

World Tribune

No. 3123

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 24, 1997

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Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

Some 26 conferences have been scheduled this year for the Florida Nature and Culture Center, where members from across the country can relax and spend meaningful time talking about life and Buddhism with newfound friends.

'97 Plan Set for Florida Center

By **DAVE McNEILL**

MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 20

A gathering of pioneers this week kicks off the 1997 schedule of conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Twenty-six conferences in all have been slated for the year, which will provide nearly 4,000 people the chance to meet new friends and discuss Bud-

dism in depth at the south Florida facility.

New to the schedule will be six so-called general conferences, open to all members, and three conferences designed for chapter, headquarters and territory leaders. (For a complete schedule, please see box, p. 5.)

All the sessions will provide ample opportunity for intimate conversation, interaction with

seniors in faith, Buddhist study, and even some sightseeing.

People who attended 1996 conferences seemed to agree that the close contact with national leaders was one of the most inspiring aspects of the four-day events. As General Director Zaitso has said: "What makes these conferences so successful? One reason must be that here there are no leaders or members. Here we

are all just human beings. Here everyone learns something. There is no one with all the answers." Whether in a formal setting, talking over lunch, or relaxing by Toda Lake, the equality of all members is evident.

Equally inspiring, members report, is when they find that they're not alone. "Listening to

PLEASE SEE FLORIDA, 5

The Joys & Struggles of Byakuren

By **CHRISTINE ALLEN**

SAN FRANCISCO CORRESPONDENT

Sara Jones credits her time in Byakuren with giving her increased humility and compassion. Denise Lapier has gained new friends and lots of joy. And Traci Takahashi has found self-confidence.

At a recent Byakuren retreat in the Santa Cruz mountains, these three women were among many who reflected on the joys, struggles and impact that participating in this group has had on their lives.

Ms. Jones, the San Francisco Byakuren chief, joined

From self-confidence to humility, young women find what they need in this behind-the-scenes support group

the group in St. Louis 10 years ago. She is now an immigration attorney and says she is fortunate to participate in Byakuren because of the humanism it teaches her; she can now cultivate humanistic relations with her clients. It's easy, she says, to harbor arrogance as a lawyer, yet she can deal with her clients' situations on the basis of their inherent human dignity.

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But Ms. Jones warns that a person must have determination to participate in Byakuren:

"It enables you to break through deadlocks in life. I encourage San Francisco Byakuren members to really focus on what they want to change in their lives."

Byakuren is a young women's division activity group that supports SGI-USA activities in a variety of ways. Byakuren responsibilities include: arriving early to clean and help set up the meeting places; greeting people politely and leading them to their seats with warm smiles; staying after the meetings to clean up; an-

PLEASE SEE YOUNG WOMEN, 4

VOICES

How do you maintain a seeking spirit after practicing for a long time?

Members from Philadelphia Joint Territory respond:



Keeping my eyes open, ears open and especially my mind open are crucial for me to maintain my seeking spirit. There are many great things [I can gain] from meeting members and listening to what they [have] to say about their lives. These interactions help greatly. Also, reading SGI President Ikeda's guidance helps me understand the nature of life...and how to challenge my problems, improve my life and show actual proof in my reality.

— KUNIHIRO URYU, Philadelphia



By constantly taking care of members and doing whatever I can for kosen-rufu, I find myself in situations in which I have to seek guidance.

I also have developed a trusting friendship with a senior in faith. We have lunch about every six weeks at a restaurant; it's a wonderful opportunity to talk. I'm always refreshed and encouraged after that.

— LUCRETIA WILSON, Philadelphia



I've been practicing for 21 years now and I think it is my early training that enables me to maintain a seeking spirit. I was fortunate to practice with people who chanted a lot...and I continue this today. I chant with members, and that enables me to develop myself internally. When doubts do arise, they manifest in my environment as a lack of self-confidence, problems at work, and a lower life-condition. Then I go back to my early training and increase my chanting and studying.

— EILEEN BOWMAN, Philadelphia



I go back to the Goshu "On Attaining Buddhahood." For me, that Goshu sums up how we should practice. Meeting and interacting with young men's division members also helps me maintain a seeking spirit. Reading President Ikeda's guidance, participating in activities and Gajokai also keep me focused.

— DAVID STEPHAN, Philadelphia



When I reflect on my life and where I want to go, it is the variance between two things — the ideal and the reality — that gives me the motivation to seek.... Often I seek my leader's wisdom in how to practice correctly, and always I am encouraged to practice to change my life. Consequently, I begin to understand myself and my practice better.

Without this seeking spirit, I would stagnate or get disillusioned. I know I need to interact with others and assess what and how I am doing. To me, maintaining a seeking spirit is synonymous with growth.

— DASHARR FISHER, Philadelphia

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.

Rising to the Challenge

EDITORIAL

At a meeting at the Florida Nature and Culture Center last year, SGI President Ikeda described six qualities that form the basis of human happiness: 1) a sense of fulfillment; 2) to possess a profound philosophy; 3) conviction; 4) cheerfulness and vibrance; 5) courage; and 6) tolerance. Also, in a recent installment of *The New Human Revolution*, Mr. Ikeda recalls: "Just before Mr. Toda's death, he announced the following guidelines: 1) faith for a harmonious family, 2) faith to enable each person to become happy, and 3) faith to surmount obstacles. We can surely consider these to be the three eternal principles of the Soka Gakkai."

These points underscore the basic goal of Buddhist faith and practice — the happiness of individual human beings. One challenge we each face, then, is to shine with unquestionable proof that we are actualizing the purpose of our faith in these realms.

We also have a parallel challenge as Buddhists: to take responsibility for not only our growth and happiness but for the happiness of our friends and families, and the peace and prosperity of our community, our nation and the world. Nichiren Daishonin emphasizes this spirit when he says, "You must not only persevere yourself, you must also teach others."

Abigail Adams, wife of 2nd U.S. President John Adams and mother of 6th President John Quincy Adams, wrote to her son in 1780: "These are times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or in the repose of a pacific station, that great challenges are formed... Great necessities call out great virtues."

What great necessities confront us now? Overcoming the hopelessness and violence infecting

our youth, the growing poverty and intolerance in our society — to name a few. If we cannot contribute to alleviating these problems through our humanistic Buddhist movement, then who will? What more important challenge can we undertake than developing, solidifying and expanding our movement, the number of people it empowers, and the positive impact it has on our society?

Addressing young people, President Ikeda recently said: "The doctrine of a life-moment possesses 3,000 realms is ultimately a teaching for changing the current state of things. Youth possessing compassion and philosophy have to courageously challenge the real suffering that exists in society."

At the end of last year, General Director Zaitzu shared with us six challenges for the future: 1) continue ever more strongly in our expansion movement; 2) focus on the district as our first priority; 3) raise young people by boldly entrusting them with responsibility; 4) create a neighborhood-based organization; 5) develop a spirit of tolerance and respect for all people; and 6) make study our foundation. Mr. Zaitzu elaborated on each of these points in his speech before the 1996 SGI-USA Council on Dec. 7 last year, which appears in the Dec. 20, 1996, *World Tribune*.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, one definition of *challenge* is "a test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding but stimulating undertaking."

By rising to these six challenges, we will not only solidify the foundation of our movement into the 21st century but in the process "call out great virtues," expanding our personal abilities and spending a most stimulating and fulfilling 1997.

Challenge — the test of one's abilities in a demanding but stimulating undertaking.

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

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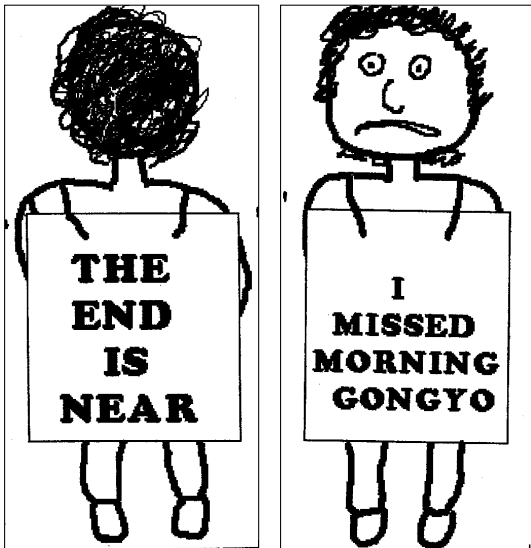
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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Not the End of the World



It has occurred to me recently that many members are still getting quite heavy over the random occurrence of a missed gongyo. Some wholeheartedly believe that because they have missed morning gongyo, they are destined to have a miserable day. This is in no way the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin nor our SGI President Ikeda. I believe it is residue from a previous time in our organization's history.

President Ikeda implores us to do the best we can. He has not once said that missing gongyo is the end of the world. As the Gosho says, "The real meaning of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance lay in his behavior as a human being" — not how many gongyos he did or didn't miss.

— LARRY TISH, Boston

Remembering JFK

I related to the article about Conover Hunt's efforts to develop an openness in Dallas about JFK's assassination (Dec. 27, 1996, "Worldview"). Her efforts to have a museum will let a new generation remember Kennedy. I had the opportunity to ride on the route JFK went that terrible day when my cousin drove me on a tour of the city. I walked up to the sixth floor and looked out the Book Depository window, and it sent chills through me. I was walking through the hall in junior high when an announcement was made that the president had been shot. Keep up the good work on the "Worldview" section.

— PHILIP RAY, Ventura, Calif.

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. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.

Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Send letters to "Mailbox," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401; or via CompuServe (102137,354) or America Online (SokaNews).

