

World Tribune

No. 3129

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

MARCH 7, 1997

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'FRIENDS FOR PEACE' PULLOUT INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Men's division members perform a colorful Dragon and Lion Dance.

Festival Displays Hope

With Hong Kong's return to China just four months away, not everyone in the territory is looking to the future optimistically. But with characteristic hope and determination, some 1,500 youth from Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan, as well as some internationally famous performing artists, put on a culture festival on Feb. 21.

The show, titled "A Gathering of Nations Celebrating a New Era of Brilliant Hope," was performed for SGI members from 100 countries, who came to Hong Kong for the 22nd SGI General Meeting. **W**



American jazz guitarist Larry Coryell (l) and leading Hong Kong 'erhu' (traditional Chinese two-stringed bow instrument) soloist Huo Shi Jie perform a sublime rendition of Ravel's 'Bolero.'

Boston Translation Group's Work Is a Source of Growth

By **FLETCHER DALTON**
BOSTON BUREAU CHIEF

Hard work for the benefit of others describes the efforts of the Boston Translation Group, which has been meeting three times a month for the past three years.

Their work is voluntary and, even to the casual observer, the task seems formidable. "The great challenge," according to Bryson Kido, "lies in converting the [Buddhist] concept from

Japanese into English, while retaining the original author's style and accuracy. In doing so, we actually study the [Daishonin's] teaching, and because we can examine only a little at a time, truly engrave the concepts in our hearts."

"A little at a time" is right. Sometimes the session will produce only a paragraph, sometimes a whole page. After all, this is no panel of linguistic experts. In fact, most members of this all-youth activity are basically

monolingual. Conviction in the value-creating aspect of the work and consistency in challenging the obstacles of it are the keys to the BTG's success.

After gongyo, the BTG meets upstairs in the Boston Community Center. Anyone peering through the window of the closed door will see the participants huddled together, like business strategists. Various reference works, including the *Daibyakurenge* (the Soka Gakkai's study journal), dictio-

Artist's Life a Model of Victory, SGI President Says

Distinguished Painter and calligrapher Fang Zhaoling overcame much hardship in her life to raise her eight children.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Hong Kong, Feb. 17

Declaring her to be a model of a truly victorious mother, SGI President Ikeda today met with distinguished Hong Kong painter and calligrapher Fang Zhaoling. Mr. Ikeda is in Hong Kong for the 22nd SGI General Meeting, the 16th SGI World Peace Youth Culture Festival and related activities.

"You shine like a jewel — a rare and precious jewel of life emanating from the earth and the universe, blazing more brilliantly than all the rest," he said to her. "Adorned with boundless treasures, your life has been forged and polished by great vicissitude." Mr. Ikeda first met the 83-year-old Mrs. Fang, who has triumphed over countless hardships, last year when they both received honorary doctorates from the University of Hong Kong.

Their warm and friendly conversation today focused on Mrs. Fang's life and artistic career as well as their shared desire for world peace. President Ikeda asserted his sincere desire to share

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naries and thesauri, are at hand. Exactly what is going on?

"We're translating from Japanese into rudimentary English and then from English into a more correct English," according to L. Jorj Lark. "This causes us to use as many forms of communication as we can think of — using our hands and facial expressions and little electronic gadgets and dictionaries — to get the point across. This

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? QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *'How and when do you tell others about this Buddhism?'*

In regards to sentient beings, I tell them about Buddhism whenever I meet them, by massaging their hearts with my eyes, my voice, or my thoughts. And if I am angry with, or upset by them, I try to do it with silent daimoku from my heart. In regards to insentient beings, I do it by trying to attune myself to the music emanating from their life.
— ALAIN BERGER, Van Nuys, Calif.



First, I chant quality daimoku for their happiness and mine. I do a vigorous morning and evening gongyo. But the real key is to muster up the courage of a lion and have the highest life-condition by being yourself. Because they have the potential to shine just like me.
— ANNETTE ALMANZA, Miami



I try to carry a current *Living Buddhism and World Tribune* with me wherever I go. Then I read them while at the health club, at work on my break or in line while waiting. Someone usually asks what I am reading and I have the opportunity to share about my Buddhist practice.
— SANDY TAYLOR, Bend, Ore.

“How” you tell others is demonstrated by your actions toward yourself (positive attitude in daily life, self-confidence that you can make your dreams, goals and aspirations become a reality, etc.) and toward others (compassion, concern, etc.). “When” you tell others...that’s the sticky point. Non-Buddhists may ask you about this Buddhism, but may not really want to hear your answer.... When I tell others about this Buddhism is when they keep nagging me about it. That shows me that they want to spend time really un-

derstanding what it’s all about, because as we all know, religion is a very serious matter (since it deals with one’s inner life).
— NAILAH BADERINWA, North Hollywood, Calif.

How. The first thing that I do is to offer my friendship and get to know that person. It can be a neighbor or a co-worker. Someone that you see every day at the bus stop, etc. I then gain that person’s trust and he or she will open up and tell me about his or her unhappiness. Be sure that the friendship comes from the heart. Show that you care with honesty, respect. Be unique. Be special to that person. When. After that person trusts you then is the time to tell that person about Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and remember that you are the model, that they are looking at you for good behavior.
— ELVIA NEWHALL, Anaheim, Calif.



I chant to be in tune and have a caring heart toward everyone. Then I can *feel* when the time is right to tell someone directly about Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Anyone I meet, stranger or friends, somewhere along the way I tell them I’m a Buddhist.
— SHIRLEY ZAGOREC, Orlando, Fla.

Most of the people I’ve told about this Buddhism are located in other states or overseas. So I use telephone calls, taped recordings and the mail. After I talk to them on the phone, I follow up with a card with Nam-myoho-enge-kyo on it and a 30-minute tape of chanting so they can get the correct pronunciation. I also send them short articles I wrote on “What Is Buddhism?” and “How To Pray.” I follow up with books and publications. I encourage them to go to dis-

trict meetings and give them the address and phone number of the nearest community center to them.
— DIANA NG, Santa Maria, Calif.

I have been practicing Buddhism now for eight months. I am chanting to receive the Gohonzon in March. It has been so natural to talk and live Buddhism. My friends start asking what is that big change? They are curious to participate, to know more about the philosophy. Or why I am so positive despite all the difficulties I have raising three kids alone. I am spreading Buddhism in a very natural way, living day by day as a Buddhist.
— MIRIAM MEZHER SILVA, N. Miami Beach, Fla.



Telling others about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism should be done in as natural a way as possible, with genuine compassion for that person’s life and taking into account their individual circumstances. I personally pray to master Buddhist philosophy through study to further correctly comprehend, absorb and articulate the teachings to others in a straightforward, down-to-earth way.
— JOY WEST, Philadelphia



I chant for the opportunity and the wisdom to touch others’ hearts. Much of the time people initiate dialogue with me. Nichiren’s Buddhism is daily

life, so invariably and naturally our discussion turns to Buddhism. I consider any setting appropriate and am careful not to appear fanatical. In the “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra,” SGI President Ikeda encourages us to “expound the Mystic Law to people whether they be

wise or ignorant, whether they believe or disbelieve.” Propagation is an act of mercy, not a contrived exercise.
— YVONNE D. THOMAS, Oakland, Calif.



At their crucial moment, I offer to share how I surmount obstacles. I keep it brief and *never* claim it’s the *only* route to happiness; just that it works for

me. I offer as much as they welcome, then chant for their happiness. I try not to be pushy.
— KIRSTEN CUTTS, Portland, Ore.

Usually when I’m interacting with a person, I sense that this person needs Buddhism in his or her life. Then I explain to the best of my ability.
— MYKE BAILEY, Jersey City, N.J.

Many of the people I know have grown distrustful that any religious or spiritual practice can help them. Consequently, they have a helpless feeling when facing problems that seem “too big” for them to handle. In these situations, I try to tell them that there was a time in my life when I felt the same way. But, I tell them, through my Buddhist practice I have discovered that I can take control of my problems rather than feeling that I can do nothing that counts.
— DENNIS MCPHERSON, Independence, Mo.

When I’m optimistic and am really enjoying my practice, telling others about Buddhism is very natural to me. When I establish friendships and share parts of my life with others, I always indicate that I practice Buddhism. Sometimes this leads to inquiries and sometimes not, but at least I shared this part of myself.
— JUAN A. ALVAREZ, Paris, France

Thanks to all who responded.

NEXT MONTH’S QUESTION:

‘With the special annual contribution coming up in May, what is the significance to you of supporting the organization financially?’

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 fax us at (310) 260-8910. E-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com. Please do not fax photos.

Deadline: March 24

Correction: In Bonnie Boswell’s essay on Martin Luther King Jr. (Feb. 14), a statistic from the National Center for Health Statistics was misquoted. It should have read, “More than half the yearly deaths from firearms are from suicide.”

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
 MAILBOX**

Overcoming Racial Animosity

Concerning Tommy Lee Ray's experience in the Jan. 31 *World Tribune*: While I'm happy for Mr. Ray in overcoming his negativity toward Caucasians and Japanese, I must point out an unsettling tendency evident to me during my 20-year practice. Whenever there is an experience in overcoming racial animosity (whether printed in our publications or delivered at large meetings in past years), it has always concerned a black member challenging him or herself to change.

Never in all my years of faithfully reading the *World Tribune* or attending activities have I ever read or heard a Japanese or Caucasian leader or member give an experience in overcoming his or her racism or ethnic bias toward blacks, Latinos, American Indians or others. I can only think of three possible reasons for this: 1) Despite the profundity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the history of racism in our society and the SGI-USA, no Japanese or white leader or member has ever had such an experience; 2) Such experiences have indeed occurred but were not communicated to our top leadership or the editorial staff of our publications; or 3) They were communicated but leadership and/or staff decided it was in the best interest of the organization not to share them with the general membership and reading public.

Regrettably, this is like a two-wheeled cart with one wheel missing, or a three-legged stool absent one or more of the legs; they cannot adequately carry out the function for which they were designed. I'm forced to ponder: Who is Mr. Ray's experience — and others like them over the years — meant to reassure? There are those like myself who have remained in the SGI throughout the years despite never feeling fully embraced by the organization. When I and others of like temperament see such experiences being shared by individuals of other ethnic, cultural or racial backgrounds, we'll know that the SGI-USA has upped by a notch or two its sincerity in carrying out its mission for world peace. Thank you.

