

World Tribune

No. 3137

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

MAY 2, 1997

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Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

Davis TeSelle, whose lithographs were on display at the Boston Research Center, speaks with participants in the religion and ecology seminar. His art also appears in 'Attentive Heart,' a book by Dr. Stephanie Kaza of the University of Vermont, who gave a presentation on Buddhism and ecology on March 8 at the center.

Religion and Ecology Series Offers a Unique Opportunity

By **FLETCHER DALTON**
BOSTON BUREAU CHIEF

Conferences at the Boston Research Center generate passionate dialogue between audiences and speakers and frequently provide to both an opportunity to transform words and thoughts into action.

Recently, at the first of a three-part conference on religion and ecology, Steven C. Rockefeller of Middlebury College invited everyone to participate in the "worldwide process

of consultation that will lead to international agreement on an Earth Charter by the year 2000."

"Civil society at large" is the principal audience for the Earth Charter, Mr. Rockefeller explained, as he read from a draft approved by the Earth Charter Commission. The drafting process will continue until March 1998 and the final version is expected in June 1998. Worldwide support will be sought from then until the year 2000, when the charter will be

presented to the United Nations for approval.

SGI President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal, which advocates an Earth Charter, had just become available to the research center, and copies were available on the information table. Mr. Rockefeller's presentation and the SGI president's proposal seemed to many in the audience to be mutually reinforcing.

The research center's religion

PLEASE SEE ECOLOGY, 4

How Making Faces Created Value

Dallas boys and girls learn about the oneness of life and its environment and help clean a local wilderness park.

By **NELIDA GALLAGHER**
CORRESPONDENT
Dallas

"OK, everybody, let's make faces!" Now what child would turn down this invitation? As the members of the Boys and Girls Group eagerly made faces in hand-held mirrors one day, we group coordinators used the opportunity to discuss the oneness of self and environment.

"Make an angry face," we say. (A hysterical sight.) "What face shows up in the mirror? Now make a happy face. What so you see?"

Making faces into the mirror and noting the accurate reflection provided an entertaining way to explain that our environment reflects our lives. As well as illustrating this point, the exercise blossomed into a lively discussion about nature. A sur-

PLEASE SEE DALLAS, 5

Trinidad Members Focus on Taking Personal Responsibility

By **DAVE McNEILL**
MANAGING EDITOR



Picturesque Stollmeyer's Castle in Port of Spain, Trinidad, is the site for Emerald Isle Headquarters' first all-member faith workshop.

"I will advance, and anyone who wants to join me is welcome." This sentiment, once expressed by SGI President Ikeda, formed the core message of a recent day-long workshop for Emerald Isle Headquarters in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

In a first for the headquarters, which has had workshops for leaders, today's workshop was open to all members.

"The enthusiasm of the members was the highlight of the day," Zola Holder, the headquarters chief, said. "The format gave members a chance to air their views, to speak out honestly."

Such speaking out doesn't come naturally to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, according to Jessica James, the young women's division chief. "We need a little push to speak out to authority figures," she said. "But

PLEASE SEE TRINIDAD, 5

? QUESTION OF THE MONTH: 'How do you, in your everyday life, stand alone for justice?'



Standing alone for justice is a most worthy cause that is frayed with whirlpools of emotions that could very well suck you down to the very level you

were standing up to change. One such whirlpool is assigning blame instead of focusing on the solution. Another even more dangerous emotion, or should I say attitude, is "Since I am right, you obviously must be wrong." I feel very fortunate to practice a religion that taps the courage and wisdom needed to sidestep these often inconspicuous whirlpools and teaches the very practical truth that in order to change my environment I must reflect and change that very thing within my own life.

— DIANE DURBIN, Kansas City, Mo.

I work in an environment that has a large number of women and a diversity of races and cultures. When I first began here, there were concerns among the employees about how they were being treated. This resulted in many barriers being erected and an overall disharmony in the company. Through my practice I feel I have made a positive contribution toward breaking down the injustice of sexism and racism. I strive

to show by example how important it is to treat everyone equal. Over time I have noticed fewer derogatory remarks and real progress in building trust among the employees.

— JACK MINNAERT, Sterling, Ill.

SPEAK OUT! Especially at work. I believe you need to be true to yourself. In the workplace I strive to have open, unbiased dialogue with internal and external customers. When I'm being myself — and honest — I set an example that others will follow.

— KAREN E. McDOUGALD, Chandler, Ariz.

I stand for justice in my daily life by encouraging others to persevere, to view obstacles as experiences that are destined to make us who we are — enlightened Buddhas that are one with the universe. Justice is being willing to fight and stand for what we know is right regardless of the consequences.

— MAGALY BROWN, Atlanta

Whenever I see someone behaving cruelly or treating others unjustly, I try to think about how Nichiren Daishonin, or presidents Makiguchi, Toda or Ikeda would handle it. This is because I want to handle the situation as a person of

character. My first reaction might be one of anger, yet I have to be sure to talk to that person and correct them with words that come from my Buddha nature. I try to look at the person and understand his or her life so I can reach him or her.

— EILENE CRAFFET, Miami Beach, Fla.

How I stand alone for justice in my daily life is not being afraid to say and do what is necessary for my growth or anyone in my environment. It means to have courage to fight my daily struggles. Although everything is our karma, it is necessary to understand that if you or anyone else is mistreated, it is our duty and responsibility to say or do what is necessary to correct, point out and acknowledge the wrong action.

— JOYCE FEASTER, Atlanta

Buddhism has helped me to stand alone for children. Recently I was in a movie theater waiting for a very violent adult-oriented film to begin when I noticed some teenagers sitting with toddler-age children. I approached them and explained (positively) why this film was not appropriate for small children. Instead of being defensive, they thanked me, said they'd had no idea what it was

about and took the children out. I felt proud for taking action!

— LYNN SACHNOFF, Culver City, Calif.

Recently I was replaced at work with no prior warning. While training the new person, my behavior toward my boss stayed exactly the same. At lunchtime, I would go home and fully express myself to the Gohonzon. Then I would go back to work, all the time maintaining my integrity and inner latitude. Three days later, my boss told me that the new person wasn't working out and that someone like me is hard to find.

— LAURA AVED, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Although I am a U.S. citizen, the Retirement Section of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management applied two countries' laws (United States and Panama) to my U.S. Civil Service Retirement. By doing so, they deducted five years of service I worked and took away \$250 each month from my retiree pay. My case is under appeal. I am the only U.S. citizen that has had two countries' laws applied. If the government is not stopped, they will later apply this to immigrants and eventually to the U.S. Social Security.

— DIANA NG, Santa Maria, Calif.

Correction

In the Las Vegas festival story last week, we inadvertently deleted the ending. Here is the correct ending. We apologize for the error.

The center of attraction for the whole festival was the entertainment, which looked like the United Nations. Diversity is Las Vegas Territory's middle name, and it showed in the lineup of entertainers. The Boys and Girls Group, junior high and high school divisions and youth division each had hip-hop and tap dancers. Guest Judy Hendrickson said: "I can't believe the talent I'm seeing here today. It's hard to believe that all these people are in your organization. I'm impressed!"

A special treat was Las Vegas city employee and SGI friend Rupert Henry's solo on steel drums. He mentors several youths on the steel drums, and he graciously agreed to perform when he found out so many young people would be attend-

ing the festival.

The choruses sang, the bands and orchestras played and the dancers danced — every act was enthusiastically received. [A large color photo of the Las Vegas Dancers was featured on the front page of the Las Vegas Sun on April 14.]

But the real story, perhaps, is the effect the festival has had and will continue to have on those who worked to make it a success. As James Herrmann of Los Angeles put it: "One of the things that is wonderful about this event is to see all four divisions working so harmoniously. The support the women's division and men's division members have given to the youth is wonderful."

"And I see youths who are changing their lives and involved in their human revolution through this festival," he said. "Several of them told me that they are using the festival and their involvement in making it successful to change things in their lives. This is their human revolution."

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

'How has studying the priesthood issue helped you deepen your understanding of and faith in Buddhism?'

Please be specific and limit your responses to 75 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.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

'Not Being Swayed'

I read, with much interest, in your "Teen Times" section (March 21) an article by Niki Steed titled "Not Being Swayed." I am not a Buddhist but my older sister is and has been for the last 25-plus years. We were raised as Christians, which I still am. Our relationship is as solid as it ever was and, yes, we do discuss religion. In fact, we have always been respectful of each other's choices.

When she became a Buddhist we were skeptical because of OUR ignorance. But as we learned more about the dynamics of it, we knew this is right for her. She has become a leader and traveled to Japan to pursue a deeper meaning in her faith. I am a religious instructor of youth in my religion and continue to study for a deeper meaning in my faith. I would like to say to Niki not to ever give up your beliefs because of the narrow-mindedness of others....

Prejudice is intolerable in any group, club and especially in religion. Who are we to judge another's choices?

Niki, I would like to say that I admire you for not being swayed and for standing up for what you believe in. We, of all religions, should pray for a world void of such prejudices. I will pray for you. Will you do the same for me?

— KATHLEEN ECKHART, Torrington, Conn.

Disabilities Are Secondary

I wanted to write to thank Joe and Donna Carr for sharing their moving experience with their son, Travis ("Experience," Feb. 28).

As the parent of a handicapped individual who is now 27 years old and still living with me, I am still susceptible to doubt concerning my son and his future. Or to put it more simply, on some days I wonder why I've put so much of my life into caring for him.

