

# World Tribune

No. 3135

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

APRIL 18, 1997

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### SPEECH

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Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Actor and SGI-USA member John Astin records the first of SGI President Ikeda's 'Values and Visions' series to be broadcast on the radio. The show is being produced by Keiko Kimura (r), who first read the essays in Japanese.

## SGI President's 'Recollections' To Be Broadcast

By **JEFF FARR**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

North Hollywood, Calif., April 11

When radio producer Keiko Kimura read SGI President Ikeda's recollections of meeting leading world figures, she started to imagine them as a radio series. Today her dream became reality as the first recording session for the series took place in a North Hollywood studio with actor and SGI-USA member John Astin.

Beginning April 19, the series, titled "Values and Visions: Por-

traits of Global Citizens," will be aired every Saturday from 1:30-2:00 p.m. on KALI-FM (106.3) in Los Angeles. Ms. Kimura's production company, GMG, hopes to introduce the series in other major markets as well, including San Francisco, New York and Seattle.

The first half of each program, read by well-known narrator Ryo Kurosawa, is in Japanese; the second half, read by Mr. Astin, is

PLEASE SEE RADIO, 4

### DIARY

## New Ideas, New Friends

By **PATRICIA ELAM RUFF**

WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

March 20

Uneventful flight, thank goodness. Palm trees are the first indication that I'm in Florida. After about 40 minutes, the limousine turns into a winding driveway and stops at a guard's booth. I notice the words *Soka Gakkai International — Florida Nature and Culture Center* carved into the stone wall. Tears sting my eyes as I begin to understand the magnitude of this place. Swimming pool to my right, complete with beach chairs and laughing sun worshippers. Several peach-colored stucco buildings off in the distance.

Efficient check-in and effusive greetings from the other members. I'm directed to my building. Poke my head into the jacuzzi room and the TV lounge. This is truly a resort! My room is a spacious hotel-like double with packaged soaps and tiny bottles of shampoo.

It dawns on me that I need to savor every moment, that this is going to be a special experience. Everyone I meet along the path is smiling and friendly; some riding bikes, others just arriving with their suitcases. I walk beside the 20-



Photos by KIRK CONDYLES



Patricia Elam Ruff

Participants at the recent publications, public relations and study conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center walk across the courtyard to the Conference Center.

PLEASE SEE DIARY, 5

## SGI-Ghana Wins in Land Dispute With Temple

By **DAVE McNEILL**

MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., April 9

A government commission in Ghana today settled a four-year-old land dispute between SGI-Ghana and Nichiren Shoshu members by unanimously confirming SGI-Ghana's ownership of a community center and accompanying land in Accra, Ghana, according to a *Seikyo Shimbun* report.

The dispute arose because of the Ghana organization's change of names. According to the Soka Gakkai newspaper report, in 1989 the SGI organization in Ghana changed its legal name from Nichiren Shoshu-Ghana to Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai of Ghana in order to clarify its affiliation with the SGI. In 1993, the organization once again changed its corporate name to SGI-Ghana to reflect the SGI's excommunication by Nichiren Shoshu.

Near the end of 1992, Nichiren Shoshu organized those who had left the SGI and incorporated an organization called Nichiren Shoshu of Ghana. Under this new name, they

PLEASE SEE GHANA, 4

# VOICES

## What does assuming responsibility for the future of kosen-rufu mean to you?

Members from San Diego Joint Territory respond:



It means to always be encouraging, even in the midst of hardships. At times it means to listen and not speak a word and yet at other times to speak out passionately, without hesitation or doubt. Taking responsibility for kosen-rufu at this time and in this chaotic world is the greatest benefit I can possibly receive — and indeed it is the very purpose for my being here.

— TONY ANDRADE, Spring Valley, Calif.



I think raising youth is one of our main responsibilities. They will take over the kosen-rufu movement in the near future. We must also pass on the correct way of practicing to the next generation, to the Boys and Girls Group and especially our children. This is the way we can ensure that they will do the same in the future.

— TERUKO GIVENS, Chula Vista, Calif.



It's up to me to grow to understand the ideals of this Buddhism, to develop a deep conviction, and to manifest it in my daily life. This way I can become truly happy, thereby creating happiness in my environment. I think then I'll be on the path to following my true master in life, SGI President Ikeda.

— LLOYD FRAZIER, San Diego



Last year when I went to the Florida Nature and Culture Center, I came away feeling I knew what creating kosen-rufu really means. Since then I've prayed more strongly for other members and for my non-member friends' happiness and safety. Of course, I have to become a happier person and show actual proof of this Buddhism.

The San Diego youth division started a *New Human Revolution* study group in February. From this activity I'm especially learning what a capable leader is.

— RYO FURUICHI, San Diego



To me it means getting actively involved in our district or wherever possible and showing those in our environment that our practice works! I believe we have to stand up when we don't like something, always try to offer fresh ideas and share our experiences. We have to create meetings

where both members and guests go away feeling refreshed and encouraged about practicing.

— LIZ ANDERSON, Alpine, Calif.



First, it means to see my own Buddha nature. And second, to see it in all humankind.

— RICHARD MARSHALL, San Diego

I agree with President Ikeda there should be no more wars.

— DAICHI DUBOSE, San Diego

# Fields of Fortune

## EDITORIAL

The benefit in making Buddhist offerings — our homes for meetings, our time for activities, our money to cover expenses — is greater than we can measure.

But as with so many other aspects of our Buddhist practice, the why of offering is most important. We may sometimes make financial contributions out of formality, not really putting our hearts into it. Sometimes we may contribute because we feel pressured to. In these cases, the significance of the offering and the benefit we receive — just as with gongyo or daimoku done out of habit — will be less than they could be. As many people pointed out in this month's "Question of the Month" (April 4), the primary purpose of offerings is to express appreciation. Sincerity is the key.

In what has become a tradition, SGI-USA members can celebrate April 28, the day Nichiren Daishonin first chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo, and May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, this year through commemorative financial contributions. These can be made through the local organizations April 28–June 6.

Supporting our activities in every city, these contributions will help pay for, among many other things, the opening of two new community centers this year.

In vol. 4 of *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda explains how in 1961 he went through an intense inner struggle over whether to expand the number of financially contributing members. To build new temples and community centers more donations were required, but President Ikeda was of two minds over what to do.

On the one hand, he did not want to burden the members; on the other hand he wanted them to have the opportunity to contribute and receive benefit from doing so.

So President Ikeda opened the Gosho and

began studying many passages on Buddhist offerings. One of the letters that helped him come to his decision was "The Bodhisattvas and Minds of Ordinary Beings," in which the Daishonin praises a follower who has sent offerings to him at Mount Minobu: "Surely you are sowing good seeds in a field of fortune. My tears flow when I think of it" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 282).

Picturing how the Daishonin shed tears of joy because his followers made offerings, the young Soka Gakkai president decided to allow all members to participate that year in a contribution campaign for the Grand Reception Hall at Nichiren Shoshu's head temple, Taiseki-ji.

The campaign was announced on May 3 to great applause.

This tradition of members making financial contributions actually began with the members themselves. Throughout the 1930s, the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, bore full responsibility for the Soka Gakkai's finances. During the organization's postwar reconstruction, Toda again covered all expenses, never asking for anyone's help. But after his inauguration as president, many members insisted they be allowed to offer financial support.

What made President Toda hesitate to take this step was his conviction that the Soka Gakkai's finances should come only from sincere donations. He thus initially chose only 78 persons to contribute in this way.

Now this group of 78 has been opened to include all of us. It's great to have this chance to cultivate "fields of fortune" — in our own lives and in the life of the organization — each year.

With the same sincerity that President Toda supported the Soka Gakkai in the early years, we can express our appreciation through our donations to the SGI-USA. WJ

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

*Our Buddhism often emphasizes "standing alone for justice." How do you, in your everyday life, stand alone for justice?*

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. Fax: 310-260-8910. Or e-mail us at: [SokaNews@aol.com](mailto:SokaNews@aol.com).

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**WORLD TRIBUNE  
MAILBOX**

**Recording Artists Be Cautious**

I read with great interest your article on Duncan Sheik (Feb. 7 *World Tribune*), and while I admire his artistic dedication, as a fellow songwriter, recording artist and Buddhist, I must bring up some important points that need to be considered by any established or aspiring recording artists.

Those familiar with the recording industry are well aware that the music business is often capricious and downright cruel to the recording artists themselves, who, more than 90 percent of the time, are the last ones to see the fruits of their labors. Artists as diverse as Prince and Frank Zappa have been courageous and outspoken about gaining control over their art.

The countless stories of "one-shot wonders," the statistical data that 90 percent of artists signed to "record deals" never have their art released to the public and, by the major labels' own accounts, that 90 percent of records that are released do not "make a profit" leads one to believe that something is terribly unjust about a system that as a matter of course chews up and spits out countless talented and dedicated artists.

There is a growing movement of independent recording artists who refuse to let anyone else decide who is a recording artist or not, and many have found that there is a good, honest living to be made from actually owning one's art and directing most of the profits to the people who actually helped create the music.

It's always a long, hard road, but as KRS-1 says, "Knowledge reigns supreme."

— KEITH ANDERSON, Seattle

**Black History Month**

I wanted to express appreciation for the appearance of two wonderful articles about black Americans. The articles, written by Patricia Elam Ruff, featured the accomplishments of two courageous black women: Zora Neale Hurston ("Worldview," Feb. 14), a nationally known writer and anthropologist of the Harlem Renaissance, and Eva Sullivan ("Perspective," Feb. 14), a beloved pioneer member, who was recently eulogized at a memorial service by family and friends of the Washington, D.C., area.

As an American, who happens to be black, it was especially reassuring to see the articles appear during Black History Month.

I have also noticed the *World Tribune's* recent efforts to incorporate features that allow more opportunities for our members' diverse voices to be heard. It has proven to be very encouraging for me. Please keep up the good work!

— LAURA M. HUGGINS, Landover Hills, Md.

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

*In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.*

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

**What Group Do You Belong To?**

**PERSPECTIVE**

By **RON BAIRD**  
SAN FRANCISCO

After driving my wife to the airport to attend a district leaders conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, SGI President Ikeda really surprised me, or rather the impact of his efforts did.

At the airport, she joined with 32 other SGI-USA members, all bound for Miami. While comparing this small number to those usually found at an international airport on an average day, it doesn't seem like much. "How can such a puny group ever change society?" I thought. (Although I must admit they were definitely in high spirits that day.)

The thought that others throughout the country were also heading toward Miami to receive something powerful to bring back home was an inspiration in itself. I felt an overwhelming pride in just being a part of the kosen-rufu process. Who could imagine that this group shoulders the responsibility of bringing hope and happiness to this country of ours?

The SGI-USA is only one of countless groups that exist within the neighborhoods of America,


each with its own agenda. There are groups for women's rights and children's rights. There are political groups for change in the government. There are groups to fight against illnesses, and groups for financial profit. There are groups against other groups, and then there is a group of those who refuse to join any group at all. So I guess we all pretty much belong to some type of group.

