

World Tribune

No. 3146

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JULY 4, 1997

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Philosophy Institute Opens Russian Branch

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
St. Petersburg, Russia, May 30

The Institute of Oriental Philosophy, founded by SGI President Ikeda in 1962 to help make Asia's philosophical heritage accessible to people throughout the world, opened an office in Russia today.

This branch, located in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, is the IOP's latest to be es-

tablished outside Japan. Other foreign offices are located in the United Kingdom, India and Hong Kong.

The Institute of Oriental Studies and the IOP agreed on this academic exchange last November. Founded in 1818, the Russian institute has been a pioneer of Eastern studies in Europe. Its many accomplishments include the publishing of a Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra (the first time in book form), re-

search on the Silk Road and the Buddhist scriptures, and the assembly of an extensive archive of ancient manuscripts. There are currently 101 scholars conducting research there.

President Ikeda has held many dialogues and formed friendships with a number of the Russian academy's staff, including Yuri Petrosyan, former director of the academy's St. Petersburg chapter and presently an honorary member of the

academy's board of trustees, and Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, a noted authority on the Lotus Sutra.

In his message for the opening, read by IOP Director Yoichi Kawata, Mr. Ikeda stressed the vital role religion plays in developing the human spirit amidst continual scientific and technological growth. The purpose of religion, he stated, is to

PLEASE SEE IOP, 4

FOCUS ON KIDS

Kids were the focus at Washington, D.C., Joint Territory's first Boys and Girls Group General Meeting last month. Children came from South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania to take part. Choosing the theme "Friends for Peace," each area represented a different country with food, music, costumes, dance, games, songs and artwork.

"I want you to know how important you are to the future of the SGI-USA, our country and the world," said Vice Joint Territory Chief Jerry Hicks to the children. "The world is not so great today. But you boys and girls are pioneers of a new era. No one can take that away from you. You can make the world what you want it to be. You can make it happen. You are the future."

— MARTHA LANGE, ABBE SCHLEBECKER & MARY ISHIMOTO MORRIS

(Children share their impressions, p. 4)

(Top) Steve Harvey with his daughter, Tara, talk to Clarince Thomas at the Washington, D.C., Joint Territory Boys and Girls Group General Meeting. (L-r) Eric Kunimoto, Jessica Kochinsky and Justin Kunimoto dress in costumes depicting ancient Egypt.



Photos by ROB HENDRY



Crossing the Racial Divide

By LINDA EILENE SANCHEZ
DENVER CORRESPONDENT

Compassion and healing emerged as the pervasive messages of a seminar titled "Dealing With Racial Diversity: The Challenge of Becoming a Global Citizen" held at the Denver Culture Center in April. Sponsored by the Culture Department, the seminar's concept originated from the passion and commitment of the diverse group of members who planned the event. The emphasis throughout the planning process was on dialogue, developing respect for differing viewpoints and encompassing new perspectives.

The result was a forum and Q-and-A session with three speakers: Ed Guajardo Lucero, associate director of The Centers at the University of Colorado at Denver; William Wei, professor of history at the University of Colorado; and Vincent Harding, professor of theology and social transformation at the University of Denver.

Dr. Wei, who specializes in modern Chinese history, said he "received his socialization in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where I ran with immigrant youth from Eastern Europe and the Caribbean." Because of his youthful experiences, he said, he is one of the few Chinese Americans who can claim to have

PLEASE SEE DENVER, 4

? QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *'What has Buddhism taught you about independence?'*

From the time I graduated from college to the time I started chanting, I often called my parents when I was desperate to survive. When I realized chanting worked, I vowed to stand on my own. From then until the time I changed my financial fortune, I chanted for whatever I needed, no matter how dire my circumstances, and I was always protected. I really learned the power of my life.

— MAGGIE BRYAN, Los Angeles



My mother died in January. Nevertheless, I do think it is important to ready oneself to meet others on even ground early. Until my 6th birthday, I spoke little or not at all due to autism. Others took advantage of me. That created bad experiences, but chanting cleared it up. Today I drive a car of my very own for kosen-rufu.

— KENNETH J. BRITCHER, Annapolis, Md.

I've learned that independence isn't easy to come by. It's a serious responsibility. Each person, according to the concept of cherry, plum, peach and damson, has a specific mission to fulfill

in this lifetime. Striving to understand, appreciate and carry out our unique mission, while encouraging others to fulfill theirs, frees us from the grip of the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion.

Cherry, plum, peach and damson represents not only diversity of mission, which may be initially invisible, but ethnic diversity, which is immediately apparent. Knowing that cherry, plum, peach and damson have unique and nourishing properties, that each of us has a rightful place in the garden of the law, allows me to appreciate and pursue my mission without feeling restricted in any way.

— FLETCHER DALTON, Boston



I think the most important quality of independence is to cooperate with others. For example, a country cannot defend herself by isolating herself from

her neighbor countries; or one cannot become independent by making decisions without concern for others, because such selfish decisions will eventually create trouble to the person and others. The SGI is a training place that teaches us how we can cooperate with

others in any situation — that is human revolution. To value one's independence means to respect one's Buddha nature, and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism shows the ways to do so.

— MIDORI KISHIMOTO, St. Louis

In today's world, with everything and each person being tied together, it often seems that we're dependent on each other, the government and our environment for happiness and to do what we want to do. But because of chanting I think that I've learned that I don't have to be dependent on our environment, the government or the next person to achieve what I want to achieve or to have the freedom to do what I want in life.

Because I have the Gohonzon, the wisdom that I can derive from my practice allows me total freedom and independence to pursue my goals, dreams and happiness that isn't dependent on anyone or anything else. Most people in society don't feel that way.

— JIM BALL, San Diego, Calif.

I think that Buddhism teaches us about individual independence. It is an independence that allows us to free ourselves from our past causes and to free ourselves from our overwhelming karma. Buddhism has taught me that independence is priceless and always

needs to be celebrated.

— EMI GWINN, San Diego, Calif.

Independence equals responsibility both for my life and happiness. I find this gives me the greatest control possible. One way I declare my independence is by chanting with a positive expectation to achieve my goals, thereby excluding negative thoughts from others who don't believe my goals are achievable. A second method is to make every effort not to let fear be a part of my life, since it has proven to be a negative prayer, drawing to me the very thing I fear.

— CHARLES A. EVANS SR., Denver

I have learned independence through the confidence and courage that is gained by realizing we are all the Buddha, all worthy of happiness and peace in our lives. Independence is a natural benefit of knowing that there is no one who can stand between myself and the infinite power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

— BOB MACK, Los Angeles



DEADLINE EXTENDED NEW DEADLINE: JULY 31, 1997

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. (See previous announcements for more details.)

We are looking for short, personal essays no more than 750 words long on any ideas you have about 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. Essays become the property of the World Tribune. Any essays not double-spaced and typed or exceeding 750 words will not be considered.*

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION

'How does business or vacation travel affect your daily Buddhist practice?'

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.

Deadline: July 21

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Quick To Judge?

Having met Bill Endsley and being a big fan of Kirk Condyles' photography, I want to respond to Bob Zuehlke's letter in the June 13 issue.

I was at the Florida Nature and Culture Center when the photo mentioned was taken. I found Bill Endsley to be generous (he wrote a very good poem and presented copies of it as a gift to all the people participating in the publications), to have a great sense of humor and a tremendous passion for the issues involved in publications. If Mr. Zuehlke would read his *World Tribune* and not just look at the pictures, he would find that Bill Endsley is also a very capable writer.

As for Mr. Zuehlke's bigoted statement about "hokey Japanese exercises," the movements being made were led by American women who are professional physical therapists.

Concerning what editor would run a picture like the one mentioned, my opinion is only a good one.

As for how Bill Endsley would look to a non-member, I feel we should all use Mr. Zuehlke's letter as an opportunity to reflect on ourselves — on how, as practicing Buddhists, we are still capable of viewing people and situations we know nothing about and judging them negatively.

— NELLDA GALLAGHER, Duncanville, Texas

Mr. Zuehlke's letter set me thinking. In it, he criticizes the shirt "I'm chanting as we speak" as "weird and stupid." A lot of us grew up in a world of Christian thinking, where going to church and talking to an outside entity (like God) isn't "weird and stupid." If we grew up in a Buddhist-dominated society (like China or some of the other Asian countries), then going to church would seem weird and stupid. Just because it's different and not what we're originally used to, doesn't mean it's weird and stupid. It's narrow-minded and very biased to think in such a manner.

Furthermore, his comment that people are doing "hokey" exercises is offensive. Consider: Weight-training as an exercise wasn't existent before 1800s. Does that mean it's "hokey"? No, of course not — more and more people nowadays are taking up the exercise. The same applies to exercises from other countries: Just because it's new and different to you, doesn't automatically mean that it doesn't work. Mr. Zuehlke should consider actually learning about other exercises before making such a judgment.

Lastly, regarding the comment about Bill Endsley looking like a cult member: To anyone not having experienced the SGI or Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, or Buddhism in general, our organization may be viewed differently, whether good or bad. Why? For the same reason: They have really no idea what the religion is or what the organization stands for, what it's trying to achieve. Does everyone remember the first time they were introduced to the SGI? (I'm speaking mainly to people who haven't experienced Asian religions before the SGI.) Sure, it seemed a little weird at first, but as we got to know the people who comprise the organization, we realized how great and beneficial the SGI can be to all humankind. To base opinions on outside appearances is very superficial.

— RAYMOND CHEN, Bayside, N.Y.