Joe and Donna expressed it so beautifully. Donna wrote: "The most important lesson that I have learned is that people with disabilities are human beings first. Their disability is secondary." Both Joe and Donna spoke of helping Travis to change his karma and of chanting many daimoku for their baby's happiness.

Thank you, Joe and Donna, for sharing your experience, which has helped me to remember why I do this. My son, despite his inability to do many things, is a human being first — a message which has not yet reached enough people — and I consider it part of my mission in life to make more people aware of this as long as I'm around. But thank you especially for reminding me that I continue to look after my son and chant daimoku so that both he and I can change *our karma*, and because I want him to be happy.

— DIANE E. HORVAT, Philadelphia

Please Embrace Everyone

I would like to thank the *World Tribune* for including "Spanish Pages" in the April 11 edition. The *World Tribune* constantly strives to enfold people of all cultures, and that is what makes this publication, and this Buddhist practice, unparalleled by any other. I would, however, like to see more inclusion of gay and lesbian members in the *World Tribune* in the future. Thank you.

— BRANDON BURTON BELZER, Carbondale, Ill.

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

**Health Comes From
a Sense of Belonging**

PERSPECTIVE

By ANNA HERNANDEZ
CULVER CITY, CALIF.

My dream is to be the healthiest woman in the universe. Even for one of the biggest dreamers ever to live, this one rates. But perhaps it's one that isn't too far to reach.

I decided to become absolutely healthy about five years ago, seven years after I became a practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. What finally prompted me was the dismal realization that my family's health history isn't very pretty. My mother, like her mother, became diabetic in her 40s. Because of her weakened constitution, her kidneys gave out just after her 60th year. Two years later, frail from the constant dialysis and her lifelong struggle with respiratory problems, she succumbed to pneumonia and died.

Both my father and grandfather battled heart disease. The fifth heart attack ended my father's fight, which started when he was 54 and lasted 15 years.

My parents were constantly in and out of hospitals the last five years of their lives, and I saw firsthand what a horror illness can be. At that point, I vowed that I would do everything in my power to see that I lived a healthy life.

While reading an article in the September 1996 issue of *Health*, I discovered that the healthiest women in the world reside in Okinawa, Japan. The average life span is 84 years and the average state of health is remarkably good. They claim this longevity of wellness has more to do with how they live than who they are.

The article relates the findings of Kazuhiko Taira, a gerontologist (one who studies aging

and the problems of the aged) and epidemiologist (one who is schooled in the incidence, prevalence and cause of disease in large populations), as he meets with and examines various seniors living on the island.

The first thing mentioned by these people as a contributing factor to long life is diet. Theirs



Anna Hernandez

is strikingly different from the rest of Japan. Okinawans eat "three times more meat (mostly fish), 50 percent more tofu, and 40 percent less salt."

Taira then quotes a saying in Okinawa: "Food is medicine, but that is only part of the answer." This is where the article started to get very interesting to me. Taira goes on to say that "The second and maybe more important secret to a long and healthy life in Okinawa is what we call *yuimaru*."

As I read on, I discovered that *yuimaru* is, as one of the natives defines it, "that sense of belonging, of being necessary." This concept started on the farm, with the realization that no one who is too lazy or too independent will survive the rigors of farm life. It takes everyone in the village coming together and understanding their interdependency to ensure

the success of all involved.

Taira then talks about studies both in the United States and Japan that have proven the emotional stability of elderly people who share strong ties with friends, family or at least one other person. He also says that isolation from others makes it "easier to withdraw from social activity, to stop going to the community center, to stop seeing friends — and to stop getting exercise. Socializing is good for the body as well as the soul."

Well, I thought, how about that? Of course, I immediately began to think of the SGI and its unprecedented efforts to instill this very idea (of *yuimaru*) into the hearts of its members. We are starting to understand the importance of involvement, both socially and individually, in our communities. Our organization promotes interaction and steady dialogue as a means to our human revolution and the peace and security of all who share the planet.

I feel SGI President Ikeda sums up the usefulness of our movement to all of humanity in his poem to the members of Los Angeles, "The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land":

This profound understanding of coexistence, of symbiosis — here is the source of resolution for the most pressing and fundamental issues that confront humankind in the chaotic last years of this century.

Our lesson is a global one: Cities and towns need us and we need them. Working closely together can only speed up the quest for much-needed answers to the problems of our world. And not only that, we can become pretty darn healthy in the process. **W**

What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune.

What articles do you like or dislike? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make the paper better? Do you have questions you'd like answered?

Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at:

Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

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Photo by JOE POWLOKA

Planting cherry trees is a family affair for Denver members and their joint territory chief, Brian Matsuo (l).

They're Cherry Determined

By IRLENE OWADA
CORRESPONDENT
Denver, April 13

Against the odds, Denver members follow through with their determination to plant 1,000 cherry trees along the city's Cherry Creek.

If you've ever wanted to learn how to develop your determination, you might ask the Denver members. Every spring, members here get together and plant cherry trees to commemorate the opening of their culture center on Kosen-rufu Day, March 16. And it hasn't been easy. They've faced their share of obstacles.

In 1989, the joint territory wanted to do something for the community and the environment; but the SGI-USA's gift was turned down by the city. Even though the mayor and a state senator came over to the culture center to help plant the trees, city officials didn't recognize the efforts.

"The first year, we planted 100 trees but only three survived," Brian Matsuo, the joint territory chief, said. "It was a disaster!"

The members tried to save the trees, replanting them in bigger pots and chanting daimoku while they waited for the city to change its mind. But it was too late.

"City officials didn't think we were very serious about planting so many trees along the creek," Mr. Matsuo said. The goal was to plant 1,000 trees, and most people would have given up. But giving up wasn't part of the Denver members' plan. Just like any other goal, the determination was made and obstacles were sure to follow.

"The next year we planted 100 trees again, and this time 80 survived," Mr.

Matsuo said. "We learned that taking care of the trees is a year-round job. We did such things as water the trees, wrap and unwrap them and consult with a horticulturist about their development."

But there were more setbacks. "We asked a local university for help, but they were not very supportive," Mr. Matsuo recalled. Instead of helping the members, the university supplied all kinds of data showing that it would be too hard for the trees to survive here.

But members did their homework, too. The creek that flows by the culture center, one of the well-known creeks in the area, is called Cherry Creek. The members discovered that in the past Native Americans of this area enjoyed the harvest of cherry trees. Over time, however, those trees died out because of floods. Now the waters are controlled, but the trees are gone. The story helped members renew their determination that cherry trees would once again grow along the Cherry Creek banks.

Today, more than 400 trees planted by the members brighten the Denver landscape. All the people who pass by can enjoy the cherry trees, especially when they bloom in the spring. And the city, at first reluctant, has now become one of the project's biggest supporters. Two years in a row they've acknowledged the SGI-

USA with an award.

In the spring of 1996, the cherry trees had especially beautiful blossoms. It was as if they were announcing the arrival of SGI President Ikeda last June, when he received an honorary doctorate of education from Denver University.

What started as a community and environmental effort has developed into a spiritual one as well. In *The Human Revolution*, President Ikeda writes about his determination to keep going after President Toda's death:

"Cherry blossoms danced in the wind, as if bidding a final farewell. My heart fills with a thousand emotions when I recall that day, the day of my mentor's funeral, and the sight of the blue sky spreading out beyond the blizzard of cherry blossoms...."

"What I feel I must do now is fight on in place of my mentor for the sake of world peace and the happiness of humankind, survive and fulfill my mission in this life. This is the path I must follow as a disciple, to repay my debt of gratitude to my mentor. It is the path of human revolution that he forged for us. As I proceed along this great path of the blossoming of Soka culture, President Toda continues to live on in my heart. I cannot stop praying that he will keep living on forever in the hearts and minds of our fellow members" (tentative translation).

"Every year more and more people

PLEASE SEE DENVER, NEXT PAGE

Religion and Ecology Series Offers Unique Opportunities To Take Action

ECOLOGY, FROM PAGE 1

and ecology series attracted new and diverse audiences. Over three weekends, practitioners and observers of the world's major religions examined the role religion must play if environmental disaster is to be prevented.

The audiences came to learn and to share.

"Our guests," said Virginia Straus, executive director of the research center, "by their presence here and their enthusiasm, showed that many people are seeking to unite with one another on the bases of values and beliefs that have relevance to contemporary problems."

"Over and over they indicated how they enjoyed the combination of good scholarship and knowledge coupled with a spiritual and a personal perspective," she said.

"This pleased me very much because this is exactly the kind of dialogue President Ikeda founded the center to foster — dialogue that creates a sense of solidarity among networks of global citizens," she continued.

The first conference focused on Judaism, Christianity and Islam; the second on Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism; and the third on Pacific indigenous traditions, Chinese religions and Shinto.

An observation by Donald Swearer of Swarthmore College was especially well received during the second conference.

Emphasizing the spiritual aspect of Eastern religions and using Shakyamuni Buddha's life as an example, the speaker declared that humankind must overcome the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion, the real causes of the ecological havoc being wreaked on the Earth.

Co-convenors of the conference were John Berthrong, Boston University School of Theology, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, Department of Religion, Bucknell University.

There were 12 supporting organizations for this series, most local, but some from as far away as New Rochelle, N.Y., and Washington, D.C.