As groups go, I don't know how they usually feel toward the future, but our group's future is such a gas. The words *soaring*, *infinite* and *Eagle Peak* (just having studied the "Clear Sake Gosho") come to mind. But the Lotus Sutra already adequately describes the future of this group.

It's been 37 years since President Ikeda, on his first trip to the United States, made his famous comment on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco that in 20, 50 or 100 years, that date, Oct. 5, 1960, would be seen as a significant milestone in the history of kosen-rufu. Thanks to President Ikeda, who carries within his heart the dream of Josei Toda to propagate Buddhism throughout the world, we have the SGI of today.

With the 20 years needed to become an adult behind us, we have already passed 35, the halfway mark between 20 and 50. I choose to interpret President

Ikeda's comments to mean that eventually everyone will become aware of the kosen-rufu movement. I also feel the years 2010 and 2060 will somehow be significant, being 50 and 100 years after his 1960 statement. That leaves 14 years and also 64 years for the SGI-USA to make this a reality. Just feeling the force of the SGI alive and well as evidenced by the program in Miami gives me, to use an old phrase, "tremendous hope for the future."

In the SGI-USA of today we may not have back-to-back meetings or phone calls day and night to constantly instill us with hope. We must subjectively learn how to keep in sync with President Ikeda and the SGI peace movement. There are times we alone must face the darker parts of our karma, and then chant with renewed determination to make a difference. The rush I felt returning from the airport, the realization that we really are connected in a profound way, that each person's victory becomes an inspiration to society as a whole, will become part of my inspiration to continue this practice. Thoughts can be so powerful. Once again, thank you, President Ikeda, for never giving up on us, and for your lifetime of showing us that happiness and peace are really possible. 

**The 1st Annual  
'World Tribune' Essay Contest**

**THEME:** *Human Diversity*

**CATEGORIES:** *Elementary School; Junior High; High School; College/University; Open (All Ages)*

*The World Tribune invites all members to share their thoughts on one of the most important subjects of our day: human diversity. There are so many different kinds of people in our country. Whether we differ in our race, our gender, our size, our background or our sexual orientation, we all share one thing: We are all human. What joys have you experienced in celebrating this diversity? What have you learned about yourself when you've met someone different from you? What prejudices have you faced? What needs to change in ourselves and in our country so we can rise above prejudice and discrimination?*

*We are looking for short, personal essays no more than 750 words long addressing these questions and any other ideas you have on human diversity. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing as well as on clarity and originality. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in the World Tribune. Plaques and other non-cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers.*

**To Enter:** *Send your essay (double-spaced, typed) to "Essay Contest," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Indicate which category you are entering. Only one entry per person. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. All essays become the property of the World Tribune. Any essays not double-spaced and typed or exceeding 750 words will not be considered.*

**DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 1997**

By MATTHEW ANTON  
CORRESPONDENT  
New York, March 22

“Whaddya wanna be when ya grow up?” students are constantly asked. So why not create an event where young people could meet with professionals to discuss their career goals? It seemed a natural to match up youth seeking their way in life with adults established in their chosen professions.

What began as this simple idea grew over six months into the New York joint territories’ first career expo for junior high school, high school and first-year college students.

During preparations for the three-hour event, titled Future Unlimited! the professionals were encouraged to be flexible, open, positive and honest, so the young people would feel free to ask questions and leave with the feeling that their future was indeed unlimited.

“The career expo was the greatest idea for everyone in junior high, high school and college,” Delano Davidson, 14, said. “It was very educational; we should do this every year or whenever we can.”

The day began with small groups talking about SGI President Ikeda’s recent dialogue on work (March 28 *World Tribune*). Students were asked if they had worries about the future and what their hopes and dreams were. Charles Horton, 17, said his group talked about what they saw themselves doing in the next 10 years. It helped him focus on the causes he’s making now in his life.

After the discussions, the



Photo by DEBBIE PARKER

Students get a quick education in the fields of fashion, design and photography at New York’s recent career expo.

## Career Expo Shows Youth Their Unlimited Future



Photo by JEFF JONES

In small groups, students talk about their career and college plans. Delano Davidson (r) hopes that the expos continue every year.



Photo by JEFF JONES

Students receive school, college and financial aid counseling.

160 students and their friends were free to roam the six floors of the New York Culture Center and talk with more than 90 professionals. Physicians, attorneys, teachers, filmmakers, architects, engineers, nurses, bankers, business owners, sculptors, musicians, fashion designers, dancers, actors, a chef, a pilot and many others took part in the fun.

“In speaking to a police officer, I really felt my dream of going into the FBI was right for me,” Himyo Green, 17, said. Aspiring musicians could strum a few chords with jazz guitarist Larry Coryell.

The legal division presented a mock trial, which allowed active student participation, presided over by Stanley L. Sklar, justice of the New York Supreme Court. “I was an attorney for a day,” Chris Gagliardi, 16, said. “I really felt the passion that goes with defending your client — and I wanted to appeal!”

A room with school counselors and advisors was devoted to students with no specific career in mind. There they could complete a personal profile to determine their strengths and interests, an exercise that proved so popular that many adults also wanted to complete one. Experts in financial aid, high school and college admissions were on hand.

After the event, planners reviewed the students’ exit questionnaires and considered holding a similar event annually and inviting more students from nearby schools next time.

### RADIO, FROM PAGE 1

in English. Realizing that many Japanese living in the States feel lonely and tend to associate only among themselves, Ms. Kimura feels President Ikeda’s example will give them the courage to make new friends.

“I strongly feel that this series should be widely introduced to the Japanese population,” she says, “most of whom are seeking some kind of spiritual nourishment.” Mr. Astin adds: “I think they’re going to find something in these stories that touches their hearts, touches their minds, their spirits. They’re going to feel good and they’re going to want to come back and hear more.”

Another motivation for Ms. Kimura in producing the series was introducing President Ikeda to an audience who knows his name but may not know of his efforts for peace.

“As a responsible member of the media,” she says, “I want to introduce Daisaku Ikeda as the wonderful leader that he is. The majority of people in the Japanese population — here and also in Japan — simply don’t know who Daisaku Ikeda is.”

The Japanese media has created a negative image of the Soka Gakkai and Mr. Ikeda over the years, she says, and “people do not even try to find out the truth for themselves. They just rely on the secondhand news and image

intentionally created by the media. I felt so ashamed to hear about this situation. As a media person, I felt that I should take action by myself to find out who he is.”

The first broadcast is of President Ikeda’s meeting with the mother of the civil rights movement, Rosa Parks, which appeared in the November 1994 *Seikyo Times*.

President Ikeda relates how Mrs. Parks’ refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger started the bus boycott movement in 1955 and how, at their first meeting in 1993, the two instantly hit it off.

“It seems to me the crux of the story is really when they met and

understood immediately how the other felt,” Mr. Astin says. “There was an immediate connection there. He is someone who’s dedicated himself to a cause; she is someone who’s dedicated herself to a cause; and they clicked.”

Future episodes will include President Ikeda’s impressions of children’s book illustrator Brian Wildsmith and Club of Rome President Ricardo Diez Hochleitner.

The same series, now in its third year, continues to be published in both the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* as “My Recollections” and “Daisaku Ikeda’s Recollections of World Figures” respectively.

### GHANA, FROM PAGE 1

claimed ownership of the Ghana Community Center.

SGI-Ghana lodged a complaint with a land dispute arbitration commission, which examined the case for two years before arriving at today’s verdict.

“[The recent verdict] reveals that in light of the laws of society, Nichiren Shoshu clearly goes against Buddhism,” SGI-Ghana General Director Bobson M. Godonu said. “From now on as well, we will continue to move forward as we promote kosen-rufu as the Daishonin’s disciples. At the same time, we will not tolerate any wrongdoing by Nichiren Shoshu.”

Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

## DIARY, FROM PAGE 1

acre human-made lake, awed by the dancing water fountain. We're free to use the brand new bikes propped up everywhere. Grab a purple one and put my belongings in the basket.

Walk through the dining hall piling fruit, pasta, rice, everything on my tray, wanting to taste it all. It hits me that I am in this beautiful, luxurious, spa-like setting filled with widely diverse people who are members! The dining hall (a unique blend of cafeteria and fine restaurant) seats 300 and there are 178 of us, so it's pretty full.

We do gongyo in the Friendship Auditorium, which seats 1,000. The raised altar area is framed by rows of flags from all the SGI countries. Someone from the FNCC staff speaks to us about the grounds and some of the rules. We learn that this is the largest conference ever held here; that we are to relax and be happy; that we shouldn't feel compelled to go to every meeting. Can this really be the SGI?

Before we turn in there is another outdoor reception with more food: fruit, buffalo wings and bonbons. Wonder if I'm going to stick to my diet here, as I munch a chicken wing.

## March 21

Breakfast, gongyo and a group picture. I ride a bike on the trails and sit for a few minutes watching the ducks in the lake, drinking in the peacefulness of the silence. Rows of trees with placards honoring people living and deceased. Was told that it took two years to develop this land. They had to get rid of plants that were not indigenous to the Everglades and add others like live oaks, sable palms, silver buttonwoods and something called bottle brush, which sprout tiny red flowers. They planted some 3,000 trees!

Brief rain and then the sun returns in full force. Someone leads us in group exercises.

First meeting takes place in the Miami Community Center. We talk about our mission and responsibility as members of public relations, publications and study to define the SGI-USA for other members and the public. "We are the ones who have to help set the course for what it means to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in America with a view toward the entire world," Vice General Director Guy McCloskey says.

Mr. Zaitzu emphasizes that the 21st century is the century of peace, and that during these next four years the growth of each in-



Betty Dunn of Los Angeles enjoys a quiet moment in front of Toda Lake during the recent conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

dividual is extremely important to the future development of kosen-rufu in America. We must ask ourselves how to expand the capacity of our hearts. We should pray without rushing and have patience. Desire to get to know SGI President Ikeda's spirit and come closer to his heart. "It is vital not to be defeated by your own weakness.... Study for the sake of practice."

I admit, I had been basking in the vacation atmosphere of this place and forgetting for a minute that this is foremost a faith activity — until the above guidance. It's right on time.

Divide into our respective groups. We first hear from two journalists about being better Buddhist writers. We also find out who "Betty Bodhisattva" is. Am pumped when I flip through our publications booklet to see that one of my articles has been included along with other *World Tribune* articles. All the writers' names are blacked out. Ego tripping a little, and I'm wishing my name were revealed.

All this quickly deflates when I realize that my piece has been included to show how not to begin an article! Mortifying but a good lesson. Phew — thank goodness my name was blacked out after all.

One of the photographers shows some slides, and we im-

mediately see the power of this medium. I am struck by the words "Photography is a visual language." Many really talented and devoted people here. We talk about how to make more efforts to include youth — this becomes an important theme.

## March 22

Some people mention having minor roommate problems like snoring and bright lights being turned on before they're ready to emerge from under the sheets.

Today's meetings are separate. *Living Buddhism* discussion is fruitful...concerns range from whether the magazine is elitist to whether Japanese terms should be rendered obsolete and, of course, how to involve youth. Impressed by how committed the writers are and how firmly rooted their faith is.

