

World Tribune

No. 3151

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

AUGUST 8, 1997

INSIDE THIS WEEK

EDITORIAL

The benefit of lifelong learning.

PERSPECTIVE

Science and religion in 'Contact.'

EXPERIENCE

An end to 18 years of drug addiction.

HISTORY

'The New Human Revolution,' vol. 6, chapter 3, parts 7-12.

DISCUSSION ON YOUTH

The diversity of our personalities.

SPEECH

The SGI president talks about the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon.

PROFILE

A filmmaker promotes diversity in Hollywood.

WORLDVIEW

Dallas Molloy is a fighter — both in and out of the ring.

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SGI Calls for World Focus on Disarmament

By **JEFF FARR**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The SGI has recently joined other voices in calling on the United Nations to focus more attention on disarmament. SGI representative Kazuo Ishiwatari attended a U.N.-sponsored conference, "New Agenda for Disarmament and Regional Security," held July 22-25 in Sapporo, Japan, for this purpose.

Government representatives from 37 countries, including the United States, attended, each in

an unofficial capacity. There were also participants from academic and research institutes, the media and other nongovernmental organizations.

Mr. Ishiwatari proposed on the SGI's behalf that member-states renew their efforts to implement the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and that a worldwide small arms registry system, to help control the flow of arms to conflict areas, be established. (Most conflicts today are carried out with small weapons, because they're less

expensive and easier to use.)

Mr. Ishiwatari also proposed that "governments engage in a thorough program of education and public information for disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, as part of their overall educational efforts," adding that "many NGOs, including the SGI, could certainly play an active role in its implementation."

The SGI's history of opposition to nuclear arms and testing began Sept. 8, 1957. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai presi-

dent, surprised everyone at a youth division sports meet that day when he made his staunch Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. "It is my wish to attack the problem at its root," he said, "that is, to rip out the claws that are hidden in the very depths of the issue."

Forty years later, despite the end of the Cold War and the growing international consensus supporting disarmament, nuclear weapons still have their

PLEASE SEE DISARMAMENT, 4



Owners reach their flooded homes in Grand Forks, N.D. Fifty thousand residents were evacuated after the worst flooding the area has ever seen. Minnesota members joined Salvation Army volunteers to help in the cleanup.

Minnesota SGI-USA Members Join Flood Relief Efforts

By **SUSAN POEHLER**
CORRESPONDENT

St. Paul, Minn., July 20

Throughout June, SGI-USA members joined Salvation Army volunteers in giving aid to those hardest hit by recent floods in the East Grand Forks, Minn.-Grand Forks, N.D., area. Although no members were directly affected by the floods, Minnesota members formed a Flood Assistance Committee. They met late in May at the Minnesota Community Center, forming several sub-committees, each with a contact person



A group of SGI-USA members from Minnesota, tired but happy, on the bus ride home after helping flood victims in Grand Forks.

PLEASE SEE FLOOD RELIEF, 5

Anti-Nuclear Declaration Is Theme of Upcoming Exchange

By **RON BAIRD**
BUREAU CHIEF

San Francisco, July 30

San Francisco is gearing up for the 4th U.S.-Japan Youth Peace Exchange, which commemorates the 40th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's declaration against nuclear weapons. Eighty-eight youth from Japan will arrive in San Francisco on Aug. 12, traveling then to Dallas and Los Angeles as well.

For the San Francisco youth, the exchange has actually already begun. About a hundred of them sent postcards to the Japanese youth as a kind of advance welcome, and districts hosting exchange meetings are contacting their future Japanese guests now. The Tokyo youth replied with a card of their own, saying, "We are deeply touched by your sincerity and are eagerly looking forward to seeing you back home in San Francisco."

The Japanese youth have also shared that through this exchange they hope to refresh their determination to fight for peace and human rights, together with America, in the spirit of Toda's declaration.

The San Francisco youth are also working to create their own anti-nuclear declaration to pre-

PLEASE SEE EXCHANGE, 4

VOICES

In light of this year being SGI President Ikeda's 50th anniversary of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, how do you envision your life after 50 years of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo?

Members from Los Angeles #4 Joint Territory respond:



Well, I think if I chant for 50 years, my dreams to become a lawyer and live in a nice house, and for my kids to be raised well, will come true. The children I'll have I will adopt from Africa. And every month I will have group meetings at my house. But I've realized that if I want all that, I have to chant and do good in school.

— ALICIA CACHIMAY, Riverside, Calif.



If I chant for 50 years, my dreams are: 1) to be a basketball star; 2) to raise my kids; 3) to have a happy family; and 4) to meet Michael Jordan. I also want to keep having big dreams for the future. See, I think if I chant I can have better things in life and look forward to a wonderful future.

— TELESHA CACHIMAY, Riverside, Calif.



I have been chanting for 40 years. On my 50th anniversary of chanting, I will still be working within the SGI for kosen-rufu. What's most important, I feel, is to develop the youth division, the Boys and Girls Group and the mothers group. By that time I may have grandchildren. I worry about their environment. In the future, we really need more people to chant. It's really serious. Things change so fast now. Ten years from now, even 20 years from now, I will still be chanting for world peace.

— MIWAKO TAO, San Bernardino, Calif.



I am a 17-year member now. On my 50th anniversary, I will be over 70. My problem right now is health, so I will become a healthy and more powerful member. I want my daughter to become a responsible person for kosen-rufu — that's what I can give to her. I hope my family, especially my sister in Japan, will practice, too. By that time I will be in the Golden Group — and I will be a vigorous Golden Group member. I don't want to just sit.

— YOSHIMI TURNER, Redlands, Calif.



I was raised in this practice. I am 17 now. My dream is to be successful in life and have a good job. Hopefully, I'll be retiring by the time of my 50th anniversary of practicing. I want to be a contributor within the SGI and help with the worldwide peace movement. I want to broaden my knowledge about this Buddhism so I can help as many people as I can.

— JACK ANGERER, San Bernardino, Calif.

If you have suggested questions for our "Voices" or "Question of the Month" columns, please send them to us. Our address is in the box at right.

Learn, Grow, Live

EDITORIAL

Life needs growth. When we stop growing, it's been said, we start dying. To always advance, seeking new ways to grow, never resting on our laurels — this is the key to living the happiest lives.

"Strengthen your faith day by day. Never slacken even a bit..." the Daishonin urges (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 241-42).

In a speech in this issue, SGI President Ikeda restates this idea. "I hope you, as leaders, will always have the spirit to learn with a lively curiosity and interest," he says. "When leaders are enthusiastic to keep learning and growing, they inspire others. New ideas emerge and spread. Fresh energy to advance surges forth. Instead of pretending to know all the answers, assuming an air of wisdom, let us always strive for greater understanding and insight into all things, so that we can continue learning together and spur one another to grow. This is the kind of spirit I want to cherish" (p. 13).

You're never too old to learn. In fact, learning keeps you young. Some research suggests that learning a musical instrument, starting to do crossword puzzles or studying a language can slow down the normal decline in brainpower as you actually create new neural pathways.

Physical learning works the same way. Studies show that people in their 70s and 80s who start a regimen of weight training can increase their muscle mass up to 50 percent. This use-it-or-lose-it attitude resonates with what Buddhism teaches.

How easy it is — after doing something a long time — to think you've seen it all. How easy it is to believe that the way something has always been done is automatically the best way for the future.

In Buddhism, certainly, there are many timeless truths, like that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon will benefit us. But when it comes to creating an organization that will best spread Buddhism's profound teachings here in the United States, it's often a matter of trial and error. An organization that wants to keep growing needs to commit itself to the lifelong learning process, too. To progress, we need to continually learn from new ideas, to see what works and what doesn't.

What can we do to maintain a fresh approach to life and to learning? For one thing, we can study the example set by President Ikeda — a person who reads prolifically every day, who meets new people at every opportunity, who takes on new challenges without hesitation. When we open one door to learning, many other avenues open as well. Why not start with a class at a local school, or set a target to study the Goshu every day? And why not ask questions? About everything. Every chance you have.

Mr. Ikeda celebrates the 50th anniversary of practicing this Buddhism on Aug. 24. Fifty years of practice, 37 years of being president, accomplishments too numerous to mention — and still the spirit he cherishes is to learn and grow more. That's probably one reason he's accomplished so much.

For all of us learning and growth are the keys to accomplishment, to making a difference. Whether it's in becoming a better parent or bricklayer or chess player or cook, the spirit to be a lifelong student will benefit ourselves and others.

As President Ikeda has stated in his "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," a Buddha is someone who continues to grow. WJ

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH: "Why did you exchange your Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon?"

Please be specific and limit your responses to 50 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401, or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Fostering Peace in People's Hearts

Thank you so much for your efforts. Reading the *World Tribune* is usually delightful. Unfortunately, "Two Points of View," the "Worldview" article on July 18 about Hong Kong and China, made me worried and angry.

If David Shambaugh really understands China, he should have known that economic revolution there doesn't mean any improvement of human rights.

Respect for citizens is never part of the nature of the communist government. Polls in Hong Kong cannot reach those who have fled in fear.

The spirit of the SGI is to cherish every individual and to fight against any devil. The type of peace we want to foster should be that in Chinese people's hearts.

— AI-YING CHEN, New York

Listening to Others

SGI President Ikeda encourages everyone to be open-minded, flexible and not to judge people without knowing them. I am surprised at how harshly people criticized Jan Sibert's article (June 13 *World Tribune*). A "Perspective" is a personal view on a subject. Everyone has a right to their opinion, views, feelings, so why do we jump down a person's throat or attack them when they have a view, unless we're more perfect than anyone else (hard to believe that anyone is)?

"It's important to listen to other people's opinions, evaluating them from a standpoint of faith, but you must not be completely swayed by them" (President Ikeda, *Guidance Memo*, p. 238).

— SHIRLEY ZAGOREC, Orlando, Fla.

Our Choice of Words

In response to Fred Grimmitz's letter (July 25 "Mailbox"), which included the question, "Does anyone think the MF-word or the F-word are the words of the Buddha?" I want to offer another point of view.

In Brooke Bundy's experience (May 23 *World Tribune*), it seems clear to me that the words in question ("No, motherf—") were an expression of her stubborn determination not to die, because of her concern for her daughter and her fellow members.

The *World Tribune*, as other respected publications are in the habit of doing, printed the necessary initial, without actually spelling out the "offensive" word itself. To have changed the indication of that word or to have left it out would have, in my opinion, been unfair both to Ms. Bundy and to the readers. Leaving it in helped me feel what a crucial moment it was that she had actually experienced.

Concerning our choice of words as Buddhists, I think some important questions to ask are: "Is the language I am using helping someone get closer to the Gohonzon?" "Does it help generate mutual respect?" "Does it give someone the courage to overcome his or her sufferings?" If the answers are yes, then regardless of what those words might be, I believe we are using the right words, the words of the Buddha.

— DANIEL BROWNFIELD, Burbank, Calif.

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In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Send letters to "Mailbox," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401; or via America Online (SokaNews).