Youth Study Committee Completes Study Survey

By VALERIE THOMAS

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

The Youth Division Study Committee conducted a survey last winter to learn how the youth division can better serve members' study needs. This committee, initiated by the national youth division leaders in 1996, comprises seven members, who will first deepen their own commitment to the SGI-USA study movement and proceed to support youth study throughout the country.

SGI Vice President Shigeo Hasegawa shared his vision for this group last summer, saying: "We can leave academic study to the academics. There is no Bud-

dhisim separate from daily life. I hope you will study Buddhism deeply through your lives, through your experiences, actions and behavior."

The committee developed the survey as a means to research the study patterns of youth division members, as well as to find out what issues they consider most important to address through study activities. Young women's and young men's division members were equally represented. The members who responded were primarily in the 12-17 and the 24-35 age groups. Different geographical areas were represented from the East Coast to the Midwest to the West, from the South to the Southwest.

In the survey, members were asked to identify the most important issues to be addressed in their study of this Buddhism. The results showed that more than half the members identified goal-setting, relationships and career issues as most important. Other issues considered important were self-esteem, health, and violence.

A question that asked how members like to study found that most members study alone rather than in groups or at meetings. The study material used most frequently is the *World Tribune*, followed by *Living Buddhism* (formerly the *Seikyo Times*).

The survey also included a space for members to share suggestions. Many members agreed

with a young women's division member from Virginia who suggested that "youth division study needs to become more strongly established throughout the United States."

Another frequently expressed opinion was that study have practical application. As a young men's division member from Hawaii wrote, "Make study apply to daily life — my life!"

Many members made specific suggestions about youth division study meetings. A young women's division member from New York encouraged having "brief amounts of material everyone can read right there and discuss right from the heart!"

The Study Committee is de-

termined to use these results to better assist youth throughout the country in their study of this Buddhism, says Shin Yatomi, the committee chief. Last week, committee members wrote a feature on goal-setting for the "Study Page" and plan to address other topics of interest in coming months in similar features, as well as in their weekly "Sign Posts" Goshō series.

If you never got a chance to fill out the survey — or never even saw it — the committee would still like to hear from you. Send your comments and suggestions to: Shin Yatomi, Youth Division Study Committee, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401

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the message we wanted to convey was that everyone needs to take responsibility for kosen-rufu and not depend on the leaders."

The workshop centered on five major discussion topics: communication, faith equals daily life, success in society, practicing joyfully in the group and taking care of members. People were asked how they felt the organization was doing in each of these areas and what they could do to contribute.

"Participating in today's

workshop has caused me to reflect on my practice," Kwesi Charles said. "It has inspired me to study more. And I also realized that a good gongyo can create a good day. I am determined to work for the kosen-rufu of my country."

The frank exchange — or "compassionate straight talk" as one member put it — gave most participants a new perspective. "When I came here I was at a crossroads, but this workshop has helped me to find my mission again," Smitha Kumar, who traveled from Grenada, said. "I

now better understand what I am expected to do for kosen-rufu."

Janice Quamina said the communication with the members will help her as a leader to develop her practice and grow as a person.

"Already through the preparation activities I have improved my practice and can better deal with members," she said. "From today, I am determined to work harder for kosen-rufu."

Jessica James and Valiska Henry contributed to this report.



Through 'compassionate straight talk,' members renew a sense of mission.



Armed with gloves and trash bags, the children hit the trails to clean up.

Photo by NELLDA GALLAGHER

DALLAS, FROM PAGE 1

prising number of children showed a keen awareness of the importance of preserving our natural environment. One child said, "Greedy people kill trees and animals so we can have more buildings and highways and poison the air."

Not one to miss an opportunity, I asked if anyone would be interested in improving their natural environment. All hands shot up.

Some weeks later, I asked Rebecca Williams, director of the Dallas Nature Center, the only remaining wilderness area in Dallas, if any volunteer opportunities for children were available. She suggested cleaning the trails and helping in the native plant nursery. All the Boys and Girls Group coordinators agreed to the idea, and we scheduled a Sunday outing there.

As with any outside activity, the weather was a threat. With a dismal forecast and heavy clouds looming overhead, 22 boys and girls arrived to clean the trails on the appointed Sunday afternoon.

Armed with gloves and trash

bags, we split into groups and hit the trails. Each one used this activity to discover wildflowers, cacti and unusual stones in the creeks and streams. Some of the children ventured close to the Cattail Pond to see where the resident beaver had done his construction.

Two hours later, back at the Visitors Station, the kids regrouped, muddy and smiling, holding up their full trash bags like first-prize trophies. After a picnic lunch and a lot of water, the boys and girls insisted on hiking another one-mile trail.

Who would have thought that making faces in the mirror would lead to creating so much value? We cleaned up our natural environment, had plenty of exercise, created closer friendships with one another, and made a friend in the community.

For me the experience was the embodiment of President Makiguchi's theory of "right-living in the home, in work, in the community and in nature." And yes, after everyone was safely home, the bottom fell out and it poured rain.

DENVER, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

come out," Mr. Matsuo said. Despite such challenges as snow in April just a few days before the planting, new members, like one-week-old Carson Bacon and her mother, Neisha, joined the seasoned planters. Patricia Hall brought her son and grandchildren for the first time. "I've practiced all over the world," said Patricia, whose husband is in the Air Force. "I heard about this at world peace gongyo and thought it would be a nice family activity. I've never heard of anyone else doing this, and I love it!"

As shovels clicked and the dirt flew today, small children laughed and played in the warm spring sunshine. Mr. Matsuo stopped long enough to survey the family activity. "When the cherry trees blossom in the spring, for one week, they are full of flowers," he said. "It is very dynamic, just like life. I hope that the members can feel President Toda and President Ikeda's spirit here today as they plant the trees." Then with a determined step, he hurried off to plant more trees.

ROBERTA TAIX, Biloxi, Miss.

'I Have Already Won'

Last April, around my 54th birthday, I found a lump in my right breast. For the next few weeks I didn't think much more about it. Then I realized that it was about the size of a marble. My mother and sister both have histories of liquid-filled, benign breast tumors. Was I now to have a similar history?

Spring became summer. My days were very full. Teresa, the owner of the salon where I work, went to Italy for two weeks. It was not a good time to find a doctor, but the lump was getting larger. I confided in my husband, Lucien (we've been married 22 years as of May 2!), about my problem and assured him there was nothing to be alarmed about. He has plenty of his own problems, being almost 10 years now with Parkinson's disease. I told myself as soon as Teresa was back at work that I would see a doctor.

Then total denial set in. After years of wanting to live on the Mississippi coast, finally Lucien and I were here and loving it. I was lucky enough to be hired at the salon, and my clientele was building steadily. Just when my life was going so well, I surely didn't need a distraction like breast surgery. Getting this far had been a long and difficult struggle, I told myself. I was not going to let everything unravel now. I knew I had gotten this far because of my Buddhist practice, and many times I chanted before the Gohonzon with deep appreciation.

Ironically, my oldest friend, from grade school on, was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago. She had a mastectomy. When I was asked to teach a new member how to do gongyo, I used that opportunity as a cause for my friend's complete recovery. My friend is doing very well.

By mid-summer the lump in my breast was the size of a walnut. That's when Teresa's 8-year-old daughter was attacked by a pit bull and badly injured. Her recovery took a few weeks, so again I delayed getting medical attention.

Then it was late September and the lump seemed to be growing even faster. I was finding it more difficult to do hair because of pain in my right shoulder and arm.

Just when I knew I had to say something to Teresa and get to a

doctor, her mother had a severe stroke. Two days later, her mother died, still in a coma. All these events allowed me to continue to deny that I had a serious problem. I viewed it as a small problem that would get taken care of eventually.

One day a new client came in for a haircut. He was a family practice doctor. Well, I thought, here's my doctor. Later that day, I took Teresa aside and said: "There is no good time to tell you this. I have a lump in my breast the size of Texas and I have to get something done about it."

She cried. I explained to the doctor that I had no insurance and precious little money. He said that there was a breast cancer seminar soon at the local electric company that is held every October. Then he called the head of the radiology department at a local medical center. She arranged for me to get a free mammogram, and the doctor discounted his fee. Two definite benefits. That was the start of a medical odyssey that would drastically change my life.

When I met with the surgeon, Dr. Lee, he assured me that I was facing a mastectomy. I explained my financial circumstances. He said that he wanted me to see Susan Stevens in Social Services at the medical center. I left his office, stopped by the library, then went to meet Ms. Stevens. Dr. Lee was just coming out of Social Services as I was going in. Ms. Stevens told me, "In the 12 years I have been doing this, this is the first time a doctor has come into my office and asked me to take care of a patient."

The universe's protective forces were certainly working for my benefit. All my medical expenses would be paid by Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This is a program for people who work, have no medical insurance, need medical intervention and plan to return to work. I hadn't know the program existed.

A biopsy was done in Dr. Lee's office. When I went to get the results, he said: "Well, it's malignant. I thought it would be. Didn't you?"

"No," I replied.

He pointed to a calendar and said he could do the surgery this week but would be out of town that week. I barely heard him. Everything was a blur.

The surgery was scheduled, then postponed because the pre-operative blood test showed high liver enzymes. Scans showed my

Roberta Taix says her Buddhist practice helps her overcome fear and doubt and gives her a sense of mission as she battles cancer.



Davidson knew that understanding would help my recovery.

Strange things happen to a body receiving chemotherapy. The first two treatments didn't work very well. By then the tumors were a lot bigger and getting painful. One place on my breast was about to ulcerate. Dr. Davidson called it an "angry place."