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

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

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

Emancipate Yourself

PERSPECTIVE

By **BILL ENDSLEY**
CHICAGO

In 1970 I learned my ABCs in one of the first integrated kindergarten classrooms in small-town Tennessee. My best friend was Patrick. When everyone exchanged tiny school pictures, Patrick and I exchanged two. It wasn't until years later that I began to notice Patrick being treated differently, especially by the teachers and other adults. As my education continued, factions formed. Slowly I learned the subtle code of racism.

Many years later, in Chicago, I was introduced to this practice by a black woman. We also became friends. She told me that I had to be the one to challenge people when they made racist remarks or jokes.

One summer she invited me to a Juneteenth picnic on Chicago's lakefront. Juneteenth is a celebration held in many Southern states that marks the date when emancipation became a possibility. Over the years, as former slaves migrated north, the celebration came with them.

Although Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, news did not travel fast. Television didn't browbeat everyone with videos of honest Abe cutting chains. Legend has it that freed slaves on mules traveled from plantation to plantation spreading the word. It wasn't until June 19, 1865, that the last slaves were forcibly freed when Gen. Gordon Granger took back the port of Galveston, Texas, the last city

held by the Confederacy.

The news of freedom, however, did not equal freedom. In many instances, sharecropping, poverty and continued oppression took the place of slavery. One inhumane system was replaced by another. Still today there is disparity in the distribution of resources. Although



Statue in Philadelphia of Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation.

emancipation is a possibility, in the public housing projects of Chicago and the boxtowns of Tennessee it is far from reality.

Buddhahood is also emancipation. Like freedom from slavery, it takes action to manifest. The declaration of absolute freedom and the actuality are two very different things. Just like the freed slaves who traveled from town to town bringing the word of a new day, we are charged with the task of informing individuals, one by one, of the greatness that lies within when we take up the battle and fight off the oppressors of greed, anger and ignorance.

In 1990, speaking of the power of gongyo, SGI President Ikeda said:

Through that practice we can acquire wisdom and good fortune, and glow with the energy to overcome any obstacle throughout the four seasons, 365 days a year; we can enter the way to the eternal happiness and attain eternity, joy, true self and purity.

Gongyo is a practice that calls forth and activates the infinite power that the microcosm inherently possesses. It transforms your fate, breaks through any apparent dead end and converts suffering into happiness. It creates a transformation, a revolution of the microcosm. It is a diagram in miniature of kosen-rufu in our lives.

The kosen-rufu that is our aim is a movement to transform the universe, the Earth, and human society into a world of peace, comfort and harmony in accord with the rhythm of the Mystic Law.

In 1970 my friend Patrick and I knew no hatred. It was something we learned. Year after year, we saw people being treated differently. We heard shouts and whispers. We felt the unspoken tension on the bus or at the basketball game. Now after 27 years, that hatred is something I am determined to unlearn.

Emancipation is freedom — freedom from oppression but also freedom from prejudice. This year as I start leaving my coat at home and basking in the sun as another summer finally arrives, I look forward to picnics in the park and the laughter of friends both black and white. I am confident that emancipation is a possibility. And I am determined to work to make that possibility a reality. ❖

Correction:

A Goshu quote in "My Deepest Thanks for Your Efforts" was incorrectly cited (June 13, p. 1). It was within a quote from SGI President Ikeda and should have read:

In a letter titled "The Unity of Husband and Wife" [addressed to Nichigen-nyo, wife of Shijo Kingo], Nichiren Daishonin states, "You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 158).

We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

DENVER, FROM PAGE 1

Chinese, Jewish and Puerto Rican values and attitudes, making him a product of multicultural America.

Dr. Wei asked, "How does one cultivate global citizenship?" He mentioned that SGI President Ikeda's speech at Columbia University gave three important elements of global citizenship: wisdom, the courage not to fear difference, and the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy.

He stressed the importance of the imagination for opening new possibilities, saying that hope springs from the ability to envision new realities. This is an important aspect of developing a more expansive, inclusive perspective and transcending differences — both necessary pre-

requisites for global citizenship, he said.

Dr. Harding, a leading scholar on the life and thought of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said there is a growing tendency away from compassion in today's world. In this regard, he expressed his admiration for the SGI-USA and President Ikeda. Although Dr. Harding comes from a Christian tradition, he recognized that compassion was a common, important element to both Christian and Buddhist traditions.

"We don't need compassion if we don't have anyone who is giving us a hard time," Dr. Harding explained. In other words, compassion emerges from our struggle to combat selfishness and inhumanity. He reminded everyone to struggle positively against adverse situations, al-



Photo by PETER NELLHAUS

Vincent Harding (left) talks with Jean Valdez following his presentation.

luding to the profound resources found in Buddhist philosophy when he suggested that "great spiritual resources should be directed to great spiritual problems." He went on to express his confidence in SGI-USA mem-

bers to contribute in a significant way to the problems besetting America.

Dr. Harding then surprised everyone by saying that it is important for all revolutionaries to sing together. He led everyone in

an old spiritual he had adapted for the occasion.

Opportunities abounded for informal dialogues throughout the seminar, which encouraged both participants and speakers. "Now I have hope for the future," Dr. Wei said.

Maria Guajardo Lucero, Rocky Mountain Joint Territory Culture Department chairperson, closed the seminar by pointing out how important healing was in the process of overcoming racial divisiveness. She said that the word *healing* comes from the word *whole*, which in turn comes from the word *holy*. To heal the various racial divisions in the United States, a profound spiritual revolution is necessary, she said.

Who better to accept this responsibility than SGI-USA members? ❖

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, founded in 1818, is a pioneer of Eastern studies in Europe.

IOP, FROM PAGE 1

provide people with spiritual nourishment and bring out their compassion for others. The SGI leader further asserted that a true religion of the people has the sublime power to transform conflict into harmony, division into unity.

To commemorate the opening, a book exhibition titled "Toward a New World of Humanism — Works by Daisaku Ikeda and the Publications of the Soka Gakkai" was on display at the

new center. A two-day symposium was also held, May 30 and 31, where researchers of both institutes discussed the theme "The 21st Century and Religion."

The IOP conducts independent research into topics such as Buddhist thought, comparative religion and the interrelations between religion and science and religion and society.

It also sponsors a variety of exchanges between Western and Eastern scholars through seminars, symposia and public lectures. ❖

D.C. Fete a Hit With the Kids

Children from Washington, D.C., Joint Territory share their impressions of their first joint territory-wide general meeting.

● I graduated into the junior high school division today. I've been in Boys and Girls Group for five years. Boys and Girls helped me learn about society and the SGI with games and other fun stuff.

— Eric Kunimoto, 10, Ellicott City, Md.

● It was fun. The best parts were on the way up here, when they broke the wood in the karate demonstration, and everything else.

— Willie White, 9, Charlotte, N.C.

● It was fun and it was different. There were different things to do. I liked the Japanese dance and cutting out the shapes of our hands to put on the poster. I liked seeing all the different cultures here.

— Maggie White, 10, Charlotte, N.C.

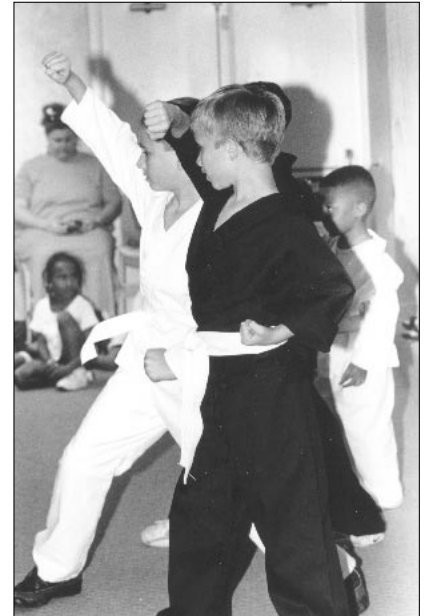
● It was fun. It was cool seeing people from lots of different places. I liked the song with the masks and drums the best. The food was good, too.

— Toshiko Ishikawa, 10, Hendersonville, N.C.

● I really liked the meeting — it was great. The chanting was interesting. I'd like to learn some of it. It seems very complicated.

— Eboni Thompson, 11, Silver Spring, Md. (guest of Diana Wells, 10)

Photo by ROB HENDRY



One of the highlights of the Washington, D.C., Joint Territory's Boys and Girls meeting is a martial arts demonstration by Richmond (Va.) Chapter.

● This was nice. It was good. I liked the piñata the best. I got lots of candy.

— Amanda Thompson, 9, Silver Spring, Md. (guest of Diana Wells, 10)

● I liked it best when I broke the boards, but then my feet hurt. I liked doing gongyo with the other kids. I don't get to do gongyo with other kids very much.

— Brandon Rodriguez, 3, Richmond, Va. (participated in the karate demonstration)

● I liked it when that girl said sometimes your parents make you chant but one day you'll thank them. That happens to me, believe me!

— Linda Morris, 7, Wheaton, Md.

The next day, Feb. 8, Shin'ichi Yamamoto and the others visited the Egyptian Museum. Many of the most precious artifacts of ancient Egypt were on display there, including the treasures of Tutankhamen, an 18th-dynasty pharaoh of the New Kingdom Period, who is thought to have died at about age 18 in 1352 B.C.E.

Wrought of solid gold, Tutankhamen's funerary mask and innermost coffin — both adorned with his likeness — shone with an undying splendor that belied their 3,300 years.

At the museum, Shin'ichi made the acquaintance of a young German academic who was lecturing on economics at Cairo University. With Akira Kuroki interpreting, they carried on an interesting conversation.