— ROBIN AZI, Richmond, Calif.

Tommy Lee Ray's experience was really interesting, articulate and powerful. He proves, once again, that "it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered."

— LAURYL A. JACOBS, Brookline, Mass.

'Question of the Month'

I think it was brave of you to replace the "official" page 2 "Editorial" with the diverse opinions of SGI-USA members. Many newspapers are often distinguished by the opinions of their editors — *The Wall Street Journal* is a good example, with its potent and often scathing editorials. Maybe what sets the *World Tribune* apart from other newspapers (and what sets Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism apart from other religions) is that it doesn't endorse an official position on any issue. Rather, it recognizes the value-creating potential of all different views.

The SGI-USA is the sum total of its members. When I read the *World Tribune*, I'm not looking for an organization to tell me how to practice Buddhism; I'm interested in what individual members have to say about their Buddhist practice. I'm glad that the editors of the *World Tribune* have opened up the paper to editorial diversity, helping to create a publication that has a truly dynamic relationship with its readers.

— LISA JONES, West Hollywood, Calif.

Editor's note: We are striving to be the best of both worlds — an authoritative source on Buddhist philosophy and SGI happenings as well as an outlet for the diverse voices of the members.

**Pulling Up the Roots —
 And Sinking Them Down Again**

PERSPECTIVE

By ANNA HERNANDEZ
 CULVER CITY, CALIF.

When I first started practicing 12 years ago, it was common to join in the district where your sponsor practiced, even if it was far away from your home. For example, at that time I lived in Inglewood, Calif. my sponsor lived in West Hollywood and we both attended activities at the North Hollywood Community Center — several miles north of us both. I willingly traveled these distances because I knew my sponsor would be at most every meeting. I had a strong connection with her; she and I were together for a long time.

Then it happened. She moved. To Louisiana.

And after awhile I moved to the San Gabriel Valley (north-east of Los Angeles). By this time, of course, I was doing the Buddhist thing of establishing heart-to-heart friendships with the members in my group, so even though I missed my sponsor, I maintained a self-motivated practice.

I started to become aware that almost all the members in my group were located miles and miles from one another. Lots of miles. And because some didn't have cars and had to travel by bus, the ride home was at times long and late. We tried to find rides for everyone, but sometimes people would have to miss meetings because transportation was unavailable.

Around this time came a welcome shift of thought in the SGI-USA. Why not make it easier for everyone to practice in his or her neighborhood? What a revelation! I was certainly ready to

help make this happen.

A little over a year ago, for a whole lot of reasons, I moved to Culver City (near Santa Monica). Before I did, however, I decided that I would leave my old district and join a new one in my new area.

I was a women's division group chief and therefore had responsibilities toward members who depended on me for organizational information and support. I visited all the members and made sure they understood my reasons for leaving — and their options. It felt a little strange amount of strangeness whenever anything changes, no matter how slight. So I determined to regard this feeling as natural and went on with the business of settling into my new town.

I wasn't sure where I was going to practice, so when I got invited to a district meeting by a good friend, I accepted.

I went to the planning meetings that were geared to prepare for meetings during SGI President Ikeda's 1996 visit to the United States. I joined the exchange meeting planning group and was eventually put in charge of one of the meetings where districts from different chapters and headquarters would come together. I got to meet with district and chapter leaders and a whole lot of members just like me.

Everywhere I went, I found myself interacting with people I hardly knew. It was not scary; it was exciting and beautiful — for one very important reason. I could see that we all had the same goal in mind: spreading the Law. This goal does not separate people — it brings them together. It brought me together with the district members with whom I would eventually practice.

I joined my new district in July 1996 and it's been a joy ever since. We have great district meetings and there's a sense that people sincerely care for each other. When I joined this district, I found out that seven members with whom I practiced for many years from my old district were now in my new district! Also, a young woman I introduced to the practice 11 years ago and who moved away to Santa Barbara soon after, is now living in Culver City and attending my district meetings. What coincidences....

At the beginning of the year a few members and I got together and went over the guidelines set by SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitzu for 1997. One of them — "seeking roots in the community" — stuck in my mind. How was I going to do that?

I didn't have to wonder long because soon after that I got a phone call from a Buddhist pal who invited me to the Culver City Community Network's hootenanny. Well, a bunch of us went, sang, ate, laughed and learned about the network's goal of making a happy, healthy Culver City for all its residents. I'm also trying to get to know my neighbors and, what do you know, a lot of them seem to be in my district.

It is my belief that if we all start gathering together as neighbors and friends in our cities and towns, helping each other to understand the interconnectedness of our lives, perhaps we can help deter social ills like riots, civil unrest, teen suicide, homicide, etc. In building a family-like closeness in our areas, I believe we can speed up the realization of kosen-rufu.

And, in my opinion, that's what I'm here for. ☸

What Do You Think?

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

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Hong Kong Artist Is a Model of a Victorious Mother, SGI President Says

ARTIST, FROM PAGE 1

her rich experiences with others. Mrs. Fang responded by expressing her deep appreciation for the poem "Great Mother Nurturing," which Mr. Ikeda dedicated to her last year.

Born in 1914, Mrs. Fang grew up in a time of great disorder and upheaval in China. From childhood, encouraged by her mother who stressed the importance of education, she devoted herself to her studies and applied herself diligently to her true passion, painting.

Mrs. Fang and her husband, Fang Yingao, studied abroad at Manchester University in England in the 1930s. The year following their marriage, World War II broke out and the young couple decided to leave England. Because Mrs. Fang had passed the exam to study at Columbia University, they first traveled from Norway to New York.

But she was pregnant and the school told her to come back after the baby was born, so she and her husband decided to return to Shanghai. Internal strife there forced them to move from one place to another, and they eventually fled to Hong Kong.

Then, in 1950, when Mrs. Fang was 36 years old, her beloved husband suddenly died of illness, leaving her to raise their eight children alone. She pressed on resolutely, taking on the management of her husband's trading business.

Her desire to learn and expand her mind never waned, however, and she later enrolled in the University of Hong Kong and then Oxford University in the United Kingdom to continue her studies. Despite the obstacles that befell her, Mrs. Fang



SGI President Ikeda greets distinguished Hong Kong painter and calligrapher Fang Zhaoling.

somehow supported all of her children and ensured that they received the finest education.

Today, all eight of her children are highly accomplished, making significant contributions to society in a variety of fields, including law, medicine, government and business. Her daughter, Anson Chan Fang On-Sang, is the first Chinese, as well as the first woman, to become chief secretary of the Hong Kong government, the territory's highest government position. Mrs. Chan received an honorary doctorate from the University of Hong Kong together with her mother and Mr. Ikeda last year.

Mrs. Fang said that her formal training as an artist began in 1953 under her mentor, noted painter Dr. Zhang Daqian. Referring to the lines in the poem President Ikeda had written for her that read, "No life is happier than that based / on the way of mentor and

disciple," she confirmed with deep feeling that the happiest person is indeed one who has a mentor.

The artist explained that although she had mastered the technique and style of traditional Chinese painting, she gradually grew unsatisfied with imitating the method of artists of the past. So in 1960, Mrs. Fang followed her dream to broaden her perspective and moved to England. There, influenced by the works of such European Impressionists as Picasso and Matisse, she started to work on developing her unique painting style, a

process, she said, that has taken 50 years. Praising her genuine creativity, Mr. Ikeda said that her

Despite the obstacles that befell her, Mrs. Fang somehow supported all of her children and ensured that they received the finest education.

many achievements are testimony to her boundless inner depth and potential.

Speaking of her strong opposition to war, Mrs. Fang related how when she was 11, her father was gunned down by Chinese soldiers before her eyes. She also shared an episode where she and her children were standing on a train platform

strewn with corpses during the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong. These scenes of war, Mrs. Fang said, have remained with her and

are the reason that she, like President Ikeda, embraces a passionate commitment to peace.

Sharing his recollections, the SGI leader said that as a boy, his four brothers were sent to the front lines to fight for Japan during the war. His eldest brother, on temporary leave from China, expressed his indignation toward Japan saying: "The Japanese army's behavior is outrageous! I can only feel sympathy for the Chinese people!" That brother was killed in action.

Mr. Ikeda went on to say, "I joined the Soka Gakkai because when I heard that its founder, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and Josei Toda were imprisoned for their unbending opposition to Japanese militarism, I knew that these were people I could put my faith in." President Ikeda added that he has put forth utmost energy toward conducting frank dialogues with world leaders in the pursuit of peace. And he said that while politics and economics, which are primarily concerned with power and profit, are of course important aspects of modern society, he has devoted his life, based on his beliefs, to the spheres of culture, peace and humanity.

The SGI leader mentioned that, at the beginning of this year, Mrs. Fang composed a piece of calligraphy comprised of four Chinese characters, reading, "I will scale a high peak once again." He said he was moved to learn that Mrs. Fang, who has already challenged many great mountains of obstacles, is endeavoring to climb to yet a higher summit. This calligraphy embodies the artist's undying and indomitable spirit, he continued, declaring that her example is truly a great lesson for all humanity. ■

Neighborhood Reorganization Underway in Queens

By BRIGID WITKOWSKI
CORRESPONDENT
New York, Feb. 15

Bearing in mind the challenge for 1997 to "create an organization rooted in the community," members of Queens Territory met today at the New York Culture Center for a "Town Meeting." Perhaps it should have been dubbed a "Borough Meeting."

Although all members of Queens Territory live in Queens, some do not practice at the meeting places closest to their homes. More meeting

places need to be developed so that, where possible, people can walk to their meetings and so that additional members, who now practice in other boroughs, can be accommodated when they transfer into Queens.

The leaders of Queens Territory set up this meeting out of concern that this reorganization not feel unnatural and not separate friends unnecessarily. They wanted every member's voice to be heard.

A song from *My Fair Lady*, "On the Street Where You Live," created a light atmos-

phere for the dialogues. Groups of about 12 people met to discuss their vision for their neighborhoods, their worries about a neighborhood-based organization, their recommendations and any experiences they have already had with local meetings. In addition, a survey was distributed to identify those who wished to work on the reorganization or to hold meetings in their homes.

In the dialogues, members mentioned their desire to see parks, playgrounds and constructive community activities

for young people. They want to see drug-free and crime-free neighborhoods.