Jodie Foster stars as Ellie Arroway in 'Contact,' a film that presents one possible alien contact scenario.

'Contact'-ing Humanistic Values

PERSPECTIVE

By **FAY HOVEY**
HAIKU, HAWAII

An exceptional film opened recently. The film, titled *Contact*, was directed by Robert Zemeckis (of *Forrest Gump* fame) and co-produced by its star, Jodie Foster. Without giving too much of the plot away, *Contact* explores what might happen if a direct communication from another civilization in the universe were to be received by scientists here on Earth, and the religious debate it might ignite about the existence of God or a supreme being.

In a scene reminiscent of the Inquisition, Foster as project scientist Ellie Arroway is asked directly if she believes in God. Knowing that her answer may preclude her dream to be sent on the first solo expedition to a distant star, she nonetheless answers honestly: As a scientist, she has no evidence of the existence of God and therefore cannot profess belief.

On the cusp of the 21st century, we face a flowering of technological knowledge that was first planted in the Industrial Revolution of the 1850s. In ways beyond our imagination, human life will advance or decline, according to whether this technology is integrated into our lives, into belief systems and philosophies that allow us to amplify and develop our humanistic qualities. The film presents a hope-filled vision of Earth's place in the great drama of the universe, a drama that is well-served by an open mind and a "well-developed

sense of adventure," as Dr. Arroway believes.

Sitting in the fifth row from the front, on my second viewing, I glanced briefly around me at the audience, light flickering off their up lifted faces, and I reflected on the great power of movies to teach, to open minds, to deepen our understanding. As a Buddhist, I felt so grateful for my practice. For years, I'd been reading SGI President Ikeda's books, such as *Life — An Enigma*, a *Precious Jewel*, and passages in the *World*

I have no doubt but that Buddhism is a completely universal philosophy and would be applicable in other worlds as well as in our own. Indeed, it is my firm belief that Buddhism must be completely universal, and that eventually all beings everywhere will discover it. From the practical viewpoint, what we ourselves are concerned with at this point is how to create here on this planet the completely peaceful society advocated by Buddhist philosophy and religion. (*Life — An Enigma*, a *Precious Jewel*, p. 80)

Leaving the theater, so many people stopped to tell others waiting in the ticket line what a great film *Contact* was. In fact, many lingered after the applause died down in the darkened theater and conversed quietly. It offers a compelling vision of what interaction with our interstellar neighbors might be like, and why they might want to contact us in the first place. It is also a fitting tribute to scientist/visionary/author Carl Sagan, on whose book the film is based.

In the opening sequence, where the viewer is made aware of the awesome dimension and beauty of space, I felt such appreciation for my practice, for the Daishonin's Buddhism that teaches us about the universe and the Buddha nature inside ourselves. I am completely confident that ours is a philosophy that will carry us into the 21st century and beyond with a focus on humanistic values and a "well-developed sense of adventure." ❧

[When the film portrays] the awesome dimension and beauty of space, I felt appreciation... for the Daishonin's Buddhism that teaches us about the universe and the Buddha nature inside ourselves.

Tribune and Living Buddhism about the ways in which our philosophy intersects with science: That it is corroborated by science and does not fly in the face of scientific discoveries as they unfold.

How often do we really stop to think about just how much President Ikeda and others have been preparing us for the future? In a discussion on the nature of the cosmos and the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere, he writes:

SGI Calls for World Focus on Disarmament; Proposes Education Program

DISARMAMENT, FROM PAGE 1

claws embedded in our future. As long as a great number of nuclear weapons continue to exist — 15,000 in the United States and 10,000 in Russia — the fear remains that they will be misused or fall into the wrong hands.

Prvoslav Davinic, director of the U.N. Centre for Disarmament Affairs, was very supportive of the SGI's disarmament education proposal. "The more you educate people the more successful you might be in pre-

venting war," he said. "In any conflict, fighting doesn't produce very good results. In the end maybe you achieve your objective but lose a great deal in getting there."

"The process of education is absolutely necessary," he said. "Educating people about the peaceful means of resolving conflicts, the necessity of disarmament and consequences — it's an essential part of our everyday environment."

The SGI's proposals at the conference were in line with Toda's statement on Sept. 8, 1957, that "we, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live." This right to live is the basis of the SGI's stance on disarmament. To eradicate nuclear weapons from the world, to control the flow of small arms and to educate the world's people about disarmament are steps that will protect individuals' right to live, the SGI believes.

Renewed interest within the United Nations in disarmament has been encouraging to NGOs like the SGI. Last year the

United Nations endorsed the International Court of Justice's decision that nuclear weapons are illegal and adopted the CTBT. (However, three nations refused to sign the CTBT, delaying its implementation.) The new U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan, has also been placing special emphasis on disarmament.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of Toda's declaration, the SGI is sponsoring various projects to promote disarmament. The Soka Gakkai in June unveiled a monument in Hiroshima, Japan, to the innocent victims of atomic bombs and nuclear accidents.

In August, a delegation of Soka Gakkai youth division members will visit San Francisco, Dallas and Los Angeles, also to commemorate this anniversary. And in September, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, the top priority of which is disarmament, will hold a disarmament conference in England.

The SGI has also held the "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" exhibit, which was born of the Cold War era but has now outlived it, in 26 cities in 17 countries. Plans to continue holding the exhibit in new cities are in the works.

Based on the reception the exhibit received last summer in Costa Rica and recently in Argentina, Mr. Ishiwatari said at the conference that "by no means is the issue of nuclear dis-

Nuclear-test concerns
Protesters oppose nuclear testing on political, environmental grounds.

POLITICAL

Concern: China conducts tests, France to resume them; tests may trigger another nuclear race

Declared nuclear weapon states: United States, Russia, China, France, United Kingdom

Have secret nuclear capability: Israel, India, Pakistan

Want to make nuclear weapons and could: North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya

ENVIRONMENTAL

Concern: Radioactive "glass" blocks created by nuclear explosions will pose a risk for thousands of years to come.

"Glass" block: Formed when nuclear explosion melts rock, which pools in bottom of blast cavern

Radioactive strontium, cesium and iodine contained in melted rock

Ground water: Washes radiation out of "glass" block

Radioactive cesium found in plankton

SOURCE: Technical University of Denmark, Greenpeace



Aug. 3, 1995 — In the shadow of London's Big Ben, Paul Aston of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament helps to light a 200-candle peace memorial to the people who died in the American nuclear attack on Hiroshima, Japan, Aug. 3, 1945. Each candle represents 1,000 fatalities.

armament settled in the mind's of the world's citizens. They fully recognize that we have entered a phase when the final touches need to be made to the disarmament process. There is a strongly rooted sentiment

among the global public which will not allow regression. Nations must not go against sensible world public opinion but work all the harder to facilitate disarmament.

Toda's Anti-Nuclear Declaration To Be Theme of 4th U.S.-Japan Youth Peace Exchange

EXCHANGE, FROM PAGE 1

sent to their Japanese friends.

Preparations in San Francisco have been going on for the last two months, with 30-40 members meeting nearly every week.

"I'm excited and happy to see so many people involved," says Stephanie Pappas, who's coordinating the welcome dinner. "The members are really fired up! This meeting has a life of its own. People feel that 'since we're doing all this, let's make a determination for world peace! This meeting has got to make a difference!' We have the feeling that when we do gongyo together, we can change the world."

Joe Stevens agrees that this

meeting is different from any he has prepared in the past. "Every other large activity I've been in started about a week before," he says. "We've hung together all this time and still retained the same level of excitement."

Mr. Stevens is putting together a mini-musical and explains that all the performers are involved in planning. "This has really brought the performers into the meeting," he says.

The visiting members have all worked hard just to come here, Mr. Stevens feels. "We have to give them something meaningful," he says. "The most exciting part will be at the end, to see the members' faces."

For those preparing for this event, it is already a huge success.

The Student Files

Name: Corey P. Spicer
School: Clark Atlanta University
Major: Mass Media Arts
City: Atlanta



In school right now, I'm only doing the prerequisites — fundamentals of speech, elementary Arabic, English 106, politics and global issues, etc. I have yet to get to my major: radio-television-film.

My practice helps bring my views to "neutral." In other words, it makes it easier for me to focus on work. It's a must that I develop strong listening skills now.

Honestly, I believe that I have talked too much about my Buddhist practice at

school. I have talked more than taking action and showing my friends this great practice. That's me — and it's time for WAR in my human revolution.

I suffer in the institution because I am academically weak. However, I am determined to challenge myself and win over this situation.

YOU SHALL HEAR FROM ME AGAIN! PEACE WILL FLOURISH, BABY!

FLOOD RELIEF, FROM PAGE 1

and sign-up sheet.

Minnesota members had the option of volunteering for the phone bank, data entry, flood cleanup or warehouse duty. An area was also set up within the community center for donation of needed goods such as rubber boots and gloves, tools, cleaning supplies and nonperishable foods. Members wishing to make cash donations to the relief effort were directed to the WECARE program.

During several weekends in June, members traveled by bus to help with the flood cleanup. Volunteers from Iowa, Michigan and South Dakota joined the Minnesota group at the gymnasium of the University of North Dakota, sleeping Spartan style on cots as had flood survivors from Grand Forks and East Grand Forks just weeks before.

Rising early in the morning, the men and women were organized into several work groups of six people each. After hurried breakfasts, volunteers boarded school buses for downtown Grand Forks and its surrounding areas. Bulldozers and steam shovels were already cleaning away the huge piles of debris that lay in the street. At one end of the city lay the charred remains of businesses burned in the unexplained fire that had followed in the wake of the flood.

Waters of the Red River had now receded, but discolored waterlines on doors, windows and walls of the city remained. Silt and mud covered floors inside the buildings. Inches of water still remained in basements. And late in the afternoon, as the temperature rose, a rancid smell oozed out of what was left of the once bright riverfront city.

"You can't know what it was like," a woman from Grand Forks said, staring across at the river. "I only had 20 minutes to evacuate my home. What do you take? I didn't want to leave, and when I tried to get back later, they wouldn't let me cross that bridge." She pointed to gnarled tree trunks that had fallen over in the flood and still clung to the bottom of the bridge, seemingly suspended in mid-air.

Three boys on bikes seemed slightly stunned but, with an air of importance, had become unofficial tour guides, gesturing first toward the Minnesota bank of the Red River, then toward the North Dakota bank. "It was 40 miles wide from one side to the other," they said.

Minnesota SGI members



The Security Building in Grand Forks, N.D., smolders on Sunday, April 20. Fires broke out after the floods and at least six buildings were destroyed.

helped a business owner and her husband, Raymond, clean up what remained of their clothing consignment shop, viewing the racks and racks of clothes scattered in heaps in front of the store.

Among the muddy clothes, a white crepe blouse rippled in the breeze. Raymond came to greet us. He had a hard time looking at us. He looked embarrassed. We felt his sense of heaviness, of loss.

