorating to me and many youth division members who attended. Many golden memories remain from the dialogue, music perjury at no personal expense. Each year, faculty in Georgia colleges and universities have received quality raises above minimum

Since I began participating in SGI music groups in 1984, I dreamed of combining the

young men's brass and percussion instruments with the young women's woodwind and percussion instruments. It seemed natural to me since in the musical world all the instruments sound best together; there is much better harmony, blend and balance when there is less segregation of instrument types.

In Georgia, I am delighted to report that we have now combined the YWD Fife and Drum Corps with the YMD Brass Band to create a vital new Atlanta Music Corps. I truly appreciate my YWD counterpart, Ivy Gabbert, as well as all the other youth division members with whom we collaborate. I look forward to helping this group contribute to world peace as we struggle and grow. **WT**

*Starting in this issue, we begin a monthly feature on the Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Bands around the country. Our thanks to these groups for providing the material.*

(Excerpt from President Ikeda's guidance at the 11th Monthly Leaders Meeting on Nov. 30, 1988)

## Spreading the Mystic Law Through Music

The Fife and Drum Corps is known as the "angels of peace." This year marks the 32nd anniversary of the founding of the Fuji Fife and Drum Corps. With the televised appearance of 195 representatives in the '88 Drill Team World Competition this past July 24, they are now one of the world's largest such musical groups. Around the world, Fife and Drum Corps members are loved by many for their hopeful and joyous melodies. Their meritorious efforts over many years defy description. To pass on such a praiseworthy legacy to future generations, I would like to tell you some of the history of their struggles.

At my suggestion, the Fife and Drum Corps was founded on July 22, 1956. Though it consisted of just 33 young women, it is notable that, with the exception of two who are deceased, all of the original members have maintained faith to this day.

Needless to say, the early corps was no match for today's group. In its early stages, the members practiced and polished their musical skills day in and day out, despite a shortage

of musical instruments. Since that time I have used every spare moment to encourage and support the members. More than anyone else, I am keenly aware of their earnest efforts.

Fife and Drum Corps members have set an example by proving that even a small group can realize a great dream, demonstrating the importance of receiving training and making tenacious efforts during one's youth.

It had long been my deepest wish to see the corps active on the world's stage. Now, both in quality and quantity, the Fife and Drum Corps is developing as one of the foremost groups of its kind. There are about 20,000 members in Japan alone, and sister groups exist in 22 countries throughout the world. I sincerely thank all those now active in the Fife and Drum Corps and those in the past who helped establish such a splendid tradition.

The Brass Band was formed in May 1954, and the first sports festival was held that November. When the Fife and Drum Corps was founded two

years later, the youth division overflowed with vigor, as if in the height of springtime. This sports festival is now regarded as the forerunner of our present culture and music festivals, but the top Soka Gakkai leaders of that time showed little understanding of its importance. In fact, most were opposed to it outright.

President Toda alone lent his support, saying: "Well, if there is so much opposition, how about promoting it independently through your own efforts? If you are going to hold this festival, I for one will be happy to attend. Go ahead and see what you can do." Even now I am moved by his trust in and support of us young people.

Thirty years ago, in May 1958, the 50-member Hokkaido Fife and Drum Corps was formed, only one month after President Toda died. The group's central figure, the late Keiko Arashi, said, "Let us perform to show that, even after the death of President Toda, the Hokkaido young women's division is in high spirits." The purity and vigor of these sincere

young women, persevering with solid unity, typify the traditional spirit that today pulsates in the Fife and Drum Corps.

In October 1957, I referred to the mission of the Fife and Drum Corps as a function of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound. "The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound" chapter of the Lotus Sutra explains that in the remote past this bodhisattva served a Buddha called Cloud Thunder Sound King, offering him 100,000 kinds of music and 84,000 alms bowls made of the seven kinds of gems. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound acquired the benefit of mystic powers as a result. As he approached the place where Shakyamuni was preaching, the sutra says: "In all of [the lands that he passed through]...the instruments of hundreds and thousands of heavenly musicians sounded of themselves without having been struck" (Lotus Sutra, tr. Burton Watson, chap. 24, p. 293).

In light of this sutra passage, we can say that the Fife and Drum Corps members spreading the Mystic Law through music are carrying out the work of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound.