That was when the puzzle pieces fell into place. It was exactly what the doctor had called it — it was anger coming out. I believe anger and fear are two sides of the same coin; defeating one means defeating both. I un-

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The drama goes on as I face an army of demons. But I don't face it alone. So many people have called and sent cards and good wishes. My daughter goes with me for every chemo treatment. Mother came for two months from Oklahoma. At the salon, a client donated two Patti Bannister prints for a raffle; hundreds of dollars were raised for me. Friends and relatives have sent books and pajamas and money. Best of all, Buddhist friends in faith have been sending me daimoku, offering help, coming over to visit and calling to see how Lucien and I are doing. Every day I thank the Gohonzon for them.

When a friend went to Atlanta, she spoke with our women's division joint territory leader on my behalf. The leader said to stem my destructive fears. Fear and doubt can make us anxious and apprehensive. It is important to squelch fear, she said, and important to chant a lot.

I knew this meant that I had to pay attention daily and watch for negative emotions that could hold back my healing. I also understood that doubt (and consequently fear) could creep into anything — my confidence in my doctor, my confidence in my practice — absolutely anything. And to squelch fear and doubt does not mean to simply pretend I don't feel that way; it means to confront it and eradicate it.

Another friend put a card on my refrigerator that reads: "Believe in this mandala with your whole heart. Nam-myoho-range-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What illness can therefore be an obstacle?" (MW-1, 119).

I have been practicing this Buddhism since 1989, and it has been my greatest good fortune. I don't know what will happen in the future or where this is all going. I do know it will be whatever is best for my life. I have a mission here and now for kosen-rufu.

Statistics tell me about this type of cancer. The survival rate for five years is 20 percent. Not very good odds. But these figures are based on the past few decades. Dr. Davidson thinks remission, and I think *mission*. This is not an ending but a beginning. Now when I face my army of demons, I do so with an army of friends at my back.

I have already won. ❏

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Deciding How To Live

By REIKO GROSHELL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

The Buddha taught that people from the very moment of their birth are accompanied by two messengers, Doshō (Same Birth) and Domyō (Same Name), who are sent by heaven and who follow them as closely as their own shadows, never leaving them even for an instant. These two take turns ascending to heaven to report the person's offenses and merits, both major and minor, without overlooking the slightest detail. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 195-96)

Life is full of challenges. My life is in a constant state of flux.

I try to do my best in every endeavor, but at times it is so difficult in this world of cause and effect. When I read this letter, "The Causal Law of Life," this hit me again. I was intimidated to remember that my two messengers, Doshō and Domyō, do not take a vacation — ever — that they are always with me, 24 hours a day.

Cause and effect is at work 24 hours a day. And my words, thoughts and deeds are causes, no matter how I look at it. I have to remind myself, though, that I am only human. Of course I'm going to make mistakes, right?

But our efforts to self reflect, to do our best to improve and to take concrete action are what matter. Deciding how we will live and making causes toward that is pivotal.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Nichigen-nyo, wife of Shijō Kingo, praising her for her efforts and her strong faith. He says that the heavens already know about her strong faith since Doshō and Domyō have reported everything.

Since I know myself best, I know how much positive efforts I am making or not making in faith. Even if I don't know consciously, I see the results — Buddhism is very strict in this way. As SGI President Ikeda recently said: "The key is deciding how you will live your life and then devoting all your strength and energy toward that. This is what faith is all about." ☐

UNDERSTANDING MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

A Promise to My Mentor

By BETSY EPPSTEINER

BOSTON

Perhaps the most beautiful, fulfilling aspect of my practice of more than 25 years has been the development of my relationship with my mentor, SGI President Ikeda. This has enabled me to experience the spirit of the mentor-disciple relationship.

When I joined the organization in June 1971, I could not understand what Daisaku Ikeda was about and why everyone was making such a fuss over him. I dismissed him as having nothing to do with me and was relieved when I learned that in this practice we follow the law, not the person.

But over time, I've had many opportunities to be with President Ikeda. And some of these were so profoundly personal and meaningful to me that they enabled me to form a relationship with him, even though great physical distance separates us.

One such experience occurred in August 1979, when I had the chance to travel to Japan. President Ikeda at that time gave guidance about the importance of propagating the Daishonin's teachings.

He asked us, in the most humble way, if we thought we could each set a goal to introduce one person to the Gohonzon a year. I considered the request and said to myself, "This is something I can challenge — and *want* to challenge." I made a promise to President Ikeda to do so.

As a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin and President Ikeda, I knew it was my mission to introduce as many people as possible to the practice and enable one person a year to receive the Gohonzon. Helping another person change his or her karma was something I could pray for wholeheartedly. And I received tremendous benefit as a result of responding to President Ikeda's request to introduce new members to the Gohonzon and take responsibility for their care and development.

Perhaps the single most important experience for me with President Ikeda was on June 18, 1981, in Glen Cove, N.Y., the day President Ikeda wrote his poem "To My Beloved Young American Friends." Two hundred of us had assembled with President Ikeda to receive guidance from him and reaffirm our commitment to the kosen-rufu movement. For my friends and I, the feeling of joy on that day will live in our hearts forever.

After the day's events concluded and we were being driven to the airport, a message came over our driver's radio to go to the Pig and Whistle Restaurant as soon as possible. President Ikeda wanted to express his appreciation to all of the drivers who had helped behind the scenes during his visit to New York. We had not been invited since we were not drivers, but we were in the car when the call came in so we "went along for the ride."

As my friends and I blended in with the regular restaurant clientele, I observed President Ikeda's attitude throughout the afternoon. He treated the young drivers as if they were the most important people in

be changed, that the impossible can become the possible, when we practice for ourselves and others. I also received the outstanding teacher award in the community in which I work, which was verification to me that my practice to the Gohonzon was correct.

I am still responding to President Ikeda's request to introduce one person a year. Several years ago at my school, I introduced a third grade teacher to our Buddhist practice. That teacher has now become the principal and is one of my best friends. Together we do our best to make our school excellent for children and staff alike. Last year the school psychologist joined, and this year a new third grade teacher joined. Whenever we face obstacles at school, we chant daimoku together and get fantastic results.

Throughout my practice, what has typically caused me the most suffering is feeling separated from my husband due to his work and Gakkai activity schedule. The first year of our marriage, 1973, was the most difficult because I spent most of my time begrudging the time he wasn't with me — and suffered profoundly as a result. My life was totally compartmentalized; I had drawn a mental line that separated Gakkai activities and my personal life.

Trying to respond to President Ikeda's request to introduce friends to the practice enabled me to change this begrudging attitude. Last year my husband was working in Japan for one week; unexpectedly his schedule changed and he extended his trip by three months! And what happened to me was the most extraordinary experience — I felt absolutely no separation between us. Whatever he was doing for kosen-rufu and the SGI, I felt I was doing, too. Although he was thousands of miles away in Japan, involved in round-the-clock meetings, I was at home taking care of our two sons, my students and the members. I realized my mission was just as important and not separate from his.

When in 1994 President Ikeda founded the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, it was an impossible dream come true for the Boston members. An SGI leader years ago had encouraged all the Boston youth division members that if we continued to introduce people, one day many academics would seek out the SGI to discuss issues of peace, culture and education. Now that dream is coming true through the activities of the BRC, where academics are discussing global issues and ways to solve society's problems. Looking out the windows of the BRC upon the very streets of Cambridge where we joyfully encouraged friends, day in and day out, I am reminded of the promise I made to President Ikeda in 1979 and my mission as a disciple. ☐

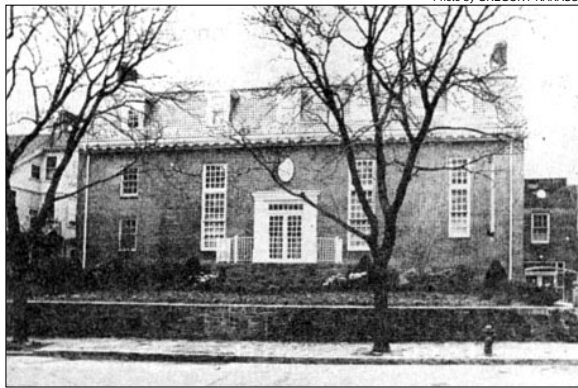


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUI

The Boston Research Center is a dream come true for the Boston members.

the world, embracing them with his heart and showing them profound appreciation. His extension of himself did not stop there, but included the restaurant staff who were taking care of him and his guests. It was the same respect I have seen him show royalty or heads of state.

Actually, it doesn't matter whether President Ikeda is meeting with members, non-members, seniors, children, people with high social status or ordinary people like ourselves — his attitude toward each person is the same. He seems to recognize the Buddha nature in each person he meets and is able to bring it out. I had read his guidance to treat all people with respect, but his behavior demonstrated this guidance in a way that I will never forget. Further, it enabled me to trust him more deeply from that point on. I could follow his guidance without reservation, because there was no discrepancy between what he taught others and how he lived his daily life.

I continued to follow President Ikeda's guidance to practice for myself and others, introducing my friends to Buddhism and developing the organization. As a result, major breakthroughs in my life occurred.

My husband and I were both succeeding in our careers and our first son was born in January 1983, after a 10-year struggle with infertility. This event demonstrated to me that any karma can

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at an All-Japan Representative Leaders Conference, Feb. 1.