"We didn't have any flood insurance," he said. "We just didn't think this would ever happen. My wife doesn't come down here anymore because she can't look at the place without crying." One of us put a hand on his arm and said: "We're so sorry you lost your shop. We're here to help you get through this."

As we began our work, we were careful to consider his wishes about how to proceed. He consulted his wife often on a cell phone. As they began to make decisions together about how we should proceed, things came to life, seemed to brighten.

"My son wanted these pipes," he said. "Who will help me put them in the truck?"

Federal aid had been



Raymond (third from left) with members who helped clean up his shop.

promised; the bill was stalled in the legislature. Help was needed now, and we were glad to be there. After two days, our work time had come to an end. We had stripped the building to its foundation using crowbars and shovels. We had cleaned out the muck left by the river with power sprayers, wet-dry vacs and squeegees. We had worn face-masks, goggles, rubber boots and gloves. We had taken water and air breaks. And we had made some friends.

Raymond gave us a large box of sweet rolls. "They're from the wife," he said. "She's very grateful."

In a sudden inspiration, we took a group picture together. Someone said, "Here's to future construction...."

But Raymond replied: "We're not sure we're going to rebuild. The city may decide to build a dike; we're waiting to see."

Three weeks later, the disaster relief money would become available but would be held back from individual flood victims while the Grand Forks City Council discussed options for flood control plans and came away undecided.

We made one last tour of the two floors we had stripped and

cleaned with Raymond, wondering if we had missed anything. Out back of the shop near a pile of boards and drywall slated to be picked up by the city lay a paper bag full of blue and white figurines. A boy. A girl. A painted plate of a horse and carriage. A flower basket candy dish. All were covered with the Red River mud — but not a single one broken. Did they want them? A last decision needed to be made. He called his wife on the cell phone. "Yes, we'll take these," he said.

On the bus ride home to Minnesota, Nichiren Daishonin's "Rissho Ankoku Ron," in which the destiny of the land and the people are shown to be inescapably linked, came to mind. Also something about purifying the land — what was that? Oh, yes. "The Daishonin teaches we should seek the pure land in this *saha* world.... 'Pure land,' in other words, indicates taking action to improve the environment and construct a better society.... [Then] the *saha* world is itself the Buddha's Land of Eternally Tranquil Light" (Daisaku Ikeda, *Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, pp. 76-77).

PAT WINTER, NEW YORK

Drug-free After All These Years

Health issues have been a reoccurring theme, so to speak, in my prayers for much of the past 21 years. I once thought of myself as a bona fide, card-carrying hypochondriac. But I can look back now and realize that I never understood the reality of my health situation. I worried about relatively minor problems, believing I was above the real problems I had.

For 18 of those 21 years, you see, I was addicted to prescription drugs (tranquilizers, sleeping pills and the occasional pain killer); I smoked up to three packs of cigarettes a day; I was 70 pounds overweight; and I had a bad knee and constant anxiety attacks. I never slept at night without drugging myself into a stupor. I never did anything without a cigarette, and although I tried diets and weight-loss programs, the results were always temporary. I should add that I had many bouts of depression and an almost manic-like temper.

I can't believe I survived with all of that, but I did, and by all accounts escaped serious health problems. I realize now that if I hadn't been practicing this Buddhism as strongly as I was — chanting daimoku, doing gongyo and taking an active role in Buddhist activities — I would never have made it!

Five years ago menopause started. Again, despite my addictions and bad habits, there were relatively few problems. I had the occasional hot flash, but I virtually breezed through a phase that most women dread.

Or so I thought.

The second summer into menopause I became inconsolably depressed. I chalked it up to hormones, but it was really

bad. In addition to being so depressed that I cried all the time, I became increasingly paranoid. I was so anxious and nonfunctional that finally I decided to see a therapist.

That's when my daughter suggested that maybe, just maybe, all the pills I was taking were causing these problems. That was ridiculous, I thought. I laughed the idea off. After all, I had taken drugs for 30 years and had never had a problem. I had even, eight months earlier, used nicotine patches and some heartfelt daimoku to end my 35 years of smoking. I never thought I'd be able to quit, but I did. On top of that, I started going to a gym because I was afraid of gaining even more weight.

Still, I was worried, and I chanted for help, although I didn't know what that meant.

One of the things that first attracted me to this Buddhism was the concept and realization that we can change anything. SGI President Ikeda says that "faith is to fear nothing," and that includes change. Through my practice, I learned, sometimes painfully, that change is up to me and me alone. There is always support from the organization, but it is up to me to sit in front of the Gohonzon and, from the depths of my life, determine to make this change and chant for the strength to persevere.

I went to a psychologist and told him that although I was sure my daughter was wrong, she was concerned about the pills I was habitually taking. I gave him as much of a history as I could, and he consulted a psychopharmacologist — a psychiatrist who deals with drugs.

The word came back that my symptoms most certainly were

drug-related, and I needed to see the psychiatrist.

Now I was in pretty deep — I was going to the psychopharmacologist, but I had no intention of quitting pills. They were my friends. They deadened me to the world. No way could I sleep without a handful of prescription sleeping pills and tranquilizers — and more if I needed them! I took eight to 10 pills every night.

After a long consultation with the doctor, in which I gave him my whole drug history — starting with amphetamines and diuretics for weight control when I was 11, he told me I was lucky to be alive. It was miraculous, he said, that I had gone on so long. I was a full-fledged junkie — only my drugs were prescribed by doctors and filled at a variety of drugstores (I had really learned to work the system), and I had a job and a family and lived in mainstream society.

But the truth, I was learning, was that I was a drug addict as much as anyone on the street who snorted cocaine or shot heroin.

The doctor said I could come off of these drugs — no, he said I HAD TO, my life depended on it — but it would take a long time and would not be easy. Although I didn't want to do it, something inside of me, my Buddha wisdom, said yes — and so we started.

The process was slow and more painful than anything I had ever experienced. I chanted so hard to get through it. I was an outpatient and going to work and doing all my activities, but my hands shook, my mind raced, my head felt like cotton, I had the hardest time focusing, my heart pounded and I was scared to death. So many times I was up all night, trying to chant, read, sleep



'I was a full-fledged junkie — only my drugs were prescribed by doctors and filled at a variety of drugstores,' says Pat Winter, whose practice helped her persevere and eradicate drugs from her life.

and just become comfortable with myself.

It was hell. For nearly two years.

But I stuck to the program, cutting back pills each week, seeing the doctor once or twice a week, and chanting like my life depended on it. I guess it did. After eight weeks I had cut out all the abusive and addicting substances I had been taking for all those years. I was on, and still am on, a non-addictive drug that I will finish with this year — but the poison was finally out of my system.

In 1996, my determination was to be healthy: mentally, physically and spiritually. I wasn't completely sure what

that meant, but I jumped into the year 100 percent with this determination.

Fabulous things happened. I found the right doctor, who discovered that I had been overdosing on thyroid medication for many years, leading to the anxiety attacks that made me dizzy and shaky. I have been slowly cutting down on the medication and those attacks are gone!

I lost 65 pounds by totally changing the way I eat and exercising four to five times a week. I have taken three health and fitness vacations with my daughter.

My knee is well! I found the right kind of treatment (nonsurgical and definitely without drugs!) and besides the usual stiffness in a 56-year-old knee, I have a full range of motion.

Thanks to the Gohonzon, to this practice, to my leaders who have helped and encouraged me so much throughout the years, who have taught me how to make a determination and then win, and to SGI President Ikeda, without whom none of this would have been possible, I am healthier and happier than I have ever been in my life. ❧

We Want Your FNCC Impressions!

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The *World Tribune* is about to start a new series of "FNCC Impressions" and we need your help. Please send a photo of yourself and your 200-word FNCC story (or poem) to the *World Tribune*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

As Eriko Okawa stared into the dark water, the bright harbor lights dancing on its surface seemed to mock her.

Not so long ago, she and her husband, Masakichi, had been running a successful jewelry store. They had lived very comfortably, owning four homes, three of which they rented out. Then in September 1956, after Masakichi had signed on as the guarantor of a friend's loan, everything had started to fall apart. The friend had suddenly disappeared, straddling him with the debt. The couple had to sell off all of their houses and possessions. But even then, there had still been a huge outstanding debt.

Their sudden, unexpected change of fortune left the Okawas numb. Losing their will to live, Eriko and her husband made their way through the Dokan district to a pier at Hakata Bay, intent on jumping into the water and drowning themselves along with their children. But just as they were about to do so, someone happened by. It would be too humiliating, they felt, for someone to jump in and try to save them. So they waited until the area was clear and tried again. Someone appeared again. After their third failed attempt, they resigned themselves to making Dokan their home.

Eriko had for some time suffered severe abdominal pains. On the advice of a specialist, she had been scheduled for surgery to remove her stomach, but then her family had met this disastrous setback. Now they barely had enough money to live, much less to pay for an expensive operation. After moving to Dokan, Eriko's pain had grown more intense each day. To dull the pain, she had begun to drink hard liquor starting early each morning. Soon she had a glass of liquor beside her at all times.

She could no longer carry out any household duties without drinking. Finally, it got to the point where she was drinking a large bottle of cheap liquor every day.

Eventually, though, even liquor would not ease the pain. Then, one night, she had a sudden attack of acute pain accompanied by convulsions and had to be carried off to the hospital. There she was given an injection of morphine, which marked the start of a new addiction. Because the amount of morphine any single hospital could give her was limited, she started going from one to another, exaggerating the level of her pain in order to receive larger dosages. She was free from pain while the drug took effect, but the minute it wore off her agony would become intense.

W eighed down by illness and debt, Eriko felt as if she were staggering blindly through an endless succession of dark nights — with no light in sight. Her life was in tatters. She was consumed by self-loathing.

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 3

Acceleration

Translation of parts 7–12 of the 'Acceleration' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbum*, 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.

One day, as Eriko was walking down the street, she noticed a woman wearing a Soka Gakkai pin, something she recalled having seen before. A Soka Gakkai member had once spoken to her about Buddhism, but at the time she had been financially well off, nothing really troubling her. She and her husband had been irritated that someone had come to talk to them about a religion they had no interest in. And they had summarily turned the person away, saying, "Come back to talk to us when you've improved your own life!"

However, that Soka Gakkai member's confident tone still resounded in Eriko's mind. She found herself addressing the woman on the street with the Soka Gakkai pin, inquiring: "Are you a Soka Gakkai member? Can you please tell me about your faith?"

The woman with the pin had only joined the organization a short while before. She explained that she did not yet know enough to talk in depth about Buddhism and went to fetch a more senior member.

In the ensuing conversation, Eriko heard the word *karma* for the first time. Learning that the only way to change one's karma is through practicing Buddhism, she immediately decided to join the organization. But when she told Masakichi that evening that she wanted to join the Soka Gakkai, he was adamantly opposed.

"When they asked us to join before, we told them clearly we weren't interested," he said. "Don't tell me that you're going to turn around now and ask them to let you join! Have you no pride?!"

Eriko had placed her last hope in salvaging her life through faith. She was therefore devastated by her husband's negative response. For the first time in her life, Eriko cried through the night.