Others mentioned solving the problem of loneliness and alienation, especially among older people, in their neighborhoods. Members were eager to share the SGI with their neighbors, to bring a sense of family into the neighborhoods, to use their SGI training to volunteer in the neighborhoods.

Some expressed a conviction that during the reorganization they must take extra-good care of members who might get sep-

arated from the people who now communicate with them.

Jim Corwin, the joint territory chief, expressed his hope that during this process everyone can be flexible, can streamline the organization and shake free of the "position-consciousness" that has sometimes colored their thinking in the past.

Although there are still many unanswered questions, members seemed to be eager to get started, to find out what can be created from this fresh vantage point. ■



Photo by JERI HUSKINS

Members of Boston Joint Territory's Translation Committee find their work rewarding and a source of personal growth.

Translators Working Hard

BOSTON, FROM PAGE 1

can lead to much laughter and bonding as we work together to achieve our common goal."

Boston Joint Territory, acting on a proposal by Jill Cibella, gave the go-ahead for formation of a translation group shortly after SGI President Ikeda visited Boston in 1993. Ms. Cibella, drawing on her experience in the Soka Gakkai's Young Women's International Group in Japan, which did a great deal of multilingual translation, felt that the group's mission would be twofold: The English-speaking members could study more deeply SGI President Ikeda's writings and speeches would reach a wider audience.

Early projects included translations of a series of dialogues from the *Daibyakureng* clarifying doctrinal issues clouded by the Nikken sect. At the end of 1996, the BTG completed an update of *Fundamentals of Buddhism*, a popular work that explains many concepts critical to a full understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy.

Work completed in Boston is forwarded to the SGI-USA Study Department. When asked about the work of the Boston Translation Group, Study Department Chief Ted Morino spoke of his deep appreciation for their efforts.

"They provided us great reference material that is often used as a basis for our Buddhist concepts series," he said. W

Leaders Appointments

Atlanta Joint Territory

Richard Brown
Youth Division Chief

David Hashimoto
Young Men's Div. Chief

Diane Capone
High School Div. Chief

Ivy Gabbert
Jr. High School Div. Chief

Boston Joint Territory

Bryson Kido
High School Div. Chief

Chicago Joint Territory

Daniel Aoki
Vice Chief

Donald Kanda
Vice Chief

Jeffrey Meguro
Young Men's Div. Chief

Osamu Kaneko
Vice YMD Chief

Corey Powe
Vice YMD Chief

Swee Cheng
High School Div. Chief

Florida Joint Territory

Clifford Sawyer
Youth Division Chief

David Sanchez
High School Div. Chief

Marsha Germaine-Murphy
High School Div. Chief

Sandra Silva
Jr. High School Div. Chief

Tony Laventhal
Jr. High School Div. Chief

New York #1 Joint Territory

Sharon Redman
Young Women's Div. Chief

Donna Snyder
YWD Advisor

New York #2 Joint Territory

Donna Snyder
YWD Advisor

New York #3 Joint Territory

Kazuyo Hayashi
Young Women's Div. Chief

Lori Karp
YWD Advisor

New York #4 Joint Territory

Angelita Anderson
Young Women's Div. Chief

Ronni Favors
YWD Advisor

San Francisco #1 Joint Territory

David Eisenberg
Young Men's Div. Chief

San Francisco #2 Joint Territory

Mary Cady
Women's Division Chief

Miki Sasai
Senior Advisor

Mark Kaplan
Young Men's Div. Chief

Thomas Harris
YMD Advisor

Seattle Joint Territory

Donna Keller
Vice YWD Chief

Texas Joint Territory

Mimi Kubiak
Vice YWD Chief

Wing Lee
Vice YMD Chief

Expressions

Cry

Cry my little darling,
Cry

Let the tears roll down
Your cheeks

Let your pain be the door that opens up
your heart to a deep and brilliant tomorrow

Cry my little sweetheart
Cry

Let me embrace your soul and I will show you how
The beauty of your life can never be destroyed,
how to find in the salt of your tears
the secret of your joy

So Cry my radiant one,
Cry

And please, please let me cry with you
For I love you more
than all the treasures this world
could ever hold

—ALAIN BERGER, Van Nuys, Calif.

Under the Banyan Tree



Photo by WILL PINKHAM

A renovated former mansion opened in January as an annex to the Hawaii Culture Center in Honolulu. The two-story house, which sits on an acre of land, houses two Gohonzon rooms on its first floor. One seats 50, the other 40. Upstairs are four smaller conference rooms. Fronting the house is a large, very old banyan tree, which spreads over the lawn and reaches high into the sky. Adding to the ambiance is a beautiful 'matsu' (pine) tree at the edge of the driveway fronting the house.

MICHIKO DE SILVA, CHICAGO

Face To Face With My Family's Karma

Oct. 7, 1995, 3:10 p.m. — My ex-husband called. My oldest son, Tommy, had been in a car accident and was in the hospital.

I can't tell you the emotions that penetrated my entire existence at that very moment. Immediately after the call, I chanted three daimoku to the Gohonzon, grabbed my sutra book and beads, and my husband, Para, and I were out the door.

At the hospital, we were met by Tommy's father, who was literally in the state of devastation and insanity. Tommy was unconscious in the emergency room. As I held my son's hand, I thanked my Buddhist practice that he was breathing.

I told Tommy I was there with him, fighting and transforming my daimoku into his life force and strength, so not to worry. As I look back, I am amazed at how I maintained my composure in what is any parent's worst nightmare. Nichiren Daishonin states that the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat. By taking this to heart, I summoned up my determination to change this poison into medicine.

Tommy was diagnosed with several traumatic injuries to his head and face. The entire left side of his face was fractured. The doctor said that there was no guarantee that the sight in his left eye could be saved. Tommy was also suffering from internal bleeding in his brain that needed to be stopped immediately or it could be fatal. The neurosurgery and the plastic surgery were scheduled immediately, while the reconstruction of his face was scheduled for a later date.

During the six hours of surgery, I sequestered myself and fervently chanted while others patiently sat in the waiting room. As I chanted, my thoughts flashed back to many incidents before the accident.

It was nearly half a year before the accident when Tommy moved in with his father. At that time, my relationship with my son was deteriorating day by day. He had grown increasingly rebellious since my divorce. He often became violent with his

little brother — so violent that Para contemplated reporting him to the police. I tried to understand Tommy's struggle to comprehend and adjust to his new circumstances. However, I felt something fundamental was missing between us — a sense of respect and trust. It was during this time that Tommy decided to live with his father.

I was devastated, as any mother would be. I tried to understand that it would be the best thing for him. The following day, I called Los Angeles and sought guidance from Wendy Clark, our SGI-USA women's division leader. My first concern was the possibility of my son's religious conversion: His father and his stepmother are devoted Baptists.

However, Mrs. Clark said that a mother's prayer determines everything. She urged me not to be shortsighted but to have a long-term vision. She suggested I let him be whatever he desires for now, but to continue to create opportunities for communication through letters or by sending him SGI President Ikeda's guidance once in a while. She said that he may not read them right now but, without doubt, the time will come when he will realize the significance of this teaching through his own experience. I then understood there was nothing to fear as long as my faith was intact.

As I continued chanting during the operation, I realized that this was the very opportunity for Tommy to realize the power of the Gohonzon with his life. I sincerely prayed from the bottom of my heart that he would one day become a capable leader in society by demonstrating the validity of this Buddhism.

The surgery was successful, though we were told the next 48 hours would be crucial. I furiously chanted throughout the night beside Tommy to fuse his life with the power of the Law. During that time, I was often confronted by the devil of cowardliness within myself that intimidated me with the possibility of losing my son. I had to fight off my weakness with daimoku.

The following morning, I went home to care for my younger son, Tomell. I will

never forget how relieved and at ease I felt once I sat in front of the Gohonzon. I cried for the first time since the accident. At that point, I honestly became overwhelmed with appreciation for this opportunity to eradicate our karma.

I thought about a conversation I had had with my mother two weeks before the accident. At that time, I was suffering from a severe rash on my face that kept me awake even at night. I had seen two dermatologists in three years, yet my skin condition continued. When I told my mother about my problem, she pointed out that it was our family's karma to suffer from problems that deal with the neck and head: One brother has suffered from migraine headaches and neck pains for many years following a car accident, and my mother, another brother and my sister have all been hospitalized at psychiatric institutions.

My mother urged me to understand this deep-rooted family karma and to apologize for my past slanders of the Law. I acknowledged the concept intellectually, but I was, in my heart, still skeptical about the relationship between my skin problem and my family's karma.

But now with Tommy's accident, I wholeheartedly comprehended this profound teaching with my life.

I prayed to completely eradicate this family karma for eternity. This Buddhism teaches that nothing is coincidental — all phenomena are based on cause and effect.

I looked up SGI President Ikeda's guidance for Oct. 7, the date of the accident, and was convinced of the reason for Tommy's accident:

A strong-willed or courageous person is always the master of his own heart. Therefore, he fears nothing, is defeated by nothing, and shrinks from nothing. As the Goshu states, 'The wise will rejoice and the foolish will retreat.' No matter what may happen, a courageous person advances against any obstacle like a fierce, raging wave. He is, with head held high, confident like the sun, king of the heavens, shining



Michiko de Silva, Dr. Para de Silva, Tommy (taller son) and Tomell (shorter son).

above the clouds. (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 4, p. 302)

I read it to Tommy that day at the hospital. As soon as he was conscious, I had him hold a pair of prayer beads. He continued to hold them tightly throughout his hospitalization. In fact, his father told me that Tommy would search for them whenever they were not in his hand, even though he had never been a consistent practitioner. I also noticed that whenever I was about to nod off as I chanted, he would rub his beads as if to wake me up for more chanting.

The battle, however, was far from over. Tommy was scheduled for major surgery to reconstruct his face. It required placing several metal plates in different areas of his face as well as transplanting a piece of bone. From the surgery, Tommy's faced swelled to three times its normal size. None of us could believe a human face could enlarge so much.

I don't think that any of us can understand the excruciating pain that Tommy must have endured. However, he displayed tremendous courage and strength, which touched many of the doctors and nurses, not to mention his family. I believe Tommy now realizes in his heart that he was protected by the Gohonzon because he was chanting at the hospital. The doctors were cautious about the infections that normally develop after surgery, but to date, there has been no sign of infection or of any side effects — and he didn't lose his sight!