The Third Stage of Life

How should we live the third major period of our lives, old age? Society must focus serious attention on this topic. In 2025, one out of four Japanese will be over 65. By the middle of the 21st century, it is predicted, that figure will rise to one in three. Even today, 2 million elderly Japanese are in need of nursing care; by 2025 it is estimated the number will increase to 5.2 million.

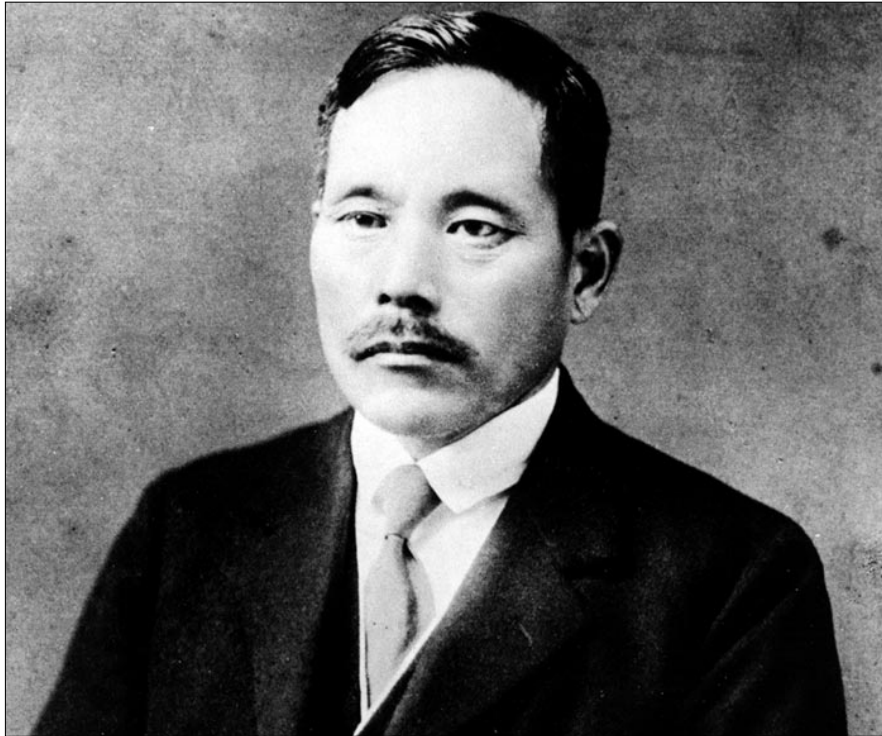
A Leading Newspaper's Series on Aging

The *Mainichi Shimbun*, a major Japanese newspaper that celebrates its 125th anniversary this month, started running a new series on Jan. 1. "We are living at a time," begins the first installment, "when we must all join hands and come to grips with the issues that a long old age will present. What can we do to have fruitful and fulfilling lives? What can we do to pave the way for a new society?"¹

This is a very important point of view, I believe. The choice of the words "long old age" instead of "long life" is significant — the article states that "long life" has traditionally had only happy implications, whereas "long old age" suggests the harsh reality we must confront.²

Our wish, of course, is that in this society of long old age people can also enjoy long and happy lives. The aim of the *Mainichi* series is to discuss precisely what we need to do to make that happen.

The installments in Part One of the ongoing series were written by a group of young journalists mostly in their 30s. They report the stories of people facing the realities of old age and share their own impressions. One article dealt with a teacher who made complete arrangements for her funeral while still alive and then died alone, anonymously. Another was about a woman whose father, a well-known writer, had contracted Alzheimer's. She made his situation public to help others who face the same problem. Yet another was about a man who became like a parent to his senile mother, striving valiantly to hold down his job and nurse her at the same time. There was also the story of an ex-pilot of a World War II commando unit who was communicating with young people over the Internet. And an-



The first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, encountered this Buddhism when he was 57 and already an accomplished educator and author. At age 64 he wrote: "When I made that great decision and finally committed myself to faith, I came to fully comprehend and appreciate the Daishonin's words: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (MW-1, 82). With indescribable joy, I transformed the way I had lived my life for almost 60 years. The anxiety that came from searching in the dark for life's answers has completely evaporated. My inborn reserve and diffidence have disappeared. My goals in life became increasingly grander and loftier; my fears dwindled."

other told the story of an energetic 89-year-old woman who still runs her own hair salon.

By looking at individual lives such as these, the series encourages its readers to think about issues such as nursing care, the parent-child relationship, senility and euthanasia. The journalists write the stories not as bystanders but as people who will one day confront the same problems of old age themselves and, in many cases, as children with elderly parents actually dealing with aging firsthand.

One reporter writes: "In a society where people are living longer, new lifestyle choices and attitudes are required. The experience of old age varies from person to person. Some face it joyfully and vigorously; for others, it is filled with suffering and anxiety. Each person and the life he or she has lived is different. So are the stories. While gathering information for my article, I realized again and again that every question I asked was a question that I must ask myself as well."³

The series appears to have

drawn a strong response from readers. It even came up the other day in a discussion I was having with a certain scholar. All of the issues the series raises are important, including nursing care and senility. But since I have spoken about these topics in my health series, I will not explore them in further depth today [the series is being published in the *World Tribune* under the title "A New Century of Health"].

Caring for Others

In a letter to Toki-ama Gozen, the wife of Toki Jonin, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "[Your husband] Lord Toki has told me that, while grieved at his mother's death, he is grateful that she passed away peacefully and that you gave her such attentive care. He said joyfully that he would never forget this in any lifetime to come" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 125).

Toki-ama Gozen had a poor constitution herself. No doubt the challenges she underwent nursing her aged mother-in-law,

who was in her 90s, were indescribable. The Daishonin felt her struggle, appreciated her efforts and comforted her warmly. There is nothing more wonderful than having a true mentor to support you, to show concern for your well-being and growth.

After the above passage, the Daishonin writes, "My greatest concern now is for your illness" (MW-7, 125). And he offers words of encouragement to Toki-ama Gozen, drawing on examples from history and Buddhist sutras.

Also, caring for an ailing family member with great love is what Buddhist compassion is all about. This is the behavior of a bodhisattva.

Boundless Compassion for the Elderly

Nichiren Daishonin also sent letters of encouragement from Mount Minobu to the elderly Ko Nyudo and his wife, Ko-no-ama, who lived on faraway Sado Island. To the childless couple, the Daishonin writes: "I, Nichiren,

must be your child, but wishing to save the people of Japan, I am residing for the time in the central part of the country.... When the Mongols come pouring into Japan, please make your way here. And, because you have no sons, please consider coming here to live with me in your old age" (MW-7, 87-88).

Though he faced one life-threatening situation after another, the Daishonin continued to stand firm. As if they were his own parents, he continued to embrace and care for his sincere elderly followers, ordinary people who lived during turbulent, uncertain times. In this strength and kindness, we see the very essence of what it is to be human.

'Buddhahood Is the Final Abode'

The Daishonin concluded his letter to the couple by writing: "No place is secure. Be convinced that Buddhahood is the final abode" (MW-7, 88). Where is our final abode, our sweet home, our safe haven? It is here. It is within us. The state of Buddhahood that we attain in ourselves is the eternally safe haven.

External circumstances do not determine your peace of mind or inner tranquility.

No matter how wonderful a home you may be living in, if you are sad and lonely you cannot be said to be at ease nor your life happy. And even if your present circumstances are good, there is no guarantee that they will last forever. Only the palace of peace and security that you build within your life through Buddhist practice is eternal.

Supportive Friends

Ko Nyudo and Ko-no-ama were followers of the Daishonin who practiced Buddhism with Abutsu-bo and his wife, Senichi-ama, fellow residents on Sado. Fondly watching over their friendship, the Daishonin always urged them to work together good-naturedly and maintain their solidarity.

There is no doubt that the older one gets, the more one appreciates the good fortune of having supportive, encouraging friends. SGI members are extending a network of such precious, jewel-like friendships throughout their communities and society at large.

The Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, the *Seikyo Shimbun*, often spotlights members of the Many Treasures Group, pioneers

SGI DEPUTY PRESIDENT EINOSUKE AKIYA'S GUIDANCE

Illuminate the Lives of All Those Around Us

From the April Daibayakureng, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "The various sufferings of all humankind are the sufferings of the one person Nichiren" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 758). A Buddha faithfully tries to take on the sufferings of others as if they were his or her own. This is the Buddha's compassionate way.

SGI President Ikeda has often stressed how important it is for leaders to understand the subtle inner workings of the human heart. The capacity to cherish others, to share their sorrows and pains, and to instill hope and courage is based on the depth of your understanding. This is an essential component of leadership.

When it comes to empathy, it is crucial to remember that the first thing people want from others is a genuine understanding, not of their happiness but of their suffering. Nothing can match the warmth and compassion you feel when someone helps shoulder the weight of your sufferings —

sufferings no one else could relate to — and offers heartfelt encouragement.

Only if we have fallen ill ourselves can we truly sympathize with a person's struggle against health problems. And only if we have experienced the bitterness of poverty firsthand can we relate to the poor's hopelessness and anguish.

Simply experiencing hardship and suffering, however, does not ensure that you'll forge great character. Even if you have confronted formidable difficulties, if you are egotistical and self-centered, you might actually take cruel delight in trampling on the feelings of others.

The key, then, is to have concern for others, to regard others' sufferings as your own and be willing to do everything in your power to help alleviate those sufferings. This desire to remove sufferings and impart joy is Buddhist compassion; leaders of kosen-rufu must have the capacity to put this spirit into practice.