Lunch: shrimp tempura, vegetables, scallops, asparagus, lemon cod. I remark to someone how ecstatic I am about this food, and she tells me that she would prefer a hot dog or hamburger. I am rendered speechless. I eat by the lake. Sky is perfect, palm trees blowing like gentle fans.

Choose the field trip to South Miami Beach (the other choices are the Everglades and an antique mansion). Long bus ride encourages members to share their

thoughts. Miami Beach — full of bodies — some beautiful, some less so. Feel as if I have too many clothes on.

Later that night we jam to DJ sounds and karaoke. Special treats are dueling "Tina Turner" performances of "What's Love Got To Do With It?" and vigorous renditions of the Young Rascals' "Good Lovin'" and Elton John's "Saturday Night." When the party ends no one wants to go to bed. There are midnight sightings of pool parties, jacuzzi caucuses and pseudo-pro basketball games.

## March 23

Last day. Feel really conflicted. Not sure I can keep this good feeling about my faith and my life if I leave here. But if I stayed here forever, I'd probably take it for granted. A Florida member, in fact, said that our presence and excitement helped him have more appreciation because he comes here all the time.

One last publications roundtable, which overflows with feeling and emotion. Many deeply felt comments made about youth — really trying to incorporate their sentiments and energy. Also talk about the need to have a first-rate magazine, one that can be sold on newsstands. I leave there feeling certain of the importance of my role writing and working

for these publications. Also feel determined to exert myself in this endeavor.

Open mike in Friendship Auditorium: Most people's comments are stuffed with exuberation and appreciation. Particularly poignant, however, is a member who lived in many of the most troubled countries, including Singapore.

She reminds us that we are practicing Buddhism for all these countries, symbolized by the flags in the room, not just our country. (When we chant three times to end the meeting, I think about her words, and they bring tears to my eyes — I have been selfish.)

Mr. Zaitzu reminds us that we are returning to the real world and that we must courageously challenge our problems. No lie. We are all friends from the remote past, he says, and must eternally dedicate ourselves to our happiness and that of others.

Last meal is teriyaki chicken, stuffed tomatoes, barley mushroom soup and seafood salad. I sit by the lake, of course, happy that the fountain is on. I see the woman who impressed me at the open mike session. "Thank you for your words and your faith," I tell her. "Never doubt this practice," she says. I say these words under my breath over and over as I strip my bed of linen and pack to leave. ❧

Shin'ichi Yamamoto spoke earnestly. With a deep wish for the success of this exceptionally talented man who so loved the Arab world he said to Torazo Kawarazaki: "All people are born with a mission. I think your mission is to build a bridge of friendship and culture linking Japan and the Arab nations. Of course, there may be a limit to what an ordinary citizen, a nonpolitician, can do to benefit other countries. But by teaching Arabic to Japanese students and communicating the culture and spirit of that part of the world's people to the Japanese, you are most definitely opening the way for great exchange to take place in the future.

"It all depends on how passionately committed you are to this. Enthusiasm inspires others; it is contagious. The thing to do is cultivate people who share the same aspiration as you.

"Your wife would be saddened to hear you speak of giving up your dream; you would be letting her down if you did so."

Large tears glistened in the eyes of this expert on Arab affairs.

"You have an enormous mission to fulfill," Shin'ichi continued. "To foster the spirit of humanism in people's hearts, paving the way to peace and building a bridge of cultural exchange is what Buddhism is all about. I will do my best to support you. Let's devote this precious, irreplaceable lifetime to working for world peace and for a hope-filled future."

Kawarazaki nodded repeatedly, his eyes moist. He took off his glasses to wipe away the tears and, in a voice filled with fresh resolve, said:

"I am currently compiling an Arabic-Japanese dictionary. No such work yet exists. The publishing companies I've contacted have shown no interest in the project, saying it just wouldn't be profitable. As a result, I'll probably have to publish it at my own expense. But I will definitely complete this project, and I promise to present you with a copy."

"Thank you very much. What a truly commendable undertaking! It will definitely be a valuable asset for future generations. However, because so many people today are motivated only by immediate gain or loss, very few may appreciate your painstaking effort. All too often the work of pioneers is ignored or criticized by their contemporaries.

"I am greatly encouraged by your kind words," said Kawarazaki.

"Incidentally, Mr. Kawarazaki, I am truly struck by your deep affinity for the Arab world. You are probably more an Arab than a real Arab. Maybe you were an Arab in your previous existence."

"Actually, I've thought so, too," Kawarazaki said with a boisterous, spirited laugh. "I'm honored that you should think so."

# The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU - ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 1

## Treasure Land

Translation of parts 6-8 of the 'Treasure Land' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

Shin'ichi asked Torazo Kawarazaki about the climate and customs of the various Arab countries and for any travel advice he might have to offer. Their meeting ended with a promise to meet again.

Returning home that day, Kawarazaki immediately sat before the Gohonzon and chanted three daimoku. He then declared to his family, "I'm going to practice with you starting today!"

Through his encounter with Shin'ichi, Kawarazaki, a passionate champion of the Arab world, became a dedicated champion of kosen-rufu.

During the flight, Shin'ichi recalled his meeting with Kawarazaki and tried to imagine the countries he would be visiting on this trip. The plane arrived in Manila for its first stopover shortly after 2:00 p.m., Jan. 29. They had left Tokyo only a little more than four hours earlier. Continuing passengers, including Shin'ichi and his party, had about a 30- to 40-minute wait ahead of them in an airport transit lounge.

Back in Tokyo, the streets had been icy. Everyone had their overcoat collars turned up to keep out the bitter winter chill.

But in Manila, it was a humid 78.8 degrees. Dressed in winter suits, Shin'ichi and his companions perspired heavily in the heat and gulped cold soft drinks in an effort to stay cool.

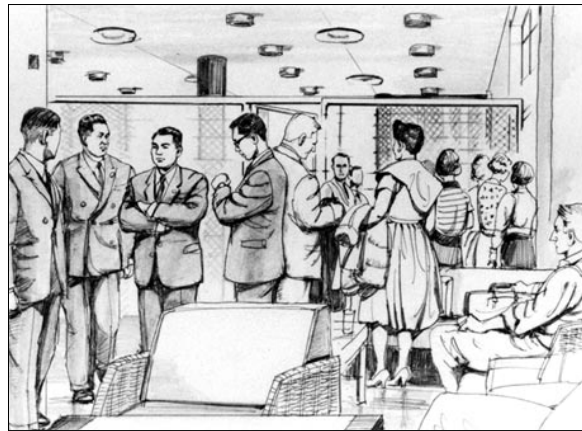
"Weren't we supposed to be meeting with a group of Philippine members here?" Shin'ichi asked. A Manila District of the Soka Gakkai had been established in the Philippines the previous May.

"Yes," Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki replied. "That's what we were told by the Overseas Department."

Ten minutes and then 20 passed, but still no members arrived.

"I wonder what happened to them?" Shin'ichi said. "Mr. Kuroki, would you mind looking around for them outside?" Akira Kuroki did as he was requested. A short while later he returned and said, "I couldn't see anyone that might be them."

Shin'ichi had been eagerly looking forward to meeting and talking with the Philippine members for the first time. Admittedly, he would only have had about a half hour to do so. But the briefest words or encounter can either inspire people in faith or cause them to turn their back on it.



The briefest interaction can forge a powerful resolution in people's hearts, giving them the strength and confidence to move forward on their own — or can momentarily undermine their determination, setting them on a downhill course.

Knowing this, Shin'ichi had resolved to pour all his energy into this encounter and wholeheartedly encourage each member.

Presently, they heard the boarding call for their flight. "What a shame we couldn't meet them!" Shin'ichi said as he left the transit lounge.

As they stepped onto the tarmac, they heard someone calling out behind them: "Sensei! Sensei!"

Turning around, Shin'ichi caught sight of several people waving eagerly from the observation deck.

It was the Philippine members; they were calling out and waving to him.

Shin'ichi stopped to wave back and called out loudly: "Hello, everyone! Thank you so much for coming. Please take care! Let's meet again!"

Making his way to the plane, Shin'ichi turned back to wave to the members again and again, wishing to engrave each face forever in his memory.

Looking out the window after taking his seat, Shin'ichi saw that they were still waving with all their might. So he continued to wave back until the plane took off.

A little later, Eisuke Akizuki, who was sitting next to him, said, "I think they were all set to meet us as arranged, but probably weren't allowed to enter the transit lounge."

"That must be the case," Shin'ichi agreed, adding, "I feel really bad about disappointing them."

There was only a small number of members in the Philippines. They had no doubt been bravely supporting and encouraging one another to advance in faith while striving in their activities.

How eagerly they must have looked forward to meeting him.

They had probably been waiting at the airport for several hours for his flight to arrive, some having taken time off work. Shin'ichi was bitterly disappointed and filled with regret that they hadn't gotten together.

Recalling each member's face, Shin'ichi chanted daimoku in his heart for their good health and success.

About three hours after leaving Manila, the plane arrived at its next stopover, Bangkok, Thailand. A district had also been established in Bangkok the previous May. Shin'ichi had made plans during this stopover, too, to meet with local members.

As the group stepped from the plane, they were immediately assaulted by the hot humid air. The temperature was 89.6 degrees.

A dozen-or-so members met Shin'ichi in the airport lobby. Together they moved to one of the airport's restaurants to chat.

Three of the local members had only recently started practicing Buddhism, one man having joined just the day before. Also present were five young women's division members. It was clear that the members here had been developing steadily in the year since Shin'ichi's first visit.

I was born in Rockland County Psychiatric Hospital, where my mother had been a patient for seven years. I was immediately taken from her; I never saw her face or heard her voice. From there, I was placed in an orphanage where I languished for three months. I was the only one of my parents' seven children who was given up like this.

Then my foster mother came into my life and literally rescued me from the jaws of death, as I had been simply wasting away from lack of caring. My foster mother provided a wonderful home physically, but I was always haunted by the feeling of being the only one left out of the family, who wasn't wanted, who belonged to no one.

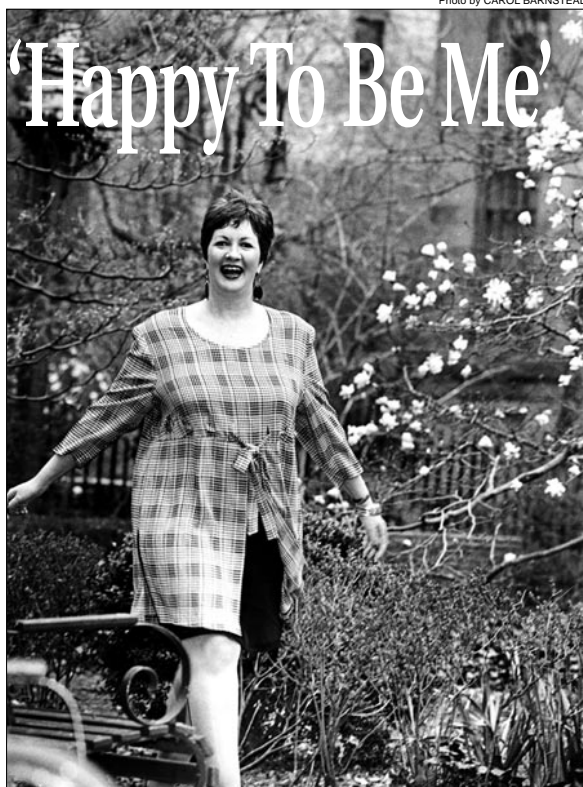
As a girl growing up in the '50s, I saw that all the women around me — my foster mother, my relatives, the neighbors — were broken somehow: old before their time, disappointed, bitter, sad. Everything I knew about my natural mother's life told me the same was true of her. She was a beautiful woman severely marred by a car crash in her 30s. Feeling that her only worth lay in her looks, she became depressed and succumbed to alcohol abuse and eventually schizophrenia.