The doctors have been astonished with the progress Tommy has made each day. Not only that, I have overcome my skin problem. Also, Tommy's father said to me that he recognized the strength that must have come from my religion. He was even explaining to his wife

what this Buddhism is about — this from a man who had resisted letting me attend meetings! I never knew he understood any part of this teaching, certainly not enough to explain it to his wife. Since then, we have shared with each other about our religions.

The greatest benefit I received through this ordeal is my improved relationship with my son. Where our mother-and-son relationship had been fragile, now the bond between us is stronger because it's solidified with love, respect and trust. Recently, his father told me Tommy had said, "I was scared throughout the whole incident, but now it doesn't matter anymore, because my mom and I are closer than ever, and that's all that matters."

I have tremendous gratitude for Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, which not only helped me to expand my character a little more as a mother and as an individual, but also provided me with an opportunity to gain greater confidence in the validity of this Buddhism. I am also very grateful for the daimoku my friends in the SGI chanted for Tommy.

How can I express my appreciation for this practice? I will do whatever I can within my capacity for the sake of kosen-rufu and the happiness of all people, together with my husband and my children.

Last spring, Tommy chose to move back home with us. He was accepted at a wonderful private school, where he is now on the freshman honor roll and the football team. We are like best friends now, and he is an excellent big brother to Tomell. I am deeply appreciative to my husband for not only the support he extended during the ordeal, but also for the unconditional love and infinite generosity he gives us in our everyday lives. ❧

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

See How It Works

By MALINA MOORE

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

The nature of cause and effect is like the relationship of flower to fruit. Or it is like the case of a single flame, no bigger than the light of a firefly, which...burns first one blade of grass, then two, then ten, a hundred, a thousand and ten thousand.... A dragon who places one small drop of water in its hands and ascends to the heavens can cause rain to fall upon the major world system. When performed as an offering to the Lotus Sutra, even a small act of goodness produces benefits that are equal in magnitude to these. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 149)

In this letter when Nichiren states that "as an offering to the Lotus Sutra, even a small act of goodness produces benefits that are equal in magnitude to these," I reflect upon all the activities and meetings I have participated in, including Fife and Drum Corps performances, over the 11 years of my practice. Although I intellectually understand the concept of cause and effect, it is not until I look at what my life was like when I first started practicing that I can really see how it works.

I was a 17-year-old, magenta-haired punk rocker with a lot of attitude — and more seriously, a young person with no real sense of hope or dreams. I realize now that all of my "small acts" over the years have resulted in the rich development of my life and sense of purpose. In the process, too, I have developed my dream of working with art and exhibits — which is what I am now doing!

I also think our individual efforts as Buddhists have a collective effect on society. I have been asked what the SGI — often described as a world peace organization — actually does for world peace. Do we help the homeless? Do we take political action? My response is "Yes and no." "Yes" as individuals and "No, not really" as an organization. However, as Nichiren teaches in this letter, our individual "small acts" are in the end what secure world peace — just as flowers bear fruit, as causes have effects. ☐

UNDERSTANDING MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

A Relationship That Depends on Me

By CURT YOUNG
LOS ANGELES

Probably one of the most amazing relationships I have is with someone I've never actually met, Daisaku Ikeda. It started in 1976, soon after I joined the SGI. I happened upon his lecture in the *World Tribune* on the Goshō "The True Entity of Life." It's a lecture I have since studied many times. The thinking so impressed me that I sought out and read other things he had written. And of course, the more I read the more I was impressed.

As the years passed it occurred to me that someday I would really like to meet this man. Not in a formal setting — that would be too foreboding — but over a cup of coffee, where we could just talk. I thought of the kind of relationship I had, for instance, with my high school English teacher, or with a particular literature professor and a history professor, both during college. These were people I deeply respected, people I could frankly discuss all sorts of things with. And they were people who were interested in me. But the opportunities to meet Daisaku Ikeda, under any circumstances, just weren't there.

For the first 10 years of my practice I lived in New York, which wasn't on his itinerary, except on one occasion in 1980. But I was too new a member to get in on the meeting. Besides, in those days, I was more interested in reading what he had to say than meeting him anyway.

Then in 1984 I participated in the 5th World Peace Youth Culture Festival in Kansai. He apparently attended our garden party at Soka University. I didn't see him, although while waiting for our bus after the festivities, I caught a glimpse of him as he got into his car.

The next year, 1985, I was in Hawaii. So was he, but again we didn't meet. Everybody else I knew bumped into him in the hotel lobby, or in a restaurant or while strolling along the beach. Not me.

In 1989, I moved to Los Angeles. Now, I thought, was my chance. A year later he would be visiting here. To cover all my bases I even bought one of those dreadful blue polyester suits we used to wear back then!

It didn't work. Seating in the main auditorium was limited; so I, along with a group of others, was shuttled off to our local community center where we watched the meeting on closed circuit television.

I quickly got over my disappointment, though, realizing that I was actually better off there. Had I been in the auditorium, I'd probably have been seated far in the back behind someone whose head I couldn't have seen over. Here I was face to face with my "teacher" on that big screen in front of the room.

I could see the warmth literally pour from his eyes. And I connected to his brilliant sense of humor. It was as if we were

shaking hands through that TV monitor.

I enjoyed that meeting so much that I now wanted more than ever to meet him. I also began to develop a low-grade grumble, which would get a little louder as the months passed, that went something like: "Why is it that whenever I see a photograph from a meeting with President Ikeda, the same people are always there? It isn't fair, why don't they give someone else, namely me, a chance?"

Whenever I voiced this to my leaders, the well-intentioned ones, sincerely trying to encourage me, would say things like, "Yes, I remember the first time I met President Ikeda, it was...." Then they would quickly add, "But you know, it's really not important whether you actually meet him or not...." Whatever else they were saying faded away as I thought, "I'll believe that when someone who hasn't met him can tell me that!"

A couple of years later a group of reformist priests visited the United States. One, I remember, went to Washington, D.C. I read the account of his trip in the *Seikyo Times*. What he said affected me profoundly. He said that the mentor-disciple relationship depends on the disciple. That simple statement, which I'm sure I must have heard a thousand times before, suddenly made all the sense in the world. I realized that the type of relationship I had with President Ikeda, just like any other relationship, was totally up to me. Not him.

That's when lots of other things began to click. I had heard, for instance, that every day President Ikeda prays for the happiness and well-being of members throughout the world. I figured that his prayer must be just hanging out there in the universe for whoever decides to pick up on it. So I did. And I reciprocated: I sent prayers for his happiness and well-being, too. I was particularly motivated to do so because of the horrible slander he was being subjected to, especially in Japan. The funny thing was that my prayer wasn't coming from a sense of obligation or anything silly like that. It was very natural, like the kind of prayer I would and do send to any of my friends whose well-being I truly care about.

I can say that from there, the relationship deepened. I began to see the things we had in common, like our love of books and reading and poetry and music. I would even drop him a note of appreciation from time to time. He had, after all, introduced me to a body of literature I might never have known otherwise. Like Tolstoy's

writings on culture and religion done toward the end of his life. The poetry of Heinrich Heine. The work of Natalia Sats, founder of the Moscow Children's Theatre. Hall Caine's *The Eternal City*. Roman Rolland. The wonderful cultural observations and poetry of Goethe. Before Mr. Ikeda, all I knew of Goethe was *Faust*. The list goes on and on. Then there's the music. Beethoven is also one of my favorite composers.

And never far from the surface of my relationship with Mr. Ikeda is the sense I have of his wonderful and infectious sense of humor. What character this man has!

The terms of our relationship allow for great flexibility. I can access it anytime I want. I think of my daimoku as a sort of cosmic telephone hookup. When I want to talk to him, all I have to do is "ring him up." And he answers in the most remarkable ways.

Whether it's the next Headquarters Leaders Meeting speech, his "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" or the "Discussions On Youth," they all seem like his responses to my questions. The way I read them now, it's as if they all begin:

**The
quality of
my relationship
with him has
nothing to do with
whether I ever
actually meet the
man or not. It does,
however, have
everything to
do with me.**

"Dear Curt, here's what I think about what you're thinking about today...." Another great thing about our relationship is that I didn't have to learn Japanese! He didn't have to learn English. We don't need interpreters and go-betweens. Our relationship is just there, just as it is with any friend.

Now is all this real? Or have I psyched myself into feeling good about a situation I had no control over anyhow? I found out when President Ikeda visited the United States this past summer. I thought, there's just no way we're not going to actually meet this time. Well, guess what? We didn't. And of course I was disappointed.

I shared how I was feeling with my dearest friend (who happens to be my wife). During our conversation, something dawned on me. Early on in this article I mentioned that I wished someone who had never met him could tell me it didn't matter whether we actually met.

What I realized is that it's me. I'm that person who has never met President Ikeda who can honestly say, from personal experience, that the quality of my relationship with him has nothing to do with whether I ever actually meet the man or not. It does, however, have everything to do with me.

And who knows, maybe we will meet someday. Maybe we won't. It's no longer a source of angst, though, because in either case, nothing will change. The cosmic connection is too deep. ☐

By SALLY MARKS MCKEE
MESA, ARIZ., CORRESPONDENT

“Ouch!” I cried as I pulled one of the seven dwarfs from my foot. I looked at my daughter’s toy and inwardly cursed. The same bedroom that I had cleaned that morning was now littered with stuffed animals, crayons and books.

“Why can’t you keep your room clean, Brittany?” I asked my 4-year-old.

“I wanted to play,” she replied innocently.

“If you have so many toys that you can’t pick them up off the floor, then I think it’s time to get rid of a few things,” I said, nastily.

A glutton for punishment, I decided to inspect my 9-year-old daughter’s room. To my chagrin, Alicia’s room was worse than Brittany’s. My anger swelled. The combined aggravation of working, embarking on my new Buddhist practice, taking college courses and maintaining a reasonable sense of order in a tidal wave of frustration.

“That’s it!” I announced to my children and husband. “Tomorrow we’re going through the closets and giving half of these toys away. No two children need so much junk.”

I quickly tucked the girls in bed, carefully watching the floor on my way so I wouldn’t step on another toy. A sinister sense of satisfaction entered my heart as I thought of carting away bags of useless toys — I love getting rid of junk more than most people enjoy collecting it.

The following day my husband, John, and I began rummaging through the girls’ toys. John and Alicia went through her things, while I went through Brittany’s. But the task was more difficult than I had imagined. Brittany did not want to part with anything.