In 1952, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, formed a youth division training group called the Suiko-kai [lit-

erally, Water Margin Group]. It met twice a month to discuss the Chinese epic *The Water Margin*¹ and other great works of world literature. Once, when the group was studying *The Water Margin*, President Toda focused on the protagonist Song Jiang, who emerges as the leader of a group of daring heroes.

Song Jiang is described as a man of medium height and build and dark complexion. Having no outstanding talent in either literary or military arts and prone to indecision, he appears to be an ordinary person. Why, then, do so many heroes gather around him? President Toda suggested that it was because of Song Jiang's special ability to see into the very depths of people's hearts. He was honored for his knack in recognizing talent in others and for his wholehearted love and respect for each person.

In his profound understanding of others, Song Jiang was second to none. There is a saying, "A man is ready to die for one who appreciates him." Nothing is more inspiring than struggling alongside someone who truly appreciates and values you.

Nichiren Daishonin clearly perceived both the strengths and weaknesses of each of his followers and encouraged them accordingly. For example, he cautions Shijo Kingo in great detail about controlling his temper. By contrast, in many letters to Nanjo Tokimitsu, rather than offer meticulous warnings, he encourages the youth to fully and freely exert himself in faith. The Daishonin was a leader of great compassion who completely understood the subtleties of the human heart.

In the *Gosho*, the Daishonin writes: "When praised, one does not consider his personal risk, and when criticized, he can recklessly cause his own ruin. Such is the way of common mortals" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 92). To be a great leader, one must thoroughly believe in people and praise their strengths. Though others' faults and weaknesses may be immediately apparent, if we endlessly point these out, we will most likely end up hurting one another.

A true leader always strives to raise capable people by

bringing out their strengths. By praising people's strong points, you can open their hearts, and they can develop self-confidence and advance.

In short, leaders' success in raising capable people depends entirely on their own state of life. The branches of a great tree will flourish only to the extent that the tree can sink its roots into the earth. Similarly, we can only develop the towering character to raise capable people if we personally cultivate deep roots of the heart.

April is the time to make a fresh start. With the radiance of the Mystic Law let us continually strive to become leaders with the abundant compassion to illuminate the lives of all those around us. 卍

1. *The Water Margin* (Shui-hu chuan; Jpn Suiko-den): a romantic tale dating from the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127) about the folk hero Song Jiang and the group of bandits that he leads. Many Chinese versions of the story exist. One has been published in English under the title *Outlaws of the Marsh*, trans. Sidney Shapiro (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1993). Another English edition is titled *All Men Are Brothers*.

Preparing for The Third Stage of Life

SPEECH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

from the early days of our organization. Their faces are beautiful, reflecting the integrity of their lives and faith.

Shakyamuni taught that those who treasure and esteem the elderly increase their longevity, beauty, joy and strength. This is a principle that is most certainly in accord with the law of cause and effect. A society that respects the elderly is one that respects human life. Such a society will flourish with vigor.

A Longer Life

In the *Gosho*, the Daishonin quotes the Lotus Sutra passage "We may use our long lives to save living beings"⁴ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 657). "Long life" in this context refers to the immeasurably long life of the Buddha as explained in the "Life Span of the Thus Come One" chapter in the Lotus Sutra.

The eternal state of Buddhahood wells up within those who

practice the Lotus Sutra. And in accord with the plea in the sutra "Let us live out our lives,"⁵ our life force is strengthened, our lives extended, as a result of our practice and desire to lead others to happiness.

Bodhisattvas do not strive to live long solely for their own sakes. They do so to serve others to the greatest possible extent, using their experience, their seamless blend of compassion and wisdom, to do so.

This is a subtle but crucial difference.

The Majesty of Age

In the *Gosho*, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as "the old man who is Bodhisattva Superior Practices"⁶ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1458). This passage has profound significance in Buddhism, but I want to clarify that the expression "old man" here is in no way negative or derogatory.

It implies a venerable, majestic greatness. It brings to mind the virtues of one who has gained true

mastery of life — qualities such as firm and unwavering faith, ceaseless, compassionate action, indomitable courage, gripping conversation, unflagging patience, transcendent nobility and dignity and a vast, inexhaustible reservoir of wisdom. This is a description of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who are spreading the ideals of humanism in the midst of this polluted age.

Makiguchi's Last Decades

We mustn't forget that the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, encountered this Buddhism when he was 57. He entered the third stage of his life, his final chapter as it were, as a practicing Buddhist.

Already he had led a life of great accomplishment, having published monumental works such as *The Geography of Human Life* and earned a reputation as a fine teacher and principal in elementary education. But it wasn't until his late 50s, and on through his 60s and 70s,

that Mr. Makiguchi gave himself to the true mission for which he had been born in this world. As he wrote [around age 64]:

When I made that great decision and finally committed myself to faith, I came to fully comprehend and appreciate the Daishonin's words: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (MW-1, 82). With indescribable joy, I transformed the way I had lived my life for almost 60 years.

The anxiety that came from searching in the dark for life's answers has completely evaporated. My inborn reserve and diffidence have disappeared. My goals in life became increasingly grander and loftier; my fears dwindled.⁷

Mr. Makiguchi opposed the Japanese authorities head-on during the rabid militarism of World War II, dying in prison for his beliefs at 73. Let us follow the example of this mentor

of boundless humanism and compassion and devote our lives until the very end to realizing our lofty goal.

In the final, most meaningful third stage of our lives, let us shine as bright beacons of hope, courage and compassion on all those around us. 卍

1. "Chomei Shakai o Ikiru" (Living in a Long Old Age Society), *Mainichi Shimbun*, Jan. 1.

2. *Ibid.*, Jan. 21.

3. *Ibid.*, Jan. 18.

4. *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 239.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

6. When Shakyamuni declares in the "Emerging From the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that the vast multitudes of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have emerged are his original disciples, Bodhisattva Maitreya expresses doubt, saying that it is as though a young man of 25 were to point to an old man of 100 and say, "This is my son!" (p. 221).

7. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daian Bunmeisha, 1984), vol. 8, p. 406.

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The youth division will meet at the Florida Nature and Culture Center for four consecutive weekends this summer.

A Wonderful New Tradition

In July and August, 600 youth will participate in training meetings at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. They will receive encouragement in faith, study Buddhism with friends old and new and refresh their determination to continue advancing and growing toward the new century.

By ED FEASEL
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION CHIEF

With this issue of the *World Tribune*, the young women's and young men's divisions are initiating the "Youth Pages," a monthly joint effort. This section will contain experiences, activity reports, study articles, guidance and creative writings. I hope this section will be a resource for you in your activities and a great source of encouragement.

With this first edition of the "Youth Pages," I'd like to let you know about some great activities that will be taking place this summer. As you may know, this summer the SGI-USA youth division has the fantastic oppor-

tunity to hold four training sessions at the Florida Nature and Culture Center: the Young Men's Division Conference from July 10-13, the Young Women's Division Conference from July 17-20, the Junior High and High School Divisions Conference from July 31-Aug. 3 and the Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Band Conference from Aug. 7-10.

Combined, more than 600 youth from across the United States will be gathering at the Florida Nature and Culture Center during the months of July and August to receive encouragement in faith, study together, make new friends and treasure old ones.

Six hundred youth will re-

fresh our determination to continue advancing and growing toward the new century.

As I consider the significance of these four conferences, I recall stories I've heard about the summer training sessions that would take place in Japan and the great momentum they generated throughout the youth division. SGI President Ikeda would give Gosho lectures and guidance during those sessions, and the youth would leave with such a refreshed determination that it would reverberate in their local organizations when they returned.

I hope in the same way our 1997 summer youth leadership conferences will mark the beginning of a wonderful new tradition in the SGI-USA, a tradi-

tion where youth gather from around the country, encourage one another and then return to our local areas determined to inspire our fellow members.

I know that the national leadership of each of the four groups meeting this summer is putting its full effort into planning meaningful conferences that will create this tradition.

Information on each conference, including eligibility requirements and costs, can be obtained from your local joint territory.

Together with youth from across the country, let's kick off the last half of 1997 and make a fresh determination toward 2001. I look forward to seeing you there. WJ

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

A Control Issue

By CRAIG GREEN &
JEFF FARR
LOS ANGELES

Why did the priests have this underlying prejudice against the SGI? It stands to reason that the SGI members must have done something to incur such contempt. In fact, they did—they dared to propagate the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

Nichiren Shoshu was a small order of priests until the Soka Gakkai initiated the spread of the Daishonin's teachings, encouraging the burgeoning membership to help suffering friends. No one can deny that little propagation was done before the Soka Gakkai was formed; and that from 1930 up to the split in 1990, the SGI members did the lion's share of propagation, introducing more than 10 million people worldwide.

The organization's growth, especially in the postwar years, changed everything—men who had been priests of a dormant sect found themselves stewarding millions of people. For many of the priests, it became a question of how to control the people.

A case in point: the Soka Gakkai's donation of temples to the priesthood. From 1930 to 1970, the Soka Gakkai donated more than 320. Not until the 1970s did the Soka Gakkai begin to focus on building its own community centers. The priesthood became anxious over this, seeing it as a move toward the Soka Gakkai's independence. This concern turned to something darker when the priesthood started publicly attacking the Soka Gakkai in the late 1970s.

The sheer growth of the organization and its proactive efforts for world peace meant that reforms in the priesthood would be necessary. It was a loss of control the priests were not willing to accept.