Seeing his wife's misery, the next day Masakichi reluctantly told her: "If you really want to practice Buddhism that badly, go ahead and join the Soka Gakkai. But you can do so alone. I won't have any part of it."

Eriko started practicing in March 1957. After joining the Soka Gakkai and exerting herself in faith, her health began to improve day by day. Curiously, she began to complain less and less of abdominal pain. And she no longer needed



hard liquor or morphine to get through the day.

One day, the Okawas visited the hospital together. When the doctor examined Eriko, he looked perplexed. Anxiously, Masakichi asked him, "Is it too late, Doctor?"

No," answered the doctor, looking bewildered, "She's completely cured." "I've joined the Soka Gakkai and been devoting myself earnestly to faith," Eriko couldn't help telling him excitedly.

Looking mystified, the doctor said: "Is that so? Well, keep it up."

Eriko was thrilled by the doctor's apparent praise for the Gakkai in Masakichi's presence.

Moved by his wife's miraculous recovery, Masakichi said, "Maybe I'll give this Buddhism a try, too."

So they began to practice together.

Eriko told herself that the Gohonzon had saved her life, so now she must use that life for kosen-rufu. She found a job in a cafeteria, in one corner of which Masakichi later opened a small stand selling second-hand articles. They both worked hard and enthusiastically took part in Gakkai activities. In time, their financial circumstances eased a little. Their children were all growing healthily.

The Okawas' only problem was their huge debt. Eriko and her husband knew if they both worked hard they could earn enough to feed their family. But if they were to resume paying off the outstanding debt, it would mean a huge drain on their budget. They would not be able to make ends meet. They even flirted with the idea of defaulting on the debt.

But in the course of their Gakkai activities, they came to feel that it wouldn't be right for them, as Buddhists, to disregard the rules of society. Though they were poor, they wanted their children to be able to go anywhere without ever having to be ashamed. Through their faith, the Okawas learned that the greatest tragedy is not financial hardship itself, but being defeated by it, giving up on life as a result.

Eventually, they concluded that if they couldn't afford to pay off the debt now, they would just have to work harder until they could. They resolved to settle their obligation without fail, even if it took them decades.

The couple's struggle continued, but now they both blazed with a fierce fighting spirit to face and win in all life's challenges. They worked themselves to the bone. Through continual prayer and brain-racking,

Masakichi steadily increased the sales at his secondhand goods stall. But though their income rose, they cut back strictly on all unnecessary expenditures and continued to live a Spartan existence. Apart from a small sum kept aside for their bare necessities, they banked the rest with the intention of using it to clear the outstanding debt.

In two or three years, the Okawas had saved a fair amount of money. Nonetheless, it was still far from what they owed. To show their commitment to repaying the balance in its entirety, however, Eriko took the money they had saved and called on the president of the company that held the loan. The president silently took the money and disappeared into another room for a long time. Eriko waited with growing anxiety. Finally, the

PLEASE SEE ACCELERATION, NEXT PAGE

ACCELERATION, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

president reemerged, holding a piece of paper.

"I'm impressed that you should come here in person and pay back this money. You really are good-hearted," he said, then handing Eriko the paper.

It was a receipt. On it was a large stamp that read "PAID IN FULL." Eriko couldn't believe her eyes. More than half the original debt had yet to be paid! Stunned by this turn of events, she bowed deeply and fervently thanked the president, then hurried home. There, Masakichi was earnestly chanting daimoku. When she told him what happened, tears glistened in his eyes. They clasped each other's hands and wept, knowing that it was a benefit of their faith.

There were countless people throughout Dokan who experienced such amazing benefits. Awakening to the truth that the key to happiness lies inside each individual, people began to challenge themselves, determined neither to wallow in self-pity over their plight nor drown in despair. Putting the dark days of anguish behind them, they began to pick themselves up, to walk unaided toward the sunlight of new hope — for life, for the future.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto's guidance had served as a powerful source of inspiration for these members. They hungrily read the speeches he gave at various meetings and his lectures on the Goshu, learning from these the basics of faith. Guidance stressing that faith equals daily life filled them with fresh enthusiasm to work hard at their jobs. Lectures discussing the mission of the children of the Buddha who advance kosen-rufu drove home to them the profound significance of their lives in this world, filling them with courage. The ever-confident declaration that all who practice the Daishonin's Buddhism will without doubt become happy inspired and deeply moved them again and again to dedicate themselves to Buddhist practice.

Dokan representatives also participated in the monthly Headquarters Leaders Meetings and other gatherings Shin'ichi attended in Tokyo. And their enthusiastic reports to fellow Dokan members of the Gakkai president's guidance were great sources of vitality for all. Shin'ichi's thoughts were always on those suffering the most. And he prayed above all for them to become happy.

Their comrades' warm encouragement also played a large part in the revitalization the Dokan members were experiencing. Such friendship and support built a new network of heart-to-heart ties among people with unhappy pasts — pasts that had made them suspicious and distrustful of others, that had left them alone and friendless.

Dokan's main meeting place was a storehouse that belonged to a couple who ran a fish shop and that doubled as their living quarters. The couple had moved to the area after the husband quit his job as

a coal miner. They had pulled themselves up from poverty and carved a successful living by running a shop that sold fresh fish.

The venue was one of the few places in Dokan that had tatami mats on the floor and was well insulated against rain and wind. Almost every day the couple would make a hot hodgepodge from fish bones and other leftovers they brought back from the shop. They would serve it to those who gathered at the meetings, most of whom had very little food to eat at home.

How moved and grateful the members must have been for this kindness, which not only filled their empty stomachs but warmed their hearts. This generous gesture was an expression of the couple's appreciation for the encouragement they had once received from fellow members, which had inspired their faith and led them to launch their business with resounding success. They gave unstintingly of themselves to the members, driven by a determination to do all in their power not to let the Buddha's precious emissaries go hungry.

They sometimes even insisted that people have a bath at their home after a meeting. None of the shanties in Dokan had anything like a bathtub. And even the small amount charged by public bathhouses was an expense many Dokan people had to forgo if they hoped to survive.

Also, none of Dokan's dark, sunless streets or lanes were paved; they were quagmires of mud and excrement. Shod only in worn-out leather or rubber sandals, the members' feet would invariably become filthy on their way to the meeting place. As a result, the tatami mats had to be re-covered several times a year. But the owners thought nothing of this and were happy and proud that their home was being used for kosen-rufu. Their fellow members were deeply grateful and appreciative of the couple's generosity.

As a result of attending discussion or guidance meetings there, countless people were encouraged and inspired to diligently exert themselves in faith, to rise to the challenge of carrying out their mission.

When any Dokan member fell ill, those close by would rally to lend their assistance, preparing, for instance, warm rice gruel for them to eat. When someone died, all would work together to build a coffin for the funeral. The members included all kinds of people — those with physical disabilities, non-Japanese citizens, people with criminal records and even a former police officer. Bonds of friendship and trust, free of

any trace of bigotry or discrimination, were forged first among this circle of Gakkai members, but soon began to spread across the whole of Dokan.

Forced out by a large-scale development project in Hakata Bay, most Dokan residents had moved elsewhere by the mid-1970s. And not long after, Dokan itself was gone. The members who had encountered Buddhism there, who had awakened to their mission and through faith miraculously transformed their lives, however, continued to devote themselves energetically to kosen-rufu in different parts of the country.

The story of Dokan is not unique — it was enacted in many places like it throughout Japan. There were countless dramas of people resurrecting their lives

Sugiura had once served as a representative on a local assembly for a progressive political party. In the *Seikyo Shimbun* discussion, he frankly voiced his opinion that, by enabling people to become truly independent, "the Gakkai had embarked on a momentous undertaking — one that I could never hope to emulate." He also applauded the organization for promoting a movement that liberated people, for enabling those whose lives had been wracked by suffering to awaken to their inherent worth and then live with dignity and self-confidence. And he further said: "Modern Japanese society lacks such a caring sense of community as is found in the Gakkai and which brings out the best in people. In that respect, the Gakkai's activities are extremely significant."

By firmly establishing in people's hearts the humanistic principles of Buddhism and revitalizing the human spirit, the Soka Gakkai's activities were beginning to effect a fundamental transformation in society's troubled and disaffected mood. These activities created a vibrant overture to a new dawn of humanity.

(To be continued)

1. Mimpei Sugiura: born 1913. Author of several books and a noted authority on the Renaissance.
2. Eighth Route Army: one of the two major Chinese Communist forces that fought against the Japanese army in China from 1937-45. In between battles, they grew their own food so as to be self-sufficient and assisted the local population in meeting production quotas. They upheld a strict code of service to the people, abiding by the rule of not taking even a single piece of thread or a sewing needle from the people.



through faith. Nothing more eloquently illustrated who were the real friends of the people.

Many years later, the Japanese author and critic Mimpei Sugiura,¹ a social activist who had long watched with interest the growth of the Soka Gakkai movement, participated in an installment of a dialogue series in the Gakkai's daily newspaper, the *Seikyo Shimbun*, titled "The Soka Gakkai — Triumph of the People." In that feature, he said:

The Gakkai's greatest achievement lies in unleashing the power of the people, of those at the very lowest strata of society, and in revitalizing their lives. This, actually, is something that I have also devoted great energy to.... [After World War II] there were so many people suffering emotional or economic distress as a result of physical disabilities, illness, the loss of a spouse and so on. Determined to help them in any way I could, I went to villages to offer assistance and undertake various volunteer activities. I made the Eighth Route Army of China² [renowned for its selfless service to the people] one of my models. But it was to no good. You can't foster genuine independence in people merely through charitable deeds or donations of money. But helping people become self-reliant is precisely what the Soka Gakkai has done. (May 3, 1981, issue)

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APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Unleashing Our Fortune

By CRAIG GREEN

SJI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Could the Buddha's decree, "He will receive his reward of good fortune in his present life," or his edict, "Truly he will have manifest reward in his present life," possibly be false for you, Nanjo Shichiro Jiro, alone? (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 5, pp. 186-87)

This passage is part of a letter written to Nanjo Tokimitsu in 1276, when Tokimitsu was 17. His father and elder brother died when Tokimitsu was very young, forcing him to take the position of responsibility in his family. Needless to say, the letter was sent to encourage someone who had already experienced tremendous hardships.

I have not been beset with the extreme conditions of Nanjo Tokimitsu. Actually, I think I've been rather fortunate. Yet I have frequently felt alone in my practice.

I'm often confused as to why things haven't changed the way I wanted. I ask myself: Why is the practice working for everyone else, but not for me? I then find myself comparing my growth with others' growth. And when I don't see immediate results in certain areas (relationships, career), I start to beat myself up emotionally.

But self-deprecation has nothing to do with Buddhism. To evaluate and reflect on oneself, absolutely. To bash oneself over what one is not or what one doesn't have, I don't think so.