When the German youth heard that Shin'ichi had been visiting all the sites in which ancient civilizations flourished, including India, Rome, Baghdad and Athens, he said excitedly: "You are making a tour of the roots of civilization, aren't you? Let me ask you one question: Do you think there is any single, common reason that all of these highly developed ancient civilizations eventually declined?"

"What a wonderful question!" Shin'ichi responded. "Of course, there were many complex, interrelated factors unique to the decline of each civilization — from such things as internal economic and political problems to invasion by other states, epidemics and natural disasters. But in my opinion the essential reason for their decline, simply put, was the leaders and the people's spiritual degeneration, the collapse of their will.

"This is true of authoritarian and democratic regimes alike. When people think only of themselves and their pleasure, the state, no matter how culturally advanced, loses its vitality and becomes split, disordered.

"This provides the opportunity for invasion by other states and encourages internal revolt. Should the country suffer natural disasters at such a time, it will never recover.

"I believe that the causes of a state's decline can be found within that state. Or to take it even further, invariably within the hearts of its people.

"When we view history from this perspective, it is no longer only the story of past events — it is a road sign showing the direction we should take in the present and future."

The young scholar was very impressed. "That is a profound insight, a

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 2

Long Journey

Translation of parts 25–27 of the 'Long Journey' 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.

very fresh perspective," he said.

"No," Shin'ichi demurred, "it is not at all new. It is the viewpoint of a Japanese man by the name of Nichiren, who lived some 700 years ago."

"Nichiren?" asked the young man. "Was he a historian like Herodotus?"

Shin'ichi smiled and answered: "No, Nichiren was a Buddhist leader who rose up to save the Japanese people when they were suffering from natural disasters and were threatened by internal uprisings

about the Gakkai, asking several questions about its activities and the Buddhist view of the human condition.

When they parted, he shook Shin'ichi's hand firmly and said: "This has been a very interesting conversation. I definitely hope to go to Japan some day myself."

"Is that so?" Shin'ichi asked. "By all means, let's meet again when you do. Please take care of yourself."

When the young man had left, Yusuke Yoshikawa said to Shin'ichi: "Wherever you are and whomever you

speak to, the subject of Buddhism seems to come up so naturally. When I try to talk about the Soka Gakkai or Buddhism, I tend to get defensive and sound forced, unnatural. How can I learn to speak about Buddhism and my faith the way you do?"

"Basically," replied Shin'ichi, "all of society, all phenomena and events are Buddhism, so that whether discussing history, politics or life in general, I can't help expressing the Buddhist point of view.

If you really make Buddhism and faith the bases of your life and have pride and confidence in that, your discussions will just naturally become dialogues on Buddhism. If you find yourself unable to do so, it is because you have somehow built a fence around Buddhism in your mind. It hasn't permeated every aspect of your life and thought.

"If every time you talk about Buddhism you become defensive, tense up and look severe, people won't be receptive to what you say. For us, Buddhist dialogue is the most natural, effortless expression of our humanity."

Shin'ichi wanted his companions to understand what a life based on Buddhism was really like.

After visiting the museum, Shin'ichi and his group took a car to Saqqara, some 18 miles south of Cairo, where they saw the Step Pyramid, the oldest of the ancient pyramids.

Built by 3rd-dynasty king Djoser in about 2650 B.C.E., a century before the Great Pyramid of Khufu, it resembled a giant staircase to the heavens set in the middle of the desert. Next, they visited the nearby ruins of the ancient city of Memphis, the capital of the Old Kingdom.

When they returned to the hotel that night, a telegram from Japan awaited Shin'ichi at the front desk. He carried

it up to his room and opened it. The words NO APPEAL in Japanese leapt at him.

Shin'ichi had been pronounced not guilty at the trial over the Osaka election incident, but it had been feared that the prosecution would appeal that judgment. Now, the 14-day limit for filing an appeal had passed without the prosecution taking any action.

It certainly seemed odd, given the aggressive manner in which the prosecutors had sought Shin'ichi's conviction. Apparently they had concluded that it would be difficult to overturn the not-guilty verdict and had been forced to abandon the idea of an appeal. The decision of the Osaka District Court was now final.

Shin'ichi felt the leaden weight of pressure and anguish that had burdened him so long lift like a vanishing mist. A smile lit his face.

Standing at the window, he watched the burning red sunset dye the waters of the Nile a flaming scarlet. The face of his beloved mentor, Josei Toda, seemed to superimpose itself over the sun.

In his heart, Shin'ichi addressed his mentor: "Sensei, my innocence has been conclusively proven. The Soka Gakkai, which was your life, is unharmed.

"I can now fully play my role, without the slightest worry or reservation, as your successor on the stage of world peace.

"I promise to realize every aspect of your vision for kosen-rufu, to rid the world of all misery. Watch me as I fight with all my might in your place, as your disciple."

That night, the others joined Shin'ichi in his room to do gongyo and chant earnestly.

It was both a prayer of gratitude and a vow to begin a new leg of their journey for kosen-rufu. Their chanting also included a prayer for the eternal peace and happiness not only of the Egyptian people but the entire African continent, latent with such brilliant promise and potential.



and a foreign power's attack.

"He taught that people are the basis of society and the nation, that eternal peace can be achieved if people's hearts are redirected from destruction to construction, self-interest to altruism, passivity to action. And if people themselves become key players in society.

"We are members of a group called the Soka Gakkai, which studies Nichiren's teachings and puts them into practice. I am its president."

"How many people belong to your group?"

"At present, we have 2.3 million households, but our membership is increasing every month," Shin'ichi replied.

The young man looked surprised. He seemed interested in learning more

(To be continued)

SIGN POSTS APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

It's Up to Me

By VALERIE THOMAS
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Whether or not your prayer is answered depends upon your faith; [if it is not,] the fault in no way lies with me, Nichiren. (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 5, p. 305)

This quote contains one of the concepts I find both most exciting and challenging about this practice. In this brief letter, Nichiren Daishonin is not only telling Nichigon-ama that he is not responsible for her prayer being answered but that no one outside herself is responsible.

Nichiren Daishonin stresses that we are responsible for our lives, our successes and failures. Sometimes it is hard to appreciate this point.

I like the success part. I can take credit for my successes and it feels good. But the failure, the NOT attaining of goals — I prefer to give this responsibility to others. My tendency has always been to blame others (parents, teachers, peers, co-workers, etc.) when my life is not what I desire.

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to apply this Goshu passage to my life. Within a single day, I had three people, all of whom I respect and value the opinion of, say things to me that really bothered me. Their comments made me feel that they did not respect my opinion or have confidence in me.

When telling a friend about the three interactions she kept asking me, "What did you do then?" My answer: "Nothing."

I blamed the other people. What is wrong with THEM, I thought, that they can't see I deserve to be treated better? Yet I didn't say or do anything to change the negative feelings I had about them and myself.

As this Goshu makes clear, the real issue was not what they thought about me but what I did in those situations.

I am praying to become a solid, confident, happy person. Because I had these three instances in one day — where I could see my hesitancy to take responsibility and change what was causing me suffering — I became more determined to change this tendency.

IT'S UP TO ME! 

Relationships Depend On Us

'The relationships you form are a reflection of your own state of life,' SGI President Ikeda says. So if we change ourselves, we can improve our relationships. Below, two SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee members share their perspectives on relationships.

Quality Time

By CRAIG GREEN

Once a few years ago, I got a phone call asking if I could meet my aunt at the airport. She had a layover for a couple of hours at La Guardia. I was asked to just keep her company — all that was required of me was my time and presence.

But this request threw me. To me, this would entail some large investment of time. I thought: "Why? I have so many things to do. I have to go to a meeting. I'm busy. I'm tired. I have to go to a meeting." Blah, blah, blah.

So I chanted about it. And I began to realize how off I really was. I had begun to view everything that wasn't directly connected to my dream, or a meeting, planning meeting or kick-off meeting, as less important. It was affecting the way I was treating people; I was wrong.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The real meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240). If I were to believe these words, then I needed to check my attitude and behavior.

As I sat with her in the airport, I thought how this was a woman that I'd known my entire life. She had raised five children, but had also done whatever she could to help me — whenever she could.

How could I have even imagined not taking the time to sit with her? All that it cost me was some time and the bus fare. She didn't drill me about life; I didn't lecture her on the Goshu. We just talked. It was the nicest trip I ever made to the airport.

I once heard someone say that kosen-

rufu doesn't take place at a meeting. It unfolds when we meet with people and get to know them. Likewise, I believe our individual relationships are the key to making this organization stronger. If I can't become a person who can hold a conversation that's not about myself, how can I support an organization that works for the sake of all humanity?

Relationships are a matter of give and take: Giving of oneself — without expectation of anything in return — and taking what is given with respect and appreciation. There must be some type of investment. I must give something of myself for the relationship to work.

Even if it's just some quiet conversation at the airport.

Significant Others

By REIKO GROSHELL

It takes effort to be in a relationship, whether it is with a significant other, a co-worker, a friend, a family member, etc. Relationships are complex and dynamic. And everybody deals with relationships differently. I want to focus on what I think many people grapple with — relationships with significant others.


SGI President Ikeda explains in his "Discussions on Youth" that love "should be a force that helps you expand your life and bring forth your innate potential with fresh and dynamic vitality. That is the ideal but, as the saying 'love is blind' illustrates, people often lose all objectivity when they fall in love" (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 7).