No. 3 in a series



Jenny Slaughter, here with her husband, Anthony, was recently appointed SGI-USA vice young women's division chief.

Dedicating My Life To Helping People

By JENNY SLAUGHTER
SGI-USA VICE YOUNG WOMEN'S DIVISION CHIEF

Most people consider me to be a "fortune baby," since my family began practicing when I was very young. My mother was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism when I was about 6 years old.

She was going through a divorce with my father and was seeking something to give her courage to face her future. She was about to enter the work force for the first time in her life, as well as raise four children alone.

During our childhood, my siblings and I were filled with distrust, resentment and hostility. My mother remarried when I was still very young; my siblings and I were supposed to accept this person into our lives.

This brought even more resentment into our household, and we wasted no time in creating a hellish life for my mother.

I began to chant on my own when I was 13. I wanted to be part of the Fife and Drum Corps and was told I had to learn gongyo and chant to be in it, so I did. This was the best thing that could have happened to me.

Gradually my siblings began practicing on their own. As our practice strengthened, our relationships with one another, as well as with our mother, stepfather and father, began to blossom. We began to develop trust and support instead of anger and hostility. Today even though each of us has separate lives with families of our own, we continue to support each other in our practice and daily lives, through both good times and bad.

I began to assume responsibility in the organization when I was still a high school student. Through this opportunity, I learned more about this practice and developed strong bonds in the organization at a young age.

The first time I found myself facing a huge challenge was when I was getting ready to go to college. I was faced with the possibility of not being accepted to Colorado State University and not being able to afford it even if I were. I had to put my practice to the test and did. I was accepted into the university, into the program I wanted, and received all the financial support I needed.

This was actual proof for me of my efforts as a leader in the organization. After that experience I vowed to dedicate my life to helping people practice and see tremendous benefits in their lives.

During my college years I was involved in a relationship that I thought was the one for me. I spent two years in the relationship with my life revolving around him. Most of my free time was spent with him so I found myself neglecting my responsibilities as a member and leader in the organization. I thought that this was my happiness, that he was all I needed.

Little did I know that soon this relationship would turn for the worst. I was left devastated, totally discouraged. But my young women's division leader encouraged me to look beyond this and once again dedicate my life to supporting other young women's division members. So I did.

I determined that I would develop and strengthen my life and that when the time was right I would meet the person with whom I would spend the rest of my life. Today I am happily married to a member who totally supports my efforts as a young women's division leader.

This practice has given me the courage to face any difficulty in my life and win. As SGI President Ikeda often says, Buddhism is concerned with winning. ☸

YOUNG DAISAKU (4)

The End of the War

By KEN SARAGOSA
PHILADELPHIA JOINT TERRITORY
HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION CHIEF

By 1945, the end of the war was very near, though the Japanese people did not know this. During the last days of the war, it seemed to Ikeda that the whole world was headed endlessly in an insane, destructive direction, faced as he was with the official call to fanatic patriotism and the absolute despair of the people around him.

Hope for the future was not an easy sentiment to maintain. Many of us are fortunate to have friends or role models at hand who encourage us to move through difficult circumstances, but even the well-intentioned in Ikeda's life were so caught up in their sufferings that they could barely keep their own hope kindled, much less help an idealistic teen.

This, perhaps, was why Ikeda spent so much time alone, reading. About those days, Ikeda writes: "I looked forward to the dawn of another day with the vague notion in mind: When the war ends, I'd have to study" (*My Recollections*, p. 39). It was in his books that he found the strength to maintain his ideals.

Because of the war, basic necessities were denied to civilians in order to support the military effort. The Ikedas, like most Japanese families, struggled every day to eat. Between the arduous conditions at work and the austere conditions at home, Daisaku's health deteriorated rapidly. He would often collapse and vomit blood. His condition was diagnosed as tuberculosis, a disease widespread in Japan during the war.

Despite his rapidly degenerating condition, he was unable to let up his daily routine and frequently worked with a fever higher than 102 degrees. Not only did his family depend upon his in-

come, but the nation was so caught up in the wartime fervor that any attempt at rest or recuperation would be viewed as lazy at best, treasonous at worst.

Air raids over Tokyo were now almost a daily affair. One historian recounts that "the dreaded planes sought out not factories but people, and concentrated on fire-bombings of congested, inflammable cities in order to coerce Japan into surrendering.... Approximately 2,300,000 houses had gone up in smoke by the time it was all over, that is, about 20 percent of the habitations in all of Japan" (Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, p. 326).

On April 15, Kamata — where Ikeda worked — was devastated in a saturation air raid. The building where Ikeda worked was destroyed.

At the beginning of the year, a doctor had told the family that Daisaku needed immediate treatment. The doctor also warned that even under the best circumstances Ikeda would most likely not live past 24. These air raids, however, destroyed any hope of treatment for Daisaku.

On May 24, the home where the Ikedas were staying sustained a direct hit. Ikeda recalls the whole family scurrying about, trying to save themselves. As the family was rushing toward shelter, Daisaku tried to grab something. He thought momentarily about saving his books, but decided instead to rescue a very large trunk, which he hoped had something of value to the family. Unfortunately, it contained only holiday decorations.

Losing his precious books was devastating, but being sad about a few books was a luxury when even basic necessities were scarce. He consoled himself by "re-reading" his books in his mind. ☸

Youth Invade the Florida Nature and Culture Center!

YMD Leadership Conference

'A Great Weekend of Friendship'
Thursday-Sunday, July 10-13
Contact your local YMD leaders

YWD Leadership Conference

'Strengthening Our True Identity'
Thursday-Sunday, July 17-20
Contact your local YWD leaders

Junior High and High School Division Conference

'The 2nd SGI-USA Junior High and High School Divisions Leadership Conference'
Thursday-Sunday, July 31-Aug. 3
Contact your local junior high and high school divisions leaders

Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Band Conference

'The 2nd Nationwide Friendship Exchange'
Thursday-Sunday, Aug. 7-10
Contact your local Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Band leaders

The ground cost for each conference is \$330, which does not include air travel to and from the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



Students from West Chester University celebrate Earth Day by canoeing on the Brandywine River in Pennsylvania, and cleaning up garbage. By noon, the canoes already are too full of junk to go any farther. Bathtubs. Shopping carts. Dishwashers. Refrigerators. Furniture. Tires. 'You would have needed a floating barge to handle all of the stuff we saw,' says Craig Stevens, faculty advisor for the clean-up.

A Day To Clean the Earth

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Brandywine River in Pennsylvania owes its fame to Andrew Wyeth, probably America's best-loved contemporary artist. Wyeth was born near the river in 1917 and has painted the place and its peoples for more than 50 years. Today the Brandywine's stark beauty is cluttered by human garbage and poisoned by fertilizers and pesticides that run off farmland, urban lawns and pavement.

So students from nearby West Chester University celebrated Earth Day by canoeing on the Brandywine, and cleaning up garbage. By noon, the canoes already were too full of junk to go any farther. Bathtubs. Shopping carts. Dishwashers. Refrigerators. Furniture. Tires.

"You would have needed a floating barge to handle all of the stuff we saw," said Craig Stevens, faculty ad-

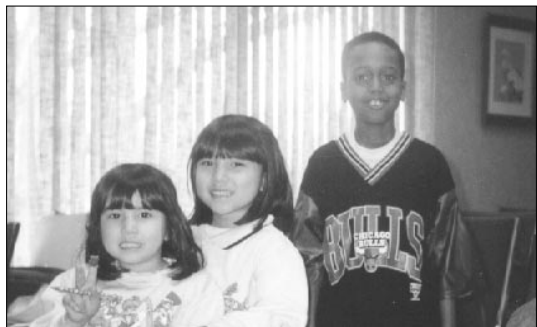
visor for the clean-up. "And we didn't pick up a lot of it because we would have disturbed the benthic organisms too much. It was better just to leave it."

Stevens is a professor in the Department of Kinesiology (the study of human muscular movement) and serves as an advisor to the Wellness Alliance, a campus group aimed at helping students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community achieve better wellness.

"I live and canoe on the Brandywine with my students and family," he said. "Water is not only a force of nature, it's integral to our own health. To me, being on the water has a very soothing effect. I can get on the water and all my worries go away. But what we saw Saturday on the Brandywine was tragic."

And perhaps a fitting subject for Wyeth. He saw the tragedy and brutality of life reflected in the environment of people he cared for, and he chose to create something beautiful out of it.

WT



From left to right: Tatiana Cassetta, Monica Cassetta, James Burdette IV and Brian Matsumoto.

Michigan Boys and Girls Discuss Cause and Effect

By JAMES BURDETTE IV, 7

Lathrup Village, Mich.

Hi. The North Woodward District Boys and Girls Group did a lesson on cause and effect in March.

We learned about the power of attraction — and that it is important to think good thoughts — because when you think good, happy thoughts, you bring and attract good things to you, not bad things.

So it is important to make good causes, so you will get good effects. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the best cause to make.

Here are some of the boys' and girls' thoughts:

- Monica Cassetta: "I like Tasha."
- Tatiana Cassetta and Brian Matsumoto: "A smiling face makes you smile, and people will like you."
- James Burdette IV: "I love my mother and father." (And, of course, his mother and father love him.)



Celebrating March 16



Puerto Rico boys and girls join their older sisters and brothers in celebrating Kosen-rufu Day.