My foster mother underwent a breakdown at the time of her menopause. Feeling that her entire worth lay in her ability to bear children, she became depressed. She stopped washing, acted strangely and lost all her previous joy. My foster mother's despair filled the house. It was as if a sustained but silent wail were cleaving the air and clinging to the walls. This happened when I was becoming a woman.

By the time I was in my teens, I could barely tolerate being embodied in a female form. It was as if I were trapped and wanted to claw my way out of my skin. Just being alive was pure hell. I attempted suicide twice before I was 20.

But somehow, something kept hope alive, and I clung to the dream that one day I would be free and proud and happy to be a woman.

Then, in 1982, I joined the SGI and began practicing. For the first time, I saw hundreds of women who were free, proud, ageless — simply beautiful. By practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with people who supported me, I attained a measure of happiness and self-love I never thought possible. Yet, I have to say, there was still some self-loathing left. I was not 100



Mary Zir overcame her self-hatred which had plagued her for many years.

percent comfortable in the core of my being.

In 1995, pain started to blossom out of nowhere, centering in my bladder. The doctor treated me for an ordinary bladder infection. I remember the mounting disappointment as each day passed and I waited for the relief I needed so badly, but it did not come. It was as if a red hot needle were being plunged into my bladder, like a very bad toothache. The rest of my pelvic area had a duller, warmer kind of pain radiating all around. I felt as if I had to urinate all the time. My body was in a constant state of alarm and agitation.

When the first doctor could not help, my husband, Stan, and I went to another and another. I didn't talk much about the state I was in to others — it was my karma and I simply had to change, so I continued to do activities, confident that I'd overcome this.

After the first couple of months, I learned to push the pain aside and ignore it while I was doing an activity, but when I got home, I would collapse. During this time, I could not work, so our financial situation was sorely distressed as well.

Often, I wanted to give up. When I ask myself how and why someone like me, who is basically selfish and likes to take the path of least resistance, was able to go on, I know it is because the

members had opened their lives to me; they trusted me. Together we shared a dream of a beautiful country, a beautiful Queens. I believe Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the only hope for the planet; from this, everything else can blossom. As SGI President Ikeda says, those with a dream are strong.

One day last summer, the condition flared up with savage force. It had been almost one-and-a-half years since the pain began. Four doctors had not been able to help. I had struggled and now it had gotten worse. My nerves were shot. I'd reached the end of my endurance and was exhausted by the struggle. The constant barrage had worn down my resistance and my confidence that I could win.

When my husband came home that night, he found me curled in a ball, crying pathetically. I told him: "Stan, I can't do this anymore. I can't go on."

"That's it," he said. "You've gone as far as you can go with this thing. You've made every good cause you can make. Now you have to rest."

President Ikeda had just given compassionate guidance about moving together as a flock of geese rather than a herd of buffalo. He said that when geese fly together, they fly in formation, and that when the lead goose becomes tired or sick, it falls back into formation

until it recovers. He said this is the way we should proceed.

With this guidance in mind, I decided that I had to step back, had to try complete rest. I did the only thing I felt I could do in that situation: I took a leave of absence, letting my co-leaders know the situation.

There was one last medical hope; a doctor who claimed he had a cure for the symptoms I had. But when I saw him, at first he offered only pain killers.

I took the pain killers, which knocked me out completely. One day, two weeks later, I woke up in the middle of the afternoon. The house was a mess; I hadn't cooked or shopped or cleaned. Because of the medication, I hadn't chanted much either. I had absolutely no energy and, worst of all, beneath the haze of the medicine, the pain was still there. That was when I became totally frightened and depressed. I was all alone. I thought: What kind of life is that? What do I have to look forward to? A life of pain? A life as an invalid, dependent on my husband?

I couldn't think of a single reason to live. There was no life ahead of me that I could believe in. I felt, what good is chanting? I've chanted for 15 years, and what good has it done? I always end up, somehow, at the place I started from, the feeling that life is worthless, not worth living. I had no joy, no desire, no will to live.

This was probably my most fortunate moment: By working for world peace in spite of discomfort, I'd built the fortune and courage to finally face my own demon squarely — the demon of self-hatred, of plain, simple, irrational despair.

Though I didn't feel like chanting and had no hope in it, there was nothing else to do. After a little while of a sort of automatic chanting, I began to really, urgently, directly connect to Nichiren Daishonin. And I searched desperately to see what it was in my life that was causing me so much agony — not just the physical symptoms, but what was deep in my life that was causing this effect.

The very next day, out of the blue, my friend gave me a book called *Woman's Bodies, Woman's Wisdom*. It explained that symptoms can be cured without healing the underlying problem. What was needed was healing. This was exactly in line with Buddhism and with my own intuition.

The author maintained that negative thought patterns, leftover energy from destructive experiences, can actually end up as

physical symptoms. She gave practical exercises to uncover and then let go of negative emotions or beliefs.

In the weeks that followed, with my newly respected woman's intuition, I cloistered myself. The book became, along with daimoku, my guide, a way out of the darkness. Very soon, I didn't even think about pain killers. I was experiencing the gradual return of my health, and it was an awesome process: the miracle of healing, the miracle of life.

Emotionally, I had faced and let go completely of all the self-hatred I had on account of being a woman, all the self-slander. And I felt good but not yet 100 percent. I was not only determined to regain my health but my vigor.

I realized I had allowed myself to become distracted from the most fundamental issue we face: the disruption of the unity of believers by a man named Nikken. I had become passive, allowing others to do the work of protecting the Law. So I began chanting once again for the absolute protection of the purity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and for slander to be washed out of our country, our borough, our neighborhood.

Within the first hour of praying this way, all the pain disappeared. In the days that followed, it flared up a bit, but each time I defeated it by chanting with more vigor and more sincerity for the protection of the Law.

I have been absolutely free of all pain and all symptoms since the first week of October last year. I can hardly express the joy I feel. Sometimes, just being able to walk down the block without pain brings tears to my eyes. I recall President Toda's words: "Absolute happiness means that just being alive itself is a joy."

I have been working full-time, and I have returned to activities for kosen-rufu. Our finances are getting healthier, and we made a good financial donation to the SGI. But the best thing for me is that I have been freed from the suffering I carried all my life: self-hatred. Now, I feel so happy to be me! Wonderful, wonderful me!

President Ikeda says the 21st century will be the century of women. I think we have a long way to go before we even begin to know what *woman* is, and it is something far different from merely being a very good imitation of a man. How marvelous our organization and the world will be when we really begin to honor and celebrate the feminine side of life. ■■■

**SIGN POSTS** APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

**Faith Illuminates**

By MALINA MOORE  
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

The sun dispels darkness, no matter how deep. A woman's heart may be likened to darkness, and the Lotus Sutra to the sun. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p.

Reading this letter, at first I asked myself: "What does Nichiren Daishonin mean by 'A woman's heart may be likened to darkness'?" I know I have "darkness" in my life, but is it inherent in my being a woman? I asked a learned, studious friend about this. And he reminded me that the Daishonin championed women, even radically (for his time) promoting the idea that a woman could attain Buddhahood — without having to be reborn as a man! This analogy must have been especially encouraging to Nichigen-nyo, to whom the letter was written. It is still very encouraging today.

"The sun dispels darkness, no matter how deep." Here Nichiren unequivocally confirms that through faith in the Lotus Sutra, we can accomplish anything — no matter what the obstacles. Reading this I reflected on my faith and the times when I sometimes have doubts.

During low points, I have felt that although I have achieved many great breakthroughs, there still are those areas that maybe will never change. I think (consciously or unconsciously), "Chanting's great and works for all sorts of things, but maybe it just doesn't work for that." I also ask myself, "Is this what 'immutable karma' means?"

In light of this passage and other letters Nichiren wrote, we know that even immutable karma can be changed. Whether we can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles depends not on the depth of our negative karma but on our ability to conjure up strong, courageous faith to face the things that cause us to suffer. As SGI President Ikeda has said, "From the moment we chant daimoku with a deep and powerful resolve, the sun begins to rise in our hearts."

I tell myself, with a renewed sense of determination, that it is possible to "dispel the darkness" in this woman's heart. WT

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

Becoming a Buddhist

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Not having been to a Gohonzon-conferral ceremony in a while, I was surprised how refreshing it was to attend one recently. The best part was seeing the overjoyed faces of the new members as they walked up to receive the Gohonzon. In the background, the sponsors clapped and jumped up and down — I couldn't tell who was happier, the new members or the sponsors.

The Gohonzon-conferral ceremony seems to be the closest thing we have in the SGI-USA to an initiation ceremony. It's the closest we come to having a certain moment when we officially become Buddhists. But in reality, it might be much later that we feel confident calling ourselves Buddhists. In fact, many people feel, even after long years of practice, that sometimes they are Buddhists and sometimes, well, they are something else.

Shinji Ishibashi, the SGI-USA men's division secretariat chief, felt this way when he neared graduation from college. Even though he was practicing, without realizing it he had been relying on his intellect alone to fulfill his life; spiritually, he didn't feel like a Buddhist. "I was confident that I would move on and become a professional in the field that I chose, architecture," he remembers, "but suddenly I had this feeling of tremendous emptiness." He would ask himself: "OK, I'm sure I'm going to become a professional, but what then? I'll be working hard, working hard, but where's it going to end?"

In trying to fill this void, Shinji found out what it really means to be a Buddhist, to "convert" to Buddhism as it were. Compassion, kindness, cheerfulness, forbearance, using common sense — these are all aspects of the Buddhist way of life that fulfilled him, he found. The bottom line was that he had to show respect to himself and others through his actions.

We are Buddhists when we behave like Buddhists — when we behave as the best, the wisest, human beings we can be. As Nichiren Daishonin teaches: "The real meaning of the Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being. How profound!" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240).