**You Don't Always Get
What You Want**

PERSPECTIVE

By ALLAN HORBACH
SONGTON, SOUTH KOREA

I have lived in South Korea since 1991. I started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1988 but stopped when I arrived in Korea. I felt I was getting nowhere in my practice and nowhere in my life. Then, as the saying goes, the plot thickened. Some SGI members got word about me and asked if I'd like to come to a meeting. That's where I heard the following story, which changed my attitude and understanding of Buddhism once and for all.

There was a couple at the meeting we'll call Mr. and Mrs. C. They were obviously in love — so much so that I thought they were newlyweds. Actually, they had been married for a long time. Mr. C beamed with enthusiasm, his eyes shining with vigor while talking about the benefits of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism or gazing at his wife. Here was a man happy and at peace.

After the meeting, impressed with his strong devotion, I asked how he had arrived at such strong faith. What he told me influenced me so much that not only did I start practicing again, I eventually became the district leader for Songton.

His story began with his wife, who first taught him how to chant. She wanted him to chant badly, and that's just what he did — he chanted, badly. He had trouble with Buddhism and chanting and would only chant to appease his wife. Besides, he felt trapped in a loveless marriage. His wife pushing him to chant was just another example, he felt, of how she was always pushing him to do things he didn't enjoy. His recitation of gongyo was just something to hurry up and get out of the way.

Then one day a senior leader visited and asked Mr. C how his practice was going. He answered that it was going about as well as his marriage. Asked to elucidate, he replied that he was not happy with anything. The senior leader then explained that he should chant for something he wanted, and if it wasn't realized in 100 days then this Buddhism was not for him. Mr. C thought he could tough it out for 100 days and



Members of Songton District in Seoul, S. Korea.

thanked the leader, assuring him that he'd be chanting vigorously.

The next day he started to chant that his wife would die! He felt that his wife was the source of his unhappiness and with her gone, his life would be better. He chanted every day and night, like there was no tomorrow.

After a while, as he was chanting he started wondering why his marriage was such a mess. As he began to reflect, he soon realized that he often came home in not-the-best mood. Later, he realized that he was authoritarian with his wife, slow to praise and fast to complain. He vowed to be a more considerate person. At least one of them should act civilized, he felt.

As the days passed, he also realized that his attitude was changing. He started seeing things in a different light. He attempted to understand his wife's side of disagreements. At first, his wife was apprehensive about his attitude changes, thinking he was setting her up for some type of humiliation, but when she saw that the change was genuine she started to change, too. When he came home, she would prepare his favorite meal, ask him about his day and listen to him with full attention.

He was getting close to the 100 days and thought about how much his wife had changed for the better, much more like the woman he had met and fallen in love with. He started to feel emotions return that he thought were long gone — love, patience and understanding. He felt overwhelmed by how much his environment was changing and started bringing gifts home for his wife like flowers, knick-knacks and love notes.

He started complimenting her on her looks. She started showing him more affection. By this point, he had actually started chanting for his wife's happiness as well as his continued happiness together.

One hundred days passed. Mr. and Mrs. C attended a discussion meeting where the man who had given Mr. C the 100-day advice asked him how things were going. Mr. C replied that at the start of the 100 days he was chanting for one thing but by the end he was chanting for something entirely different. He said, "I thought I knew what I wanted for my life to change for the better." He told the leader about his hidden wish for his wife to die, but stopped thinking that way when his wife changed.

The leader pointed out: "You say you wanted your wife to die. But it was your negativity that died, taking that negative environment, including your wife's negativity, with it, too. You changed your environment by changing yourself — by changing your actions."

"We often hear that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, but Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches us that every momentary action and reaction has 3,000 possible manifestations. By chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo, we can always choose our own paths of action. Chanting simply opened your eyes to the truth that was always within you."

Mr. C received what he really wanted, what he really needed.

I will always remember this story, which reminds me that I, like Mr. C, have always attained in one form or another whatever I have chanted about. A person should chant with strong determination and in so doing reap many benefits. I know I have. ☐

'I changed my life tremendously through participating in Byakuren, in ways that I never could have if I hadn't challenged myself through this activity.'

— Sara Jones, San Francisco Byakuren Chief



San Francisco and L.A. young women enjoy a retreat, where they talked about their participation in Byakuren.

From Self-confidence to Humility, in Byakuren Young Women Find What They Need

YOUNG WOMEN, FROM PAGE 1

By **CHRISTINE ALLEN**
SAN FRANCISCO CORRESPONDENT

Sara Jones credits her time in Byakuren with giving her increased humility and compassion. Denise Lapiere has gained new friends and lots of joy. And Traci Takahashi has found self-confidence.

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Youth, Community Involvement Focus of Boston Kickoffs

By **FLETCHER DALTON**
BUREAU CHIEF
Boston, Jan. 16

Boston Joint Territory got a jump start on 1997 with separate kickoffs for men and youth this week.

Beginning with a chanting session on Jan. 5, the youth of Boston Territory #1 launched into their action plan for the new year, the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century.

After discussing the youth division guidelines for 1997, Territory #1 youth decided to take responsibility for planning and executing district discussion meetings in February, April, July and October; to plan the content and presentations for 11 commemorative meetings during the year; and to create a framework for nurturing and supporting youth division members in each district.

According to Andrew Asboe, Territory #1 young men's division chief, the action plan in the proposal stage won unanimous praise and support from the youth division, the territory and the four-divisional leaders of the joint territory.

Men's division members,

too, kicked off the new year with a special gathering on Jan. 11. A question-and-answer period was the highlight of that meeting. The answer to one question, about getting involved in local communities, was answered in part by a letter from SGI-USA Men's Division Chief Richard Sasaki to the Boston men:

"It is important that leaders always ask themselves,

Territory #1 youth will plan district discussion meetings in their local organizations in February, April, July and October.

"What can I do to advance kosen-rufu in my community?" he wrote. "This should be the constant focus of their thoughts and prayers. It is also vital for leaders to gather to discuss matters in earnest and to be united, openly sharing information and pooling their

wisdom. Such efforts will pave a fresh path toward victory. Leaders must carefully weigh the various issues confronting them and act accordingly.

"Our local communities represent the true land," Mr. Sasaki continued in the letter. "We are deceiving ourselves if we think we can advance kosen-rufu and practice Buddhism correctly while neglecting the community we live in." □



South Carolina children plant trees at a local state forest.

Boys & Girls Learn Importance of Trees

By **TOMOHIRO KAWAGUCHI**
CORRESPONDENT
Columbia, S.C., Nov. 24

The South Carolina Territory Boys and Girls Group joined with friends and local environmental groups at the Harbison State Forest today to participate in a tree-planting project called "Trees for Marine Life."

The project originated from first Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's book

The Geography of Human Life, because the book explains the indivisibility between human beings and the Earth they inhabit.

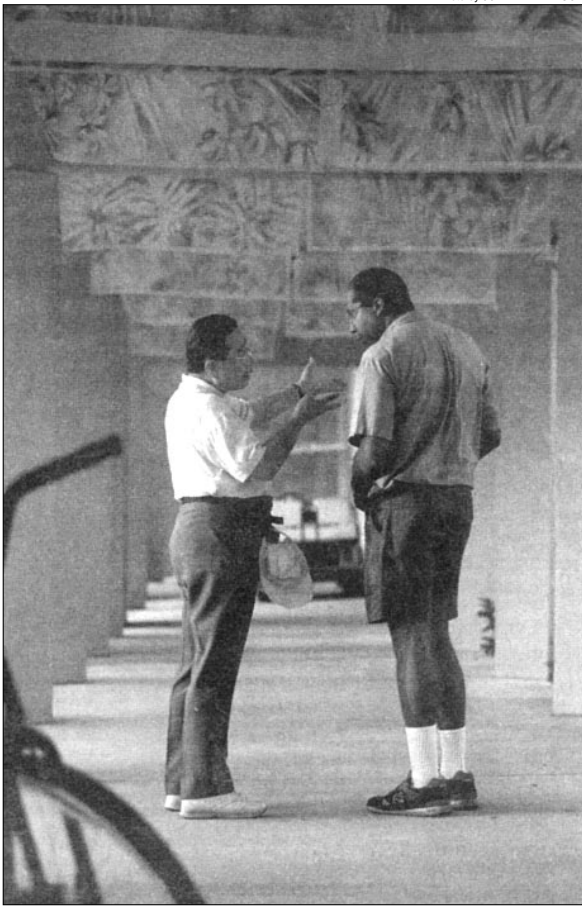
It also explains the interrelationship between the forest and the sea, noting how the coastal forest provides insects as fish food, shade for shelter and controls erosion and water runoff.

The purpose of the project was to teach children the im-

portance of trees in environmental conservation. The South Carolina Forest Commitment generously provided the seedlings and the site at the state forest.

Ten trees were planted, one of which — a green oak — honored Mr. Makiguchi's quest for human happiness and marked the 125th anniversary of his birth. A plaque commemorates the site. □

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



Close contact with national-level leaders, such as Men's Division Chief Richard Sasaki (left), is one of the highlights of FNCC for many members.

1997 Schedule Set for Florida Nature & Culture Center

FLORIDA, FROM PAGE 1

By **DAVE McNEILL**
MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 20

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in a formal setting, talking over lunch, or relaxing by Toda Lake, the equality of all members is evident.

Equally inspiring, members report, is when they find that

'I can't express how much I appreciate members coming here...'

—Stephanie Kaplan,
FNCC assistant office manager

1997 Conference Schedule at the Florida Nature & Culture Center

Twenty-six conferences have been scheduled at the Florida Nature and Culture Center this year. District leaders conferences are designed for leaders within the district and general conferences are open to all members. Qualifications for the other functions, as well as details for all conferences, will be made available via organizational memos at least two months before the date of the conference. Please contact your joint territory office for more information.