Depending on the people he is trying to save, like a great actor, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound appears in 34 different forms — including a god, a monk, a dragon, and a demon. With regard to his function, Nichiren Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," "To work out solutions according to the sufferings of the people is compassion; this condition of life is called *bodhisattva*" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 774).

In essence, the different forms in which Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound appears in order to save people are manifestations of his compassion. Our multifaceted movement to promote peace, culture and education accords with the same principles employed by Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound in his efforts to save people by appearing in various forms. The Soka Gakkai's spectrum of activities indeed manifests the principles of the Lotus Sutra.

Along with my sincere prayers for the unfettered growth of the Fife and Drum Corps, which has the wonderful mission to encourage fellow members through heavenly melodies, I ask all leaders to watch over the activities of these young women and, deeply aware of their struggles, give them the highest praise. ☐

## Young Men, Women Join Forces in Atlanta Music Corps

**B. IVY SABBERT**  
ATLANTA MUSIC CORPS CHIEF

The history of the Fife and Drum Corps and the Brass Band in Atlanta had been like that of the rest of the country. In the past, hundreds of members attended practices every Sunday, and there were many performances to be involved in, such as conventions and parades.

SGI President Ikeda's visit in 1990 brought lots of change in the SGI-USA. Atlanta was no exception. Dramatically, the youth division's participation in all areas of activities, including the Fife and Drum Corps and Brass Band, dropped. There was a time when Brass Band seemed to have disappeared. The Fife and Drum Corps tried to con-

tinue holding practices, but getting members to participate was a big problem.

Through the next few years of struggle, Brass Band and the Fife and Drum Corps decided to combine to form a youth Music Corps. On March 16, 1996, the Music Corps had its first performance in South Carolina.

The benefits gained in this new combined group have been great. We are no longer limited to our previous instrumentation, so we can enjoy a variety of sounds and music that we could not before.

Since March the Music Corps has worked on new music every month, and has performed in several territory world peace gongyo meetings. There are



One of the benefits of the combined Music Corps is that it can enjoy a variety of sounds and music.

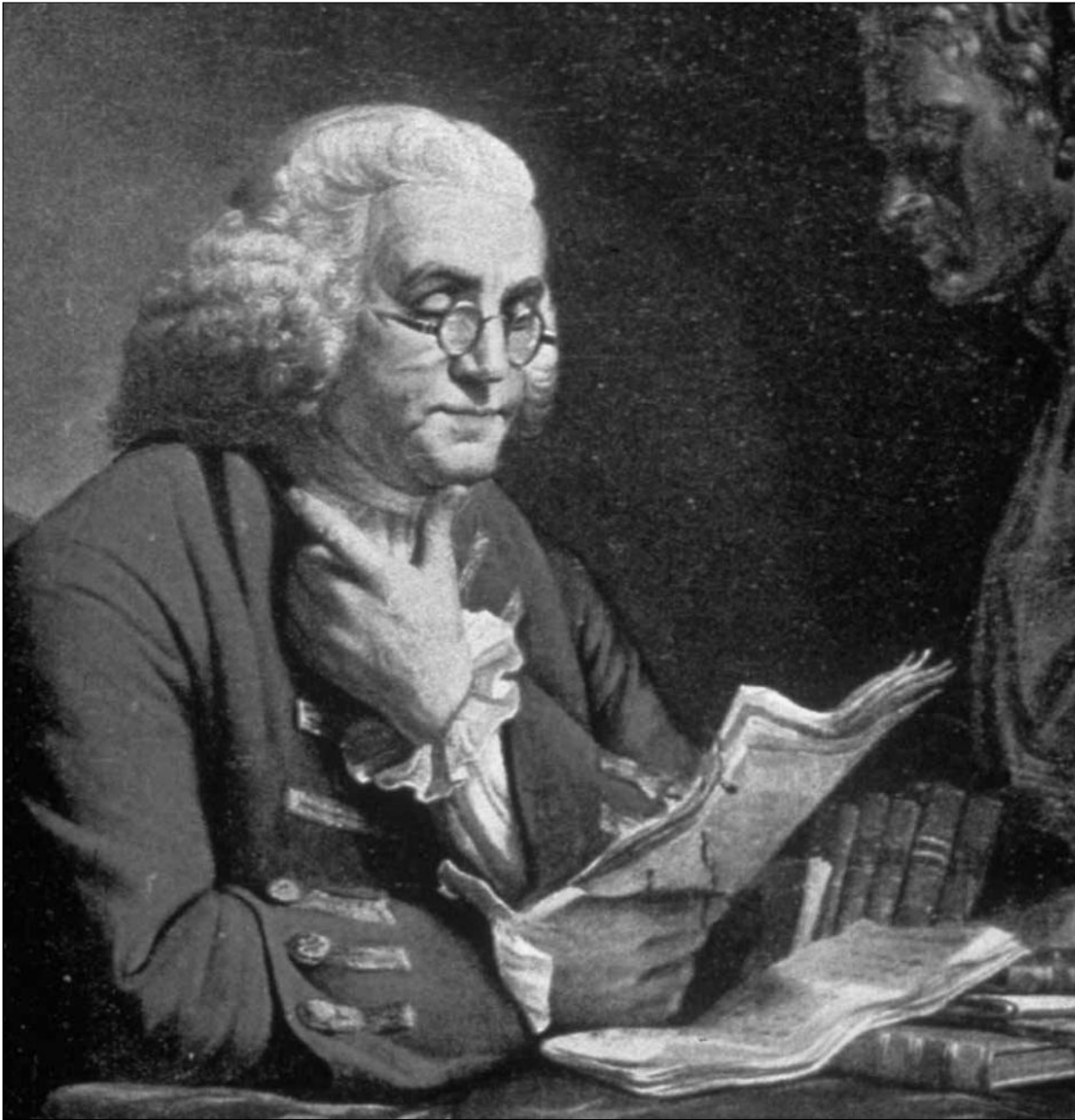
many goals the Music Corps would like to accomplish. First on our list is growth in faith and in the number of members in our group. To do this we would like every practice to be enjoyable so that each member wants to come