Sheilah Edwards, an SGI-USA vice general director, learned about living like a Buddhist when her husband got a great new job. She expected to be "in the money," but soon found his new em-

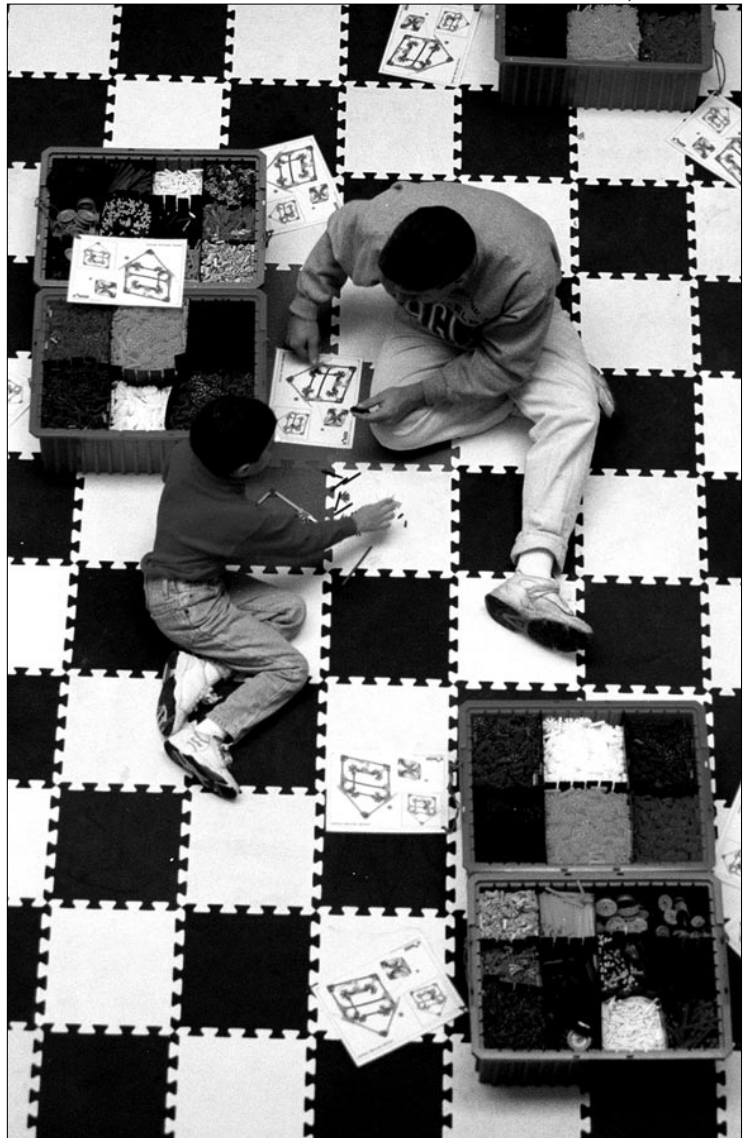


Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

We are Buddhists when we behave as Buddhists — when we behave as the best, the wisest human beings we can be. It is in relationships with others — like between father and son — that we can display the life-condition of the Buddha through compassionate action.

ployment necessitated them putting out more funds than she had expected for giving dinners, entertaining people and going to expensive restaurants.

"This was a whole new thing in my life that I never associated with my practice," she remembers. "I went on for a long time just trying to make ends meet, feeling really angry at my husband. There were demands coming from everywhere for more money — and I was just trying to make it work."

What could she do but put her faith into action? She remembers: "I decided

to use my common sense and curtail a lot of my spending, budget better and really begin to chant to be understanding, to not be angry at my husband, to be more supportive, to have appreciation for my circumstances. Then I wasn't on the edge all the time."

Becoming a Buddhist is liberating — it's a gradual process of bringing forth the great reserves of wisdom we already have deep in our hearts. Converting to Buddhism is, in this sense, nothing less than converting to our truest selves. WT

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SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 1st Okinawa Executive Conference, held at the Okinawa Training Center, Onnason, Japan, Feb. 23.

First of all, I am happy to report that all activities and events during my stay in Hong Kong this past week were a great success. I express my deepest gratitude for the support and prayers of SGI members around the world during this visit.

On arriving in Okinawa, our group was welcomed by a brilliant full moon. The entire night sky was illuminated. Standing in the soft glow of the moonlight, I prayed for the safety and happiness of all who are struggling day and night for kosen-rufu.

Although this is a small gathering, I will say a few words as encouragement for our comrades in each region who are working so earnestly to spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

**Always in Excellent Spirits**

I recently received a priceless, 90-volume set of the complete works of Tolstoy from Moscow State University. Work on this edition of Tolstoy's writings began the year I was born [1928, the centennial of Tolstoy's birth] and took 30 years to complete. It was an undertaking of such magnitude that it has been described as "a feat that could never be repeated."

Many have the image of Tolstoy as always wearing a dour, serious expression, but in fact he smiled and laughed a great deal. Mahatma Gandhi, too, who carried on a correspondence with Tolstoy, was known for his joviality, greeting all with his toothless grin. People of outstanding character, I have invariably found, always tend to be in excellent spirits.

**'It's the Builder's Fault!'**

There is an episode involving one of Tolstoy's sons, Ilya, when he was young. One day, the boy was given a cup and saucer that he had wanted for a long time. Overjoyed, he wished to show it to everyone. He rushed around the house almost beside himself with excitement. But between one room and the next there was a high doorsill. Ilya tripped over it; the cup went flying and was smashed to pieces.

The boy broke into loud sobs. When his mother scolded him, telling him that it was his fault for being careless, he got angry and



Leo Tolstoy as a Crimean Army officer.

# Take Responsibility for Your Life

tearfully retorted: "It's not my fault. It's the builder's fault! Why did he put a doorsill there?" Tolstoy, who overheard, roared with laughter. He never forgot these words.

From then on, whenever members of his family tried to justify themselves by blaming their mistakes on others, Tolstoy would grin and ask, "It's the builder's fault, right?"

For example, when one of his children tried to explain away poor grades by pointing at a hopeless teacher, Tolstoy shot back: "I see. It's the builder's fault."

When a child grumbled after accidentally plunging his horse into a swamp while riding in the woods, "No one ever told me there was a swamp there!" or when a child fell from a horse and complained, "The groom didn't fasten the saddle securely enough," Tolstoy chuckled and remarked: "That's right. No doubt it's the builder's fault." Whenever he said this, his children would turn bright red and look sheepishly at their feet.<sup>1</sup>

**Blaming Others Leads to Defeat**

I'm sure most people would be amused by this anecdote about stumbling over a doorsill. But in fact, adults are apt to react in much the same way to failures or setbacks. For example, a merchant whose business is not doing well might say, "It's all because so-and-so wouldn't lend me any money." Or when kosen-rufu activities may have grown stagnant someone might blame this on the laziness of a particular leader. Or a person in a relationship punctuated by constant bickering and quarreling might think, "If only my partner were more understanding, I would try harder," while the other person thinks, "If only my partner would try harder, I would be more understanding."

There are also malicious people who not only put the blame for their mistakes on others, but who viciously attack and try to discredit others in a desperate attempt to camouflage their own actions or justify themselves. This is typical of many who aban-

doned faith and turned against former comrades.

Those who go through life constantly blaming their troubles on others will always be controlled and buffeted about by their environment. They will never achieve victory.

**Those Who Do Their Best Need No Excuses**

Buddhism expounds the principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms. Fundamentally, everything that happens is a manifestation of our inner state of being or mind at each moment. This is perhaps the point that Tolstoy was trying to make.

In other words, don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your life — resolve to be victorious. If you allow yourself to be defeated, all the excuses in the world will get you nowhere. Defeat is defeat no matter how eloquently you try to justify yourself.

The important thing is to win where you are right now, to achieve victory without fail.

This is the way of life taught in Nichiren Daishonin's Bud-

dhisim, which expounds that the state of Buddhahood is eternal and inherent in our lives. This means holding fast to our faith and convictions to the end of our lives and fighting resolutely for truth and justice wherever we are, even in such dire adversity as being imprisoned for our beliefs.

**Steadfast Daimoku Is the Key**

No matter what obstacles we face, it is crucial that we transform the situation and realize victory right where we are. This is the way of a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin first began inscribing the Gohonzon for his followers when he was exiled to Sado Island. The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, attained a profound awakening to life's essence while in prison. They each transformed a place of great hardship and adversity into a place of supreme achievement and triumph. Right where they were, they lived true to their convictions and realized victory.

The Gohonzon, which actualizes the principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms, enables us to fulfill our prayers. The power of daimoku is invincible. Through daimoku, there is no situation we cannot change, no obstacle we cannot surmount, no battle in kosen-rufu or daily life we cannot win. As long as we possess strong faith, we can, at every moment, change wherever we are into a Land of Tranquil Light.

With continuing economic recession afflicting many parts of the world, in this crucial phase of our movement approaching the 21st century, it is vital that we resolve firmly to be victorious in every aspect of our lives, to win through faith.

**Evidence of a 'Defiled Time'**

To get an idea of the Daishonin's frame of mind while he was enduring severe persecution on Sado, I will read a passage from "The Birth of Kyo'o."<sup>2</sup> The daughter of Shijo Kingo, Kyo'o Gozen is thought to have been named by Nichiren Daishonin. Her name means "king of the sutras," a synonym for the Lotus Sutra.

In this Goshu, addressed to his trusted follower Shijo Kingo, the Daishonin writes:

Ours is called a defiled time, a troubled age. Moreover, there is

CORBIS-BETTMANN

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech on the first day of the All-Japan Representative Leaders Conference, Jan. 31.*

Nichiren Daishonin states, "I will be the pillar of Japan" and, "All other troubles are no more to me than dust before the wind" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 175 ). Our spiritual pillar is faith and the advancement of kosen-rufu. The ultimate crisis, therefore, would be the collapse of our movement. All other hardships that we might face pale by comparison; they are like "dust before the wind."

There are many vast mountain ranges in the world. I have flown across the Alps of Europe, gazed upon the Himalayas of Asia, flown over the Rocky Mountains of North America and the Andes of South America on great expeditions to widely spread the Mystic Law throughout the entire world in accord with the Daishonin's decree.

In August 1861, a young man, the 21-year-old English mountaineer Edward Whymper (1840-1911), challenged the towering Alpine peak known as the Matterhorn.

With the majesty of a colossal pyramid, the Matterhorn soars to a height of 14,692 feet. Since ancient times people had feared the mountain, believing it to be inhabited by demons. The common belief was that it could never be scaled. And of all the Alps' many mountains, the treacherous peak of the Matterhorn continued to defy the best attempts of mountaineers to reach its summit.

The young Whymper boldly resolved to climb this mountain and succeed where no one had succeeded before. His first attempt failed. But he summoned forth a dauntless and invincible spirit, resolving not to give up until either he had conquered the mountain or the mountain had conquered him.



English mountaineer Edward Whymper challenged climbing the Matterhorn seven times before successfully reaching the summit.

## No Mountain Is More Noble

### After Seven Attempts, Brilliant Victory

Year after year, the young man courageously pitted himself against the formidable peak. On one attempt, he got within 1,420 feet of the summit but then lost his footing and fell 200 feet, sustaining severe injuries. Another time, he was thwarted by a rockfall and

was forced to descend. He made seven attempts to climb the mountain, and seven times suffered bitter defeat. Still, Whymper did not give up.

By challenging an enormous goal head-on, youth can break through their limitations and realize tremendous growth.

On July 14, 1865, on his eighth attempt, Whymper finally made it to the summit, realizing his dream at long last. He and the six other members of his party stood victoriously on the peak. It was a moment of brilliant triumph: "We made it! We reached our goal!"