Have you ever been in a relationship where you are so "into" that other person that you forget all about your friends and priorities? Or where you feel you need to be in the relationship just be-

cause you are lonely? Or where you compromise your ideas or beliefs for that person? Or where your whole identity revolves around what he or she thinks? Or, worst of all, where you are involved with someone detrimental to your well-being but you stay in the relationship?

I'm sure we all have been in one of these situations some time in our lives. We try to self-reflect and learn from them and vow to never let them happen again. But strangely enough, until we find our "soul mate," it may happen again — maybe in different degrees.

This is because we haven't changed the root of the problem. Unfortunately, if we are looking for happiness in a relationship without finding happiness inside ourselves, we will be dealing with more unhappiness and emotional pain along the way. As President Ikeda says: "Happiness is not something that someone else, like a lover, can give to you. You have to achieve it for yourself. And the only way to do so is by developing your character and capacity as a human being; by fully maximizing your potential" (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 8). We have to find our own happiness first.

The key to doing this is within our lives. If we don't realize this, no matter how hard we practice, our relationships will not change. As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life" (MW-1, p. 4). By praying to the Gohonzon and striving to live courageously, we develop a strong sense of self. In this way, we can contribute something positive to any relationship — as individuals with our own goals and dreams, who at the same time can create new ones together with our significant others. 

SGI President Ikeda's Recent Guidance on Relationships

- There are many kinds of friendship. Some friendships last a lifetime. But there are also friendships that endure only for a certain time — it might be 20 years, five years or one year. Sometimes your feelings may not change, but the other person's do. You don't have to be obsessed with the idea that friendship must last a lifetime. A friendship still has meaning even if it lasts only a short while. The main thing is that you respond with sincerity to each encounter. (Jan. 17 *World Tribune*, p. 10)
- If you genuinely love someone, then

through your relationship with him or her, you can develop into a person whose love extends to all humanity. Such a relationship serves to strengthen, elevate and enrich the inner realm of your life. Ultimately, the relationships you form are a reflection of your own state of life. (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 9)

• It is demeaning to be constantly seeking your partner's approval. Such a relationship is bereft of real caring, depth or even love. If you find yourself in a relationship where you are not treated the way your heart says you should be,

I hope you will have the courage and dignity to decide that you are better off risking the scorn of your partner than enduring an unhappy relationship. (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 9)

• Real love is not two people clinging to each other; it can only be fostered between two strong people secure in their individuality. A shallow person will have only shallow relationships. If you want to experience real love, it is important to first sincerely develop a strong self-identity. (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 9)

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the Kansai Representatives Conference, at the Kansai Culture Center in Osaka, May 17.

I've just returned from Shanghai, and I couldn't be feeling better. My heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your support and prayers for the success of my trip.

Shanghai and Osaka are sister cities, so quite a few people I met in Shanghai asked me to convey their warmest regards to their Soka Gakkai friends in Osaka and other parts of the Kansai region.

It was in Shanghai that the young champions of a new China launched the Chinese Revolution. It was also in Shanghai that women stood up to challenge outmoded customs and practices and create a society in which women could enjoy equal rights. And now, once again, Shanghai is leading in efforts to reform and open up China, boldly pulling the great country toward the 21st century.

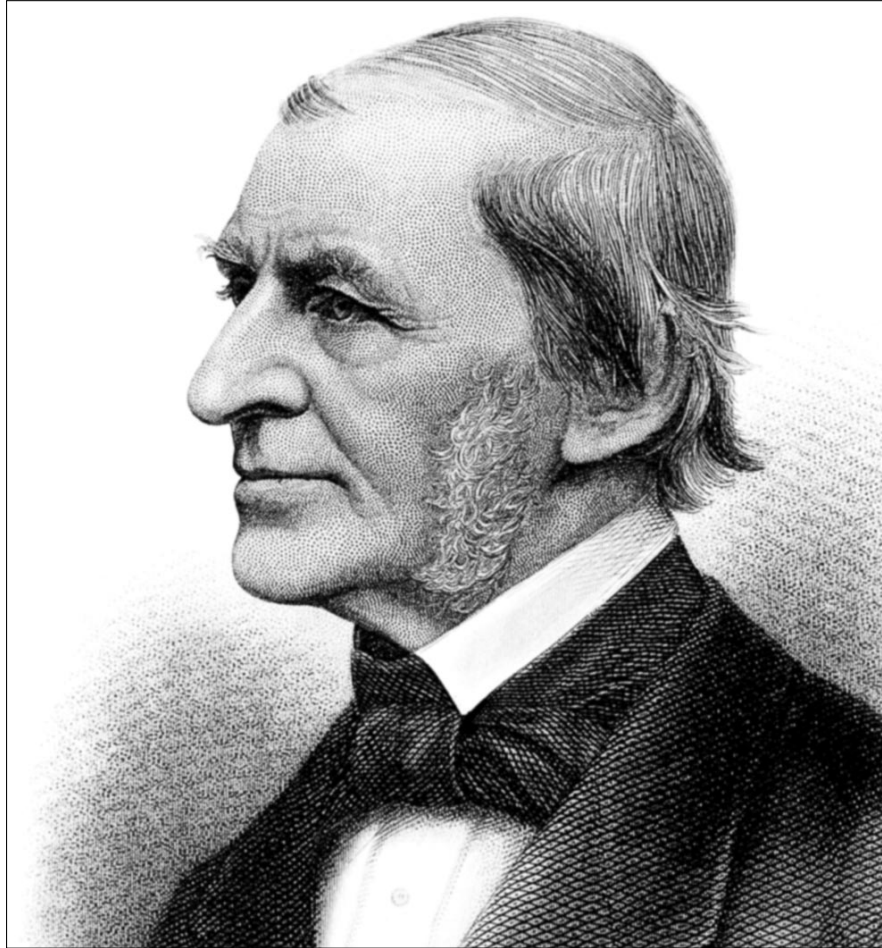
A country that is developing or an organization that is growing is certain to have a particular area that becomes its cornerstone and functions as the power source that propels the whole forward. In China, a people's republic, Shanghai performs this role. And in the popular movement of kosen-rufu, Kansai does.

Kansai's mission — no, its task and pledge — is to create a great new momentum to victory, to raise hopeful new talent, and to open a glorious new page in the history of our movement, manifesting to the fullest the energy of *soka* — of value-creation.

This year has special significance for me. It is my 50th since taking faith; the 45th since I took the first step for kosen-rufu here in Kansai; and the 40th since that momentous Osaka Rally.¹ It was with the purpose of opening a new chapter in the indomitable advancement of "Ever-victorious Kansai" that I returned from Shanghai directly to this pivotal center of our movement.

Whenever I come to Kansai, I feel immense peace of mind. Kansai is a model of kosen-rufu. It is the pillar, the axle, the foundation of our movement. From here, let us once again generate a powerful impetus that will spread across the country and around the entire world. I want to teach and convey the true spirit of the Soka Gakkai and to create and leave behind an organization that embodies that spirit. Please join me in this effort!

We attain Buddhahood by challenging life's negative functions and fighting to overcome all



Ralph Waldo Emerson, American philosopher, encourages us to have 'hearts of steel' — to be people of justice.

Make Causes Now for the Distant Future

manner of obstacles and attacks. People of faith, who have the courage to wage such a struggle, are always youthful. Those who strive energetically for kosen-rufu are always lively and animated. And they will be born in wonderful Buddha lands in lifetime after lifetime.

Looking Five Decades or a Century Ahead

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once asked Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai how he appraised the French Revolution. Premier Zhou reportedly replied that it was still too early to give a proper evaluation. It was almost 200 years after the French Revolution when he said this — illustrating the monumental scale of his vision and his long-range approach to history and world events, always putting their significance into the perspective of

hundreds or thousands of years hence.

We, too, have our sights set on the 21st century, the 22nd century, the 23rd century — on through the 10,000 years of the Latter Day of the Law.

As was announced some time ago, the first half of the 21st century will mark the second cycle of Seven Bells.² I envision this as the time when we consolidate the groundwork for peace in Asia and throughout the world.

Looking further ahead to the latter half of the coming century — the century of life — I hope that the tenet of the sanctity of life will be the underlying spirit of the age and of the world.

Having a clear vision of how kosen-rufu will develop in the 21st century, I am now turning my attention to the 22nd century.

During the first half of the 22nd century, I pray that an indestructible foundation for

world peace will be laid. And on that foundation, in the latter half of the 22nd century, I picture a brilliant flowering of an age of humanism.

In the mid-23rd century, in 2253, is the millenary of the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching. I conceive this to mark a brilliant new phase in our movement. These are, of course, not "prophesies." Rather, they are my determinations arising from my wholehearted prayer for peace.

Kosen-rufu is a long-term struggle we are pursuing over the 10,000 years of the Latter Day. Therefore, as we strive to realize victory in the present, we need to maintain a vision of the next 50 or 100 years. Each day I am making efforts with my focus on the infinite future.

What will the future be like? No one knows. All we know is that the effects that will appear in

the future are all contained in the causes that are made in the present. The important thing, therefore, is that we stand up and take action to achieve great objectives, without allowing ourselves to be distracted or discouraged by immediate difficulties.

Who Will Win?

In whose hands does victory lie? The 19th-century American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson writes: "The day is always his, who works in it with serenity and great aims. The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon."³

Emerson, the flag-bearer of the American Renaissance, is telling us: Work each day with great aims! If you do, you are certain to be victorious. But you will also be plagued by shiftless rumors and aspersions, the same way that the brilliant moon shining in the heavens generates high waves by its gravitational pull. Remain unperturbed.