A Mouse and a Cherished Dream

The following is excerpted from a speech given by SGI President Ikeda on March 20, 1989 (From Today Onward, vol. 28, pp. 229-30).

[Walt Disney's] dream for the future was not easily shared by other people. In fact, he was often opposed.... [At one point, after losing nearly everything,] Disney found himself in the depths of sorrow. He had neither money nor a job, nor any one he could rely on....

Yet Disney still had a dream that he had been cherishing in his heart since he was a boy. He could not afford to be defeated. He racked his brain for a solution. What came to lonesome Disney's mind then was the "friend" who used to come to his room when he was drawing pictures alone. The friend was a mouse with whom Disney kindly shared his bread.

Disney thought: "That's right. I still have a friend." He decided to make his little friend into a new main character. This was the dramatic moment of the birth of Mickey Mouse. Mickey Mouse soon became a popular cartoon character in America.... Such a happy Mickey Mouse was born out of Disney's tears of pain.



Friends Sharing With One Another

FRIEND TO FRIEND



Our Boys and Girls study topic for June is mentor and disciple. Please send us your thoughts about the mentor-and-disciple relationship (up to 50 words) along with a photo of yourself. It can be an experience or just whatever you think about mentor and disciple. Send it to "Friends for Peace" by May 21. (See page C for the comments everyone sent in this month about courage!)

• KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK • KIDSPEAK •




Stephanie Holmes, 10

Highland, Calif.

At first I had problems with my friends. I always fought with them. Then one day, my mom told me to chant for 30 minutes. I'd never chanted for 30 minutes before. I chanted to get more friends.


A science fair was coming up. I worked hard on my science project and forgot about my friends. My science project was about what made paint stains come out of clothes more.

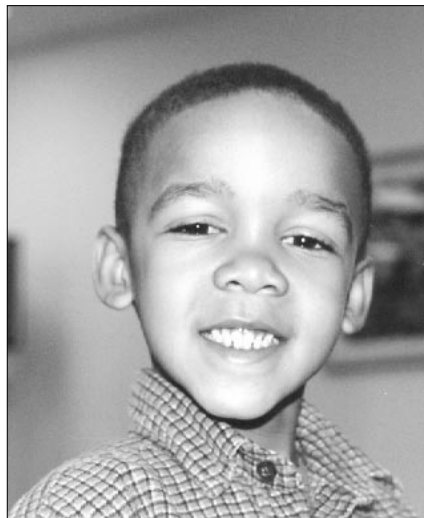
On the morning of the science fair, I didn't only get second place for my class, I got second place for my grade, too! I never got a place ribbon before. I also got a lot of friends by joining a cheerleading squad. Chanting really helps a lot. 



Andrew Gallagher, 7

Duncanville, Tex.


Hi! I'm in the first grade. Last year, my kindergarten class had a bunny named B.B. Bunny. During spring break, my teacher, Ms. Fisher, asked if anyone would like to take care of him for a week. My mom wrote a note saying it was OK, but another boy got him. Then when school was almost out for the year, Ms. Fisher asked if anyone would like to care for B.B. Bunny the whole summer. This time, my dad wrote a note and my mom said I should chant that B.B. gets the best home for him. I chanted 10 minutes before school, and that afternoon Ms. Fisher said I could take care of him. I am glad I chanted. 



Zakee Correll, 6

Philadelphia


My best friend's name is Miroku Washington. Miroku went to Florida. I missed him a lot. I chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo for him to come home so we could play. I asked my mom if she could get a job in Florida. She told me to chant

to see my friend. Miroku is back home again! I'm so glad. We chant and play together again. 



Brian Stone, 8

Bellingham, Wash.

My friend introduced me to Cub Scouts this year and it is a lot of fun. Each month all the groups get together for a "pack" meeting. Last December, instead of having a Christmas program, each group did a presentation on a different religion, and my group did a presentation on Buddhism. Everyone in my group made New Year's goals. I am chanting for my Bear Badge and Arrow Point Badge. 

"Friends for Peace" wishes to thank everyone who contributed to this issue for their assistance and support, including Ann Martin (Philadelphia), Roberta Templeton (San Francisco) and Sylvia Smith (New York). Thanks also to Barbara Murphy and Diane Lauble of Chicago for designing the figures in the "Friends for Peace" nameplate.

Please send us your experience (around 150 words), your comments, your questions or your news article to: "Friends for Peace," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

COURAGE COURAGE COURAGE — FRIEND TO FRIEND — COURAGE COURAGE COURAGE

Jacqueline Mills, 10

Belleville, Ill.

What does courage mean to you? To me, it means being proud of yourself and working hard to do things for other people. When you show signs of courage, people who are always gloomy become happy!!

☐



Erica Badial, 12

Vacaville, Calif.

Courage isn't being strong on the outside, it comes within your heart and can only come

in your heart. Courage is when you let it out of your heart. Courage is a beautiful thing when you let it come out.

☐

Eleanor Roosevelt:

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself: "I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along."... You must do the thing you think you cannot do.
(from *You Learn by Living*)

Anne Frank:

Whoever is happy will make others happy too. He who has courage and faith will never perish in misery!
(from *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*)

Mark Twain:


Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear — not absence of fear.
(from *Pudd'nhead Wilson*)


Andrew Jackson:


One man with courage makes a majority.
(one of his favorite sayings)

FROM SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA:


Here are some things that SGI President Ikeda has said about courage:


 To be fearless no matter what happens — this is the root of true happiness. (*World Tribune*, Aug. 16, 1996, p. 12)

 [A] condition for happiness is courage. Courageous people can overcome anything. (*SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's Addresses in the United States, June/July 1996*, p. 106)

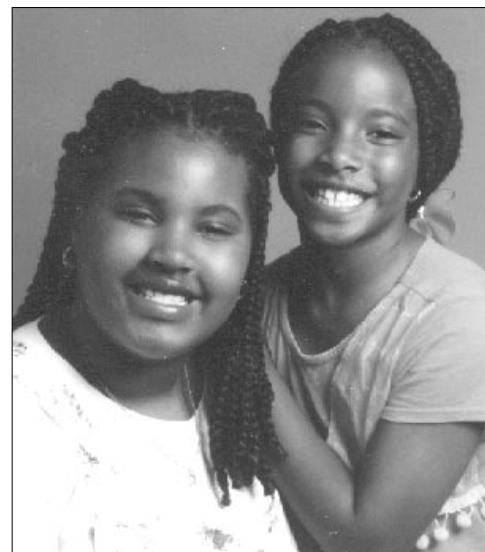
 Should you encounter defeat, it is important to resolve to win next time or to try even harder than before to change the situation....

Once you are resolved, courage and wisdom will well forth. Even with things that are said to be impossible, you don't know whether they are until you try for yourself. No matter what others may say, it starts with you. I hope each of you will establish such strong resolution. ("Youth of the 21st Century, Strive With All Your Might," March 20, 1990)

 The most difficult time is the best opportunity to open a new road in your lives. Please never forget this. As long as you keep making efforts without allowing yourselves to be defeated, the tree of dreams will continue to grow in your hearts. Your effort is the nutrient for the growth of your dreams. (*From Today Onward*, vol. 28, p. 230)

 Without courage, we cannot embrace the Gohonzon and endeavor to propagate faith in it for the sake of kosen-rufu (world peace) throughout our lives. Courage implies mission, effort, construction and development.

Nichiren Daishonin states in the Goshō "Teaching, Practice and Proof," "Nichiren's disciples cannot achieve their goals if they are cowardly." We must understand this passage deeply and always remember that conviction coupled with courage is essential for all people.... (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 2, p. 92)



Chauntee (l) and Charrie (r) McMahon

Charrie McMahon, 8

Winston-Salem, N.C.

I showed courage by helping my friend's mom look for her when she was lost. When I have to go into a dark room, I go in even though I'm scared. I am showing courage every day when I ride the school bus and walk home alone.

☐

Chauntee McMahon, 12

Winston-Salem, N.C.

Courage is the power to do something without being scared. When I need courage, I chant with my mom, and I wrote this poem:

Courage
When you say "I can't," you won't
When you say "I'll try," you might win
You have the power
To choose your courage

☐





Poem

I Have a Dream

By ALEXIS PAYTON, 10

San Diego

I have a dream,
That one day in the future,
Everyone in the world
Can walk the streets and not be afraid.
That instead of wars,
We can deal things out peacefully.

I have a dream,
That people will not have to die
Of being shot for their rights
Or for just doing nothing.
There will be no prejudice in the world.
Humans can be respected
For how they really are,
But from the inside, not out.

I am not asking for the world to be perfect,
I am asking for it to be peaceful.

Responsibility

By LAUREL EVANS, 11, Chicago

Using the words below, fill in the lines with the correct words. Each box needs a letter. When complete, you will get a message at the bottom of the page.

HOMEWORK
RELATIONSHIP

APPEARANCE
ATTITUDE

HEALTH
EXERCISE

1. The way you look:

___ _ _ _ _ ___ _ _

2. Work you get from school and do at home:

___ _ _ _ _

3. The way you act depends on the way you think:

___ _ _ ___ _ _ _

4. Activity that develops muscles:

___ _ _ _ _ ___ _ _

5. Condition of body and mind:

___ _ _ _ _ ___

6. Connection of two or more people:

___ _ _ _ ___ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

C - _ - A - _ - T + _ - H - E - N + _ - _ - _

*"The lion king fears
no other beast;
the same is true
of its cubs."*

Determination



EACH BOX
= MINS.