As this passage demonstrates, there is no doubt in Nichiren Daishonin's mind about the fortune we each possess. And with his belief also comes undeniable power of conviction. If I were to make this belief my own, would I not have the same power of conviction? And then would I not manifest great reward and good fortune in this lifetime? Each of us has something unique and distinctive within that only we can express. Our own fortune account, if you will. The power of faith in the Gohonzon, which is unlimited and nonjudgmental, is the key to opening this. We are the only ones who can unleash our fortune from within. We just have to practice, have patience and have faith that we are worthy of the reward. ❏

BUDDHIST CONCEPT

By ELIZABETH PAGE

SEATTLE CORRESPONDENT

Shakubuku. It's a funny-sounding word that means introducing someone to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Early on in my practice, I was told it literally means to break and subdue someone's attachments to misleading teachings or philosophies. That was a clear explanation. It worked for me then...or did it? Does introducing people to Buddhism always mean breaking and subduing their beliefs?

There has been some confusion in our organization between the terms *shakubuku* and *shoju*, which means to introduce someone to Buddhism gradually without refusing his or her attachments to erroneous teachings — no breaking or subduing needed. At first, *shoju* sounds more like what we do in America. After all, most Americans are not necessarily slandering Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It might seem that we are often misusing the term *shakubuku* right off the proverbial bat.

Actually, though, it's not an either/or situation. *Shakubuku* has a broader mean-

ing than breaking or subduing people's attachments: to speak the truth about Buddhism. And *shoju* is a form of *shakubuku*. Nichiren Daishonin clearly says, "In the Latter Day of the Law...both *shoju* and *shakubuku* are to be used" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 183-84). In other words, sometimes we need to speak forcefully, sometimes soothingly and sometimes both. It depends on the person, on the situation.

SJI President Ikeda explains in an upcoming installment of "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" (serialized in *Living Buddhism*):

First, as the major premise, all efforts to teach people about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day constitute *shakubuku*. Basing ourselves on the spirit of *shakubuku* to teach others about the Mystic Law without selfish concern, at times we might strictly refute a person's mistaken views, while at other times we might explain the truth with a broad-minded spirit of tolerance for the other person's beliefs.

Even if we feel we need to "strictly refute a person's mistaken views," though, we should be polite. In February 1990 in America, President Ikeda explained that

propagation should always be conducted with respect for other people; we should never forget that they have the potential to become Buddhas, too.

Many SGI-USA districts have clear goals for new members to join, like two or three new members for this year. Without a target or goal, of course, it's easy to become complacent and lose the spirit of *shakubuku* that President Ikeda has been emphasizing. And considering the tremendous amount of effort it takes to help even one person practice correctly, these district goals are very ambitious.

Think about how relatively easy it is to just tell someone about this practice or even bring him or her to a meeting. Granted, these both require a lot of patience and courage — but it takes quite a bit more effort, usually by several different people, to help that person develop strong, self-reliant faith and (hopefully) surpass us!

Speaking the truth about this Buddhism might seem easy, but convincing people is hard. Knowing when to say it straight and when to just listen comes from our compassion and then doing our best — it's the process of learning how to talk about Buddhism with many different kinds of people. ❏

SEPT. 8, 1957 — TODA'S DECLARATION AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

How Do We Sensitize Ourselves Again?

SIGNIFICANT DATE

By MATT LUCAS

KENT, OHIO, CORRESPONDENT

On Sept. 8, 1957, 40 years ago this year, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, made his declaration against nuclear weapons. He declared that all people have the right to live. This is the spirit of Buddhism; the Lotus Sutra, too, speaks for the people when it says, "Let us live out our lives."

I have not, however, given the subject of nuclear war much thought in the past couple of years. With the anniversary of Sept. 8 coming up, I, the eternal pack rat, searched through my files both mental and physical to try to revive the dormant feelings, to somehow reawaken to the horror that at present we are still on the brink of world destruction — even though we are no longer in the Cold War. I believe that many people are in the same boat; we are at this point desensitized to so many things that the prospect of another World War, though frightening, becomes as trivial as a *Jeopardy* question. How do we sensitize ourselves once again?

In my cache, I came across an interview with Joe O'Donnell, a photojournalist for more than 45 years (interview by Randy Sarvis, summer 1995 *The Link*, published by the Wilmington College students). As a youth, when he heard FDR announce the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the military. O'Donnell says he "wanted to be a paratrooper, but the Marines made me a photographer," and that "I accepted the fact that I would never aim anything at a Japanese but a camera — so I was determined to become the best photographer I could be."

Immediately following the atomic bombings, his final military assignment was to photograph the American landing on the Japanese mainland. Dropped off in advance of the troops, a bizarre thing occurred: "A Japanese officer surrendered to me and asked me for a cigarette," he says. As he walked inland, though, the feeling of euphoria at being surrendered to dissolved as he became the first American to see the ghastly view of atomic destruction. "In every direction, buildings were leveled and everything wiped out," he says.

ENEMY, PLEASE KILL ME — these were the words of "a man with no ears, no nose nor skin who signaled me to come closer," O'Donnell continues.

"I put my head in my hands and prayed that God be merciful and relieve this man's suffering. That man tapped me on the head and I looked up to see tears running down a face with no skin. That man died the very next day." More than 50 years later, O'Donnell says, he still cannot forget.

This is only one story of nuclear warfare. I realize my thoughts or feelings about nuclear war are infinitesimal compared to the suffering of those whose lives were not spared, whose stories and lives can only now be shared by all humankind. Through our sharing their stories their lives gain more meaning — and we can resensitize ourselves. I hope many more stories like this are uncovered in our discussion meetings and through daily dialogue so as to work toward preventing the occurrence of nuclear war again.

Nichiren Daishonin says in "The Gift of Rice" that "life itself is the most precious of all treasures" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 267). President Toda, who had seen the repercussions of nuclear war firsthand, made his declaration against nuclear weapons to protect the lives of the people. Reminding ourselves of the human tragedy that accompanies nuclear war is one way we can continue his efforts. ❏

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Bringing Out Our Best

This is the 10th installment of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the members of the high school division.

Ikeda: Today, our discussion is on personality, something that greatly affects our lives. Someone once said it is determined by fate, and there's nothing we can do about it. The fact is, almost everyone agonizes over some aspect of his or her personality. This agonizing actually leads to growth. But you also have to realize that just worrying about your problems won't change anything.

Although the human race has made incredible advances in science, in reality we still understand very little about ourselves and the workings of the human mind.

Kimura: One student came to me upset and asked: "My mom told me that I inherited my father's unattractive qualities. What can I do to change?"

Igeta: There are different types of personalities: extroverted and introverted, level-headed and hotheaded, fickle and persistent. Is it impossible to change our personality?

Ikeda: Buddhism views a person's innate personality or nature as essentially unchanging.

People's personalities are truly diverse. In Buddhism, the word *society* (Jpn *seken*) also has the meaning of difference or distinction. In other words, society constitutes a gathering of people who each possess unique, distinct personalities.

There is a vast vocabulary to describe the various personalities and character traits people have. The English language is said to have as many as 18,000 words for that purpose. Some people even break personalities down into separate groups.

In the multitude of personalities, we see the Buddhist principle of cherry, plum, peach and



CORBIS-BETTMANN

The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes: 'How may one get to know oneself? Never by contemplation, only, indeed, by action. Seek to do your duty, and you will know at once how it is with you.'

apricot blossom at work. Just as each blossom is beautiful in its own way, each person is endowed with special qualities.

Being introverted doesn't make someone incapable, just as being quick-tempered doesn't make a person useless. We should live in a way that is true to ourselves. That is the fundamental aim of Buddhism.

Once, when encouraging a member who had begun practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to change his angry nature, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said: "You don't have to worry about changing your personality. All you have to do is chant daimoku and live the best you can. Then,

very naturally, you will see the negative aspects of your personality disappear, leaving you with the positive ones. You must have a clear purpose and work for the betterment of society."

That member ended up being loved and admired by everyone and living a truly happy, fulfilling life.

Kimura: So you mean that even though our basic personality is difficult to change, we can bring out its positive traits?

Ikeda: It's like a river. At a certain point the river's banks are pretty much fixed. In the same way, the identity of a person doesn't change much. But

the quality of the water in the river can vary. It may be deep or shallow, polluted or clean, have an abundance of fish or none at all.

The content, in other words, can change. It is the same with us. Our personality doesn't determine our happiness or unhappiness. Rather it is the substance of how we've lived that decides our happiness. The purpose of Buddhism and education, as well as all our efforts toward self-improvement and growth, is to enhance that substance. This is what life is all about.

Igeta: So, are you saying that while our river can't become a

different, separate river, we can, through effort and hard work, clean and purify our river so that lots of fish will be happy to swim in it?

Ikeda: Exactly. By chanting daimoku, we can cleanse our lives of negativity and impurities. We can push everything in the direction of happiness. For example, a person's shyness can be transformed into valuable qualities such as prudence and discretion, while someone's impatience might be transformed into a knack for getting things done quickly and efficiently.

A river meanders, but never stops. This is the natural way of things. Similarly, if you make continuous efforts, your personality will improve slowly, steadily. The key is to keep moving forward and never stop.

No one's personality is flawless. Everyone, without exception, has some karma that renders his or her less than perfect. It's inevitable that you won't like aspects of your personality. But it is foolish to become obsessed by such things and succumb to feelings of self-hatred and unworthiness, consequently hindering your growth.

Kimura: A member told me that his mood swings were taking a toll on his friendships and causing him a lot of grief.

Ikeda: In this apathetic age, being a bit impetuous might not be such a bad thing! You are young, so it's natural to have passionate emotions.

Getting along well with others is of course important, but doing so to the point of suppressing your individuality will only bring you misery. Furthermore, a strong character is almost a requirement to survive in this tumultuous, ever-changing world. And having intense emotions enables you to understand the feelings of others. It is not a bad thing to be passionate, but if it is driven by egotism and hurts others, it can be dangerous. A race car that can reach hundreds of miles an

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hour also needs extremely powerful brakes.

The point is, you must have self-discipline. And that comes from chanting daimoku, from developing a strong life force. When you bring forth your Buddhahood, your passionate nature will become your impetus for your progress, strong sense of justice and burning desire to help other people.

Igeta: How would you encourage those who get down on themselves for being content with second best, who don't apply themselves seriously, who give up easily, or who immediately look for a way to get out of anything unpleasant?

Ikeda: I think half the problem's already solved because they know what the problem is!

People tend to lack willpower. To take the path of least resistance is human nature. Outstanding individuals didn't become great overnight. They disciplined themselves to overcome their weaknesses, conquering apathy and inertia to become true victors in life.

Life is a struggle with ourselves. It is a tug-of-war between moving forward and regressing, between happiness and unhappiness. Those short on willpower or self-motivation should chant daimoku and pray with conviction to become people of strong will, who can tackle any problem with real seriousness and determination.

Perhaps they should try challenging some task at hand — it can be anything — and keep at it until they're absolutely satisfied that they've done their best. Taking the first step leads to the next one.

Igeta: One student really got down on herself because, though she tried hard to overcome her laziness, her resolve never lasted very long. Soon she would find herself slacking off again.