He also says, "Good-nature is plentiful, but we want justice, with heart of steel, to fight down the proud."⁴ If people are merely good-natured, then those who are arrogant and high-handed will have free rein to carry on as they please. Only those who fight with "hearts of steel" are people of justice.

All of us who are now striving for kosen-rufu with "conviction of steel" are in reality creating the 21st century, as well as the 22nd and 23rd centuries. Moreover, we are engraving in our lives the causes to continue working for kosen-rufu then as well.

Do Not Be Deceived!

In the Goshu, we find the expression "tigers in a marketplace" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 222). Unscrupulous priests who try to pass themselves off as superior or as possessing superhuman powers are as preposterous as tigers in a marketplace. Their posturing is all a lie. In this Latter Day in which we live, there are no priests who uphold superhuman precepts. Do not be deceived! Do not be led astray! — this is the warning contained in the expression "tigers in a marketplace."

In China, there is an account about a prince of the kingdom of Wei who was to be handed over as a hostage to the powerful rival kingdom of Zhao during the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.E.). A loyal minister who was to accompany the prince as a

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 2nd Okinawa Executive Conference, at the Okinawa Training Center in Onnason, Feb. 27.

There is nothing more noble than the people. They are truly the most valuable treasure. Air is everywhere, but it is priceless; we can't live without it. Water and soil are all around us, too, but water is of far greater value than the finest wine, and soil, more precious than the rarest gems. We cannot do without them. Truly admirable are not the wealthy or famous few, but the multitudes of ordinary people found everywhere. They are the most respectable and precious of all. I have always put the people first and foremost, working by their side, with their happiness my sole objective. This is the fundamental Soka Gakkai spirit.

The members in Okinawa and the rest of Japan have again made wonderful strides in their February activities. I heard that one of our pioneer members, now a grand lady of more than 90, wholeheartedly continues to support and watch over her grandchildren's SGI activities. She still gets excited whenever February rolls around.¹ To enthusiastically devote ourselves to kosen-rufu, no matter what our age — this proves that the lifeblood of faith still flows vigorously in our veins. This is the invincible Soka spirit.

A Disciple of Shakyamuni

Among Shakyamuni's disciples was an elderly woman, Punnika. Before becoming a follower of the Buddha and joining the Buddhist community, she was a water bearer for the nobility. No matter how cold it was, she had to wade into the freezing river and draw bucket after bucket of water. If she tried to rest just a little, the noblewomen would scold and punish her.

But when she met Shakyamuni and embraced Buddhism, she began to have direction in life and be fulfilled. The hardships she had endured were transformed into deep compassion — a source of great wisdom — to care for and help others.

One day, Punnika saw a Brahman practicing austerities



Russian politician Alexander Yakovlev (left), who recently met with SGI members in Okinawa, believes the SGI movement is crucial to realizing an age of humanism. An architect of perestroika, he continues to be an influential figure in the Yeltsin era.

The Larger Concern

by sitting in a cold stream.² Approaching him, she was reminded of the pain and hardship she had undergone as a water bearer. She called energetically, "O Brahman, what are you so afraid of that you must sit in that freezing water, shaking and shivering?"

The Brahman replied, "I am sitting here because, whether young or old, one may wash away bad karma by sitting in this water." He probably said this with a haughty air, as if to infer, "Don't you know anything?!"

But Punnika was not intimidated. "If that were true," she responded, "then frogs, turtles and crocodiles, which are always in the water, would surely be born in heaven. And if the water washes away all your bad karma, it would certainly wash away your good karma as well — you would be nothing but a spectator of life with no relation to good or bad."

If one is driven by deep compassion to awaken someone to the True Law, boundless wisdom will well forth.

The woman then said in a gentle, compassionate voice filled with sincere concern for his health: "Please stop that foolish practice. Get out of the cold before you become ill!"

Buddhism is a teaching of reason and good sense. It exists

so that we may lead healthier, happier, more productive lives.

Punnika's words suddenly brought home this truth to the Brahman. He vowed to become a follower of Shakyamuni and a member of the harmonious Buddhist order. In this way, an ordinary woman succeeded in awakening a Brahman, a member of the most educated class, to the True Law. How closely this wonderful story resembles activities of the women's division and pioneering members who comprise the Many Treasures Group.

Come As You Are

I fondly remember how happy Mr. Toda was when he heard, back in the early years of our organization, that a women's division member with little formal education had confidently introduced a university professor to the Daishonin's Buddhism. The SGI has developed through the noble efforts of just such ordinary men and women.

The same is true, of course, in Okinawa. A great network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth is growing surely and steadily — you are playing an active role in society, among the people, in daily life. This magnificent Okinawa International Peace Center is a proud testament to your

victory. Congratulations! It is your center. I hope you will use it freely, in a most meaningful, valuable way.

There is no need for rigid formality in our activities. Let everyone come as they are and express themselves openly and joyfully.

Fresh, Exciting Possibilities

There is a beautiful passage in the Lotus Sutra that I'll share: "A fragrant wind blew away the withered flowers, / whereupon fresh and beautiful ones rained down" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 137). All living things exist in an ever-flowing stream of change. That is why we must not look back but always face the future, constantly refreshing our lives with new vitality. Let us make each day and each year one of growth and fresh, exciting possibilities.

One important way to do this is by meeting with our fellow members, speaking with and encouraging as many people as we can. Our spirits are lifted when we do so; we are invigorated and rejuvenated. Limitless benefit and good fortune adorn those who cherish the members above all, who, rather than meeting the famous or powerful, would happily meet sincere members — you who have inherited the

Buddha's will and decree and earnestly spread Buddhist ideals.

Like the aforementioned sutra passage, the presence of those who possess such fresh, unsullied faith is truly a fragrant breeze. This March, with spring just on the horizon, let us create a vibrant new momentum of happiness, joy and friendship.

The Spirit of Disciples

A World Peace Youth Culture Festival will be held in Okinawa in 2000. I hope that you will open the curtain on a brilliant new age of peace in this lovely tropical paradise. The time has come for Okinawa to channel its energies into raising and fostering youth.

Buddhism expounds that the mentor is the true effect and the disciples, the true cause. No one more than youth division members are the true cause for the future of kosen-rufu. Leaders mustn't order the youth about, but instead work and struggle alongside them, guiding them by showing a clear path to the future. This is the spirit of Buddhist leaders of true cause.

The Trials of Youth

During my recent visit to Hong Kong, someone asked about Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. This individual had received a copy of the book from a friend but hadn't read it and wondered if I might give him a short summary. I have spoken about this work in some detail in previous speeches, so I will be brief today.

I am reminded, incidentally, that the SGI of Germany's Villa Sachsen Culture Center is located in Bingen, which Goethe once declared offered "the most beautiful view of the Rhine." Also, among Soka University's important treasures is a rare 2nd edition [1775] German copy of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The book, first published in 1774 when Goethe was only 25, is inspired in part by personal experience.

Around this time, Okinawa was experiencing a renaissance of sorts. It was a golden age of culture, with the compilation of histories; the establishment of a criminal code; the composition of poems in various forms, including Japanese, Chinese and

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

CONCERN, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Ryukyu [the islands of Okinawa are also known as the Ryukyu Islands]; and the establishment of educational institutions.

Anyway, to return to Goethe's novel, the hero of the story, Werther, was a sensitive, refined young man. He met a girl named Charlotte and fell passionately in love. Unfortunately, she was engaged to another, which caused Werther much agony. In addition, he found himself in constant conflict with his superiors at work, and endured social snubs and insults from the aristocracy in the highly stratified society of his day.

Werther was plunged into the depths of despair when Charlotte married. Unable to contain his feelings any longer, he visited her when her husband was away and confessed his love — but she would not accept his declaration. He bade her farewell forever, and the next day shot and killed himself.

This novel was immensely popular with young people throughout Europe and was translated into several languages. Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have read it seven times. Goethe once said in a discussion of *Young Werther*, "Obstructed fortune, restrained activity, unfulfilled wishes, are the calamities not of any particular time but of every individual man."³

The Strength To Triumph

At any age, life is a series of trials and tribulations. This is es-

pecially true of youth. But it is vital that each of us strive to overcome those difficulties, to triumph over them and live our lives to the fullest. Faith gives us the power to do this. The teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, which expound that earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana, are attracting more and more attention from thinking people around the world.

One such person is the Russian politician Dr. Alexander Yakovlev, who recently visited Okinawa and was overjoyed to meet with many members. One of the architects of perestroika, he has played an important role in history as an individual with the courage of his convictions. Dr. Yakovlev stated that Mahayana Buddhism enables people to transform the raging winds of suffering into driving winds of creation. This is crucial in the world today, he said, when people are torn apart by conflicting and contradictory desires and emotions.

Dr. Yakovlev also said that a great religion that expounds respect for humanity will go hand in hand with a movement of the people toward realizing an age of humanism. He added that the value-creating organization of the SGI, under the leadership of clear-sighted thinker and activist Daisaku Ikeda, is taking the lead in this initiative based on Buddhist ideals.

A youth, a life, dedicated to realizing the great wish of kosen-rufu means willingly

taking on suffering for our friends' sake and society's peace and prosperity. It means asking oneself, "How can I help so-and-so get back on his or her feet?" "What can I do to encourage them?" "What can I do to help my local organization advance?" This is a bodhisattva's spirit; it is identical to a Buddha's heart.

When one lives this way, one's small personal problems are completely subsumed in the larger concern of the welfare of others. We can only grow to the extent that we experience hardships. In the course of earnestly working to help others become happy, we will find the personal problems or worries that once plagued us have been resolved or overcome naturally.