Dates	Type	Joint Territories
Jan. 23–26	Pioneers	Nationwide
Feb. 6–9	District Leaders	LA#1, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, NY#2, Atlanta
Feb. 20–23	District Leaders	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, LA#5 San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
March 6–9	District Leaders	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#2, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
March 20–23	Study, PR, Publications	Nationwide
April 3–6	General	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
April 17–20	General	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2 San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
May 8–11	General	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
May 22–25	District Leaders	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
June 5–8	District Leaders	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2 San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
June 19–22	District Leaders	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
June 26–29	Central Executive Committee	Nationwide
July 10–13	Young Men's Division	Nationwide
July 17–20	Young Women's Division	Nationwide
July 31–Aug. 3	Jr. High/High School Div.	Nationwide
Aug. 7–10	Brass Band/Fife & Drum	Nationwide
Aug. 21–24	Men's Division	Nationwide
Aug. 28–31	Culture Dept.	Nationwide
Sept. 11–14	Atlanta Jt. Terr.	Caribbean Gen'l Meeting
Sept. 18–21	General	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
Oct. 2–5	General	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2 San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
Oct. 9–12	Women's Division	Nationwide
Oct. 23–26	General	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
Oct. 30–Nov. 2	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
Nov. 13–16	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2, San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
Nov. 20–23	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
Dec. 3–7	Central Executive Committee	Nationwide
Dec. 11–14	Pioneers	Nationwide

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 5, Chapter 3

Victory

Translation of the final three parts, 45–47, of the 'Victory' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shim-bun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1961.

Expressing his appreciation for their great efforts, Shin'ichi Yamamoto warmly addressed the members: "Nothing makes me happier than to see you here in Japan, having fulfilled your promise to come visit. I know very well how difficult it has been for you to raise the money and take the time off from work to come here. But now that all of you are here safely, you have won a great victory!"

"I am confident that, through your earnest endeavors, you have made a cause for developing a state of life in which you can freely and without hindrance carry out activities for kosen-rufu. During your stay here over the next couple weeks, please take good care of your health and meet with as many members as you can. Please thoroughly nourish and enrich yourselves with faith, so that you may return to the United States with the most wonderful memories of your lives. I, too, will do everything I can to support you. I'll see you all again soon."

When the American members heard Shin'ichi say "You have won a great victory," it was as if a shaft of golden sunlight suddenly lit their hearts.

For the past year, these members had struggled tenaciously, solely intent upon traveling to Japan. When they had first arrived in America, most had been overwhelmed by their new lives, feeling buried and forgotten in a foreign land. But looking back, almost before they knew it, they had found themselves filled with hope, tirelessly traversing the vast American landscape for their friends' happiness. Moreover, they had all gained a keen sense that making efforts based on faith would enable them to create whatever kind of wonderful life they desired and achieve a state of indestructible happiness. They had definitely won a great victory of the spirit, however inconspicuous it might still be.

So began the American members' visit to Japan.

Around the same time, Soka Gakkai Study Department promotional exams were being held for those at the level of assistant professor. At Shin'ichi's proposal, a special study exam would also be held for the members from America. He wanted to make their visit a more meaningful source of encouragement for their future growth and development.

In addition, the American members attended the November Headquarters Leaders Meeting held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Sports Arena on the 27th, where they were warmly welcomed by members from around Japan. Each of the American chapters that had been established that August — Washington, D.C., Chicago and San Francisco — were presented with a chapter flag. Announced also were the formation of 22 new chapters in Japan and the appointment of 24 new directors, along with the establishment of new Study Department positions — headquarters-level Study Department chiefs and Study Department administrative committee chiefs.

It was also announced at the November Headquarters Leaders Meeting that the Gakkai's membership had grown by 61,670 households that month, bringing the total membership to nearly 2.3 million households.

Guidelines for activities in the following year, designated the Year of Victory, were also announced and a new membership target of 2.7 million households set.

The Gakkai's spectacular development continued unabated and the members present were brimming with energy and joy. Small group discussion meetings were also going very well. Shin'ichi Yamamoto was confident that the following year would see an outstanding victory in every sphere.

In his speech, Shin'ichi touched on the Osaka Incident trial that was currently under way:

"For several days, the newspapers and radio have been covering the alleged election law violations in Osaka. I deeply apologize for the worry and trouble this has caused all of you.

"However, when we refer to the golden words of Nichiren Daishonin, we see that the three powerful enemies will unflinchingly descend upon us with fury as we try to achieve kosen-rufu. It is only to be expected that those in power who seek to control the people will do their utmost to suppress and weaken the Soka Gakkai before it gains even greater support. This is because it is an organization working to unite and empower the people to take the lead in society.

"No matter how much the authorities try to intimidate us, however, let's move ahead with courage and good cheer, confident that they can never destroy our noble ideals nor our faith. I believe there will be a verdict in the trial by the beginning of next year and I am confident of emerging triumphant, so please don't worry.

"It has long been the way of those in power to entrap innocent people by accusing them of some criminal act. Looking at our long struggle for kosen-rufu, this trial is no more than a minor obstacle. We will surely face much greater hardships than this again and again in the future. But there is nothing to fear.

"President Toda often said, 'I would love to have the chance to go to prison again for the sake of the Lotus Sutra and for Buddhism.' Our mentor's words demonstrate the immense faith and confi-

dence he had in the Daishonin's teachings. This is the courageous spirit of those who fight for kosen-rufu. Those who possess such unwavering commitment and determination will in the end wear the glittering crown of ultimate victory."

It was a powerful speech. Thunderous applause erupted from the audience.

The song that had been composed by the Tohoku members, "Song of the New Century," was also introduced that day. A dynamic atmosphere of victory pervaded the arena.

Shin'ichi's schedule grew even more hectic in December. Among other activities, he attended the regular monthly young women's and young men's division leaders meetings on the 4th and 5th, respectively, the Fourth Student Division Speech Contest on the 8th, and a meeting to formally announce new members of the Educators Division for Tokyo and surrounding areas on the 9th. Then on Dec. 15 and 16, he had to appear in court for further sessions of the Osaka Incident trial.

On the 16th, Shin'ichi gave his final testimony, in which he attacked the unjust way prosecutors had carried out their criminal investigation. First, he pointed out that the prosecution's closing argument, which claimed that the Soka Gakkai had violated election law "under the guise of religious activity," was clearly biased in that it could be construed as denying the Soka Gakkai's constitutional right to engage in election activities.

Shin'ichi also remarked on the unusual severity of the sentence sought for him by the Osaka District Prosecutor's Office — a 10-month prison term. Past cases of door-to-door vote solicitation — the violation with which Shin'ichi was being charged — had been penalized only with a fine. He also described the manner of investigation as inhumane and condemned as unconscionable the prosecutors' arrogant abuse of authority in intimidating the weak and defenseless. It was a sharp rebuttal — a cry for justice denouncing the prosecution's unscrupulous attempt to frame innocent people.

All that remained now was to await the court's final session on Jan. 25, when the verdict would be handed down.

The latter half of December saw Shin'ichi swept up in a whirlwind of meet-

ings and activities where he exerted his utmost to guide and encourage the members. On Dec. 20 and 24, he attended meetings of the Writers Department Group No. 3.

This group, consisting of women's division members, had been formed in October. Women had for too long taken a backseat role in Japanese society. Unless they spoke out boldly and expressed their opinions, it would be impossible to create a true democracy. Shin'ichi devoted all his energy to enhancing this awareness among the women of the Soka Gakkai, hoping that they would become capable people whose voice would contribute to shaping a new society.

The Year of Dynamic Advancement — 1961 — was the second year of Shin'ichi's leadership as president. It had been a year of solidly securing the foundation for kosen-rufu's ongoing development. The youth division had grown stronger in this Year of Youth, accomplishing its gathering of "100,000 patriots." Seeds for kosen-rufu had also been sown in a number of Japan's Asian neighbors as well as in countries throughout Europe.

Having pledged to realize further great progress, Shin'ichi spent the busy year-end tirelessly traveling to encourage and inspire friends. His dedication was such that he had no leisure time to enjoy the cherry blossoms of spring or the crimson leaves of fall. In his heart, however, there soared a majestic and intrepid form — the great mountain of Soka, fragrant with the people's blossoming happiness.

(This concludes 'Victory' chapter.)

Per members' requests, at the conclusion of each chapter we will be providing sample discussion questions for those holding study meetings using The New Human Revolution.

'Victory' Chapter Discussion Questions:

1. In part 15 (Nov. 15, 1996, *World Tribune*), a passage from President Toda's "Precepts for Youth" is quoted. It states, "We sincerely desire, through the power of the highest religion, to achieve human revolution, to deliver people from suffering, to enable each individual to build a happy life and so create peace and prosperity in this country." In what ways have you experienced the inner reformation process known as "human revolution," and what implications has it had to your life?

2. In part 23 (Nov. 29, 1996, *World Tribune*), Michiyo Watari declares, "Rather than chasing after distant ideals, let us plant our feet firmly on the ground where we are, showing proof of faith at home and on the job, becoming beacons that will illuminate all of society." Share your various experiences of challenging to make things happen "where you are," and what they have taught you.

JUDI HENDERSON, OAKLAND, CALIF.

Building the Buddha Land at Work

Because you embrace the Gohonzon, you attain Buddhahood. Wherever you go becomes the Buddha land. How many of you find the Buddha land when you go to work?...If you chant daimoku to the Gohonzon in the morning with the determination that: "I am going to bring the life of the Buddha with me, and I will transform my workplace. I need wisdom. I need strength. But I'm going to make the difference," you will be amazed at the power you already possess to transform your environment.