Ikeda: Anyone who has ever made a resolution discovers that the strength of his or her determination fades with time. The moment you feel that is when you should make a fresh determination. Say to yourself: "OK! I will start again from now!" If you fall down seven times, get up eight. Don't give up when you feel discouraged — just pick yourself up and renew your determination each time.

The important thing is not that your resolve never waver, but that you don't get down on



Eleanor Roosevelt in New York in 1945 speaking on a broadcast to Dr. Lisa Weitzner, a noted Swedish scientist whose research helped develop the atomic bomb. Both Roosevelt and Weitzner placed the responsibility on the women of the world to see that atomic energy is used for humanity's benefit after the war.

yourself when it does and throw in the towel. The fact that you realize you've become lazy is evidence that you are growing.

Igeta: Another student told me she feels alone and isolated even when she's among other people. She is quiet by nature, but others think she's melancholy.

Ikeda: If you are not talkative, how about becoming an excellent listener? You can say to others: "Please tell me about yourself. I want to hear all about you." If you try to show people that you're something you're not, then speaking will be nothing but torture. You are fine just the way you are. You should let people get to know the real you, warts and all.

There are some people who just ramble on mindlessly without saying anything. A person of few words is likely to have far more substance and depth than someone who talks just for the sake of hearing his or her own voice! Someone who takes action swiftly and effectively is a great deal more trustworthy than someone who is all talk.

Of far greater importance than whether one is quiet or talkative is whether or not one possesses rich inner substance. The

beautiful smile or small, unconscious gesture of a person with a rich heart, even if he or she is reticent, will speak more eloquently than any words. And often such people will speak out with authority and confidence at a crucial moment.

In Buddhism, we say that the voice does the Buddha's work. Fundamentally, this refers to chanting daimoku. Those who chant daimoku are, in essence, the most eloquent of all.

Start with what you want to say to the Gohonzon. It's also important to chant for others' happiness. Then, quite naturally, you'll develop the ability to freely, confidently say what you want to say.

Kimura: What about people who dwell for a long time on things that upset them?

Ikeda: It's not necessarily good to get over things easily. Injustice, for example, must never be excused. In Japan, people tend to think that letting things go, like water under a bridge, is the noble thing to do. But such an attitude can hinder society's progress. It allows mistakes to be repeated. We should keep our anger alive and continue to fight against injustice

tenaciously and courageously. Those who have done so have effected positive change for their fellow human beings. It is also vital that we strive toward our goals with fierce perseverance and determination.

In short, it is important to become a person who views things not in terms of your tiny, selfish concerns, but from a larger, more generous perspective. You have to pray to the Gohonzon to become more broad-minded and tolerant. You have to chant and look unflinchingly at the people and things in your life that are making you unhappy. Running away from things you find unpleasant is what causes suffering. But if you face and challenge such situations, they will enrich your life.

Igeta: Some students complain that they can only see their faults, and ask how they can find their good points.

Ikeda: People who are strict with themselves often feel that way — it's a sign of a sincere, laudable character.

It's difficult to see ourselves objectively. The Gosho states, "We common mortals can see neither our own eyebrows, which are so close, nor heaven

in the distance" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 271). Perhaps you could ask someone who knows you well, like a friend, parent or sibling, what strong points he or she thinks you have and should develop. I'm sure they'll name many admirable qualities you possess.

No one has only faults or only merits. We all have a mixture of both. Therefore, you should strive to develop and polish your positive attributes. As you do, your shortcomings will fade until they are no longer apparent.

Also, if someone should point out your faults, rather than getting offended or upset, it is to your benefit to listen calmly and objectively to what they have to say as constructive criticism. Once you take your place in society, there won't be many people who will be so honest with you.

Igeta: Many young people worry about what others think of them. Although they tell themselves that no one is paying attention, they feel intimidated. They have no confidence in themselves and think that others are talking about them behind their backs.

Ikeda: Timidity and shyness are signs of a gentle, sensitive nature.

Perhaps you've heard of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962), who remains one of the most respected women in the United States. She once wrote: "Looking back, I see how abnormally timid and shy I was as a girl. As long as I let timidity and shyness dominate me I was half paralyzed."¹

Through self-discipline, Mrs. Roosevelt conquered her fear. What concrete measures did she take? Like most shy people, she was plagued by fears about herself, so she applied herself earnestly to break those chains. First, she stopped worrying about making a good impression on others and caring what they thought of her, instead thinking of others. Second, she quit obsessing over herself and wholeheartedly pursued her interests. She learned that people don't pay much attention to what others are doing and the amount of attention we pay ourselves is actually our greatest enemy. Realizing this, Mrs. Roosevelt put great effort toward disregarding herself. Third, her sense of adventure and desire to experience life were helpful in overcoming

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her shyness. She maintained a lively spirit to discover what life had to offer.²

By continuing to challenge herself, Mrs. Roosevelt gradually gained confidence. She was later involved in historic initiatives, such as the drafting of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. And she was loved by many people.

The important thing is to take that first step. If you bravely overcome one small fear, it will give you the courage to take on the next one.

Make goals. Whether they are big or small, work toward realizing them. You must be serious about and dedicated to your goals — you'll get nowhere if you just treat them like jokes. An earnest, dedicated spirit shines like a diamond and moves people's hearts. That is because a brilliant flame burns within.

If we are sincere, people will understand our intentions, and our positive qualities will radiate. It is pointless to be caught up in outward appearances.

The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) writes: "How may one get to know oneself? Never by contemplation, only, indeed, by action. Seek to do your duty, and you will know at once how it is with you."³

It's all about taking action, taking that first step. If your aim is to swim across a vast ocean, it will do you no good to get cold feet before you even take the plunge. Rather, you've got to make a move, keeping your sights on your goal in the distance. Hindsight can be valuable toward one's growth, but it is self-defeating to set yourself up for failure before even trying.

Kimura: What about people who can only see others' faults?

Ikeda: It's much more valuable to look for the strengths in others — you can gain nothing by criticizing people's imperfections. To develop a bigger heart, please try chanting, even a little at a time, for the happiness of your friends. Gradually, you will cultivate tolerance and broad-mindedness.

I'm sure there are many other ways in which people are unhappy with their personality. That you are troubled means that you can change those things causing you suffering. Adults tend to just resign themselves to fate and give up on their personality altogether! That, however, is where their growth ends.



'Gandhi held the conviction that we can become anything we want to be. It all depends upon the strength of our determination.'

As long as we are moving forward and continuing to grow, we will inevitably face various problems and inner struggles. Even second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda confessed that he made great effort to overcome his cowardly nature. You cannot achieve human revolution without working hard at it. If you keep challenging yourself without giving up, you will definitely develop courage and strength.

Kimura: Is our personality or character determined by our genes, our environment, or both?

Ikeda: I imagine it's a little of both. Many studies have in fact been conducted on this topic. Essentially, however, we are the architects of our lives.

The English word *character* is derived from the Greek word *charakter*, meaning to engrave or make an impression. From a scientific standpoint, one's personality and physical constitution may be determined to some extent by genetic factors. But that knowledge alone isn't going to change anything. What matters is what we do to improve ourselves on a practical basis.

Buddhism stresses the importance of the present and future. These are what matter. Al-

ways challenging oneself from this moment onward — this is Buddhism.

Personality is also viewed a number of ways by psychology. One view looks at personality in terms of a concentric circle. At the core of this circle exists our most basic nature. Around that is the side of us that is shaped by habit and custom, and surrounding that is the part we have formed to cope with various situations and circumstances.

Kimura: This idea has also been explained using layers: The first layer represents one's inherent nature, the next portrays the basic personality developed during childhood, and so on.

Ikeda: Our core personality isn't easy to change. Yet other aspects can sometimes change so much that people may comment that we seem like a completely different person.

Anyway, you have to be true to yourself. You have to follow your path and do your best to contribute to society. Education equips us with what we need to do that. And faith is what fuels our efforts.

Igeta: In other words, we become our best selves when we pursue a goal that allows us to

fully develop and make use of our uniqueness.

Ikeda: Those who practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism are fortunate to chant daimoku to the Gohonzon. And those who don't practice Buddhism can also lead good, fulfilling lives, if they aim and work toward a great goal or purpose that embodies the values of beauty, benefit and good. Indian political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) is an excellent example.

As a boy, Gandhi was excruciatingly shy. He was unable to sleep without a light on, haunted by imaginary thieves, ghosts and serpents. He was introverted and always worried that people would make fun of him. Gandhi struggled with this for many years.

Kimura: That's so hard to imagine. I always think of Gandhi as a courageous figure who feared nothing.

Ikeda: Let me add, however, that even as a young man, Gandhi possessed a strong sense of justice and an aversion to anything underhanded or morally wrong. Once, during his first year in high school, his class was paid a visit by an education inspector who told the students to write the word *kettle* to test their spelling — and Gandhi misspelled it. The teacher, noticing Gandhi's mistake, gestured to him to copy the correct spelling from his neighbor's slate. But the concept of cheating was alien to the young Gandhi. Consequently, he was the only boy in the class who got the word incorrect.

Igeta: Gandhi's unyielding sense of right and wrong didn't change throughout his life.

Ikeda: Nonetheless, even after passing the bar and qualifying as a barrister, he was still quite timid. When he finally had to present his first case in court and the time came to cross-examine the witness, he became nervous and confused, and the room started spinning. He completely forgot what he was going to say and had to leave the courtroom.

A major turning point occurred when Gandhi was in South Africa. The Indian residents there faced severe discrimination. On one occasion, Gandhi was riding in a first-class car on a train when a white person brought over the train conductor, who ordered him to move to the freight car. Gandhi wouldn't budge, so the conductor called a police offi-

cer who forcibly pushed him off the train.

In the waiting area at the train station, Gandhi sat shivering in the cold and dark. He stayed awake all night lost in thought, pondering whether he should return to India or endure the hardship of taking a stand and fighting for human rights. He finally came to the conclusion that it would be cowardice to run from his fears and disregard those who were being discriminated against. From that moment, with the determination to save people from injustice, Gandhi faced and challenged his timid nature.

After a 20-year struggle, the Indian people in South Africa gained concessions toward freedom. And, as is well known, Gandhi then returned to India where, through his movement of nonviolent civil disobedience, he achieved the independence of his home country.

Gandhi held the conviction that we can become anything we want to be. It all depends upon the strength of our determination.

Each of us embraces this great life-philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin, which expounds the principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms. It is the Buddhism of human revolution. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason to put yourself down.

The Daishonin's Buddhism enables us to reveal our most intrinsic nature — to fully reveal our unique potential, to develop our character and bring our true self to shine. To do this we need life force. A strong life force will bring forth the most positive aspects of our personality.

All rivers, irrespective of their differences, flow unceasingly and unflaggingly to the sea. If we, too, continue to make persistent efforts, we will eventually reach the great ocean of happiness, for ourselves and others. We will savor boundless freedom and potential, shining brightly while celebrating and encouraging others' individuality.