Toward Life's Final Victory

The SGI has always advanced in complete harmony with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. That is why, just as the Daishonin promised, the four bodhisattvas stand before, behind and on either side of us, protecting us from harm. I want you to be confident of the great benefit we receive through faith. Continue to carry out the noble mission of the Buddha.

Death is the final settlement of accounts of our lives in this world. We only die as we have lived. How we have lived, how full and rich we have made our internal lives — all this is revealed at our last moment. At that time, we will surely know in the depths of our beings how



The SGI of Germany's Villa Sachsen Culture Center is in Bingen, which Goethe says has the 'most beautiful view of the Rhine.'

wonderful it is to have dedicated ourselves to the Mystic Law. I am confident that each of you will close your final chapter with victory, joy and glory.

I have the highest expectations for the Okinawa youth division. As Goethe wrote:

Although in pain and torment yet you wander, Youth's happiness still lies along your way. With bold and manly footsteps cross that threshold, Approach the realm where friendship's light holds sway. There, in the midst of those who love you dearly, Let waters from life's fountain now flow clearly.⁴

In closing, I pray that my beloved young friends in Okinawa will always have hope and

enjoy lives of brilliant triumph and achievement. ☸

- In February 1952, President Ikeda, then 24 and a newly appointed staff of Tokyo's Kamata Chapter, paved the way toward an unprecedented achievement of 201 new families joining the Soka Gakkai in a single chapter in a single month. This was the start of what has come to be known as the February Tradition, the spirit to share Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with others and promote greater understanding of the Soka Gakkai's activities.
- The Elders' Verses II: Therigatha*, trans. K.R. Norman (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995), pp. 26-27.
- Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1951), p. 34.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years; or The Renunciants*, trans. Krishna Winston (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 240.

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fellow hostage had the following exchange with the king before their departure.⁵

"Your Majesty," he asked, "if one person came to you and said that there was a tiger in the marketplace, would you believe it?"

"No, I would not," the king replied.

The minister continued, "If two people reported a tiger in the marketplace, would you believe it then?"

"I might begin to wonder whether it had some truth," the king answered.

"Then if three people came to you and reported a tiger in the city, would you believe it?"

"Yes," the king replied, "then I would probably believe it."

The minister rejoined: "It's impossible that a tiger would turn up in the marketplace. Yet on the claims of only three peo-

ple, it will be taken as fact that a tiger has appeared there."

This illustrates how easily people can be deceived. They don't bother to think about or examine things for themselves.

The minister continued: "When I leave the capital with your son and go far away as a hostage, you will hear many bad things about me. There are far more than three people who want to discredit me. But please do not believe them."

The king assured the minister that he understood and promised not to be deceived. At length, however, the king was taken in by the lies and schemes of malefactors, and the minister was persecuted.

An Ascending Path in Life

I am always most grateful to the members throughout the

country who deliver our publications early each morning. Thank you for your selfless efforts.

In *Walden*,⁶ Henry David Thoreau, a writer of the American Renaissance, describes morning as a sacred and pure hour and says that during that time "some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night." "Morning," he says, "brings back the heroic ages."

Thoreau also cites a line from the ancient Indian text of the *Vedas*, "All intelligences awake with the morning," and the inscription on the bathtub of a Chinese king, "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again."

Morning, says Thoreau, is accompanied by "the undulations of celestial music" and "a fragrance filling the air." When we greet each day brimming with hope and aspirations, he says, we awaken to "a higher life than we

fell asleep from." In other words, we follow an ascending, not descending, path in life.

All of you who deliver the publications know very well the serenity and beauty of the morning. You walk together with the sun and renew yourselves each day. Step by step, you are advancing along an ascending path in life. Though the responsibility you have taken on is demanding and a lot of hard work, with each step you take, a still grander view opens up before you.

My friends in Kansai, working together with Kansai Chief Ryozo Nishiguchi as you aim toward the 21st century, please cause the brilliant sun of indestructible Kansai to rise anew! ☸

- Osaka Rally: a huge rally held at Nakanoshima Civic Hall on July 17, 1957, to protest Mr. Ikeda's unjust detention by the Osaka district prosecutor's office.

- Second cycle of Seven Bells: Seven Bells is the term given to the seven seven-year periods marking the history of the Soka Gakkai's development from its founding in 1930 through 1979. Mr. Ikeda introduced this concept (which the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, had developed) on May 3, 1958, shortly after President Toda's death, and has also announced guidelines for a second cycle of seven bells to begin in the year 2001.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," *Essays and Lectures* (New York: The Library of America, 1983), p. 66.
- Ibid.*, "The Young American," p. 227.
- From the ancient Chinese work *Zhanguo ce* (Intrigues of the Warring States). This episode is based on the Japanese translation of this work: *Sengokusaku*, trans. Masahiro Sawada (Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1969), vol. 2, pp. 80-82.
- All quotes are from: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), p. 71.

My District

When My Life Got Crowded

By MADDY PLUHAR YALOWITZ
NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

SGI President Ikeda has encouraged YWD members to "actively participate in meetings and, through your presence, ensure that each meeting is warm, cheerful and compassionate. Never forget that this serves as unspoken encouragement for all of your fellow members...." When I was appointed as Harvard District YWD leader two years ago, I resolved to make a fresh start taking President Ikeda's guidance to heart. It gave me a powerful sense of mission. I felt it was up to me to ensure that my members would grow in happiness and capability for their sakes and for that of the district, as well.

The first thing I did was chant about each of the members. There were two, at first; over two years, four more joined the district. I made a determination card with their names and chanted for them every day. This kept me open to them when my life got crowded with other responsibilities — it helped me remember their obstacles and goals, and to see their Buddha nature. Over time,

I have developed a deep sense of caring for them. On home visits I pray that I can encourage them somehow and that we can become closer friends.

Preparing presentations for our discussion meetings together has been a very effective way to get to know one another, have fun and enhance our wisdom. I always find a way to travel to meetings and activities together with these YWD members.

We also get together just to hang out, on the rare occasions when time allows. Over time, comfortable, warm friendships have grown among all of us.

Meanwhile, each young woman has overcome obstacles and most have shared their experiences at meetings. I have, too. Since joining Harvard District, my life has been full of responsibilities and struggles outside the district. These have included dealing with the unexpected death of my father in the Philippines last spring, striving to save my marriage over the last eight months and advancing in a full-time master's degree program over the past two years.

I have seen every young woman in the district expand her state of happiness and deepen her



Maddy Pluhar Yalowitz is the Harvard District YWD chief.

faith. These members bring their energy to the discussion meetings — in the two years we have been practicing together as a district, Harvard District has achieved a beautiful sense of friendship.

Our discussion meetings are very well attended, vibrant and joyful. By the end of our meet-

ings, everyone is talking with one another across divisions, guests are smiling and laughing and everybody is energized. I am deeply grateful to the YWD members of Harvard District, who strive so sincerely to emanate Buddhahood in every aspect of their lives. ❧

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

The Main Point

By CRAIG GREEN & JEFF FARR
LOS ANGELES

In 1979, as the priesthood's true, political agenda was becoming clearer and clearer, an episode happened with SGI President Ikeda that put everything into perspective for the Soka Gakkai leaders. To this day, leaders who were there share their experience as a reminder to us all.

May 3, 1979: President Ikeda had been forced by the priests to resign but was set to attend the Soka Gakkai Day meeting at Soka University — the 19th anniversary of his presidency. With the priests present, members felt intimidated to even clap after President Ikeda's speech. Leaving the gymnasium, though, some women spontaneously called to him. President Ikeda turned to the Soka Gakkai leaders with him and asked, "Who will take care of them?" He then stated: "The Soka Gakkai exists to make such people, the genuine common people, happy. For that purpose, Buddhism, too, exists. Don't you think so? You have to remember this point."

In this short statement we can see the difference between the SGI and the priesthood: The SGI exists to make the people happy. The priesthood has been using people. The Soka Gakkai leaders present made a new determination that day. If kosen-rufu was just a game to the priests, if the members were just pawns and Nichiren Daisshonin's teachings just something to manipulate, the Soka Gakkai was going to stand up to these priests.

No. 5 in a series

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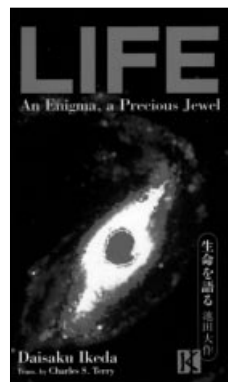
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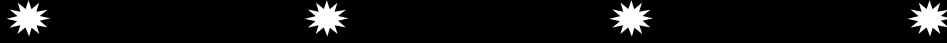
by Daisaku Ikeda

The Buddhist analysis of the dynamics of life, as Mr. Ikeda explains them, is more detailed and subtle than any modern Western analysis that I know of. — Arnold J. Toynebee

First published more than 15 years ago, the SGI president explains in this book the meaning of life, the spirit and existence after death in a style both passionate and comprehensible.

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GUIDANCE INTO ACTION

Fighting the Mind Battle

By SHARON REDMAN
NEW YORK #1 JT. TERRITORY YWD CHIEF

Society is a struggle, your life is a struggle, Buddhism is a struggle. The Daishonin also lived a life of struggle. So did Shakyamuni.

The Buddhist scripture [says]: "So rise up! Go outside. Give yourself to the Buddha's noble teaching. Drive out the legions of the King of Death (the Devil King)." — SGI President Ikeda, *A Conversation With Youth*, p. 15.