back. Also, we would like to form deep bonds of friendship.

We are determined to be a source for youth to further their understanding of faith by personalizing the practice in their lives so that they can apply faith

in a practical way every day. Members of the Music Corps of Atlanta Joint Territory are striving to fulfill the role of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, leading the people toward happiness through our music. ☐

# A Man of Tolerable Abilities



ARCHIVE PHOTOS

Benjamin Franklin, whom 'Rolling Stone' magazine recently dubbed the 'Hot Founding Father,' enjoys enduring popularity.

8 FLETCHER DALTON  
BOSTON BUREAU CHIEF

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin offers this explanation for his tremendous rise from humble beginnings to world renown: "I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan, and cutting off

all amusements or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan his sole study and business."

In grammar school, when my classmates and I heard the story of Franklin's life, a four-word phrase quickly came to be used to describe his mental agility and generosity of spirit: "Boston born, Philadelphia bread." The latter two words refer to Franklin's actions on his first day in the City of Brotherly Love. Dishevelled and gray

pressed over work, was a guru of self-actualization and a devotee of high tech, had a thing about his image, knew how to have a good time and could spin on any subject."

Another reason is, no doubt, that Franklin was always eager to share what he had learned with others and to put that knowledge to use to help them. One of the maxims in his *Poor Richard's Almanac* encapsulates his philosophy: "The noblest question in the world is, 'What good may I do in it?'"

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from rigors of the ocean voyage and having very little money, he purchased from a vendor three rolls of bread. One roll satisfied his hunger, so he went back to the wharf and gave the other two rolls to a woman and her child who had come in on the same boat with him and were awaiting passage elsewhere.

Today Franklin — born Jan. 17, 1706 — is as popular as he ever was, if not more so. *Rolling Stone* magazine recently dubbed him the "Hot Founding Father." He also made *Forbes* magazine last year. There's a Franklin exhibit on display in Berlin, a profusion of Web sites, his autobiography has been printed in at least five new editions recently, and a Yale University project is compiling all the correspondence he ever sent and received.

The lengthy and varied list of his accomplishments — and the list of honors conferred upon him — is amazing. A random cataloging would include the founding of the Philadelphia library, the establishment of the American Philosophical Society, the invention of the Franklin open stove, the invention of the lightning rod, and the establishment of the Philadelphia Union Fire Company.

This man of tolerable abilities was on the committee that framed the Declaration of Independence, and he served as president of the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

What makes his appeal so enduring might be because we can relate to him so easily today. As a recent *Los Angeles Times* story put it: "He fretted about his weight, ob-