The important thing is to accomplish everything you possibly can. You'll be more surprised than anyone at how much you can achieve. All of you possess such unlimited potential! **III**

1. Eleanor Roosevelt, *You Learn by Living* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 31–32.

2. *Ibid.* p. 32.

3. *Goethe's World View: Presented in His Reflections and Maxims*, Frederick Ungar, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. 65.

The Times Call Forth Great People

The following speech was read by SGI Vice President Shigeo Hasegawa on SGI President Ikeda's behalf at the opening session of the SGI Spring Training Course, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, April 19.

My heartfelt welcome to all of our precious SGI members who have gathered here from around the world. I greet you, leaders of profound seeking spirit, with my palms pressed together in deepest reverence and respect, and with the wish to warmly embrace every one of you in welcome.

When Nichiren Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island, a follower made the long and dangerous trip from Kamakura to visit him. He praised her valiant dedication, saying, "The length of the journey traveled in pursuit of the Law represents the strength of the seeking spirit" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1223). In another letter to her, he wrote, "Let it be known that Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha, all the Buddhas of the ten directions, great bodhisattvas such as Jogyo and Muhengyo [Superior Practices and Boundless Practices], Bonten, Taishaku, the Four Heavenly Kings and other deities will protect you and be with you always, just as a shadow accompanies the body" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 52).

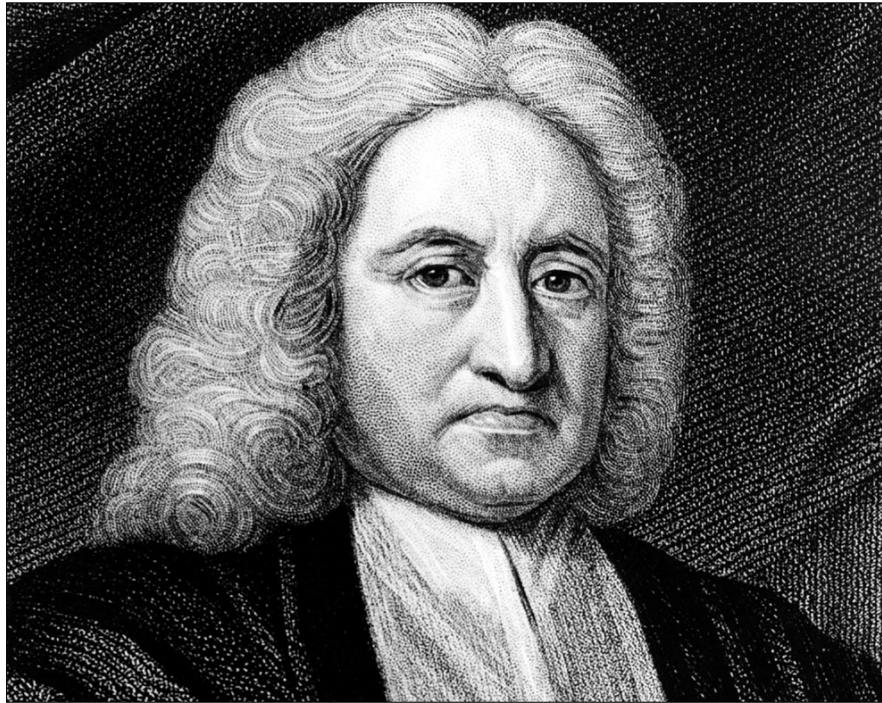
Your benefit and good fortune, too, are immense. Solely for the sake of Buddhism, you have joyfully gathered here in Japan to participate in this training course, challenging and overcoming financial and other obstacles and making time in your busy schedules to do so. There is not the slightest doubt that the benefit that accrues from all these causes you have made will shine gloriously throughout eternity, in lifetime after lifetime, not only for you but for all your descendants.

Through your faith and efforts, the SGI movement, with members now in 128 nations and territories around the globe, is making sure and steady progress into the 21st century. A solid foundation is now in place. I want to express my humble gratitude for your noble efforts and hard work.

Buddhism Does Not Exist Apart From Society

The SGI always advances by spreading its roots broadly and

Nichikan Shonin lived in a time of great reform both in the East and West. A reformist himself, he returned the priesthood to the original teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.



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The time in which Nichikan Shonin lived was marked in Europe by the movements of Rationalism and the Enlightenment. Scientists like Edmund Halley, the English astronomer after whom Halley's Comet is named, tried to bring new reason to humanity's view of the heavens.

deeply into society. I have quoted these words of the Daishonin time and time again, and I repeat them now: "A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs" (MW-6, 142). The Daishonin also clearly stated in his explanation of the precept of adapting the teachings to the locality that we should practice Buddhism according to the manners and customs of the country we are in (MW-6, 12-13).

Buddhism is reason. It doesn't exist apart from society, apart from reality. That is why it is important for each of us to cultivate good judgment and common sense. We must respect society's ways and try to harmonize with them. Respecting the life of each individual, we work among the people. This is the SGI's fundamental creed.

The SGI always advances in the spirit of many in body, one in mind. Nichiren Daishonin regarded this unified commitment in faith as the key to the

successful accomplishment of kosen-rufu. He wrote:

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death.... When you are so united, even the great hope for kosen-rufu can be fulfilled without fail. (MW-1, 23)

Here, today, in this gathering of representatives from 56 nations and territories, of different nationalities and ethnic groups, in this noble assemblage of people united in the shared aspiration of faith, is the true spirit of kosen-rufu. How overjoyed the Daishonin would be to see your vibrant, joyous advance in such brilliant unity! How surely he would praise and applaud your endeavors! I hope you will all be

absolutely certain that the SGI is moving forward in exact accord with the Daishonin's teachings.

The Times of Nichikan Shonin

I hope you, as leaders, will always have the spirit to learn with a lively curiosity and interest. When leaders are enthusiastic to keep learning and growing, they inspire others. New ideas emerge and spread. Fresh energy to advance surges forth. Instead of pretending to know all the answers, assuming an air of wisdom, let us always strive for greater understanding and insight into all things, so that we can continue learning together and spur one another to grow. This is the kind of spirit I want to cherish.

Recently, an overseas member asked me about the date on the Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan Shonin, now being conferred on SGI members, which reads June 13 of the fifth year of the Kyoho Era.

The member wanted to know what that period was like. It corresponds to 1720 on the Western calendar. This was in the middle of Japan's Edo Period (1600-1868), best known as the time when the progressive Kyoho Reforms were being instituted by the youthful eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune.

The Kyoho Reforms attempted to curb political corruption, fiscal decline and economic chaos. Specifically, the reforms called for such measures as employing people of talent in important public positions, unifying and stabilizing the currency, developing new rice fields to increase revenues, establishing procedures to make direct legal recourse available to ordinary citizens, founding hospitals for the poor, and encouraging learning among the common people. The Kyoho Reforms are widely regarded as the most successful political reforms in the Edo Period.

The year 1720, in particular, marked a series of important new undertakings. For example, in January, work began on the codification of the law. In July, the government instituted a comprehensive medical policy. In August, it reinforced the fire-fighting system and relaxed the prohibition against the import of Western books. Great steps were made in that year. The spirit of the reforms spread through society, creating a turning point, a watershed in government and the economy alike.

Meanwhile in Europe...

The period in which Nichikan (1665-1726) lived was marked in Europe by the emergence of Rationalism and the Enlightenment, movements that sought to examine old customs and established authority from a logical, reasonable point of view and liberate society from ancient prejudices and superstitions. These intellectual currents contributed enormously to sudden and dramatic advances in the natural sciences, such as botany, chemistry, astronomy and medicine.

Mr. Toda once observed that: "The times call forth great people. Consequently, when great people appeared in the East, they also appeared in the West." Around the same year that Nichikan was born, the young Sir Isaac Newton gained the first glimmerings of what became his theory of universal gravitation. Newton's contem-

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TIME, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

porary, the astronomer Edmond Halley, calculated the orbit of the comet that is today named after him and became the royal astronomer in 1720 — the fifth year of the Kyoho Era in Japan. Also in 1720, *Monadologie*, the definitive work of German philosopher Baron Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, saw publication.

Many other important thinkers and philosophers were also born around this time. For example, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1712; Scottish economist Sir James Steuart Denham in 1712; the founder of modern economic theory, Adam Smith, in 1723; the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1724; Qing-dynasty writer Cao Xueqin (Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in), author of the great Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hong lou meng), around 1715.

Nichikan, Religious Reformer

For us the important point is that Nichikan was a great religious reformer who lived in these momentous times.

Japanese Buddhism in this period had become, through a state-instituted parishioner system, closely aligned to the ruling authorities. It had devolved into "funeral Buddhism" with the sole function of controlling and exploiting the common people.

Within Nichiren Shoshu, high-ranking priests appeared during the first half of the 17th century who acted in direct transgression of the Daishonin's teachings. High Priest Nissei, for instance, supported the creation of images of Shakyamuni Buddha. Nichikan vigorously denounced such corruptions and courageously worked to reestablish the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism within the priesthood and without. He was a great scholar who composed many important texts, such as the *Rokkan Sho* (Six-volume Writings) and commentaries on a number of the Daishonin's major writings. He wrote these works for the sake of later generations and out of a selfless dedication to realizing kosen-rufu.

His sights were focused on a future time when the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin would spread throughout the world. He interpreted the word *land* of the principle of securing the peace of the land through establishing the truth (*rissho ankoku*) as indicating "the entire world" and also "the future."¹



German philosopher and mathematician Baron Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. In 1720, his definitive work, *Monadologie*, saw publication. He made contributions to optics, mechanics, statistics, logic and probability theory.

At the same time, he was a great human being who loved the people and was loved by them in turn. He lived a frugal, simple life, and he took pains to be a model of the priestly ideal of having few desires and being satisfied with having little, so that those who came after him would do likewise. Of course, he never married or had a family.

He treated the sincere donations he received from lay followers as if they were more precious than all other treasures. He insisted that the offerings made in exchange for copies of the Gohonzon were the very written characters of the Gohonzon transformed into gold. Such offerings should be used, he sternly warned his fellow priests, for kosen-rufu and not

for any other purpose.² The Nikken sect has utterly trampled on and violated this solemn spirit.

'No Prayer Will Go Unanswered'

Nichikan Shonin wrote, "If you have faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo even for a short while, no prayer will go unanswered, no offense unexpiated, no good fortune unbestowed and no righteousness unproven."³

How overjoyed Nichikan would surely be to know that SGI members all over the world are chanting to the Gohonzon that he transcribed and are showing wonderful actual proof of faith, your lives filled with benefit!

Nichikan further wrote, "This Gohonzon of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms is not somewhere outside us. It resides within the faith of us ordinary people."⁴ And: "Everyone who receives and embraces this object of worship enters the way of the Buddha from time without beginning.... We common mortals who have entered the way of this Buddha are entirely one with this Buddha of limitless joy."⁵ And further: "When one embraces and has faith in this Gohonzon and chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, one's life immediately becomes the object of fundamental respect of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms. It becomes the life of Nichiren Daishonin."⁶

As these statements convey, Nichikan directly refuted the discriminatory view that placed priests above and believers below. He broke new ground in his times by declaring that Buddhism was and always would be a teaching of humanism and great undifferentiating wisdom.