Every time I make a determination, I'm full of excitement, energy and boundless hope. However, all that usually comes crashing down when the opposing forces say, "Oh no, we won't let Sharon break through." I guess it's that Devil King that SGI President Ikeda is talking about — the manifestation of the fundamental darkness inherent in our lives — that attacks me. So I find myself constantly fighting a mind battle as I try to keep my life set on accomplishing each goal.



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

Sharon Redman is determined not to be swayed from her dreams.

During 1996, I made a series of determinations regarding my career path. I am interested in a position coordinating special events in a creative environment. As usual, I started off with lots of enthusiasm and daimoku — and even took a course designed to

better prepare me for this field. But again, after a few months that old devil got the better of me. One Gosho I've been studying constantly to encourage myself is "Letter to Misawa," in which Nichiren Daishonin discusses beating the Devil King:

When a common mortal of the Latter Day of the Law is ready to attain Buddhahood...this devil is greatly surprised. He says to himself, "This is most vexing. If I allow this person to remain in my domain, he will not only free himself from the sufferings of birth and death but lead others to enlightenment as well. Moreover, he will take over my realm and change it into a pure land. What shall I do?" "The devil then summons all his underlings from the threefold world of desire, form and formlessness and tells them, "Each of you now go and harass that votary, according to your respective skills. If you should fail to make him abandon his Buddhist practice, then enter into the minds of his disciples, patrons and the people of his land and thus try to persuade or threaten him." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 252)

Based on this Gosho, I pledged to make 1997 the "Year of Sharon" — a year of total victory regarding every goal that I had set for myself.

In the dictionary I looked up the word *pledge* and found that it means "a solemn promise." This was just what I needed to get me set for the "Year of Sharon" — solemn promises. Three months after writing these pledges down, the Devil King attacked once again, trying to make me feel that I couldn't fulfill my dreams. Those "underlings" always seemed to be following me, saying, "You can't leave this job; it's not possible; no way...no way."

In the past, I tended to listen to these negative voices. But this year, I was in full battle armor! I continued to chant strong daimoku with my pledges firmly in mind. The company I want to work for called me for an interview for the position that I have been waiting for. This interview was rescheduled several times. In the past, this might have made me assume that I didn't get the position. But in the "Year of Sharon," I am not swayed. I will rise up and drive out the Devil King. I am waiting! I am ready! I have won!!!

STUDENT NEWS

Midwest Students Share Their Concerns

By KAREN KIMURA & VERONICA EVANS
CORRESPONDENTS
Chicago, May 16-18

In a coffeehouse in the Printers' Row district, a unique group of students gathered to exchange experiences. SGI-USA college students from Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Wisconsin offered support to each other and welcomed Valerie Thomas, SGI-USA student division chief, at the inaugural activity of a weekend designed to build the foundation of the Chicago student division.

Representing vastly different majors, the students opened their hearts and asked poignant questions about practicing away from home and how to tap into the valuable support of the SGI.

Even though the students' experience with the SGI varied from being relatively new members to being born into families practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, they shared the common challenges of balancing collegiate activities with their Buddhist activities and of introducing others to this Buddhism.

Ms. Thomas encouraged the group by pointing out the essential connection between their studies and their future. Sometimes feeling "away" from the influence of SGI members, friends and family can be difficult, she said. But she encouraged the students to focus on their studies so they would have no regrets later in life. It was helpful for students to hear that others have a difficult time find-



Students from five states got to know each other in Chicago in May.

ing inspiration when they are alone.

At a meeting at the Chicago Culture Center, Ms. Thomas and the students had a dialogue on the theme "Imagine a World If There Were World Peace." The students broke into groups to share their personal views of world peace and brainstormed how their fields of study could contribute to a peaceful society.

In addition, the students met in their respective fields. From the ensuing discussions, three goals for the Chicago student division were agreed upon: 1) to increase the membership to 200; 2) to participate more in the Study Department; 3) to "courageously fight against all injustices while embracing a fundamental respect for all humanity."

The topic of discussion that seemed to resonate most with everyone was overcoming problems. Ms. Thomas mentioned that if students can overcome their problems while they are young, their adult lives will be great.

She asked them not to look outside themselves for happiness, but to solidify their lives. Since this involves changing karma, the change may not be readily apparent when they are young, she added. But time will show the proof of their efforts.

To enjoy the many cultural opportunities available in Chicago, the students from five states also visited the world-famous Art Institute of Chicago. At the end of the weekend, the students determined to keep in touch — even if only by postcard. "The student division is starting to do all I hoped it would be doing here," said one student. "We're getting involved with not only faith, practice and study, but also global concerns like world peace and the environment."

Enemies No More

AP/WIDEWORLD PHOTOS



Partnership for Peace's joint exercises, with troops from 22 countries (many notably from Eastern Europe), bring former enemies together to work on the same side to promote peace. In Fort Polk, La., Platoon Sgt. Ivan Bogdanov of the Bulgarian Army winds up for a pitch while learning America's favorite pastime.

By LINDA WRIGHT
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

On July 8 and 9, leaders of the 16 NATO nations will meet in Madrid to select new candidates for membership. The countries most likely to be named for inclusion into NATO are Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, although Romania and Slovenia are also possibilities.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established in 1949. Its goal was to form a defensive alliance based on political and military cooperation to safeguard the freedom, security and democratic institutions of the member countries. Since the end of the Cold War, the mission of the organization has expanded to promote the stability and security of Europe as a whole.

This evolution led in 1994 to the creation of the Part-

nership for Peace program, which includes countries — particularly in Eastern Europe — which are not yet official members of NATO. Members of the new partnership work together to diminish threats to peace and strengthen good relations.

A practical illustration of this new collaboration could be witnessed last week at the opening ceremony of Cooperative Nugget 97, a joint training exercise held at Fort Polk, La. Twenty-two countries, from Albania to Uzbekistan, are there until July 4 to practice tactics and techniques associated with peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. This was the third time since 1994 that Partnership for Peace exercises have been held in the United States.

Commenting on the significance of these exercises, Gen. John Sheehan, the commander in chief of the Atlantic Command, said that since there is no longer a sin-

gle enemy threatening NATO countries, security will need to be addressed in new ways in the next century. With that in mind, he hopes these types of joint peacekeeping exercises will allow countries to come together to be a force for preventing war.

Gen. Sheehan said that for the past 50 years many of the countries participating in Cooperative Nugget have thought of each other as the enemy. But, he elaborated, when they have a chance to get to know one another during these joint exercises they realize that former adversaries are not the bad guys, that we all bleed, that we all get hungry, that we are all human. When asked if he thought programs like this would help prevent future wars, he responded: "People who talk to each other don't fight, because if they are busy talking, they have a tendency not to fight. It's when they stop talking that I get worried." WT



for Peace Friends



SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION

JULY 4, 1997

SPRING FESTIVAL, MAY 25:

It was like a great big birthday party where it was every kid's birthday. Everybody got to take home goodies, whether it was a ball, a folded paper hat, something they made or their own face painted.

Interaction was the key. Everywhere, kids were doing things, making things, playing things. They made helicopters propelled by balloons blowing air through a straw. They made paper, a mural about diversity, playdoh, discs spinning on strings and even ice cream they got to eat.

Puppet shows and storytellers shared lessons of diversity and wisdom. One storyteller told of two sons who were both eligible to inherit their father's wealth. To test them, the father asked each to buy something at the market to fill a whole room from top to bottom and from side to side. One brother bought

NEW YORK CELEBRATIONS

many things and tried unsuccessfully to fill the room. The other brother bought one candle. When he lit it, the light filled the room. His father said that just as the light filled the room, knowledge and wisdom can illuminate our minds. The second son share his inheritance with his whole family.

The bright light of the Spring Festival filled children from top to bottom and from side to side in one delightful day. As one parent said, "This was a cool activity."

By Michele Taliaferro, 7, and Robert Taliaferro

GENERAL MEETING, JUNE 15:

Today was the New York Boys and Girls Group first ever general meeting. Almost all the participants were the children themselves. Maya Gnesheharan and Candyce Barnes danced; Eric Moore and Kenji Greenberg played the piano, the boys and girls of Westchester sang an original song complete with their own musical accompaniment, and several children gave their determinations.

In his opening remarks, Jeffrey Dallesandro, 11, admitted that when he first started coming to the activities, he didn't really like giving up half his Sundays. But looking back, he can see how valuable it was for him. He currently does morning gongyo with his parents and got all A's on his report card. He encouraged the younger kids: "You may dislike it, but it helps you be who you want to be."

By Robert Taliaferro

(Right) Everyone at the June general meeting sends greetings to all their friends everywhere. (Far right) Boys and girls make clay at the Spring Festival in May. (Bottom left) The general meeting is a great time to meet old and new friends. (Bottom right) Face painting is one activity at May's Spring Festival.

Photo by KIRK CONDYLES



Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES



Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD



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

Quiana Gibson, 7

Philadelphia

March 1 was my birthday, so now I am 7 years old. My mommy and daddy have been trying to teach me gongyo. Sometimes I chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo before the Gohonzon. I chant to be happy. I also like to go to the kids' meetings. Sometimes I will read something or sing or dance at the meetings. I hope one day that I get to see SGI President Ikeda.



FP

Erika Noel, 8

Honolulu

Aloha! I came from Japan one year ago. Since I came to Hawaii, I didn't like school because some kids were teasing me and making fun of me.

Every morning I told my mom that I didn't want to go to school. When I told her, she worried about me very much. I told Mrs. Erquizo (she is my teacher) that next year I would go to a different school. She said "Why?" and I said because I can't stand the people who tease me. After I said that, my teacher said, "You are in 3rd grade, and 3rd graders are suppose to solve the problems you have." I tried what my teacher said, but it didn't work. So my mom told me to do gongyo every morning and night. When she said that — I tried it. I started chanting at the end of February. After I started doing gongyo, in a few weeks it worked. And when it worked I was so happy because now I have many friends.