“Why are you saving this egg carton?” I asked.

“Don’t throw that away, Mom,” she cried. “It’s an apartment house for my little dinosaurs.”

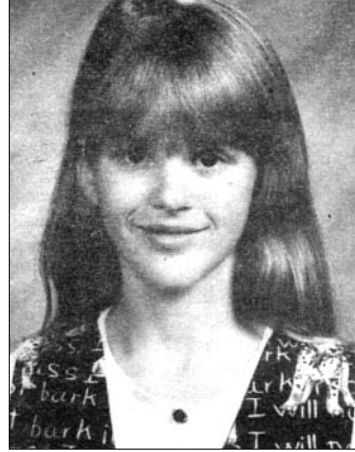
“Nope,” I said as I threw the carton in the trash. “Looks like your dinosaurs will have to live someplace else.” I picked up a stuffed animal and threw it in a bag.

“Not my duckie!” Brittany howled.

I looked at the duck, trying to imagine what was so special about it. It had all its parts and it still played “Old MacDonald Had a Farm,” but Brittany hadn’t touched the toy in ages.



McKee family at the Grand Canyon in 1988. Alicia (l), Sally (r) and Brittany in foreground on the rock.



Brittany McKee in 1996 at age 12.

‘Not My Duckie!’

I threw the duck back in the bag and Brittany fished it out.

“Brittany, that’s a baby toy,” I said, trying to appeal to her desire to act like a big girl.

“I don’t care,” she countered. “I still want her.”

“You haven’t played with it since you were 2 years old.”

“Yes, I have. I just couldn’t remember where she was.”

I wasn’t getting anywhere with Brittany. I waited until she wasn’t watching and I stuffed the duck back in with the outgoing toys. After an hour or so we finished going through the closets and had come up with two bags of junk and four bags of decent, but neglected, toys to donate to the local child crisis center.

John and I loaded the bags in the trunk and we all hopped into the car to run a few errands, grab a bite to eat and make our final stop at the child crisis center.

It was late by the time we finished eating. Everyone was so tired that we considered skipping the toy run and going straight home. However, I knew I couldn’t rest until the toys were out of the trunk.

John parked in front of the child crisis center. He wanted to go inside, which would have been the proper thing to do, but I insisted that we drop off the toys at the door and leave. I didn’t want to talk to anyone or wait for a receipt.

I jumped out of the car, unlocked the trunk, quickly grabbed the bags and placed them by the front door, trying to work as fast as possible so no one would see us.

As I grabbed the last bag, a few things tumbled out. I started

quickly stuffing them back in the sack. But there, unfortunately, on top of the heap, was Brittany’s duck.

“My duckie! My duckie!” she cried with pain in her voice. “No! Don’t give them my duckie! I love my duck. I love that toy. Give them something else...please.” She climbed out of the car and tried to rescue her duck.

Quickly I put her back into the car, in my haste accidentally shutting the door on her finger, adding further misery to an already unpleasant situation. Ignoring her cries, I told John to hurry and drive away.

“We can look at her finger later,” I said. “Let’s get out of here. I don’t feel like talking to anyone.”

We drove off. Brittany’s finger was fine, but she kept wailing endlessly about her duck. I tried to reason with her. I told her about how some poor kid really needed her duck, how she was behaving selfishly — but she would not be placated. I used psychology, reasoning and a generous sprinkling of guilt, but she was adamant. She wanted her duckie back.

When we arrived home I remembered something that I had been told about the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Although I had only started chanting a few months before, I had seen many positive changes in my life. I reflected on the words of my seniors in faith who had always encouraged me to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to overcome my problems — even the simple, mundane struggles that occur in life.

“Brittany, come here,” I said. She slowly walked over to me, eyeing me with suspicion. Her eyebrows knit into a frown above her brown eyes and she folded her arms tightly across her chest.

“I think we should chant together,” I said. At first Brittany didn’t cooperate and it was obvious she didn’t trust me.

“Brittany, if you chant with me I will make you a special promise,” I said. “We’ll pray with all of our hearts to do the right thing about your duckie. After we get done chanting, you will know in your heart what is the right thing to do — and then we’ll do it!”

She walked over to me and climbed in my lap. We sat together and faced the Gohonzon. I confidently watched my daughter as she clasped her little hands together and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo several times. When she finished, she looked at me and smiled.

“Were your prayers answered?” I asked.

She nodded. “What did the little voice in your heart say to do?” I asked gently.

“To go back and get my duckie!”

I was shocked. I had been certain that chanting would work. I wasn’t going to go back on my word, so I instructed Brittany to get in the car and we would go back and get her duck.

The child crisis center is close to our house and I figured that the duck would probably still be outside the door. As I backed out of the driveway, I watched the garage door close and several thoughts flooded my mind: Could it be that I was the selfish

one? Maybe I shouldn’t have forced Brittany to relinquish her stuffed animal. What were my real motives for wanting to get rid of the toy? I wasn’t concerned about the poor kids; I was sick of picking up after my children.

I also wondered what I would say if the folks at the center had already brought the toy inside — but it didn’t matter, I knew I would think of something. I had made Brittany a promise and I had faith that we were doing the right thing.

We drove to the end of our street and Brittany reached out and touched my leg.

“No, Mom, wait,” Brittany said. “Go back home. Let the poor kids have my duckie.”

“Are you sure?” I asked. “Yep,” she said, without a trace of doubt in her voice.

I looked at my dainty daughter and her wide grin and stopped the car to give her a big hug. I was so proud of her. She had made the decision to give up her little duck entirely on her own, without any pressure from me. And she had made a huge sacrifice for a 4-year-old.

Our prayers had been answered, but not in the way I had anticipated.

That night, as I tucked my children into bed, I could feel a change in myself. I thought about how lucky I was to have such a wonderful family. I kissed Alicia goodnight and went into Brittany’s room. Suddenly I felt a sharp object under my foot. I pulled a miniature, plastic Cabbage Patch Kid from between my toes.

I placed the little doll on the bookshelf, kissed Brittany goodnight and turned out the light. No yelling, no threats, no anger. My preschooler wasn’t the neatest kid in town, but somehow it didn’t seem so important. She was a fine little human being. That was what mattered the most.

Post script: The above incident happened eight years ago. The “neat freak” mom in this story, Sally McKee, is currently a district leader in Arizona Territory. Her older daughter, Alicia, is an honor student at Westwood High School, a junior group leader in Desert District and an active member of the high school division. Brittany, now 12, is an active member of the junior high school division, an accomplished violinist in the Concert Orchestra of her school and an honor student.

Her bedroom, however, is still a mess.

SGI President Ikeda spoke at the SGI Representative Leaders Conference held on day one of the 22nd SGI General Meeting, in Hong Kong, Feb. 19.

Congratulations on the start of the SGI General Meeting! We are all members of an eternal family. I warmly welcome all of you gathered here from around the world — many having traveled very long distances. Nichiren Daishonin writes, “The length of the journey traveled in pursuit of the Law represents the strength of seeking spirit” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1223). Each of you embodies such lofty seeking spirit. Your good fortune and benefit are immeasurable.

I also express my deepest appreciation to the Hong Kong SGI members, who always welcome and shower such warm hospitality on the many overseas SGI members on occasions like these. *Duo xie! Duo xie!* (Thank you very much.)

Here we are, representatives of the global SGI family, assembled under one roof and sharing a festive and meaningful evening of heart-to-heart exchange. This gathering itself is a microcosm of world peace; it represents the solidarity of humanity and the quintessence of Buddhism.

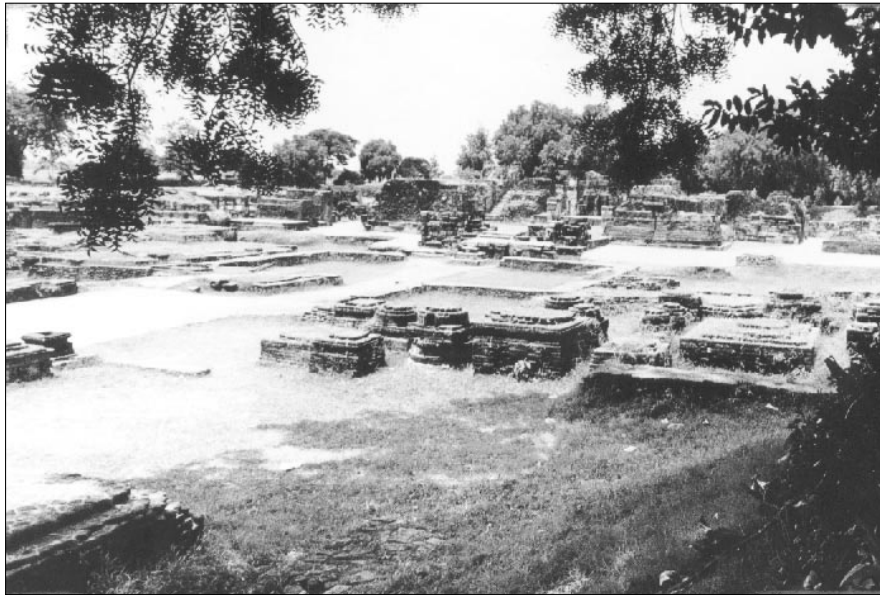
I would like each of you to thoroughly enjoy life. Life is meant to be enjoyed. Happiness is life’s purpose. When you tally up all the joys and all the sufferings at the end of your life and subtract one from the other, what do you get? If there is more joy than suffering, then you are happy. If there’s more suffering than joy, then you are unhappy.

Moreover, the wise, the truly strong, can surmount even the most painful times with courage. In contrast, the pessimistic, who weakly wallow in their problems, unable to move on, tend to agonize and suffer over the smallest things. I hope all of you will be wise people who can live with joy.

Shakyamuni’s Warm Consideration for Each Person

There is an anecdote about Shakyamuni and his disciples being invited to dine with the people of a town on the Ganges River. After the meal, as was customary, Shakyamuni would preach the Law as a token of his appreciation.

A farmer wanted to attend the gathering to hear Shakyamuni



After his awakening under the Bodhi tree, Shakyamuni went to the Deer Park where he gave his first sermon.