— excerpt from a 1995 study lecture by SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin

Six months after receiving the Gohonzon, I was downsized from a company where I had worked for eight years. I saw it as a benefit — although I was highly paid, the job was emotionally draining and personally unfulfilling, but I never would have had the courage to leave on my own. I longed to work in a more creative and supportive environment instead of the technical and competitive fields I had always worked in.

I started my own business in the arts field. After two years, I realized I had made a mistake and dissolved the business. I was financially and emotionally devastated, and it took one agonizing year to find steady employment.

Although I viewed my self-employment as a time of failure, the United Airlines representative who hired me as an account executive viewed it as an asset — he felt self-employment meant I was self-motivated — and selected me over hundreds of applicants. I had always dreamed of traveling internationally, and it was ironic that after several years of barely having enough money for gas and bridge tolls, I now had a job that would enable me and my parents to fly inexpensively all over the world. We could now regularly visit our extended family members across the country, creating the family unity I had been chanting for.

My position with the airline required that I use my personal car to drive more than 100 miles a day to make sales calls on travel



San Francisco SGI member Judi Henderson holds a torch to symbolize her victory in the workplace. She was awarded an all-expense-paid trip to the Olympics by her employer due to her 'Olympian' efforts at work.

agents. Although I hated the extensive driving, I tolerated it because I adored my manager and the travel benefits. My hectic schedule and frequent trips out of town made it a struggle to fulfill my growing responsibilities as a young women's division leader and Byakuren member. However, every time I exerted extra effort in my SGI activities, I would get an unexpected benefit at work, such as all-expense-paid trips on company time to Costa Rica, France, Thailand and the Napa Valley wine country.

When my manager was transferred, I found myself working for a manager I felt was chauvinist, racist and incompetent. Our cultural differences caused us to distrust each other and battle constantly. In addition, he assigned me to a new list of accounts that required driving even further from home. Suddenly, a job that was once tolerable was now sheer misery.

For most of my professional

career, I've never been supported by my managers or co-workers, so I knew that changing jobs wasn't the answer to this problem. I needed to change this karma. I began an intensive daimoku campaign, including hosting 10-hour chanting sessions (one hour for each of the ten worlds) at my home.

Soon after I began this campaign, a new secretary was assigned to my boss, and she and I got along fantastically. She in turn got along well with our manager, and she willingly served as a diplomatic liaison, communicating messages and providing advice to each of us on how to work together.

One day, with no warning, my manager told me he was recommending me for a newly created six-month assignment in another district. The assignment would require significant sales results in a short time, and the success or failure would be closely watched by senior management.

In addition, this assignment would require that I sell a technical product I wasn't familiar with, nor interested in. I didn't see this position as an opportunity to excel, but as a chance to fail — in public, no less. I told my boss I was not interested.

"Too late," he said. "I've already recommended you. Your interview is next week."

"How could you recommend me for a position without knowing if I was interested in it?" I demanded.

His response was that my personality would be better suited for this position, and there was no need to discuss his decision further. I was livid! I was convinced that he was not only trying to get rid of me but deliberately putting me in a highly visible position so I could be humiliated if I failed to produce results.

That evening, I was so angry I could barely chant, and when I did chant, my eyes were full of tears. I decided to request that my manager withdraw my name from the interview process. The next day, when I shared my plans with the secretary, she wisely advised me that if I refused the interview it would embarrass my boss, which would only increase the tensions between us.

"Besides," she said, "going on the interview is no guarantee you will be chosen since a lot of people are interviewing." She suggested I use this as an opportunity to practice interviewing skills in case I wanted to apply for work somewhere else.

This helped me to see the opportunity rather than be the victim and enabled me to chant with a sense of appreciation rather than anger. Since I wasn't interested in the assignment, I wasn't intimidated by the panel of three who interviewed me. My life-condition was so high, the interview was actually enjoyable. In fact, it went so well, I got the job over more experienced candidates! Rather than feel elated, however, I was again filled with despair.

It was at this point that I heard Greg Martin's guidance. I chanted to have the strength and wisdom to transform my work environment in the next six months, despite my doubts and fears. Immediately after I started chanting with this attitude, I was told that this assignment would allow me to set my own work schedule and work from home 80 percent of the time, with a home office supplied by the company. The time I used to spend commuting could now be spent having a leisurely breakfast, going to the gym, chanting more

daimoku and visiting members. Plus, I could work in jeans, a sweatsuit or even my pajamas!

Focusing on this guidance when I did morning gongyo helped me realize what wonderful results can be created when I "bring the Buddha to work." I listened to my customers with more patience and understanding, as opposed to being concerned only with accomplishing my sales agenda. I focused on supporting my new manager, even if I didn't always agree with her decisions, and she in turn respected my insights and opinions.

On those few occasions when I came into the office, I was happy and enthusiastic and acknowledged the efforts of everyone in the office, not just the people in my district. My co-workers would consistently say how much they looked forward to my visits and wished I came in more often. Instead of a competitive environment, I now had an environment of camaraderie. Never before had I felt so much support in my work environment.

My fear of failure on this special assignment due to my discomfort with the technical aspects of the product was unfounded. What my customers valued more than my product knowledge was the compassion, trust and confidence that I exuded. My continuous efforts to polish my Buddha nature brought forth the qualities that they valued in me. I was so successful in this temporary assignment that I exceeded the anticipated results, was honored at an awards ceremony, received a cash bonus and got my first outstanding job evaluation with United Airlines.

At the end of the six months, the assignment became a permanent position, and I was offered the job. I thanked my previous manager — the one I hadn't gotten along with — for recommending me in the first place. He hugged me and told me how proud he was of me, and now we communicate like old friends. In retrospect, I could see how this experience helped me learn to trust the strategy of the Lotus Sutra, versus the strategy of my own cowardice and arrogance. I realized that I had a deep-seated lack of confidence in my abilities, and this attitude was a way of slandering my life.

With my newfound confidence combined with my flexible work schedule, I had the time, energy and fortune to develop a community project that uses the creative talent I have been longing to express. I am

PLEASE SEE BUILDING, NEXT PAGE

By JAMIE CUTLER
CORRESPONDENT

Back in 1974 when we were still propagating this Buddhism on the street, I first met Hermine Gayle. My district chief, Keith Price, and I were out on the streets of New York City asking passersby if they wanted to go to a Buddhist meeting. When we asked Hermine, she said to me, "Not unless you want to follow me home to put my groceries away first."

She didn't expect me to say "Sure." But by the time we took her home, she was way too embarrassed to turn back.

Hermine has been a driving force for kosen-rufu in the Miami area for the last 19 years where she worked as a nurse. Her fighting spirit and determination encourage all who meet her.

But I remember how hard she struggled to learn gongyo. She wanted to get it perfect, so we worked together for eight or nine years. I know there were days when she wanted to "murdilize" me, but we kept challenging things together.

Hermine used to joke about how I followed her to Florida like she was a mother hen, "Peep, peep, cluck, cluck." But when we first came to Miami, there were only a few members who were spread out all over Miami. Together we developed a passion for developing Florida, which SGI President Ikeda had called one of the seven pillars of kosen-rufu on earlier visits to this tropical paradise.

Now, after 22 years of friendship, I can help to tell about one of her benefits. Here is the story that Hermine related to me.



Hermine (l) and Jamie at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

'This Is Truly World Peace'

"As I exited the expressway on a rainy day, I had to go around a sharp curve. My car skidded. I went through a guard fence, the car flew up into the air and I landed in the middle of the lake stuck inside the car.

"Immediately the automobile started to sink, so I let down the window. The only thing that came to my mind was how when Nichiren Daishonin was going to Tatsunokuchi to be beheaded he called out to the Buddhist deities for protection. I yelled out at the top of my lungs, 'Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.'

"A voice inside of my head told me to jump out of the car. Just as I leaped out, the auto sank. I do not swim, and as I was trying to tread water I got tangled up in the weeds. I lost consciousness and went under.

"One man driving by saw the accident, but he could not swim either. So he ran back out to the

expressway to try to flag down some help. The first man who came along was a long-distance swimmer. He also had a cellular phone and called 911. Then he kicked off his shoes, took off his tie, jumped over the fence, and started swimming to where the water was bubbling.

"As he was nearing the car my body floated to the surface. Usually drowning victims do not surface until their lungs are filled with water. He grabbed me by the neck, because there was no sign of life.

"Seven to 10 minutes had elapsed since I had gone under. When he got me over the fence I started coughing. It was then that he realized I was still alive.

"The paramedics got me into the ambulance. As soon as I was strapped down, an 18-wheeler coming around the same curve had brake failure and slammed into the rear of the ambulance.

The rear end was crushed, but again I was protected and no one else got hurt either. The damage was so extensive, though, that they had to call for another ambulance.

"At the hospital the doctor took X-rays and was shocked to see that my lungs were clear as a bell. Not one drop of water was noted on the radiology report. The doctor advised me to go home.

"I called my husband at work and asked him to please come and pick me up. I rested for about an hour, but I was determined to help my scheduled patients. I got myself ready to go back to work.

"My husband, Rick, knows how stubborn I am, so he drove me around all day. This was a real benefit because I was a visiting nurse at the time, and it was necessary to travel from home to home to see my pa-

tients. His work had given him the day off to help me. It was all a benefit because there was no way he was going to talk me out of caring for my patients.

"I truly felt that a deep change had taken place in my life. The gentleman who first saw the accident came over to our house that evening to see how I was because he was so impressed that I had survived. He felt that he had witnessed a miracle. He was convinced that I had been reborn. Maybe my mission is not complete, and I have been. My new car had been totaled, but I did not get a scratch. I felt renewed with a rejuvenated sense of mission for kosen-rufu."