This was the glowing achievement of a young man of 25. I hope the youth of the SGI will leave behind many such records of victory for which they can feel a genuine sense of pride and satisfaction.

As a young men's division member, I earnestly strove to fulfill my duties at each successive level of leadership, whether it was as a group chief or a district leader.

Whatever my role, whatever my position, I always made it a point to fully carry out my responsibilities and realize victory.

Forty-five years ago, in January 1952, at age 24, I was appointed a chapter staff of Tokyo's Kamata Chapter. At the time, propagation activities throughout Japan were not making much headway. "Accomplishing kosen-rufu will take thousands of years at this rate," lamented the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda. Therefore, as his disciple, I took the lead in ascending the mountain of propagation, of sharing and teaching others about the Daishonin's Buddhism.

The first chapter chief and chapter women's division chief of Kamata Chapter were Takashi Koizumi [later the Soka Gakkai's general director] and Shizuko Shiraki, respectively. At the time of my appointment, I vowed to make Mr. Koizumi the greatest chapter chief in all of Japan.

I began by personally challenging myself to introduce people to the Daishonin's Buddhism. I stood up and took action. I visited all my neighbors in the apartment house where I lived and talked to them about Buddhism. To this day, I continue to receive fond notes from people who began practicing at my urging at that time.

During February, the month after my appointment, Kamata Chapter set a new propagation record nationwide of 201 households in one month, breaking through the 100-household mark that had long been thought the maximum possible in a single month. This achievement inspired members around Japan and became the impetus toward accomplishing President Toda's dream of a membership of 750,000 households.

The passion and power of youth are the eternal driving forces behind the Soka Gakkai and the SGI's development.

As a leader, it is vital that you first take action yourself, that you challenge your personal targets. To urge others to make efforts while doing nothing yourself is deceitful and underhanded. You cannot attain Buddhahood.

Only to the extent that you yourself pray, tell others about Buddhism and spread the Mystic Law will you be protected by Bon-ten and Taishaku, the protective forces of the universe. Only to that extent will great life force, wisdom, benefit and compassion well forth from your life.

Returning to Edward Whymper and his comrades, on their descent, four of the seven-member party fell to their deaths. Later, looking back on this tragedy that

struck so soon after their moment of glory, Whymper observed sorrowfully that "a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime."<sup>1</sup>

It is doubly important that, as leaders of kosen-rufu responsible for protecting and watching over many irreplaceable children of the Buddha, we are never careless or negligent in any area.

### Elevating All People's Lives

Please be confident that the more you work for the Law and for others in the spirit of "exerting a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 790), the closer you are to reaching the summit of Buddhahood.

President Toda taught that kosen-rufu means to realize true happiness and peace in the world by elevating the life-condition of all humanity to the highest possible level. No peak is more grand or shines with more eternal glory and hope than the summit of kosen-rufu.

It is now 50 years since I first met President Toda. Countless are the perilous peaks I have ascended over this time. And I have not a single regret.

Now I call out to my disciples, "Scale the mountain of the new century!"

Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly declared that he was the mainstay and pillar of Japan. He boldly pronounced [to Hei no Saemon and the hundreds of warriors who had come to arrest him]: "Nichiren is the pillar of Japan! If you lose Nichiren, you will be toppling the pillar that supports Japan" (MW-4, 228), and [again addressing Hei no Saemon]: "Nichiren is the pillar and beam of Japan. If you lose me, you will be toppling the pillar of Japan!" (MW-3, 171).

Seven hundred and twenty-six years ago [at the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271], Hei no Saemon, then one of the most powerful political figures in Japan, led a group of several hundred soldiers to arrest Nichiren Daishonin at his humble abode. Behind this development was the infamous priest Ryokan, who was bent on exacting revenge for the loss of prestige he had suffered because the Daishonin had exposed his evil nature and corrupt lifestyle. Ryokan had plaintively demanded of those in power that something be done about the Daishonin. The country's rulers had their own agenda in persecuting him: They could not bear to see this priest who had been so

PLEASE SEE MOUNTAIN, NEXT PAGE

## 'Expressions, Is Moving!

Beginning in June, members' poetry will be found in *Living Buddhism*. If you previously submitted material, it will be forwarded. Please send all submissions to: *Living Buddhism*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401

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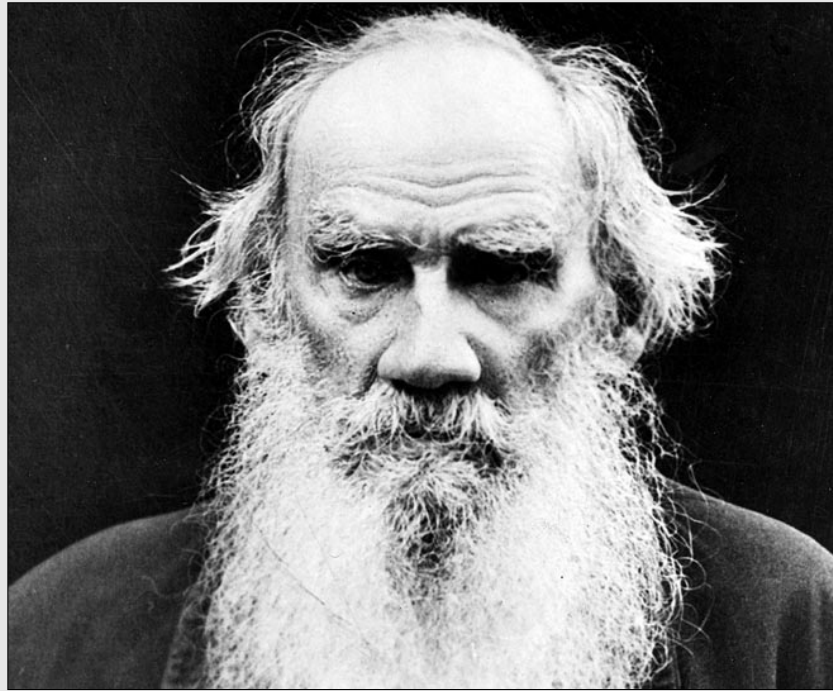
clear evidence all around us of how disordered society is. As a result, in this present existence, people are destined to suffer the disaster of warfare and fall into the path of Anger and in their future lives fall into the evil paths [of Hell, Hunger and Animality]. There is no doubt about this. It is written, however, that those who believe in the Lotus Sutra will definitely attain Buddhahood.

As you know, the sutras predict that such disasters [as foreign invasion, internal strife and so on] are bound to occur. Hence I have continually warned people of this day and night. Not that they would heed my warning, however. There is no reason why I should have incurred punishment for doing so. But regardless of the age, it is typical of those headed for ruin to refuse to take good advice. Ultimately, therefore, my words will continue to be disregarded and society will hurtle toward collapse. It is solely because the country has persecuted the emissary of the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha that it now incurs the onslaughts of Bonten, Taishaku, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings and other heavenly deities.

Even though society may fall into ruin, there will come a time when people throughout Japan will chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Therefore, you should exert even greater efforts to talk with those who disparage [the Mystic Law], however disinclined they may be to pronounce [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra]. Should you manage to survive these times, be sure to watch and see what happens.

Nevertheless, no matter how much people may chant [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], if they are

## 'It's the Builder's Fault, Right?'



**'Many have the image of Tolstoy as always wearing a dour, serious expression, but in fact he smiled and laughed a great deal. Mahatma Gandhi, too, who carried on a correspondence with Tolstoy, was known for his joviality, greeting all with his toothless grin. People of outstanding character, I have invariably found, always tend to be in excellent spirits.... There is an episode involving one of Tolstoy's sons, Ilya, when he was young. One day, the boy was given a cup and saucer that he had wanted for a long time. Overjoyed, he wished to show it to everyone. He rushed around the house almost beside himself with excitement. But between one room and the next there was a high doorsill. Ilya tripped over it; the cup went flying and was smashed to pieces. The boy broke into loud sobs. When his mother scolded him, telling him that it was his fault for being careless, he got angry and tearfully retorted: "It's not my fault. It's the builder's fault! Why did he put a doorsill there?" Tolstoy, who overheard, roared with laughter. He never forgot these words. From then on, whenever members of his family tried to justify themselves by blaming their mistakes on others, Tolstoy would grin and ask, "It's the builder's fault, right?"'**

hostile to Nichiren they are destined first to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Then, after a lapse of countless *kalpas* [spent atoning for their slanderous acts], they will become Nichiren's disciples and attain Buddhahood. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1123)

The Gosho is a clear mirror reflecting the essence of life and society. A society that persecutes the Buddha's emissaries, Nichiren Daishonin declares, is sure to "anger the Buddhist gods" — to disrupt the protective functions of the universe — and as a result

decline. He also indicates that no matter how corrupt the age, even if society is plunged into turmoil and confusion, the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law will be accomplished without fail. He stresses that this is precisely the time to exert greater ef-

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critical of them steadily gain more and more followers.

The Daishonin's prediction that the Mongols would launch an invasion against Japan had come true and, as a result, the Daishonin's following rapidly increased. Amid the fear and confusion that gripped the land, people must have felt that only the Daishonin could clarify the proper path for the country to take. However, at a time when the country's rulers should have humbly listened to the Daishonin's advice, they tried instead to do away with him.

The fact that Hei no Saemon brought with him a force of several hundred armed men to apprehend the Daishonin and his

few companions betrays a psychology that can only be called deranged.

With complete composure, the Daishonin declared in a booming voice to the soldiers who had ransacked his hut: "See how insanely Hei no Saemon is acting! You all have just toppled the pillar of Japan!" (MW-1, 178) The soldiers reacted to his words with surprise and confusion and grew pale. The thought that they were perhaps making a terrible mistake undoubtedly crossed their minds.

*The Daishonin writes, "When they saw me standing before the fierce arm of the law unafraid, they must have realized that they were in the wrong, for the color drained*

*from their faces" (MW-1, 178-79).*

It was not the Daishonin who grew pallid with fear. On the contrary, it was those who had come to arrest him! The lesson here is that justice must be accompanied by the courage to proclaim the truth.

True to the Daishonin's words, the Kamakura regime fell into rapid decline thereafter and eventually collapsed. Hei no Saemon was later executed and his family wiped out. Judging from his irrational behavior, we might conclude that Hei no Saemon had, by the time of the Daishonin's arrest, already reaped severe consequences for his actions against Buddhism. It is clear that he was

no longer exercising sound judgment or reasoning.

### The Hope of the World

Exactly 600 years after these events [the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, Sado Exile, and the Daishonin revealing his true identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day], Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, was born [in 1871] in Niigata Prefecture, which includes the island of Sado. Mr. Makiguchi established the Soka Gakkai, a wondrous organization that appeared in accord with the Buddha's will. In these events we see a mystic rhythm at work.

President Makiguchi said, "In the final analysis, unless we rebuild ourselves from the very core

forts to tell people about the Mystic Law.

### Our 'Only Memory of This World'

The world today is certainly in a state of disarray. Society has lost all standards, all vision, all hope. People have lost perspective on what happiness and misery mean. The only absolute thing in this turbulent world is the eternal, unchanging law of Buddhism. Those who tenaciously persevere in faith will definitely succeed in establishing happy lives.