The Heart of Buddhism — Humanity

speak. However, as he was about to set out that morning, he discovered that one of his cows was missing. As eager as he was to see Shakyamuni, it was of greater urgency that he find the cow, on which his livelihood depended. By the time he found the animal and returned it to the field, it was close to nightfall. He was starving, not having eaten all day and having wandered far and wide in his search. But he hurried off to the gathering.

He arrived just as everyone had finished eating and Shakyamuni was about to begin preaching. Shakyamuni, however, immediately perceived the great struggles the farmer had gone through to join them. Only the Buddha understood, with mirror-like clarity, how exhausted and hungry the man was and how sincere the seeking spirit that had brought him here. Shakyamuni asked one of his hosts to prepare a seat for the farmer and serve him a meal. He then waited for the man to eat and feel restored in mind and body. Only after that did he begin to preach.

Deeply touched, the farmer naturally listened with even greater joy and earnestness to Shakyamuni’s preaching and was deeply content. Bringing contentment to people is the very hallmark of a Buddha.

There were, however, some

monks among Shakyamuni’s disciples who frowned at the Buddha’s special consideration for the man, complaining, “Why are you making such a fuss over one poor peasant?”

But Shakyamuni replied simply: “If you preach to people whose stomachs are empty, they cannot really appreciate what you are saying. Nothing is more unendurable than hunger.” There was nothing authoritarian or officious in his manner. He was warmly humanistic throughout.

What a contrast to the priests of the Nikken sect! They have angered many by their complete lack of the compassion and concern that characterized the behavior of both Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin!

Shakyamuni fought dauntlessly throughout the “nine great ordeals,” the major hardships he suffered during his lifetime. He fought against the evil machinations and vicious slander of the treacherous Devadatta and others who were out to destroy him. Even in the midst of such onslaughts, Shakyamuni showed the greatest respect for each person and, with steady and sincere efforts, created a beautiful, harmonious community of individuals bound by shared aspirations.

Leaders must always remember that everything starts with humanistic behavior —

for instance, warmly welcoming all who attend meetings and sincerely expressing your gratitude for their efforts. As leaders, you must use your hearts and your heads so that everyone can advance joyously and courageously.

In the West, ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle valued hospitality as the virtue of a generous, humanistic spirit. Kant, whose works the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Maki-guchi, read with great interest in prison, also viewed hospitality as an indispensable element in what he called “cosmopolitan right,” or the rights of global citizens, a cornerstone of his formula for achieving perpetual peace.¹

Today, with the 21st century just over the horizon, we of the SGI, placing supreme value on the individual, are creating an ever-expanding network of global citizens, transcending differences in nationality, ethnic background and language. And the most humanistic center of that network is surely here in Hong Kong.

A Scholar’s Assessment of the SGI

I would like to share some comments about the SGI and its activities by Dr. Bryan Wilson

[Reader Emeritus at Oxford University], a respected researcher on the sociology of religions and the first president of the International Conference for the Sociology of Religions. Dr. Wilson, with whom I published a dialogue [*Human Values in a Changing World*], has studied the SGI movement from a scholarly viewpoint.

He summarized what he had found to be SGI’s main sources of appeal as follows: 1) It is a lay movement comprised of ordinary people. 2) It is pragmatic and focused on practical everyday affairs. 3) It offers multiform conceptions of salvation. 4) It is “world-affirming,” endorsing positive attitudes to social experience. 5) It emphasizes religion as an instrument of benefit, not as a compensation for suffering. 6) It sets aside much of the apparatus of conventional church organization. 7) Its local groups operate as support groups for individuals. 8) It is an outgoing religion, sponsoring a wide variety of cultural and social activities. 9) It has a strong activist orientation, in terms of sharing its philosophy. 10) Its whole ideology legitimizes well-being and does not employ guilt feelings.²

Let us continue to take action and make even greater contributions to society, to culture and to human happiness.

The New Millennium

The Daishonin writes: “What does Fukyo’s [Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s] profound respect for people signify? The real meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha’s appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240).

The new millennium will be the time when the humanistic ideals of the SGI will be put into practice and validated on an unprecedented scale. Please bring hope and confidence to your families and fellow members through unflagging optimism, courage and sound common sense. And please lead magnificent lives of mission as champions of humanity. I am praying with all my heart for the prosperity and happiness of your respective countries and territories. ☸

1. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1983), p. 118.

2. Summary of points made in a speech by Dr. Bryan Wilson at the Boston Community Center, April 7, 1996.

Putting Out the Fire With Human Revolution

The "Simile and Parable" (3rd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "There is no safety in the threefold world; / it is like a burning house..." (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 69).

This is from the parable of the three carts and the burning house. The allegory goes as follows: One day, a fire breaks out in a large mansion, engulfing it in flames. But the children inside are so absorbed in play that they fail to notice the fire. Their father calls for them to evacuate, but the children ignore his pleas, making no attempt to leave.

So the father comes up with a plan: He tells the children that outside by the front gate are numerous rare toys that they have longed to play with. Upon hearing this, the children all rush to get out of the building. The father presents each with a gift of supreme value.

According to the sutra, the burning house represents this world, which is engulfed in the flames of greed, ignorance and other earthly desires. That the children are oblivious to the approaching danger exemplifies the state of world affairs today — especially, it seems to me, in Japan.

Although there is widespread concern about Japan's future, the country's leaders and politicians stand by idly without any fundamental plans for warding off disaster. Their irresponsibility is appalling.

And such global problems as regional conflicts, the plight of refugees, widespread poverty and the degradation of the environment apparently fall outside their

The following article by SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya appears in the February 1997 *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

sphere of concern. They are just like the children who play in the midst of the flames.

This spiritual decline, I believe, reflects the lack of a sound philosophy. Young people ought to lead the way in breaking through the present apathy and stagnation — but we find that youth today are fettered by a sense of powerlessness. In fact, in all sectors of society, the power to actively grapple with reality is in short supply.

Many people, the strength to reflect on their inner lives having waned and lacking any spiritual compass, are pulled this way and that through life. In Japan, this lack of spiritual mettle seems even more severe at present than it was during the material and spiritual upheaval of the early postwar years.

The path of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the exact opposite of — and the antidote for — such a powerless and resigned way of life. True faith means making continuous efforts to revolutionize one's life, to construct a solid identity breaking through the shell of the lesser self, to tap

one's inherent wisdom and compassion; in other words, the path of human revolution.

Human revolution, as the successive Soka Gakkai presidents have taught us, both constructs a resolute, unshakable self and provides spiritual nourishment to society.

No matter how comfortable our circumstances may be, as long as we are controlled by our environment we cannot become truly happy. Only by standing up, by waging a spiritual struggle, can we transform our destiny and humanity's destiny.

When SGI President Ikeda was a young man, his mentor, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, said to him: "You have to accomplish a great revolution. It is not a revolution by force of arms or power but a human revolution, in which everyone wins and there are no victims."

The great human revolution of a single person positively changes the society, the country, the entire world. President Ikeda, through his 50 years of practice, has provided us with a model of tremendous human revolution.

Aurelio Peccei (1809–84), the first president and cofounder of the Club of Rome, endorsed the concept of human revolution. "Thanks to this human revolution," he remarked, "the end of our century and of the present millennium can become the door to one of the best periods in human history" (*Before It Is Too Late*, p. 122).

As is evident from President Ikeda's dialogues with Dr. Peccei and other leading intellectuals, many conscientious people agree that the philosophy of human revolution — the principle of people unleashing the full potential of their lives and taking control of their destinies — holds the key to solving the problems facing humankind.

Indeed, praise for our movement is heard worldwide. There are high expectations that, as countless people carry out their human revolution, the 21st century will indeed become a century of hope for humankind.

While proudly sharing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with friends around the world and in our communities, let's advance with dauntless composure toward the great victory of kosen-rufu, setting our sights on the distant future. ❏

SGI President Discusses Propagation

EXCERPTS

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Jan. 23

The Mystic Law is unfathomable," SGI President Ikeda stressed to representatives from Taiwan, Paraguay, Bolivia, the United States and Japan today. "There is no nobler way of life than dedicating yourselves to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.... Irrespective of your nationality, circumstances or karma, if you believe in and practice in accord with the Mystic Law you will definitely become happy. There are no exceptions. Similarly, if you turn your back on and act against the Law, you cannot avoid punishment, no matter who you are."

Addressing the youth, he said: "I especially hope that you, members of the youth division,

will devote yourselves unstintingly toward realizing your ideals in a way that befits youth. It is vital that you discard all falseness and vanity and work hard for kosen-rufu. Only if you have personally struggled and experienced hardships can you understand other people's hearts. Unless you go through difficulties, you cannot empathize with others' hardships. And if you are unable to understand others' struggles, you cannot be called a Buddhist leader."

Mr. Ikeda also shared his mentor's advice that "you must not suffer and agonize alone. Please find at least one person with whom you can talk things over." Finally, Mr. Ikeda spoke of the great triumph of a life dedicated to the Law. "Just as the day following a beautiful sunset is fine and sunny," he said, "the solemn, dignified death at the end of a life dedicated to one's mission promises a brilliant existence in one's next lifetime." ❏

SGI President Talks With Soka Schools Officials

EXCERPTS

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Feb. 4

It is vital, SGI President Ikeda said at a Soka Schools conference on Jan. 25, for teachers to always have the welfare of their students uppermost in mind, just as leaders have to make the people's happiness their highest priority. Both teachers and leaders should never be self-centered.

President Ikeda also stressed that teachers must never use their students, nor SGI leaders their members, as means for achieving their own ends. Rather they should make their students or members their purpose and serve them wholeheartedly.

It is crucial for leaders to put aside their egos and strive to elevate their life-conditions, the SGI leader added. This will contribute to others' happiness

and confident growth. The presence of earnest individuals who spare nothing for others can positively transform everything, he said.

Meeting with Soka University officials from Japan and America today, President Ikeda emphasized that the SGI accords the highest respect and consideration to each country in which it is active. This is an eternal rule of the SGI. The Buddhist Law is the law of the universe, he said; based on this universality, we treasure the culture of each country.