Hermine always talks about how her heart is filled with appreciation for the practice every day. "My mind cannot comprehend the power of this practice. However, my life is actual proof," she says.

Hermine worked as a first aid nurse during the opening of the Florida Nature and Culture Center last year. Chefs came in from all over the country to prepare food at the center's cafeteria. Hermine couldn't believe her eyes when Keith Price, our old district chief from New York, called out her name. She was so excited that she told me and I went to the kitchen to see him. Neither of us had seen him for the past 19 years.

We laughed about following Hermine home that first day 22 years earlier, watching her put her groceries away and dragging her to her first meeting. She admitted that she came because we just seemed to refuse to give up. We were both so grateful at reuniting with our friend in faith.

As Hermine said, "This is truly kosen-rufu." ❖

BUILDING, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

collaborating with Buddhist and non-Buddhist friends to produce a local weekly cable television program called *Yes, You Can!!* The program profiles individuals who have a product, business or nonprofit organization that inspires people to take new risks, create new possibilities and make positive changes

in their lives. Our goal is to empower viewers to believe that "yes, they can" overcome whatever obstacle is in the way of their happiness. The chance to work on a creative project I love, with interesting people and that contributes value to the community, is a benefit.

Initially, I was reluctant to tell my co-workers about this project due to that old fear of not

being supported. However, when I told one co-worker, it resulted in a very memorable benefit.

The co-worker nominated me for a company-wide contest to win an all-expense-paid trip for two to the Olympics last summer. In the letter, the co-worker wrote about the television show, my inspirational attitude and my outstanding sales results. To my surprise, I received a call from the

company president congratulating me for winning, selected with nine other winners from a pool of 1,500 nominees! It's as if I am not only supported and appreciated by the people in my department but the entire company as well.

The personal growth I experienced over the last 10 years enabled me to develop a level of compassion, confidence and faith that would not have hap-

pened without the struggle to be happy in my work environment. I thank all my seniors in faith and my fellow SGI members who encouraged me to continue to make efforts for world peace and never stop practicing even when it seemed to me that the lotus blossom was never going to bloom from the muddy swamp I was in.

But it always did. ❖

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Appreciating Life and Friendship

It is rare to be born a human being. The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail. Life as a human being is hard to sustain — as hard as it is for the dew to remain on the grass. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238)

By CRAIG GREEN

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Every time I read this Gosho passage, my vision of Nichiren Daishonin becomes more clear.

He was a man of humility and strength. He was a man desperately seeking a way to save people and keenly aware that those who supported him would be in danger. He understood the importance and transience of life.

I think it is very easy with our 20th-century view of the world to see our lives as givens, to see life and everything in it as luxuries bestowed upon us. Yet everything Nichiren Daishonin teaches challenges this.

Life as a human being is a unique experience, which relatively few beings in the universe encounter. And if we truly value it, we must treat it with the utmost dignity, respect and humility.

Also, throughout this letter, Nichiren Daishonin strictly encourages Shijo Kingo not to slacken in his faith and to be mindful of his behavior. Yet underlying this is the two men's friendship, which no one person, no one event, nothing, could ever destroy.

It is very easy to talk about friendships and theorize about "being close" and "creating a bond." Yet the reality is often very different. Nichiren Daishonin, though very learned in theory and doctrine, was more importantly a man of his word and his heart. He was a man of compassion and of friendship.

Nichiren Daishonin crystallizes in this passage not only the profundity of human life but the power of friendship. And it makes me wonder if I've yet learned to appreciate either of them. ❏

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

Buddhahood Lies in Continuing

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The gruesome story of Shariputra and the Devil of the Sixth Heaven stuck in many people's minds after they studied it for last year's Elementary Exam. Shariputra, a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, was practicing the bodhisattva austerities, nearing their completion, when the Devil of the Sixth Heaven tried to trick him into quitting. Disguised as a Brahman, the devil begged for Shariputra's eye, which Shariputra promptly ripped out and handed to him.

But when the Brahman stomped the eye into the ground, Shariputra couldn't take it. The practice of giving alms was too difficult, he thought, so he quit his practice, only to end up miserable. Of course he eventually started practicing again, but he always regretted the time he wasted.

"I felt that [frustrated] at times," John Sweeney of San Lorenzo, Calif., said after the test. "Especially when it was hard for me to encourage someone else

to practice. I'm trying to overcome this feeling and dig down deep in myself, so that I can really help people." The Shariputra allegory teaches us to continue in practice even when life deals us a blow. As Nichiren Daishonin says: "To accept [this sutra] is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 127).

Continuing is indeed not always easy. Sometimes it seems there are just too many components to the practice: doing the morning and evening prayers, chanting daimoku, going to meetings, reading articles like this, etc. And on top of all that, there's encouraging others to do the same.

Yoshi Nagaoka, SGI-USA youth division advisor, learned that a self-motivated practice is the key to continuing in all these things. "I was, so to speak, born into this practice; my parents joined when I was 2," he recalls. "When I was very young, like ages 5 to 10, I was always forced by my mom to do gongyo."

When he became a teenager, though, he felt he had to find his own reasons to practice Buddhism. "You don't get any result just being forced," he says. "At first, as I was told by my senior leaders or my parents, I tried to do something to contribute to the organization. But through those activities, I learned the importance of self-motivation, the self-realization of this practice."

While chanting one more Nam-myoho-enge-kyo or talking to one more person with a problem can sometimes seem as painful as taking out an eye, these are opportunities to remind ourselves why we are practicing in the first place. When we get back to our original self-motivation, continuing down the road can be a whole lot easier.

As SGI President Ikeda said when he visited America last year: "Ceaseless effort is what makes our faith a living and breathing part of us. And making our faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism an active and indivisible part of our lives is what it means to attain Buddhahood" (*SGI President Ikeda's Addresses in the United States — June/July 1996*, p. 13). ❏

NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BIRTHDAY — FEB. 16

Rising Above Our Destiny

SIGNIFICANT DATE

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

According to Buddhism, the circumstances in which we are born result from our karma or destiny. The land in which we are born, the parents to whom we are born — these are decided by karma we have created ourselves in the past.

In the Gosho "Letter from Sado," Nichiren Daishonin writes that "Bodhisattva Fukyo [Never Despising] was vilified and beaten by countless slanderers because of his past karma. So, too, it is with Nichiren, who in this life was born poor and lowly to a *chandala* family" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 37).

(*Chandala* was the lowest class of people in India, even lower than the caste system; this class survived by the killing of living creatures, which was frowned upon.)

Nichiren Daishonin perhaps chose this word to describe his family because his father was a poor fisherman. Nichiren was born 775 years ago, on Feb. 16, 1222, as Zennichi-maro ("Splendid Sun"), to

Mikuni no Taifu, his father, and Umegikunyo, his mother.

"Letter from Sado," which describes the unfortunate circumstances into which Nichiren was born, was written to Toki Jonin and other disciples in 1272 when Nichiren Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island.

He uses the difficulties of his life to teach his disciples an important lesson about the law of cause and effect, saying that all his misfortune came about because he slandered the Lotus Sutra in a past life.

Sharing simple examples based on the Hatsunaion Sutra, like "one who deprecates those of handsome appearance will be born ugly" (MW-1, 40), he explains cause and effect in a way that anyone can understand. Another example is that "one who mocks noble men or anyone who observes the precepts will be born to a poor family" (MW-1, 40).

But who would want to practice Buddhism if all it did was explain that the less than ideal circumstances we experience in our lives come from slander we committed in the past? In "Letter from Sado," Nichiren Daishonin goes on to explain how we can alter our karma by protecting the Law.

He quotes the "Encouraging Devotion" (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra where it

says that "it is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that one can diminish...his suffering and retribution."

While he may have been born to a poor family due to past slander, Nichiren now felt he was reversing this karma by defending the sutra. He was in fact sure he would "become a Buddha equal to Shakyamuni" (MW-1, 41). And he was telling his followers that the power of the Lotus Sutra would allow them, too, to overcome any kind of karma in this lifetime.

Throughout "Letter from Sado," Nichiren Daishonin identifies himself with Bodhisattva Never Despising, whose story is told in the 20th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Never Despising was kind and respectful to everyone he met, but still he had the karma for people to tease and even beat him — until he found the Lotus Sutra. Those who had persecuted him were then saved by his preaching of the sutra, eventually becoming his followers.

It is a basic principle of Buddhism that whatever our negative karma, just like Nichiren Daishonin or Bodhisattva Never Despising, we can change it into something wholly positive that will help others. We are thus not victims of destiny, but masters of it. ❏

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 9th Soka Glory Gathering for students of Soka University and Soka Women's Junior College, held at the Soka University Auditorium in Hachioji, Tokyo, Nov. 2, 1996.

Full marks for your wonderful performances today! I can imagine that some of your professors may have been musing as they watched you: "I only wish they'd apply themselves to their studies with the same dedication, passion and wisdom!"

Please make every effort to learn as much as you can and to continually cultivate and polish yourselves. Society is now turning in the direction where people will no longer be assessed by academic and intellectual abilities alone but by their humanistic qualities, such as emotional stability and character. I am fully confident that you will be the victors in this new age of humanism.

Today, I received the great honor of receiving an honorary doctorate in international education from Russia's Far Eastern State University in Vladivostok. This distinguished institute of higher learning is a brilliant beacon of intellect lighting the way to the 21st century, not only for the Russian republic but for the countries of Asia and the Pacific Rim as well.