We can transform all our hardships and sufferings into causes for happiness, changing poison into medicine. All our efforts will become the fuel that propels us toward a state of life in which we enjoy unsurpassed happiness lifetime after lifetime. They will become joyful memories of our existence in this world.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 38). As emissaries of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, let us redouble our efforts in faith. Let us advance with great joy and jubilation along the noble path of life's supreme victory. 卍

1. This episode is from *Torusutoi — Tamashii no Sho* (Tolstoy — Book of the Heart), compiled and translated into Japanese by Toshio Yazumi (Tokyo: Kawano Seikokan, 1938), pp. 45-46.
2. This Gosho was written by Nichiren Daishonin at age 51, in 1272, on Sado Island. It was sent to Shijo Kingo in reply to a letter he wrote informing the Daishonin of the birth of his daughter Kyo'ō.

of our being through a religious revolution, there will never be any cure for society's ills." The Soka Gakkai, President Toda proclaimed, is the pillar of Japan. And now the SGI is the hope of the world.

All of you who have pledged to live your lives together with this great organization, the SGI, are truly wondrous; you each possess an unfathomably profound mission.

Making this your greatest source of pride, please become people who are trusted and respected, and who can become models of outstanding leadership for others. 卍

1. Edward Whympier, *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 334.

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER/KIM KOMENICH

# Committed to the Earth



Earth First! activist Judi Bari looks out on a few trees outside her home near Willits, Calif. Ms. Bari, who recently died of cancer, took passionate action to keep the Earth healthy and productive.

By TERRY ELLIS  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Judi Bari's occupation was variously described. National headlines seven years ago identified her as a dangerous terrorist. Articles written after her death on March 2 called her an environmental activist and leader of Earth First! in the redwood region of Northern California. She was a 47-year-old mother of 11- and 16-year-old daughters, a carpenter by trade and a long-standing member of the Industrial Workers of the World.

But on her official obituary, written as she approached death from inoperable breast cancer, Ms. Bari told friends to simply call her a revolutionary. She wasn't a revolutionary in the sense that could be easily labeled socialist or communist, said friend and neighbor Naomi Wagner. It was a commitment to keep the Earth healthy and productive, the world safe for women and girls and the economy one in which workers reap the benefit of their labor. And it was a commitment to nonviolence, even in the face of violence, said Ms. Wagner.

"Judi came to my watershed, my neighborhood, Sherwood Forest Watershed in 1990," said Ms. Wagner, whose two boys went to school with Ms. Bari's two daughters in the town of Willits, Calif., population 4,000. "I watched her go from somebody who wasn't known to someone who built a movement that transformed the community.... We are mothers. Violent tactics aren't us. We are creative and fun. To Judi's way of thinking, an action had to be fun. If it wasn't fun, it didn't happen."

On May 24, 1990, Judi Bari made national news when she was critically injured by a pipe bomb while driving through Oakland, Calif. FBI agents showed up at the scene of the bombing within minutes, labeling her and fellow Earth First! organizer Darryl Cherney as environmental terrorists and accusing them of carrying the bomb on the back floor of her Subaru station wagon, leading to an accidental explosion. Charges were dropped eight weeks after for lack of evidence but not before the claims had been publicized nationally. Right up until her death, Ms. Bari worked fiercely on a lawsuit against the

FBI and Oakland Police Department, charging them with false arrest and civil rights violations. Mr. Cherney and her family and friends will continue the lawsuit.

"Judi stood for, worked for justice," said Betty Ball, a friend and fellow environmentalist with the Mendocino County Environmental Center. "Now it's time for justice for Judi — for finding the bomber and winning her lawsuit." Her death on the one hand leaves a hole in the environmental movement's leadership, Ms. Ball said. On the other hand, those who knew her feel her presence all the time. They remember her courage, her brilliant strategies and her humor, which ranged from the impish to the raunchy.

Ms. Bari's strategy wasn't new. She brought with her years of experience as a peace activist and labor organizer. She also brought to the environmental movement the wisdom that loggers and other sawmill workers aren't the enemy. Instead, she pointed the finger at out-of-town corporate landowners. Even in the face of death threats before the bombing in 1990 and after she was severely injured, Ms. Bari continued to speak out.

"We used to talk about the old Indian saying, 'It's a good day to die,'" said Ms. Wagner. "You have to die for something, not just of something. She was willing to die for her beliefs."

Her view of the world also encompassed death, said 23-year-old Alicia Littletree, who lived with Ms. Bari and her two daughters during the last months of her life and considered Ms. Bari her mentor. "She said to me that her system of belief allows for death, allows for the natural cycles of nature," Ms. Littletree said. When Ms. Littletree asked her if she was afraid to die, Bari shared an analogy about being pregnant: "At first you're terrified about this new life, but by the ninth month you're huge and you can't wait for the baby to come out. It's kind of a relief to get it out."

Ms. Bari asked that her ashes be spread over redwood land that remains unprotected.

"She believed in the natural cycles of the Earth and didn't add any attributes," said Ms. Littletree. "She totally respected the Earth and felt it was worth fighting for." ■

# TEEN TIMES

A SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION OF THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE'

By, For and About the Junior High and High School Divisions

Issue #8, April 18, 1997

## Youth Celebrate March 16 Nationwide

See pages B-C for more reports.

By ABED HERNANDEZ  
Trujillo Alto, P.R.

I'm in charge of the junior high and high school divisions for Puerto Rico. I was asked to give a report on how we celebrated Kosen-rufu Day and also the anniversary of the junior high and high school divisions. We were very excited!

We celebrated March 16 very joyfully at our community center. The youth division was in charge of organizing the event, which turned out to be a very lovely and successful one.

I will list a few of the items on the agenda:

1. Gongyo
2. Lecture on war and peace in the 20th century by Laura and Adrein Fournier
3. Interpretation of SGI President Ikeda's poem "A Blue Deeper Than the Blue of the Indigo Plant Itself" by Miguel, Angie, Naima, Salem and Abed (me)
4. Peace proposals by Jaime Fournier
5. The creation of a newscast, "NOTI-BUDA," to talk about the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" by Cristina and another member. We also had an artistic creation by Jose Daniel. There was a live band and a dance done by the future division. There were about five guests and a large attendance. It was a wonderful day. **E**



## A Lasting Friendship

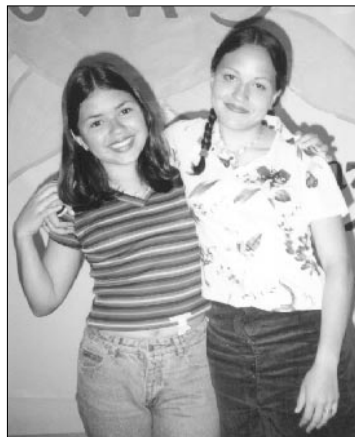
By PRISCILLA GONZALEZ HUERTAS  
and DIANNE HERNANDEZ  
Puerto Rico

It's been six years since we met each other in the 3rd grade. In those times our mothers, Sylvia Rodriguez and Priscilla Aciestas, practiced the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin.

Through the years, our friendship matured along with our practice. We would go out and share like all friends would. We also studied in the same school, lived in the same complex and went to the same dance school.

Then, each of us went our own way. When we were in 7th grade we became best friends and we started spending more time together; we would go camping, to the beach, to the movies and at times we would spend the night at each other's place.

Now, both of us have been practicing for five years. Our friendship has always been very stable; we've never stopped seeing each other and we always communicate. We live far away from



Priscilla and Dianne.

each other, we don't study in the same school, and we're not in the same dance school, yet we never stop communicating. We have problems at times like all friends do, but this doesn't mean our friendship will waver.

Both of us are very happy because of our practice and we also have each other. We are like sisters, and we are 100 percent sure that we will always be. **E**

## We Have a New Logo!

By ERIC ODA  
Honolulu



Eric Oda (second from left) with some friends from New York.

wouldn't call myself an artist, but most of the time I am the person who is responsible for producing fliers/signs for promoting events that the Hawaii junior high and high school divisions sponsor.

So, I submitted my logo entry and to my amazement my art was picked. Now it can be seen on every issue of the "Teen Times." As you can see, the logo features part of a clock with the name "Teen Times" in the center. Whenever we hear the word *time*, we often think of hourglasses, watches or even clocks. So along this line of thought, I created this logo with a clock.

I enjoy reading the "Teen Times" and feel that it is another step forward in the movement of the junior high and high school divisions of the SGI-USA. Keep up the good work and the great issues!!!

## March 16 Celebrations

### Los Angeles #1 Joint Territory

By BRENDAN GIBSON  
Simi Valley, Calif.

Los Angeles #1 Joint Territory split up into three territories: one in North Hollywood, another based in San Fernando Valley, and one more in the Santa Barbara area. Each of these territories had its own March 16 activity. The junior high and high school divisions combined with the youth division in each of these activities.

North Hollywood members began with morning gongyo and had a short meeting. After that they went to the park across the street and had a picnic and a softball game. Everybody had a fun time and made their friendships stronger.

Around 60 people participated in Santa Barbara's activity. They started their meeting with gongyo, followed by a performance by the Boys and Girls Group. A video was then shown, based on the history of March 16 and the SGI.

Cory Taylor, the joint territory young men's division chief, spoke, and then the meeting broke into discussion groups. The topic of the discussions was "How can we promote peace in our daily lives." Some of the responses were to smile at strangers, think before we speak, have more compassion, etc.

After the discussions, the women's division members provided lunches for everyone. Then people stayed longer and had more informal dialogues.

Valley Territory's activity was held at Soka University of America in Calabasas. Nearly 200 people participated in this meeting, including 80 exchange students from Japan. Members out of the blue jumped up and talked about what March 16 means to them. Then there was a skit put on by youth division members. The exchange students put on a performance of many different songs. One student gave an extraordinary experience about her relationship with her father. Two other junior high students also shared great experiences. Final words were given by SGI-USA Vice Youth Division Chief Dave Pole. The L.A.-wide Dance Crew performed to close the meeting.

Then everyone went outside to play a variety of games, ride bikes, exchange addresses to become pen pals, or just walk and talk. This went on for about an hour; then they went inside and did evening gongyo. After gongyo, there was a huge barbecue waiting for everyone. While they ate, people were taking pictures with each other and becoming lifelong friends.

It's evident that each of these activities was a tremendous success. The informality of each activity gave every person the opportunity to make new friends or strengthen old friendships.



Photo by MIKE BYNUM

Los Angeles #1 Joint Territory members pause during a bike ride at the SUA campus.

### San Francisco Joint Territories

By WENDY SCHRADER

*When you try so hard that the sweat streams off your brow and you squeeze out wisdom which you didn't even think you had, then you can make the impossible possible. And that's the time when the Gohonzon will protect you in every way, shape and form.*

— SGI President Ikeda

Spontaneous laughter resounded throughout the new Ikeda Auditorium as the Junior High and High School Drama Group expressed its determination for kosen-rufu in an original piece created for San Francisco's March

16 celebration. "Youth Unite and Advance for Peace" was the motto of this gathering of youthful Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The junior high and high school students of San Francisco joint territories were involved in all aspects of the March 16 celebration — from creating "get-on-it gifts" for members participating in behind-the-scenes activities to taking an active role in the Stage Crew and organizing a friendly barbecue after the meeting. Members of the junior high and high school divisions took the lead in creating an encouraging and heartfelt environment for youth division members to celebrate together.