Whatever the field, he went on, great people are always modest. The leaders of the SGI must never be haughty or arrogant. When you do not seek special treatment from others but take action with the spirit that titles and positions do not matter, resolving to do more for everyone, to serve them with greater sincerity and dedication — only then can you be called a genuine Buddhist leader, President Ikeda concluded. ❏

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YOUNG DAISAKU (3)

Life During Wartime

By KEN SARAGOSA

PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL CHIEF

Daisaku loved his paper route. While delivering papers, he would imagine himself a crucial messenger of much needed information. These imaginings sparked in him the ambition to become a journalist:

I began thinking that in the future I'd like to be a reporter for a newspaper or a magazine. 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 enjoyed the opportunity to study thoroughly and with composure. To compensate I had to struggle to make time for reading. (*My Recollections*, p. 20)

Reading was the source of his spiritual nourishment.

In July of 1941, Kiichi, the oldest Ikeda child, was discharged from the military and returned home. Daisaku then no

longer bore so much responsibility at home and began to hope that he might stay in school. But in December of that year Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Ikeda vividly remembers delivering the paper announcing the attack. The war was escalating beyond imagination; within a year, Kiichi was once again drafted into service and by 1943, all four of Daisaku's older brothers were serving in the military.

The entire nation became swept up in a patriotic fervor. Ikeda often mentions that growing up during the war "learning English was regarded as a 'traitorous' activity.... Young and innocent, we abided by the government's education decrees" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 62).

The Meiji rescript on education recited by students every school day read in part: "Offer yourselves courageously to the state, and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of the Imperial throne." Daisaku, too, was caught

up in emperor worship. "The frightfulness of education," he later wrote, "is that it can paint whatever colors it pleases on the blank canvas of the tender mind. That much is clear to me now" (*My Recollections*, p. 24).

In 1942, 14 years old and just finished with school, Daisaku attempted to enter military service. Japan's military was routinely inducting and training adolescent boys. Though he saw how much it hurt his parents to watch their sons go to war, he wanted to fight and prove his heroism. His father refused to sign the consent form, saying that "four are plenty!" (*ibid.*, p. 25).

Daisaku bore the primary financial responsibility for supporting his family, so he gave up his paper route for a job at the Niigata Iron Works, actually a munitions plant. The young men working there were generally too young or sickly to serve in active duty. Here, too, young Daisaku lived under the

daily indoctrination of the Japanese military government.

But it was here that he began to understand the horror of war. The factory was manufacturing miniature submarines, called "human torpedoes," the naval equivalent of kamikaze planes. The war had entered its last, desperate stages. Ikeda remembers that "young men imbued with the idea 'Your life for an enemy ship — ram it!' sailed into the jaws of death" (*ibid.*, p. 30).

Daisaku struggled to do the only thing that might, at least in his heart, allow him to break out of the hell he was in. He remembers: "My solitary joy in those days was getting immersed in some book during noon hour on a strip of grass within the factory compound.... I was so fascinated by what I read that my mind soaked up everything it touched" (*ibid.*, p. 33). With great difficulty, he pieced together a very small but precious personal library. ❧

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Two Different Religions

By CRAIG GREEN & JEFF FARR
LOS ANGELES

New members joining the youth division today may not know about the temple issue — even though simply by joining they are becoming, retroactively, "excommunicated" Buddhists. Whether we are new members or not, we owe it to ourselves to periodically reexamine the basics of the temple issue, its history and the questions it raises, which is what this series will do.

At first, studying the temple issue may seem to have little to do with us. To the many SGI members who have studied the six-year-old conflict, though, it's been a great clarification process. Learning through the Nikken sect's example what Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is *not*, what this Buddhism *is* becomes much clearer. What could have more to do with our lives as Buddhists?

Nichiren Daishonin taught that any person can attain enlightenment through his or her efforts, just as Shakyamuni did in ancient India. In fact, in "The Izu Exile," Nichiren writes that "the Lord Shakyamuni...is none other than each of us" (*Letters of Nichiren*, p. 409).

Nichiren's Buddhism promotes a brand of humanism that insists each of us has the tremendous self-sufficiency of Buddhahood inside. This idea, however, the Nikken sect has rejected, stating on many occasions that an intermediary — the priest — is necessary between us and the Mystic Law.

Since 1991 the SGI and the Nikken sect have gone in different directions, teaching two different philosophies. Obviously, as SGI members, it's important for us to be clear on the difference. ❧

No. 1 in a series

LEARNING FROM SHIJO KINGO — 3

Where It's At — The Workplace

By TENJIN IKEDA

NEW YORK YMD STUDY COMMITTEE

Regard your service to your Lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra. [The Hokke Gengi makes precisely this point when it says:] "No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 270)

Human relations are challenging in general, so when put in the context of the work environment they can seem even more so than normal. One reason is because in the workplace you depend not only on your talent or ability but also on the people around you to perform a good job.

What happens when relationships sour at work? Your performance may be questioned; you may feel your boss is unreasonable and lacks respect for you; or you may have jealous co-workers who are very competitive and trying to make you look bad in the eyes of your boss.

On the other hand, what happens when your attitude

sours at work? You may feel secure that nothing can happen to you so you constantly come in late or are always on the phone with personal calls. Or you may think that "I've done my job, the rest is up to everyone else." These may seem like extreme cases, but from time to time they are our reality. These reflect the different conditions of life that one can experience in the course of a day or over a period of time.

In the above passage the Daishonin encourages the letter's recipient (believed to be Shijo Kingo) about the importance of using faith in every aspect of our lives. Over a four-year period Kingo struggled with Lord Ema, his "employer," and his fellow samurai, his "co-workers," because of his faith in the Daishonin's teachings.

Knowing Kingo's bad temper, Nichiren Daishonin consistently encouraged him not to rely on his ego to solve his problems with Lord Ema, but to use the strategy of the Lotus Sutra.

After all, faith does not exist apart from what we do day-to-



New York YMD members at their 1996 year-end meeting.

day. Faith exists to enhance all our daily affairs and to enable us to show actual proof.

In an upcoming "Discussions on Youth" installment on the meaning of work, SGI President Ikeda says: "When working in a company — which is like a society or community all of its own — it is important to forge harmonious relations with your colleagues and superiors, employing wisdom and discretion along the way.... Wisdom is vital to being successful at one's place of work." As SGI members we have faith — the greatest strategy for winning at work. ❧

When we love our work, we can continue in spite of our surroundings because we have a focus, a sense of mission. On the other hand, if we begrudge our work environment then we cannot give 100 percent to our jobs.

It is our practice of faith that enables us to seek alternative solutions to common problems at work. The reality is that if we don't experience problems or obstacles we will never tap the true benefit this Buddhism offers: to allow us to do our human revolution and thus live happy existences. The workplace is a great place to do this. ❧

Making Headlines

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS/RUTH FREMSON



Washington 'Post' Chief Executive Officer Katharine Graham is interviewed in her Washington, D.C., office in January. Graham has written a new book on her life, but don't ask her to write her epitaph. 'Too hard,' says the 79-year old woman who led the Washington 'Post' Co. through the turbulent years of the Pentagon papers, Watergate and beyond.

By **NIKKI AMDUR**
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

For the first four years of her life, Kay Graham — along with three siblings — was abandoned to the care of a nanny in New York City while her parents relocated to Washington, D.C., to pursue social and business success inside the Beltway. When the insecure child grew up, she married a man who fur-

ther undermined her confidence by constant criticism — and the nickname Porky.

Was it any wonder that when Kay's father, Washington *Post* publisher Eugene Meyer, left control of the newspaper to her husband, Phil, instead of his journalist daughter, the unassuming young woman didn't think to protest?

Kay Graham's professional life could have ended right there. But events conspired to transform a life in the shadows

into one in the public glare.

Phil Graham — brilliant but unstable — had his first nervous breakdown in 1957. The couple tried to hide Phil's difficulties, but in the next five years, his mood swings accelerated. His bon mots degenerated into vicious jabs, now directed not only at his wife but also at longtime associates. He began an affair with another woman.

Phil killed himself in 1963, and the

Washington *Post* — not yet the award-winning superstar it would become — was up for grabs.

When a friend suggested that Kay take the reins, she said: "Me? That's impossible. I couldn't possibly do it."

Obviously, she could — overcoming a lonely childhood, an abusive husband and the low self-esteem that had dogged her all her life — and did, opening the way for women journalists everywhere. ❧



for Peace

Friends



SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION

MARCH 7, 1997



Boys and girls of Washington, D.C., Joint Territory gather for a commemorative meeting.

Being a Buddhist Isn't Always Easy — Especially for a Kid!

By ANN MARCHANT

Jan. 26, Washington, D.C.

As the Boys and Girls Commemorative Meeting began today, the bright sun filled the second floor Gohonzon room. Today's meeting marked the first time the boys and girls met on a day other than World Peace Gongyo. It was very special. More than 30 young people attended.

The meeting began by reciting part of gongyo. Afterwards, the boys and girls were asked if they had a favorite country. They were to choose several countries to study and learn about later in the year, because preparations were to start soon. The children voted and chose Jamaica and Japan.

Then everyone stood together and smiled for a commemorative picture. I heard one of the children say, "They praise us here no matter what we do!"

Next, a young women's division member led everyone in warm-up exercises and lots of jumping around to music. The room was noisy but everyone

had fun!

The first and second graders then went downstairs to the Boys and Girls Room. They read a story on diversity from "Friends for Peace." Based on the story, they each made a paper chain with colors of the rainbow. Then they connected each chain to make one long chain representing how we are "the same but different."

The third to sixth graders stayed upstairs and gathered in four small groups. Each group was given a library book on a religion other than Buddhism. They read different parts of the books together and discussed what they read. When they got back together as a group, each child was eager to talk about what it is like being a Buddhist — sometimes the only one in the whole school.

They also talked about how they got teased sometimes for being Buddhist. The adult group leader pointed out that we need to respect others no matter how different they are from us. And even if

PLEASE SEE BEING BUDDHIST, D

SGI President Ikeda's New Year's Message

Be Strong and Vigorous

A happy New Year to all the Boys and Girls Group members. The 21st century will begin four years from now. I send this message to all of you who will play an active role on the stage of the new century.

Do you know Pablo Casals, a great musician from the country of Spain? He was the world's No. 1 cellist and also played a great role as a conductor. He was not only an important artist, but also worked for world peace using his cello and baton as his tools. I described how he fought for world peace in my novel *The New Human Revolution*.

Now, I would like to talk about his childhood. Casals loved music. He was strongly attracted to playing the cello when he was 11. He was fascinated by the sound of the cello that a man named Garcia played at a concert. Because of this, he asked his father to buy a cello. From that time, he worked hard and sincerely to learn to play the cello, and eventually entered a music school in Barcelona, Spain.