I express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Rector Vladimir I. Kurilov and his wife, Konkordia A. Kurilova. While I should have been the one to do the traveling, Rector and Mrs. Kurilov, along with Yevgeny Krasnov, the chairman of the Committee on Science and Higher Education in the Primorsky Territory Administration, graciously undertook the long journey to present the degree here in Japan. Again, my heartfelt appreciation to them. *Spasibo* (thank you)!

This brings to 40 the number of honorary doctorates and honorary professorships that the SGI president has received.

I am reminded of my journey to London to meet with the British historian Arnold Toynbee, with whom I spent literally dozens of hours speaking at his residence. Dr. Toynbee wrote me, indicating his strong interest in having a discussion with — as he so kindly put it — "a youthful philosopher and practitioner of Buddhism," and suggested that we meet. Dr. Toynbee at the



SGI President Ikeda receives an honorary doctorate in international education from Russia's Far Eastern State University. President Ikeda has received 40 honorary doctorates and honorary professorships.

The University Is a Driving Force for Human Rights

time had a heart condition that prevented him from traveling overseas, so without hesitation I went to see him.

At the end of one of our talks, Dr. Toynbee told me that he regarded recognition from educational institutions as the highest of honors. He very thoughtfully and encouragingly added that he had received many honorary doctorates from universities throughout the world, and that, if his judgment were not mistaken, he expected I would receive still more.

A Shared Commitment To Creating Value

One of the aims of the Far Eastern State University is to "promote values ensuring world peace and the development of international cooperation." This closely parallels the spirit of the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose concept of value-creating education forms the foundation of Soka University.

In October 1903, just one year before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), Mr. Makiguchi published the great opus of his youth, *The Geography*

of Human Life. In it, he roundly condemns the foolish tendency of people to become divided over trivial and insignificant issues. He also discussed the physical and human geography of Vladivostok, which is home to the Far Eastern State University.

With profound insight, Mr. Makiguchi discerned that the people of Russia — whom he characterized as "persevering," "composed" and "strong" — looked to this port-city at the edge of Asia with tremendous hope and soaring expectation.

I therefore dedicate this honorary degree from the Far Eastern State University to Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in commemoration of the 125th anniversary of his birth. At the same time, I hope that all of you, my young friends, will emulate the people of Russia by developing the qualities of perseverance, composure and strength.

Vladivostok, known as the "San Francisco of Russia" because of its bustling port and cosmopolitan atmosphere, is a lovely city. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization has identified it as an international center for trade, science and tourism and one of the world's 10 most

promising cities for future development and growth. The Far Eastern State University has been a driving force behind the city's advance.

A university is a powerhouse for change. When its students resolutely struggle to realize its founding spirit, have a sound vision, are willing to debate ideas, and put forth great efforts to advance, the university can be a force for positively reforming all spheres of society. That is why, in a sense, the quality of a society in large measure depends on the vitality and quality of its institutions of higher learning.

It gives me great joy to join hands with the Far Eastern State University and embark together on a great voyage of hope toward human peace and harmony. Once again, my gratitude.

Rector Kurilov of the Far Eastern State University is a legal scholar of global stature. He is an expert on human rights issues and is a leading authority on labor law.

Incidentally, starting this month, I will begin a dialogue on law and legal rights in Japan with some young lawyers who are Soka University graduates. I

hope that our discussions may in some way help honest, hard-working people protect and safeguard their livelihoods and their rights.

The Voice of Justice Cannot Be Silenced

During the 15th through the 17th centuries, European society was ravaged by witch hunts. In this, one of history's cruelest episodes, the lives of countless people were ruined because of outrageous charges brought against them based on anonymous rumors and false accusations. People were unjustly arrested, tortured into confessing to acts they did not commit, forced to give false testimony and subjected to sham trials.

The number victimized in this way is truly staggering. Some estimate that as many as several hundred thousand people were executed during the witch hunts; others put the figure at several million. Moreover, the assets of those condemned to death in this way were seized by the Church, enriching the members of the clergy.

The power of authority has a devilish nature, and so does any religion that serves corrupt and abusive authority.

There was, however, one pioneer of human rights who dared to stand up against the atrocity of the witch trials conducted by the Inquisition. His name was Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535), a German lawyer who was also a prominent physician and philosopher. In 1519, Agrippa, with tremendous valor, agreed to defend a peasant woman falsely accused of practicing witchcraft. He boldly argued that the inquisitor — the priest presiding over the court convened in the name of religion — who was persecuting the innocent woman was the one who deserved to be branded a heretic.

Our voice is important. With it, we must speak out for justice. And we must do so unhesitatingly with the unflinching courage of a lion. Silence only signals defeat.

Agrippa's arguments infuriated the inquisitor. Nonetheless, the court was persuaded by the lawyer's clear assertions. Because of the strength of his reasoning and the proof he offered of the woman's innocence, Agrippa won the rare verdict of not guilty, thereby saving the woman's life.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

SPEECH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Later, however, Agrippa himself became the target of envy and bore the brunt of vicious attacks. For the rest of his life, he was relentlessly vilified. That he suffered such attacks at the hands of cowardly and unscrupulous people proves that he was indeed a person of justice.

While facing this barrage of persecutions, one disciple came to his aid — a former student by the name of Johann Weyer (1516–88), also a physician, who later came to be known as the father of modern psychiatry. The path of mentor–disciple is the most elemental path in life. This stalwart disciple used his pen to defend the reputation and honor of his mentor, who was being treated with great contempt. The witch trials, he firmly proclaimed, were the devil’s invention. Weyer’s actions were those of a true disciple.

As a result of championing his mentor, Weyer naturally met with severe persecution. His books were banned and burned. Nevertheless, his persuasive arguments, supported by his knowledge of psychology, gradually influenced the thinking of his day and opened people’s eyes to the truth.

A German philosopher noted, “All history is the struggle between the intelligent and the powerful.”¹ It seems to me that the university is precisely the place to cultivate the intellectual strength necessary to defeat corrupt and unscrupulous people in positions of power and gain the grounding to become a person of intellect who will not tolerate injustice.

The Flame of Indignation

In his heart, Weyer burned with indignation at the base individuals who harassed innocent people and caused his mentor — a man of exemplary virtue and character — to suffer. He must have thought, “How can I remain silent while my dear teacher and the people are being treated with such contempt?”

When I visited the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom [1972], a professor, literally trembling with emotion, mentioned to me how a number of outstanding Cambridge graduates had been killed by the Japanese during World War II. Although the war had ended decades earlier, his anger at this tragedy was as fresh as if the war had just occurred. That scene is

indelibly engraved in my mind. He embodied the kind of unremitting anger and flame of indignation toward injustice of which I have just been speaking.

Weyer rebuked the persecutors with the intensity of a blazing fire, proclaiming that he would seek revenge for their inhumanity in the “court of truth.” He was determined never to allow them to get away with their lies.

Sadly, this pattern of throwing groundless accusations at and trying to damage reputable people, who have done no wrong, continues to this day. Mr. Makiguchi died in prison for his unwavering stand against the Japanese militarist government. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, was also wrongly imprisoned. And I, too, have encountered a stream of persecution simply because I have fought for justice.

This spirit to struggle against unjust power is the very heart of Soka University. Great people are forged not in fair weather but amid great adversity. I hope you will always take pride in studying at this noble institution. I also hope you will resolve to do your very best here and learn as much as you can during your years as a student.

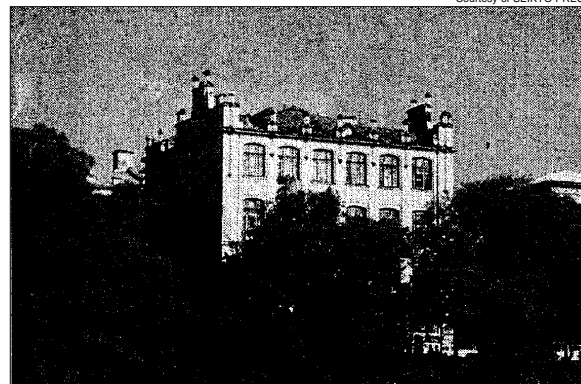
Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), the founder of Keio University [a prestigious Japanese private university], was a prominent writer and educator who worked to disseminate Western thought in Japan during the Meiji Era (1868–1912). He, too, maintained a relentless struggle to educate the Japanese people despite constant threats against his life because of his progressive ideas.

All genuinely great people, all pioneers, have traveled this same route.

Creating Solidarity With Activists for Peace

This unflinching spirit was also shared by the two-time Nobel laureate and father of modern chemistry Linus Pauling (1901–94), with whom I had the honor of sharing a friendship.

At the height of the Cold War, Dr. Pauling resolutely called for peace and friendship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and for the abolition of nuclear weapons. As a result, authorities subjected him to unremitting intimidation. Dr. Pauling told me how Albert Einstein had strongly encouraged him to continue fighting even though the future prospects of democracy might seem dismal. “I will fight,” Einstein had declared, “and I hope that you will con-



The Far Eastern State University campus. One of the aims of the university is to ‘promote values ensuring world peace and the development of international cooperation.’ Located in Vladivostok, the ‘San Francisco of Russia,’ the university has been a driving force behind the city’s advancement.

tinue to do the same.”

It is a great pleasure for me to announce today that the Pauling family, out of respect for the friendship I shared with the late Dr. Pauling, has expressed the intention of entrusting me with some very precious personal effects of his. I am profoundly touched and honored by their gesture.

I have developed friendships spanning the globe and

have worked to create a bond of solidarity among people of intellect who actively fight for truth. And I sincerely hope that you, the Soka students, will carry on this work.

I am praying for your growth. Thank you very much! ☸

1. Translated from German: “Alle Geschichte ist ein Kampf der Klugen gegen die Starken.” Quote by Rathenau in *Von Schwachheit, Frucht und Zweck*.