The personal determinations given by Alex Bardales and Emily Jen were inspiring and urged the youth division members to create a dream for the 21st century. The taiko drum group brought the audience to its feet with an original and creative beat, and the New Century Brass Band had everyone grooving to a new rhythm. Although wet weather descended on San Francisco on the day of the celebration, it was pointed out during the meeting, "The sun's sure shining in here!"

Since the establishment of the junior high and high school divisions in San Francisco in 1993, their tremendous growth has truly inspired the rest of the members in the San Francisco joint territories. More than ever before, the younger youth division members are taking responsibility and awakening to their personal missions for kosen-rufu.



Photo by STEVE FRUS

San Francisco youth meet at the new Ikeda Auditorium.

## Texas Joint Territory

By MIMI KUBIAK  
Arlington, Tex.

Texas Joint Territory includes the states of Oklahoma and Texas, and because it is so hard for us to gather in one location, March 16 was celebrated on the territory level. One would think that because these meetings were held in different cities that somehow we wouldn't be able to unite. That, however, was not the case. As I read over the reports given by each territory I could feel the unity of the junior high and high school divisions and the youth division.

In each area the youth division took charge and actually planned the March 16 celebrations. The junior high and high school division members of San Antonio and Oklahoma participated in the performance portions of the meetings. In San Antonio, they sang a sentimental song called "Carry On," which was written by a young men's division graduate.

And in Oklahoma, the high school division members and other youth participated with a vigorous opening song, "Takin' Care of Members." Then the High School Dance Troop performed an energetic, rhythmic hand-clapping, foot-stomping dance number, much to the delight of the members.

In Dallas, a rainbow of balloons floated above the stage where an explanation of the significance of March 16 was given by two junior high and high school division leaders. In Houston, the members discussed the meaning of faith, the importance of March 16 and the way to chant. The students also learned the formula for answering prayers — determination and taking action. It is my sincere belief that the members of the junior high and high school divisions of Texas Joint Territory engraved the spirit of March 16 in their lives and have determined to carry on the goal of world peace.

## L.A. #4 Joint Territory

By MIKE FUJIE  
Hacienda Heights, Calif.

There was an overwhelming spirit of youthful exuberance at the East Los Angeles Community Center on the morning of

March 16. With an attendance of more than 200 youth division members (mostly teenagers), Los Angeles #4 Joint Territory began our March 16 celebration with a vigorous morning gongyo, followed by welcoming words from our joint territory young men's division and young women's division leaders.

Next, we were treated to part 1 of a presentation on the mentor-disciple relationship (put together by the East L.A. and La Puente headquarters youth). The presentation was a performance depicting the struggles of presidents Makiguchi and Toda, culminating with the tremendous growth of the SGI under President Ikeda's leadership.

After that, we went outside and participated in numerous unity games. Then we remained in our teams for group discussions on the significance of March 16, relationships with parents and friends, peer pressure, etc. After part 2 of the presentation and final words, we once again went outside where the men's and women's division members had prepared a delicious barbecue for all of us, a perfect way to cap a very encouraging and enjoyable activity overall!



Washington, D.C. youth gather at the local community center.

## Washington, D.C., Joint Territory

By PENNY PARKER  
Alexandria, Va.

On a day when most Washingtonians were home watching C-Span, a diverse group of dedicated youth division members was expressing its passion and determination for kosen-rufu in front of an enthusiastic crowd of friends, family and neighbors at the local community center. The event was an opportunity for these sincere young members to reaffirm their mission for kosen-rufu and inspire others.

The meeting began with an explosive performance by the youth band that had audience members clapping in unison and in the mood for a celebration. Building on that energy, the young women's division dancers brought the audience to its feet with a hip-hop number to Toni Toni Tone's "Let's Get Down." Next the Northern Virginia string ensemble gave a moving performance of "Surprise Symphony," arranged by Handel. In all, there were more than 18 performances, ranging from jazz solos to poetry readings.

After the meeting, one audience member noted, "Each performance was so full of heart and vitality, I couldn't help but feel great." Another member added: "It is so encouraging to see the youth division members, especially so many junior high and high school members, display such capability. This is a great example of the spirit of March 16."

Steve Doty, the local youth division chief, shared his feelings about the activity: "I am so impressed by how far these youth have come. It was exactly one year ago when just a handful of determined youth created many of these groups that performed today."



Youth division members from L.A. #4 hold small group discussions.

## L.A. #3 Joint Territory

By NICOLE CHU  
Culver City, Calif.

Of all the March 16 meetings around the country, I was fortunate to attend Los Angeles #3 Joint Territory's meeting at the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium.

I was impressed by the performances of the Las Vegas Brass Band and the Dance Crew. Various youth division members presented a slide show, determinations and two amazing experiences, all of which really encouraged me. The strong and passionate struggle against their difficult circumstances gave me knowledge that I am not alone in my personal struggle. I could see the advancement of each of my fellow youth, and this gave me courage to put all my effort into advancing toward the 21st century.

Nearly 40 years ago, on March 16, 1958, Josei Toda met with 6,000 youth division members and passed on to them the responsibility to accomplish kosen-rufu. Even though I was not at that meeting, I could still feel the same spirit at this one.

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## What Do You Answer When Someone Asks

# ‘Don’t You Believe in God?’

Continued from the March 21 edition of the “Teen Times.”

By BRIAN HOLLY

Faculty member  
University of Pennsylvania

All religions seek a way to grasp the ultimate reality of life and arrive at a positive relationship with it. Theistic (god-centered) religions conceptualize this ultimate reality as a supreme being endowed with human virtues raised to an infinite degree: Hence God is conceived as all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, the creator and moral ruler of the universe.

Although almost no adult really believes that God is an old man with a beard living up in the sky, it is essential to believe that God is a person, like us. Some thinkers, like Sigmund Freud, have seen the idea of God as a projection of hidden desires for a perfect, all-powerful parent to take care of us.

Whatever the origin of the God-concept, many believers have had deeply meaningful experiences that they interpret as those of being close to God. My belief is

that people with such experiences are really experiencing their own higher worlds and call it *God* because that is the only concept they have. In any case, we need to respect their sincerity and their experiences.

We do not help people to understand the magnificent Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin by saying things like, “The whole idea of God is stupid.”

Buddhism takes a totally different approach to understanding and harmonizing with the ultimate reality of life. For us, the ultimate reality is not some all-powerful spirit standing outside the universe, watching over and ruling it. Rather, it is the Mystic Law, the world of Buddhahood infusing all beings and all reality, the natural rhythm of change and the interdependence of all things. We call it mystic because we realize that no concepts or words can ever adequately describe this fundamental aspect of all things.

Therefore we chant daimoku and fuse with the Gohonzon to experience and know this reality residing within ourselves, and to enjoy the boundless happiness, life force, wisdom and compassion of

enlightenment to this reality. Over time this view of the world becomes very natural for us, so we should remember how strange it seems to those unfamiliar with it.


Some of my friends who asked me about the role of God in Buddhism are satisfied with a general philosophical explanation: I tell them that we simply conceptualize the same ultimate reality as the Mystic Law rather than as God. But most of my friends have had more specific concerns. Some are worried about morality in the absence of divine commandments and a divine judge to enforce them. For these people, it is best to explain how Buddhist practice helps us grow in compassion for all beings and in wisdom to know what is best. Your experiences are the best answer.

Others are worried about the role of spirituality in our lives. Such people need to hear about the great joy of chanting and fusing with the Gohonzon.

Some people, even though they are asking about God, really want to know about what happens after death. This is a profound topic. These people need to hear about the great eternity of life, of which

we are all part.

Finally, let me say that if your friends ask you questions you can't answer, that's great! They have helped you find an area where you need more study.

Let's remember that for our friends, co-workers, fellow students and families, we are the emissaries of the Buddha, their friendly, neighborhood Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Let's talk with them, showing the same profound compassion and respect that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging<sup>1</sup> exemplified. 

1. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging: In chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni tells a story about one of his past existences as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed to everyone he met, deeply respecting their inherent Buddha nature regardless of how they treated him. The story reminds us of the importance of not judging others or holding grudges against them. To see the Buddha nature of others, we have to believe in our own Buddha natures.

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## Why Is April 28 Important?

Nichiren Daishonin was born on Feb. 16, 1222, in the small village of Kominato on the eastern coast of Awa province. Given the name of Zenichimaro, the Daishonin was born to a poor family that made its living fishing the waters of the Pacific Ocean. In the class system of that time, fishermen were regarded as very lowly, similar to jailers or butchers. He lived in the fishing village until he was 12, when he left home to study Buddhism at a nearby temple called Seicho-ji.

At an early age, Nichiren Daishonin began to question the teachings of Buddhism that he was learning. He found them confusing and contradictory, and was convinced that there must be one true and correct form of Buddhism. At age 18, he set out to find the means to enlightenment for the people.

After several years of travelling Japan and encountering many other sects of Buddhism, he concluded that the true teachings of Buddhism were to be found in the Lotus Sutra. One of the many teachings, or sutras, written by Shakyamuni, the Lotus Sutra represents the heart of Shakyamuni's enlightenment.

Nichiren Daishonin returned to Seicho-ji temple in 1253. There, very early in the morning of April 28, he chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo for the first time, thereby providing the key for all future generations to unlock the treasure of enlightenment. And it was on this day that he changed his name to Nichiren (Sun Lotus).

The Daishonin stated that by chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo one could attain enlightenment. He taught that the individual could attain perfect harmony with

the universe by chanting these words to the Gohonzon, the object of worship which embodies the Law. In the Goshō “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra,” Nichiren Daishonin addresses the question of whether or not one can receive benefits by chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo without understanding the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, and stresses the necessity of faith in attaining Buddhahood:

Although there are innumerable practices which lead to enlightenment, if one teaches faith, then that includes all those practices. Thus faith is the basic requirement for entering the way of the Buddha. In the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, the first ten stages, dealing with faith, are basic, and the first of these ten stages is that of arousing pure faith. Though a person has no knowledge of Bud-

dham, if he has pure faith, then even though he may be dull-witted, he is to be reckoned as a man of correct views. But even though one has some knowledge of Buddhism, if he is without faith, then he is to be considered a slanderer and an icchantika or a person of incorrigible disbelief. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, pp. 4-5)

In my own experience, when I was a little girl, my parents told my brother and me that if we were ever in a bad situation to chant and to have confidence that Nam-myohorenge-kyo would protect us. Now that I'm older, I can truly appreciate my parents' advice. By chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo, I feel as if I can accomplish anything. I chant now not because I'm in a bad situation, but because it has given me confidence that I can overcome any problem, accomplish anything I set my mind to and, most important, become absolutely happy. 