He also emphasized that the efforts of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to propagate the Mystic Law would invariably be dogged by the hatred and jealousy of many, and that the most hostile of these elements would be found among high-ranking priests of which the sutra warns when it says, "Evil demons will take possession of others" (*Lotus Sutra*, p. 194).⁷

Elsewhere, Nichikan wrote: "On a flower-filled morning, we dislike the wind. On a moonlit night, we abhor the clouds. [In the same way,] if we do not rebuke the evil priests who slander the Law, how can we carry out the good of the True Law?"⁸

The Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan functions to safeguard SGI members from the malicious schemes of slanderous priests who have succumbed to destructive forces; it is "the banner of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra" (MW-1, 211) behind which we unite to carry out our activities to spread the Mystic Law throughout the world as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Those Who Respect Are Respected

I hope that the SGI will always remain the most friendly and harmonious of organizations. I ask you, as leaders, to be careful never to lose your tempers and scold members emotionally. The role of a leader is to be patient, to listen to what everyone has to say and to be encouraging and supportive. The Daishonin said, "Always

remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse each other" (MW-3, 208). He also said, "Even should the people on your side make a slight error, pretend not to see or hear it" (MW-3, 239).

Our fellow members are all family with whom we are linked by deep bonds. If we support and protect this family, they will act as protective forces in our environment, supporting and keeping us from harm lifetime after lifetime. This is a profound principle of Buddhism.

Those who sincerely respect and praise their friends will also be respected and praised. Those who truly rejoice at their friends' happiness will enjoy a deep and genuine happiness themselves.

You are all infinitely noble leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and have an immeasurably profound mission. Please stay healthy and cheerful. And please serve others with an ever-youthful spirit, with sincerity and genuine concern as you carry out your human revolution and strive always to create a life of utmost value.

The people of the world are hoping that the coming century will be an age in which humanistic ideals and values such as those embraced by the SGI prevail. All the world has great expectations for your endeavors. You will demonstrate the greatness of Buddhism if each of you, in your respective country, on the unique stage of your mission, becomes an exemplary citizen who values and contributes to society and to the welfare of your local community.

I close my speech today with these simple words to you, dear friends of deep mystic bonds: Your individual triumphs are the triumphs of the SGI; your progress is the progress of the world. ❧

1. "Commentary on the 'Rissho Ankoku Ron,'" *Nichikan Shonin Mondanshu* (The Commentaries of Nichikan Shonin) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1980), p. 8.
2. *Fuji Shugaku Yoshu* (Essential Works of the Fuji School), ed. Nichiko Hori (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1991), vol. 5, p. 356.
3. "Commentary on 'The True Object of Worship,'" *Nichikan Shonin Mondanshu*, p. 443.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 465.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 488.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 548.
7. "Commentary on 'The Selection of the Time,'" *Nichikan Shonin Mondanshu*, p. 234.
8. "Commentary on the 'Rissho Ankoku Ron,'" *Nichikan Shonin Mondanshu*, p. 26.

By LISA JONES
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT



Nanci Rossov's organization, Filmanthropic, helps women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, people over 40 and the economically disadvantaged gain work experience in the film industry.

Film director or social activist? Nanci Rossov was torn between these two seemingly divergent career paths. Then a car accident. Injuries. Deep prayers and the fervent question, "What do I really want to do with my life?"

"I was chanting a lot," Ms. Rossov says, "and it occurred to me in front of the Gohonzon. I told a friend, 'I'm going to create an organization that promotes diversity in the film industry.' My friend said, 'Then that's your mission for world peace!' At the time, I didn't think I was important enough to have a mission for world peace." She laughs, disbelieving.

But now she not only sees the value of her varied talents, interests and experiences, she has integrated them into a vision for making Hollywood more accessible for people who are underrepresented in the filmmaking work force.

Two years ago, Ms. Rossov founded Filmanthropic, a not-for-profit organization that provides both on-the-job training and creative-control opportunities for women, people with disabilities, members of ethnic communities, people over age 40 and people identified by federal government criteria as being economically disadvantaged. The program is open to people who live in the Los Angeles area and is not a training program for actors.

By producing at least one low-budget independent feature film each year, Filmanthropic gives participants the hands-on experience they need to compete in the Hollywood job market.

"This is a difficult business to break into," Ms. Rossov explains. "Because movies cost millions of dollars to make, studios and producers can't afford to take chances when it comes to hiring. Filmanthropic provides a way for participants to show ac-

tual proof of their capabilities and earn on-screen credits."

Rossov herself has shown such actual proof. She was co-founder and artistic director of Theatre Aquarius, a leading Canadian regional company, before graduating from the American Film Institute directors program. Her directing credits include *The Adventures of the Black Stallion*, starring Mickey Rooney. She has coordinated educational programs for the Directors' Guild of America and served as an advisor to the Canadian government on the role of women in the film industry. Her work as a writer, producer and di-

rector has garnered commendations from the governor of California, the State Assembly and the city of Los Angeles.

Hollywood's response to Filmanthropic has been as gratifying to Ms. Rossov as her past successes, if not more so. "I'm moved by the generosity and spirit of philanthropy in this business," she says, pointing to the office furniture that was donated by Columbia Tristar. The office space, too, was donated—in the aptly named Crossroads of the World Building, beneath the famous Hollywood sign.

Yet despite the positive buzz about Filmanthropic, funding

has been hard to find. "We're a grass-roots operation that can't survive on a grass-roots budget," Ms. Rossov says, citing the relatively high costs of filmmaking.

But, as some SGI members say, if what you want is possible, then why do you need the Gohonzon?

"I pray for the success of Filmanthropic," Ms. Rossov says. "So I have to believe that the funding I need will appear. It's hard to keep going when grants don't come through. But I have to challenge myself to overcome this obstacle. Gandhi said, 'You must become the change you

wish to see in the world.' Filmanthropic is based on this kind of faith. My mission is my work, and my work is an expression of my Buddhist practice."

Currently, Ms. Rossov is struggling to get Filmanthropic's first movie, an interracial love story, off the ground. "We're at an important juncture," she says. "We need to begin principal photography this year, absolutely, do or die."

As almost everyone in Hollywood can attest, assembling all the requisite pieces to put a film into production is no small feat. "One of my friends says that making a movie is like playing dominoes with clouds," Ms. Rossov says.

In such circumstances, she finds Nichiren Daishonin's letter "The Eight Winds" to be particularly inspirational.

Ms. Rossov's Buddhist practice has enabled her to remain focused on her larger purpose and maintain a humanistic attitude. "I've learned to resist the urge to slander people who don't support what I'm trying to do," she says. "If a person—whether a studio executive or a grant administrator—doesn't see things my way, I have to work around that. Because of Buddhist practice and study, I know better than to waste time and energy thinking ill of people who 'just don't get it.' I have to keep moving forward.

So far, the people who do get it include actor/director Edward James Olmos and actress/producer Jasmine Guy, both of whom serve on Filmanthropic's board of advisors.

"Many people have a cynical view of Hollywood, that it's a town based on insincere connections," Ms. Rossov says. "But I refuse to buy into that perception. People want to get into the entertainment industry because they believe they have something important to say, something to contribute. I refuse to underestimate the power of another person's dream." ❧

Movie Mission

A Hollywood filmmaker uses her talents and Buddhist practice to create an organization promoting diversity in the industry.

GLOSSARY

Buddha: One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature is inherent in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion, spiritual strength, hope and unshakable happiness.

daimoku: Literally, "title." Refers to the invocation, or chanting, of Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

Gohonzon: The embodiment of the law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the form of a mandala. *Honzon* means "object of funda-

mental respect"; *go* means "worthy of honor." The *Gohonzon* takes the form of a paper scroll inscribed with Chinese and two Sanskrit characters. Together, these characters represent life in its highest condition: Buddhahood. "Nam-myohorenge-kyo, Nichiren" is written down the center of the Gohonzon.

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, *gongyo* means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life Span of the Tathagata" (16th) chapter

of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo in front of the

Gohonzon.
Gosho: Literally, "writing worthy of great respect": the writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

ichinen: Literally, "one mind." The life-moment, or ultimate reality, that is manifested at each moment in common mortals.

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's ac-

tions in the past have shaped one's reality at present, and actions in the present determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

kosen-rufu: Literally, to "widely declare and spread (Buddhism)." To secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of true Buddhism.

Latter Day of the Law: The period beginning 2,000 years after Shakyamuni's death, when his teachings lose their power and the essence of the Lotus Sutra will be propagated.

Having Heart



Dallas Malloy uses the never-give-up spirit she learned from boxing as she faces alcoholism and drug addiction.

By DAVE CORBETT

NORMAN, OKLA., CORRESPONDENT

Dallas Malloy recently boxed on the big screen in the opening sequence of *Jerry Maguire*. In the movie, Tom Cruise plays a big-time, big-money sports promoter. Dallas plays herself: An up-and-coming comet of the sports world who flashes before the audience momentarily and then disappears.

Four years ago at the age of 16, she made amateur boxing history when she fought in, and won by unanimous decision, the first officially sanctioned amateur bout between females. In a sense, she was an unlikely choice for making history. A talented musician since early childhood, she fell for boxing in 1992 and pursued it with a passion.

"I wanted a match just like any other boxer," she says. But she soon discovered that the official amateur boxing rule book restricted sanctioned events to

males only. She wrote the American Civil Liberties Union for help. Her assigned attorney, Suzanne Thomas, won the landmark case in a Seattle courtroom in 1993.

And so she got her chance for a match. Moments before the opening bell rang, her coach and boxing mentor, James Ferguson, gave her his final encouragement with tears in his eyes: "You have no idea what's inside if you just dig deep."

Dallas knew in her heart what he meant: "It's hard to explain, but I know when you're working out you push yourself as hard as you can and then go a little further — there's no limit to what you have inside of you," she says. "That's the heart of the boxer — you never give up."

It was the one thing from the world of boxing that stuck with her after the media attention surrounding her win had begun to subside. That's when she found herself up against an even more challenging opponent: alcoholism and drug addiction.

"As an alcoholic, you tend to trade one obsession for another. As my love — obsession — for boxing faded, it coincided with my increased drinking," she says. "I took a serious interest in acting, which focused me for a while, but I continued on a downward slope. Then when I discovered cocaine, I lost all ambition."

Last January, she sought help in dealing with this "obsessive-compulsive hell." She renews her commitment to recovery every day, and it begins with loving herself. "I have always craved love, but no human can give that love you really desire," she says. "If I have contentment and peace, self-love, then I will not be seeking for something out there to fulfill that need."

At 20, she already has made history. Still, she explains with an aura of genuine humility and joy, her quest has only just begun: "The best thing I can do is to help myself and then, perhaps, through my example, others can see that the potential for spirituality and growth are limitless." WJ