Two-time Nobel laureate and father of modern chemistry Linus Pauling (1901–94), at home in Los Padres Forest on the California coast. At the height of the Cold War, he resolutely fought for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Expressions

Congratulations On A Great Victory

Mystery doth never quit
Beyond learning, guessing, wit
Boiling from a store
Seen
Known
Felt and suspected
Traces always in the mind
From where do they unwind?

How can we of tiny spinning place
Deal with not having a definite face
To blame, scold, to point the finger
Wishes linger, let responsibility go
Yet, thrill beyond comprehension
Seems to be in learning to know
How to live at the shifting veil
Between the mind and what
Exists beyond known scale

There, life in its full glory
Is secret, yet, exposed
Partly remembered
Sparkling story.
Some strive
For that
Kind of free
And breathe eternity
— ERHARD GAJEWSKI

Fifty Years

UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN



Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Their nonviolent opposition to authority has served as a model for political struggles around the world.

of Freedom

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Indian people's long struggle for freedom from British rule ended 50 years ago. On Aug. 15, 1947, India finally became an independent nation within the British Commonwealth, after years of work by Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. The two first met in 1916

at a convention of the Indian National Congress, after which Nehru joined Gandhi's nonviolent campaign for independence.

As Stanley Wolpert explains in a new book on Nehru, India's Independence Day was the moment Nehru felt he had worked for all his life. He had even spent nine years in jail toward this goal. After championing human rights for so long, his greatest joy was

to see the Indian youth stand up to British rule and win their freedom.

"At the stroke of midnight hour, when the world sleeps," Nehru said just before India became independent, "India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

As India's soul found utterance, Nehru became the nation's first prime minister. The evening of Aug. 15, in his first broadcast as prime minister, Nehru warned India that "the burden of foreign domination is done away with, but freedom brings its own...burdens." This burden of freedom still troubles India, but the victory Nehru and Gandhi won for human rights continues to inspire people the world over to stand up. **WJ**

THE SGI-USA TEEN TIMES

By, For and About the Junior High and High School Divisions (#6) • A Pullout Section of the 'World Tribune'

RACING

Into the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century

MESSAGE TO THE HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION

Hi, everyone! Even though January is almost over, we want to take this opportunity to express our best wishes to all of you for a fantastic and unforgettable 1997!

From the bottom of our hearts, we hope that each member of the high school division can steadily progress in developing your character, accomplishing your goals, and establishing yourself as a capable person on the stage of the 21st century.

In his current dialogue series with the Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs, SGI President Ikeda has repeatedly emphasized that we should "be like the sun."

For each of us, we may have our own individual interpretation of what it means to be like the sun, but no matter what happens, please persevere and continue to shine from within your life.

Through our daimoku and efforts, we can begin to develop the confidence that gives rise to the unshakable joy of living for a mission. Thank you very much for doing your best!

Because your years in high school are so limited, please try to participate in high school division activities whenever you can.

Of course, your school work and school activities are the No. 1 priorities, yet this is an invaluable time in your life. To meet new friends and deepen friendships with your fellow members who are also facing the same experiences as you — these are truly rare opportunities.

And through high school division activities, we hope to encourage each other and deepen our

understanding of Nichiren Dais-honin's Buddhism. Actually, to practice Buddhism in our daily lives is the purpose of our high school division.

Finally, for some of you, the next few months will be your last



(L - r) Mike Bynum, Jeannie Olander, Vanness Harris, Colleen Bachman and Jimmy King.

in high school, as you look forward to graduation and the rest of your lives.

And some of you are just beginning the second half of your first year in high school and have many new challenges in front of you.

Hang in there!

For everyone, in both good times and bad, the only thing we can do is try our best with a positive attitude.

And before you know it, you will have accomplished something great, setting a wonderful example of victory for us all.

— By Mike Bynum, high school division young men's chief, and Colleen Bachman, high school division young women's chief

MESSAGE TO THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION

Congratulations to each of you for your many victories in 1996! Each of you faced giant challenges which must have been intimidating at the moment you were facing them.

It is truly amazing how you

use daimoku to win again.

Please continue to read the ongoing dialogue series with SGI President Ikeda, "Discussion on Youth."

President Ikeda is pouring his whole life into this dialogue to inspire you toward your personal growth. Please look for the continuation of this series throughout 1997 in the *World Tribune*.

Armed with your goals, your consistent daimoku to reach those goals and your reading of President Ikeda's guidance, you hold the keys to your great advancement.

In his "Discussion on Youth," President Ikeda said:

I want you to savor the joy that comes from living with ever fresh aspiration as you strive to realize the future dreams and goals that you have personally resolved to pursue.

Effort and hard work construct the bridge that connects your dreams to reality. Those who make steady effort are full of hope. And hope, in turn, arises from steady effort. Embrace your dreams and advance as far as they can carry you. That is the hallmark of youth.

Happy New Year and may each of you enjoy the realization of the greatness that lies within you.

— By Jeannie Olander, junior high school division young women's chief, Vanness Harris, junior high school division young men's chief, and Jimmy King, vice junior high school division young men's chief

See page 2 for a message from Ed Feasel, Youth Division chief

HEL-LOO!

HEY, KIDS!

We **REALLY** want to hear from you. Make "Teen Times" **YOUR** newsletter:

Send us your reports, your

comments, your essays, your questions, your critiques, your suggestions, your experiences, your drawings, your photographs....

Well, you get the idea.

The deadline is the 10th of each month for the following month's issue. Be the first on your block to be part of the

TEEN TIMES



Ed Feasel

Happy New Year! This year, 1997, is the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century. Actually, the new century is right around the corner, only a few years away.

If you think about it, most of you will turn 21 sometime after the year 2000, that is, during the new century. Clearly, you are the ones who will create the new century.

The one message I want to share with all of you is to have great goals for the future and to challenge these goals with the Gohonzon.

I know many of you may feel impatient about the future, wishing things would change faster or that you could grow up quicker. I'm sure many of

you are also facing problems both at school and at home. I felt exactly the same way when I was your age.

This may sound weird, but

The new century is right around the corner, only a few years

when I look back at that time of my life, I feel very fortunate for having all the problems that I had.

It was because of those problems that I would sincerely chant to the Gohonzon. Gradually, I got beyond my problems and developed great dreams for the future.

It was during my teenage years, through challenging these dreams, that I learned the greatness of the Gohonzon and this Buddhist

practice.

Now, I have complete confidence in this practice.

I know that with the Gohonzon, I can overcome any problem that confronts me and accomplish my goals.

During this year, I hope that once again you will study hard, with the realization that your efforts now will result in great rewards in the future.

SGI President Ikeda has reminded us time and again that study should be our first priority. He has encouraged us to study to the extent that we have absolutely no regrets in the future.

Together with all your older brothers and sisters in the youth division, we look forward to watching you develop into the leaders of the new century.

I wish you the greatest victories in 1997. Once again, Happy New Year!

Happy New Year, Pen Pals!

We here at "Teen Times" sincerely apologize for the long time it has taken us to launch the "Pen Pal" project. This year, 1997, is expected to be a year in which many new friendships will be made and relationships previously established will be strengthened.

We promise to do our best to

connect all the people who wrote in for a pen pal with someone by the end of January.

You and your pen pal will receive a correspondence from us with some basics about your new pal. Then you



can start writing and getting to know each other. We hope through this dialogue that you will establish bonds of trust and friendship that will last a lifetime.

For those of you who wrote in for a pen pal and don't receive a

correspondence from us, be patient. That only means we are waiting to connect you with someone.

We tried to connect pen pals who are about the same age and gender.

We wish to continue connecting youth all around the country. Those of you who still want to write in for a pen pal, please do so. Someone is awaiting a friend to write to. Thank you, readers, for your continued patience.

What's up, teens? "What's Up Teen Times" will be continuing its section that focuses on the social situations of today's teenagers. Let's

face it, the circumstances regarding teenagers' daily lives aren't getting any easier. Today's teens need an avenue to vent or discuss issues that concern their age group.

This section of the paper hopes to initiate dialogue among teens across the country. Let's talk about those topics that may be sensitive and heated, but are a true representation of the struggles of teenagers.

Only through open and hon-

What's Up Teen Times

est dialogue among teens who are actually experiencing difficulties will real solutions emerge. The reality of it is that without you, there exists no future! Let's begin the new year by courageously and freely expressing our opinions.

SGI President Ikeda is conducting a dialogue series with the Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs. In his discussions, he focuses on the concept of individuality! In an age where

being yourself is unpopular, many teens struggle with acknowledging who they are and how they truly feel.

We all have a tendency to compare ourselves to others.

Even though we recognize that we're all different, maintaining our own uniqueness becomes a struggle in itself.

Society steadily pressures teenagers into conforming to the status quo. President Ikeda states: "Do not compare yourself

to others. Be true to who you are, and continue to learn with all your might! Even if you are ridiculed, even if you suffer disappointments and setbacks, continue to advance and do not be defeated."

To our readers, "Teen Times" would like to pose a question: As a teenager, how can you continue to maintain your individuality and hold fast to your beliefs, even though your peers may disagree with your views? Please

send all comments to: "Teen Times," 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401



Winning Through Obstacles

By Rachel Golden
Inglewood, Calif.

The article "The Worries and Hopes of Youth — Part I" (the first installment in the "Discussions on Youth" series, Sept. 20, 1996, *World Tribune*), was given to me by a youth division leader.

This individual understood my different challenges and obstacles that I faced, and from time to time still face. He suggested that I read the article and give my sincere opinion as to what I felt afterwards.