There, his teacher was none other than Garcia, the musician whose music first attracted Casals.

Casals not only studied music, but also strived to earn money. For example, he joined in an orchestra and traveled to many places to play the cello during the season of summer festivals. The music that he performed was easy, so it did not challenge him to improve his music skills. However, Casals wholeheartedly and sincerely performed everything without complaining.

He said later that the most important goal in our lives is more than merely looking good. Rather, it is to continue growing. And we can see that growth every day when we devote ourselves even to the smallest works that may seem worthless, he said.

The people who applauded with great joy at his performances were ordinary people such as fishermen and farmers. I can say that his experiences, his heart-to-heart bonds with these people through music were to become the basis of his actions for world peace — through his music, he connected people's hearts as one.

At a lecture he gave, he once told his listeners that to soar toward the sky, we must first firmly plant our feet on the earth.

PLEASE SEE MESSAGE, B

Max Wittert

Santa Monica, Calif.

I'm 9 years old. I won the Golden Pencil Award at my school for this poem. During the time that I wrote it, we were studying the rain forest. We learned the rain forest provides oxygen for half the world. My mother died five years ago; I wrote this on her birthday. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

I Am The Earth

I am the earth that has a tree
That gives oxygen to half of me.

I am the earth that has fine grass
That has a life that will not pass.

I am the earth that has a sky
That is so vibrant
It will not die.


Nov. 14, 1996



Christopher J. Vicens

Chicago

Hi! I am 12 years old and in the 6th grade. I have been chanting for 6 years on and off but the last 3 years I have been chanting hard for one thing which is a real microphone.

Every day I would chant for 10 and sometimes 5 minutes. At the end of the year for my birthday my grandmother asked me what I wanted. I told her a real microphone, so she took me to a music and instrument shop and she bought me a real microphone. Ever since then I know when you chant hard or just a little you can get what you want. And it is always good to chant for happiness and world peace. 




Daimoku + Tornadoes = Courage

The tornado touched down on the street, around the corner, up the hill from my friend Lani Nelson's house. She had recently moved to Anderson, S.C. We are in the Boys and Girls Group in Capitol Chapter. Alicia and I went up to see Lani because, the next day, we were going to Charlotte, N.C., to support the youth division sports festival. While we were talking and having a great time, Lani shared this experience with us.

By LANI NELSON

As told to Samantha Thompson
Anderson, S.C.

On the day of the tornado, Lani had forgotten her house key. She thought she was going to be locked out, but her mom had dropped the key off at school. When she got home her dad had called because there was a thunderstorm. While on the phone the electricity went out. Her dad's job had just lost electricity, too. Then the phone went out and the wind started blowing very hard. She went to the Gohonzon and started to chant. She felt like the Boys and Girls Group was with her. Courage and confidence welled up inside her. When her parents came home they told her about the tornado. They were very worried about her. But Lani knew the power of the Gohonzon. She was OK, and her parents were really happy that she chanted to the Gohonzon. 



L to r, front: Margret Nelson, Samantha Thompson; middle: Alicia Burns, Mrs. Nelson, Jeanie White, Lani Nelson; back: Mr. Nelson.

'It Is a Great Pleasure To Watch Your Growth'

MESSAGE, FROM PAGE A

I also want to emphasize to all of you, the Boys and Girls Group members, this point: It is very important to wholeheartedly strive in everything, whether it is in your daily studies, exercises, class activities, friendships, promises to your parents, etc. — even simple things that seem to be dull jobs in your daily lives. In other words, to fly toward the great sky of your missions for the 21st century, firmly base yourselves in reality.

At this beginning of the new year, I will

be delighted if each of you makes a determination, a promise such as "I will accomplish these things no matter what!"

It is a great pleasure to watch your growth. I will sincerely pray for you and watch over you, hoping that you will vigorously and strengthen your body and heart so your mothers and fathers will be confident of you throughout the year. Please do your best!

— Daisaku Ikeda, Jan. 1
(tentative translation)

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



Ann Arbor Boys and Girls Perform 'The Cherry Tree'

By EMILY BROOKS, 9
Ypsilanti, Mich.

At our February world peace gongyo we did a play about *The Cherry Tree*, a book by Daisaku Ikeda. After the play we took a picture of the kids in the puppet show and then we wrote about how we felt. Here is what some of us thought:

• Carrie Finsilver: "I thought that the puppet show was really good. It was really fun, too."

• Emily Brooks, 9: "I thought it was fun to play a puppet in *The Cherry Tree*. At first I was nervous. But later I felt

good about doing the play and I think we all did the best that we could do."

- Monica Cassetta, 6: "I liked the grandpa."
- Tatiana Cassette: "I liked the mommy."
- Robin Finsilver, 12: "I really enjoyed playing a puppet in *The Cherry Tree*. I really encourage other kids to do a puppet show or something. At first I was nervous about doing the puppet show but at the end when everyone clapped for us I was really happy."

P.S. This world peace gongyo was held by Metro Headquarters in Southfield, Mich., at our community center.

Joshua Bell

Los Angeles

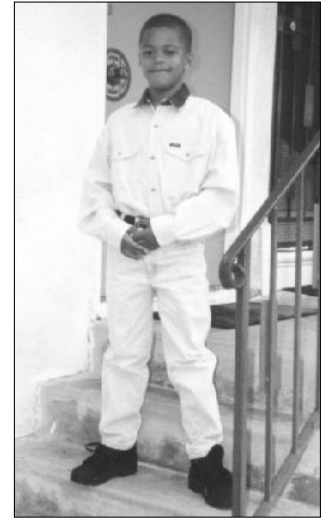
Hello! I am 8 years old. I am in the third grade and I go to Carthay Center School.

Two years ago when I was in first grade I felt sad because I did not have a friend to play with after school and on the weekends. Also at that time my dad was living in another country.

I made a list of things to chant for — for there to be peace in the world, to get a Sega Genesis game system, to do better in school, to get karate lessons and to help clean up the environment.

Chanting for these things brought other benefits to me also. I became friends in the first grade with Odell Hamby, who is now my best friend. He came with me to the SGI summer family festival last year and the year before that. We had lots of fun! We have just started a business together to earn money to go to college. (I can't tell you what the business is because Odell and I don't want anyone else to have the same business.) Sometimes we get into fights but we always become friends again right away. Another benefit was that my dad moved back to this country last year and now I have visits with him regularly.

One of my next goals is to go to Disneyland real soon and somehow I know it will happen.



Reiche Kuehu

Waianae, Hawaii

I am 7 years old. My benefit is about my grades. I started a Boys and Girls Group daimoku chart when I made a determination to get good grades in school. I would chant five minutes every day. When I went to the teacher and parent meetings, he (my teacher) showed us my grades. They were all As and Bs. My mom and dad were very happy. My mom said that I am a good girl, too. I will chant to be a good hula dancer next.



We need YOU to make "Friends for Peace" a success. Tell us your stories, send us your art.

Make this YOUR newsletter!

Melinda Petrongolo

Philadelphia

Hi, I'm 10 years old, and I'm in the 5th grade. I've been chanting most of my life. I want to share an experience with you. I live alone with my mom. Life was good until I started school at age 5.

I still remember my first day at school. While waiting in line in the school yard, I heard a girl crying. I felt so bad for her, I held her hand and tried to calm her down. I thought this was the beginning of a new friendship. Instead, at playtime she tried to choke me, and the other children started to make fun of me because I was white. They were African American, like most of the kids at school.

I came home scared inside and out. I talked to my mom and she asked me to chant with her and I did. Things did not get much better. It was hard for me to understand racism at a young age. I was not raised that way. All I wanted to do was to make friends.

I tried very hard. I wanted to get along and I wanted to be accepted.

"You're white, you don't belong here," they said. I hated school. I complained a lot to my mom. My mom chanted at lot for me.

I started to get sick. My mom tried to transfer me to a new school, but nothing came of it. They said to go back to school. It took so much courage for me to go back.


My grades were good in spite of my absence and I made the honor roll that year. The kids stopped hitting me and only teased me once in a while, but still I did not like school.

"One more year, and I'm out of here," I thought.

Fourth grade, my last year, I was placed in a special class for children who communicate well with others. I liked my teacher, Miss DeMuth, and for the first time I liked school. My classmates respected me. I graduated in 1996.

I am happy in my new school. We are multi-cultural, all different races together. It feels liked the United Nations, and it feels good to be accepted for who I am.

In fact, I met a good friend this year at school. She is African American. She recently moved away, but that's what happens sometimes when I meet good friends.

I still need to work on building and keeping friendships. I appreciate so much this change of karma. 



L to r: Melinda Petrongolo, Angela Armour, Michelle Armour (see article to the right).

Monthly Study

Matching Game

Match each cause with its effect
(Draw a line to connect the two items that match).

CAUSES

- Studying hard
- Forgetting your lunch
- Yelling at your mom
- Saving your money
- Kicking your dog
- Daydreaming at the bus stop
- Chanting before school

EFFECTS

- Getting bitten
- Able to buy something nice
- A+ on your test
- Feeling hungry
- Feeling bright and happy in class
- Being scolded
- Missing the bus

BEING BUDDHIST, FROM PAGE A


they make fun of us we shouldn't make fun of them back.

At the next meeting, the children want to talk about how they handled, in a positive way, being teased about being a Buddhist. They all expressed an interest in learning more about their religion so they can answer questions when people ask them about it.

The "open forum" approach really allowed each boy and girl to speak about things on their



minds. They are looking forward to the next meeting!

The meeting ended with wonderful refreshments. 

Michelle Armour

Age 10, Philadelphia

Hi there! I would like to tell you about a play that I wrote and starred in. It is called *A Picky Princess*. It was performed at the Cultural Extravaganza for the Boys and Girls Group. I wrote this story originally for school. When I brought mine home, my mom asked me to turn it into a script.

When I was done doing that she showed it to her friend Muna, who showed it to the Boys and Girls Group leaders,

and they decided to fit it into the Cultural Extravaganza.

It took hard work and ambition to get this play just right. Everyone rehearsed every Sunday morning. Regina (the director) even came over to my house and helped me learn the songs she wrote for the play and practice my part. Afterwards Regina, my mom, my little sister and I did gongyo. I chanted the night before the play.

Then came the day of the play. It was a success! It was exciting and fun seeing my story come to life. 