Now I know that when I have a problem, I should chant to the Gohonzon first.



FP

Teddy Robinson, 5

East Northport, N.Y.

I started watching the Mighty Ducks movies about one year ago. I wanted to play ice hockey just like the Mighty Ducks. I started taking ice skating lessons about six months ago. When I turned 5 in January, my mom and dad heard about a free ice hockey clinic with a famous Russian coach named Alexsey Nikiforov. I wanted to be in the clinic very much.

The first time on the ice was so scary! There were many older and bigger boys. I did not know what to do a lot of the time. The next week I told my mom and dad that I did not want to go



back to the ice hockey clinic anymore — and I meant it!!!

My mom and dad told me that I needed to finish the eight lessons before I could stop. I was very upset, but they would not listen to me. We were driving to the ice hockey rink and my mom said why don't we chant for you not to be scared and to have a really happy time. We chanted 10 minutes. I had a great time at the ice hockey rink. After the ice hockey was over my coach offered me a really great pair of skates that used to belong to his son! Afterward, I asked my mom if she thought that it was the chanting that made me feel better or the fact that my dad took off from work that day to watch me play ice hockey. My mom and I decided it was both.

FP

Aziza Yates, 6

Jackson, Miss.

My name is Aziza Yates, and I have heard the sound of Nam-myohorenge-kyo all my life.



FP

SEEKING SPIRIT • SEEKING SPIRIT — FRIEND TO FRIEND — SEEKING SPIRIT • SEEKING SPIRIT

When disciples have a seeking spirit toward their mentor and determine to fight alongside him, then the mentor's life — the mentor's commitment to kosen-rufu — pulses and flows through the disciples' veins. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 273)

SEEKING the • Seeking • Spirit

Seeking means to discover or search for something; to reach toward something. In Buddhism, seeking spirit means that every day we determine to learn and improve ourselves. We need to read lots of books, ask lots of questions, study hard every day, and make great effort in all that we do. Then we will become a great human being who is respected by others and who always has a big heart to help others.

What President Toda meant when he called himself "an excellent common mortal" is very profound from a Buddhist perspective. In the context of our actual behavior, it means a way of life eternally dedicated to learning, development, improvement and seeking the Way, while striving toward perfecting ourselves as human beings. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 24)

[Shin'ichi Yamamoto speaking:] "The task before you now," he said, "is to develop tremendous passion, study harder than any-

one else and devote yourselves to your practice of faith. What lies in store for those who neglect to train and strengthen themselves in their youth is a life as fragile as a castle built on sand. I would like you to advance steadily

and patiently, diligently applying yourselves to your studies and thoroughly developing yourselves so that you will emerge as great people in the future." (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 42)

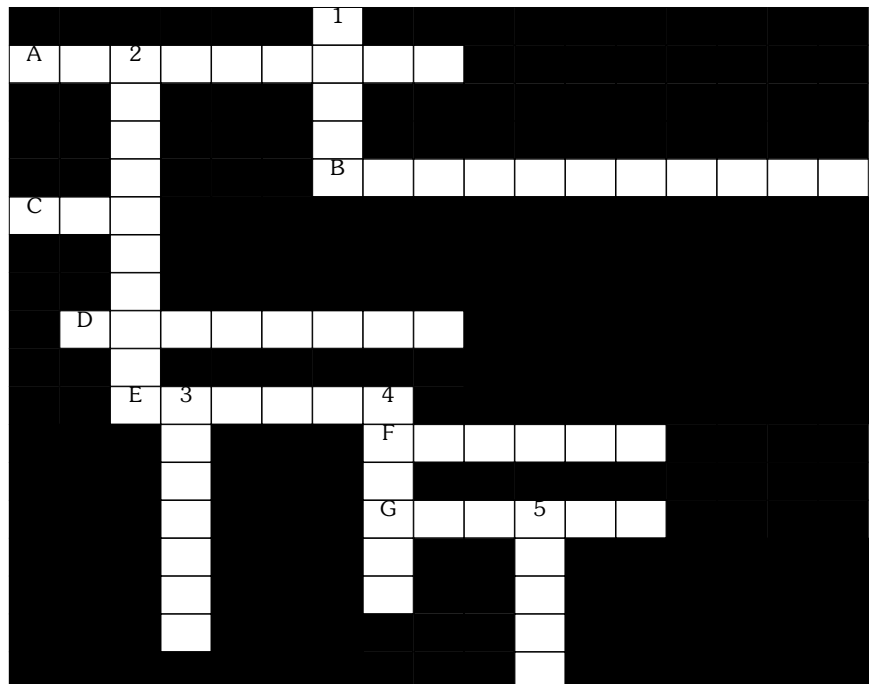
[Shin'ichi Yamamoto speaking:] "When I was working for President Toda, I was forced to drop out of night school. Not having a formal educational background is nothing of which to be ashamed. Trying to learn is not a disgrace; it's *not* studying that is something of which to be ashamed. I study every day. Even just 20 or 30 minutes a day is enough. What counts is making every effort to find even a spare minute to study or read a book. Persevering this way will become a powerful asset for you in the long run." (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 200)

'Learn From Everything'

President Ikeda writes: "The important thing is to be determined to learn from everything. You should strive to climb the slope from yesterday to today, and from today to tomorrow, refreshingly determined to reach a deeper understanding. This kind of vitality and seeking mind will guarantee your victory in life. You should never forget this. (May 1995 *Seikyo Times*, p. 55)

SEEKING SPIRIT PUZZLE (THE ANSWERS CAN ALL BE FOUND ON THIS PAGE)

- 1 down Read lots of _____.
- 2 down Learn from _____.
- 3 down Try to _____.
- 4 down Respect every _____.
- 5 down Seeking means to _____ toward something.
- A across Always ask lots of _____.
- B across It's important to have a _____.
- C across Study every _____.
- D across Seeking means to _____ something.
- E across Never _____.
- F across Make great _____ in all that you do.
- G across Seeking also means to _____ for something.



Friends Sharing With One Another

FRIEND TO FRIEND

Our Boys and Girls Group study topic for July is "Friendship; Respect." Please send us your thoughts about friendship and respect (up to 50 words) along with a photo of yourself. It can be an experience or just whatever you think about friendship and respect. Send it to "Friends for Peace" by July 21.



Greetings From Washington, D.C.

Children from the District of Columbia and six states meet for the Washington, D.C., Joint Territory Boys and Girls Group General Meeting in June. (See pp. 1 and 4 in this week's *World Tribune* for more information and photos.) Below are some of their experiences.

Aloha, Everyone!



Boys and Girls say 'Aloha' from the island of Kauai.



Kids in Santa Barbara, Calif., pause for a moment after their recent reenactment of 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show.'

EXPERIENCES FROM THE JUNE WASHINGTON, D.C., JOINT TERRITORY BOYS AND GIRLS GROUP GENERAL MEETING:

Susan Jung Eisenbach, Northern Virginia Territory: I am 11 years old, and I've been practicing since the day my mom was pregnant with me. One of my experiences was wanting to place 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the Virginia State Tae Kwon Do Championships. I was competing against some of the best in Virginia. The goal I was chanting for came true, and I got gold and bronze medals. How I made this goal into an experience is that I chanted every day, morning and night.

Sometimes your parents will push you about chanting, but sooner or later you are going to thank them. Trust me, I've been there. Sometimes you might not want to chant, but all you need to know is that if you have a goal or something you want to come true, just chant about that "special something" that needs to be accomplished.

By chanting and getting the gold medal, I will now represent Virginia in the Junior Olympics in Kentucky during July. Thank you for letting me share one of my experiences.

Yosuke Ominami, Virginia Headquarters: I came from Japan last August. My family moved to the United States because of my father's job. We plan to stay here for five years.

In Japan, when I attended Boys and Girls Group meetings, I played games and watched videotapes of SGI President Ikeda's storybooks specially made for children. Also, at the end of every meeting, we sang the Boys and Girls Group song.

I was surprised, at my first Boys and Girls Group meeting in the United States, when I sat in a chair and looked up and the altar was so small.

While I am here, I want to learn to speak better English so I can go to an American college to get a good job and become a global citizen.

Kathryn McGhee, Richmond (Va.) Chapter: I am 11 years old. When I was a baby I lost most of my hearing due to an illness. Most of my life I have been using sign language to communicate with others. My mom and dad have been practicing Buddhism for a long time but I never chanted much until my mom and dad encouraged me to try even though I could not hear very well.

I received a cochlear implant about two years ago. My parents and I chanted a lot. The surgery was very successful and restored almost all of my hearing. I can hear my parents' voices and hear Nam-myoho-renge-kyo more clearly. Also I started participating in the Boys and Girls Group, and was in a commercial on local television because my implant was so successful. I also stopped using sign language and was mainstreamed into regular school classes. Everything changed when I filled up my first daimoku chart and got encouragement from my parents and Boys and Girls Group members.

I hope that my experience will encourage other children who cannot hear well, because chanting has made me a happier person.

Paul Stonebraker, Maryland Territory: I have two things to say. First, an experience: Yesterday, I scored my first soccer goal out of four seasons. My mom and I chanted very sincerely for it. It was my team's first playoff game and we won 2-0. I have had a lot of fun times with the Boys and Girls Group. Even though today I'm graduating into the youth division, I will still miss everybody here.