I felt it a privilege to be able to share my opinion as to what I truly feel without worrying about being judged.

At this particular time in my life, I'm seeking out my true mission in this lifetime as well as trying to avoid reality and people.

I was in so much pain and had feelings of doubt, fear, sadness, insecurity and frustration. I was drained and exhausted with chasing other people's dreams so much, that I had not even begun to think about my own.

In this article, SGI President Ikeda emphasizes how important

it is to understand that having problems and feeling regret are only natural and that the important thing is not to be defeated by them. He went on to say "that in the midst of worries and struggles, always look forward and advance." He also stated how important it is "to keep pressing forward and while struggling with problems to chant daimoku."

This had a powerful and profound effect on my life. At this particular time in my life, I'm dealing with a lot of issues, and often I chant for them to all go away and to start fresh.

Again, as I read on in the article, President Ikeda said, "Your life will be enriched and deepened in proportion to the amount of pain and grief you have suffered, the degree to which you have struggled and the amount of daimoku that you have chanted."

He also said: "The hardships

you face now will all serve to nourish your growth into leaders of the 21st century. Your future depends on the efforts you make and whether or not you are walking the correct path. It's not important how you compare to others, but how you

compare to who you were yesterday. If you can see you've advanced even one step, then you've achieved a victory."

In closing, I must admit that as a youth, I often ran from issues in my life. I felt like I was too young to have these particular problems. I felt like all the obstacles I had faced and still face today couldn't have any significance toward my mission in my life.

Then I received an abundance of guidance in less than 24 hours. Now I am on a campaign not only for myself, but for my family, my SGI family and all the youth divi-



Rachel Golden

I felt like I was too young to have these problems... Now I am on a campaign for myself and others.

sion members. I sincerely pray that we all attain and hold close to our hearts kosen-rufu and have many victories in our lives.

Thank you, President Ikeda. I will become one of the many 21st century leaders for peace!

My Secret Place

By Nancy Lin
Tampa, Fla.

*Water trickling from its narrow tributaries
The cool mist rising into the sweet air
clear liquid smoothing over rigid rocks cutting the passage way
of the stream into many confusing directions*

*Strong salmons jetting spontaneously out of the water
Against the current;
Against all odds;
Their determination shines like the neon-bright sun rays
peeking through the tree leaves*

*Dragonflies cut across the skies playfully
tagging each other*

*The sound of the gentle wind whistling through
wild daisies bellowing to the joyous songs*

*The shy field mouse dashing from behind the oak trees
which rest under the white puffs of marshmallow clouds*

*The diverse wild nature working together
to create a beautiful masterpiece of love,
respect and understanding for all breathing,
living things —
My secret place*

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

By Charisma Brinkley
Charleston, S.C.

*In Buddhism we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
We all chant it from the heart.
I didn't do so from the start.
I remember from the beginning I thought it was a joke.
But when I found out about the benefits, I almost choked.*

*At first I thought the words were stupid and funny
until Karon Frasier said, "You're just not getting it honey."*

*Chant gongyo to find the passage way
And when you do, please remember these special words to say.
Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.*

Earth

By Sarah Dooley
Bothell, Wa.

*Earth is a deep dark ocean
With hurt, pain and hunger
With beauty, love and joy coming free
As the brightness swallows the darkness
The sun comes back*

This issue of "Teen Times" was compiled by its volunteer staff: Brendan Gibson, Jason Harris, George Barnes, Rachel Golden, Gisselle Acuna, Guillermo Velasquez, Max "Spam" Jones, Lauren Robinson, Bryan Mack and Linda Wasko.
— Editor, Vanness Harris
Assistant Editor, Kim Stapchuk

Q: Whenever I have to do something, I always back out the last minute. I'm afraid that I'll be a failure and everyone will criticize me. How can I get over this fear and become more self-confident?



A: One of the most important things for young people to learn is how to handle failure. This is because failing is an inevitable and natural part of life, especially for young people. Growing up is to a great extent a matter of trial and error. Learning to successfully navigate the ever-changing difficulties of life is not an easy thing.

Older people are always eager to offer what they believe to be wise advice based on their hard-earned wisdom but, in the end, one must learn one's own lessons.

Unfortunately, the value of learning from failure is not always well understood or appreciated in our society. Often so much emphasis is placed on achievement — good grades, winning the game, living up to the expectations of others — that fear of failing can become a dominant tendency in one's life. There seems little room for "I did my best."

A person afraid to fail may be afraid to try new things. This can

be a big problem because the way to expand your self-confidence and self-esteem is to challenge and accomplish things that you haven't done before. Without challenging yourself to reach beyond your current grasp, it becomes difficult to expand your confidence level. When you lose the willingness to try, you lose the ability to develop confidence.

Rather than fear failure, we should fear not trying. The courage to try is essential for the development of a young person. An atmosphere in which failure is not feared but rather learned from is also important. The courage to try is the basis for developing self-confidence, self-esteem and winning ultimate victory. The persistence to try again even after initial failure is also important. In this sense, failure can be the cause for victory as a human being.

Learn how to fail and make failure a cause for growth. Protect and support each other. Encourage trying. Develop the courage to try and

the wisdom to learn from mistakes. This is the path to developing oneself as a human being. Learn how to create victory from defeat. This lesson will last a lifetime.

I've read that the average millionaire has declared bankruptcy three times. This indicates that millionaires know how to fail. They learned from failure. They tried again and again and again until they reached their goal. They were not afraid to try.

Michael Jordan, perhaps the greatest basketball player of all time, fails to make a basket about 50 percent of the time. Yet, he shoots again. He doesn't let failure prevent him from trying. He has learned to handle failure. He is not intimidated by failure.

Babe Ruth, famous Baseball Hall of Famer, is well known as a home run hitter. What most people don't realize is that he also held records for the most strikeouts. Babe Ruth was not defeated by failure. Although often humiliated by striking out, he came

Question and Answer

Learning How To Fail Or: When Failing Is Not Failing


Greg Martin, SGI-USA vice general director, offers an answer to one reader's question

back to the plate again and again — swinging for the outfield fence.

Thomas Edison tried over a thousand different materials before finding the right one to use as a filament for the light bulb. A thousand failures did not prevent him from trying again.

I believe that a human being's greatness is not the absence of failure, but the ability to use failure, to learn from failure and to change failure into victory. This is one of the most important lessons to learn in life. And the earlier one learns this, the greater the head start one will have on a life of victory. Learn how to fail so that you will never be defeated.

Most important is to learn to keep trying whether we fail or not. This is the key and one reason why we practice Buddhism. The Gosho states, "Buddhahood lies in continuing faith." This means that victory and happiness in life can be achieved by those who continue to try, continue to make effort and continue to advance whether they experience failures or setbacks.

Buddhism is concerned with winning. Even loss becomes a source of victory based on our practice. Those who practice can never lose then. 

The Teenage Years of Daisaku Ikeda

By Ken Saragosa
Philadelphia

The following is the first of a two-part excerpt from Ken's ongoing biographical essay now being serialized in the "YMD Pages" of the World Tribune.

Young Ikeda was plagued by illness as a child, a fact that worried his parents, but which they didn't have the resources to combat. Doctors' visits and medication were a constant feature of his youth.

Though his mother tried to instill in him an optimistic and hopeful heart, Daisaku nonetheless spent a great deal of time pondering death. "The fact that questions about life and death never left my mind during my youthful years apparently has, as you may well imagine, some connection with the truth that I was constantly in poor health," he writes. "As I wakened from a nightmare, drenched in sweat, I found myself wondering, 'What

happens to people after they die?'" He also mentions not realizing until later that most children did not meditate over such matters.

To help out during these difficult times, Daisaku's oldest brother, Kiichi, dropped out of school to sell vegetables from a portable cart in what is today the Musashi-Kosugi area. Daisaku would follow his older brother around whenever he wasn't in school and help push the vegetable cart. Daisaku idolized Kiichi and saw how he, though still in middle school, voluntarily took on so many of the responsibilities of taking care of the family that their sick father was unable to fulfill. This brother, whom Daisaku held in special esteem, would later die in Burma during World War II.

In 1937, Kiichi entered into military service. Though Daisaku was only 9, this marked the end of his childhood. Not only was his favorite brother gone, but the loss of Kiichi's financial contribution meant that Daisaku had to get a

job. As it was, the family had to move to a smaller residence. At age 10, his daily schedule began at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., gathering seaweed for the family business. He delivered newspapers, attended school, came home to clean seaweed and then delivered the evening newspapers. This was his routine for three years.

Throughout this time, Daisaku found solace in reading, and he had an active and adventurous imagination. While delivering papers, he would imagine himself a crucial messenger of much-needed information. "I began thinking that in the future I'd like to be a reporter for a newspaper or a magazine," he writes. "The problem was that during my years in grade school and upper elementary school — and even after the war in night school — I simply never had the opportunity to study thoroughly and with composure. To compensate I had to struggle to make time for reading. I figured that I would read as much as anybody else. You might

say that reading contributed significantly to my desire to write."

In 1942, when he was 14 and just finished with school, Daisaku decided to enter military service in the Junior Division of the Naval Aviation Corps. His older brothers were fighting, and many of his friends had joined up. Japan's military, by this time, was routinely inducting and training adolescent boys for military service. Though he saw how much it hurt his parents to watch their sons go to war, he took this as a fact of life and decided that he, too, wanted to fight.

His parents, upon hearing his plans, were adamantly opposed, but Daisaku enlisted anyway. However, when the clerk in charge of naval volunteers came by the Ikeda home, Nenokichi refused to sign the consent form, saying: "Our three oldest sons have already gone into the service. The fourth will soon be going.... Four are plenty!"

(To Be Continued)