

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

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YWD, YMD Hold 1st National Conferences

Young Women Strengthen Their Identity

By CHARLISE LYLES

DAYTON, OHIO, CORRESPONDENT

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., July 17-20

Creativity, appreciation for diversity, gratitude for SGI, determination to study, and a deeper sense of true identity flowed from the SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leadership Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

"The Everglades is all sorts of textures — sawgrass, slimy

green stuff on the water, bird feathers, dry tree bark — all coming from the same fertile ground," said Deborah Thayer of Virginia. "The YWD members are just like that — so many textures."

"We are a rainbow of beautiful voices," added Samirah Evans of Atlanta.

Even the hairdos spoke diversity: flowing red waves, Nubian locks, stringy dos, blunt cuts, braids, bobs — even a bald

PLEASE SEE YWD, 4

Young Men Empower Themselves

By DAVID BOGOSLAW

NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., July 10-13

In a weekend that went from celebrating the young men's division's past — poking fun at its more extreme aspects — to creating new trust and camaraderie, 180 young men from across the United States gathered and planned seeds for relationships that they can nurture in the future. They also learned that the

mentor-disciple relationship is key to unleashing their potential. The conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center commemorated the 46th anniversary of the establishment of the division on July 11, 1951, where 180 young men gathered with the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda.

"I wanted young men to feel a sense of empowerment," said SGI-USA YMD Chief James Herrmann. "And I feel we ac-

PLEASE SEE YMD, 4

Four Radio Stations To Add SGI President's 'Recollections'

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Aug. 7

Radio listeners in four additional cities will soon be able to tune in to SGI President Ikeda's recollections of leading world figures. Popular with Los Angeles listeners since its debut in April, the program, titled *Values and Visions: Portraits of Global Citizens*, will in the next few weeks debut in Honolulu, San Francisco, Seattle and Las Vegas.

The series starts on Aug. 9 in Honolulu, to be broadcast every Saturday at 1:30 p.m. on KZOO-AM (1210). San Francisco's KVTO-AM (1400) begins the series Aug. 10 and will broadcast it every Sunday at 12:30 p.m. In Seattle, KEZX-AM (1150) will begin the series Aug. 16, playing it every Saturday at 2:30 p.m. KLAV-AM (1230) in Las Vegas plans to start the program the first week of September, although the day and time have not been decided. In addition, Keiko Kimura, the show's producer, is in negotiations to have stations in several other states pick the show up.

Values and Visions is based on articles that have been appearing in both the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* (as "My Recollections" and "Daisaku Ikeda's

PLEASE SEE RADIO, 5



Making Friends at Camp

Long Island Headquarters members in New York explain Buddhist concepts via stories, videos, songs and drawings to children at St. John's Episcopal Church's summer day camp. Canon Cecily Broderick invited the SGI-USA to share its philosophy as part of her ongoing efforts to educate children in the ways of other religions. (Above)

Children sing a song after watching a video on the life of Martin Luther King Jr. (Right) Kids draw pictures to express the theme 'I Can Fly,' one of the songs sung during the day.



VOICES

What does the phrase 'I am the SGI-USA' mean to you?

Members from Midwest Joint Territory respond:



I have the greatest opportunity ever to face humankind, and that's an awesome responsibility. I can achieve anything, and I'm dedicated to realizing my potential and showing the world a brighter future through peace, culture, education and prosperity.
— BILL SCHWEIKERT, Omaha, Neb.



It means that I am a reflection of the future of world peace. Being a young, multiracial, Buddhist woman, I am a minority. However, through my practice, I celebrate these aspects of my life and celebrate being an SGI member in a country of diversity. Our organization's diversity is a reflection of what kosen-rufu means.
— LISA HONN, Rantoul, Kans.



SGI President Ikeda has always gone first in showing us how to apply the Daishonin's Buddhism to ourselves and society. If "I am the SGI-USA," I must absorb his guidance and do my part to make this the model organization for the world, to look for responsibility and be successful in fulfilling it.
— JIM CELER, Omaha, Neb.



It means that when I chant, not only is my life condition getting better, but everyone in the SGI is getting better because we are all united. Also, when I do activities, I am not only creating good karma for myself, but I am also encouraging other members and bettering the organization.
— NIKI JORDAN STEED, Omaha, Neb.



It means that my Buddhist practice impacts all areas of my life. Because of the law of cause and effect, I represent the SGI doing anything and everything. This statement also means that my actions impact the organization and that I have a Buddha nature.
— PATRICIA FORD, Kansas City, Miss.



To me it means that wherever I go, whatever I do, I am an SGI-USA member. And I must always strive to reflect the greatness of the organization in my words, actions and behaviors toward others.
— CHUCK MARTIN, Lee's Summit, Miss.



I have been a member since March 1995. I'm the only Buddhist among my non-practicing family members and my good friends. I have been working hard to live my life as a representative of this practice. I have been given many opportunities to participate in the organization. I have been doing activities and I provide transportation to activities for members. "I am the SGI-USA" means I really feel I am a part of the SGI-USA.
— BOB COSTA, Kansas City, Miss.

Any Moment Can Be A Crucial One

What makes a "crucial moment" crucial?

The answer: You. Your attitude. Your actions.

Webster's New World Dictionary calls a crisis a turning point that can lead to a condition that is either better or worse. Unfortunately, the dictionary offers no advice about how to get to that better place. To be in a crisis implies that we have no control; we are at its mercy and will wind up wherever it chooses to dump us.

But when we employ Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism — the strategy of the Lotus Sutra — we don't have to be at the whim of a crisis or crucial moment. We can take the reins of any situation and steer it in the direction we choose — in the direction that brings us closer to our victory, to our enlightenment.

In other words, we can choose to turn any moment into a crucial moment. The transformation may involve many steps, but there are at least three points to keep in mind.

The first is to recognize the moment for what it is. And you might be surprised — it doesn't have to be a dramatic event like a major illness or a plane crash. A turning point can come at our most benign moments — washing dishes, talking with friends, taking a walk — any moment in which we can envision a new future.

And then we make a decision.

What kind of decision? A decision to change something. A decision to take action. A decision to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Does this all sound simple so far? Don't be fooled. At moments of well-being, of a sense of strength, it's easy to make a determination. "Oh,

EDITORIAL

some might say, "if I were facing a crisis, I would never forget the steel-hard determination I feel right now." Easier said than done.

One defining aspect of a crisis is that our normal thought processes may go out the proverbial window. Perhaps you're on a diet when someone hands you a plate of chocolate-covered goodies. Suddenly your diet becomes a dim memory. What happened to your decision? What if you're facing a far more serious crucial moment? Like a moment when you doubt the practice and wonder if you should quit.

Nichiren Daishonin tells us, "Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [rev. ed.], 180). Foolish, he says. To forget our determination is to be foolish.

One way to cement our determination is to take every opportunity to remind ourselves. Like having fire drills or rehearsing for a play, we can renew our determination frequently and repeatedly — reminding ourselves of our goals for self-development and the happiness of others. Constantly "rehearsing" can make us less likely to forget in a moment of stress.

The third point to keep in mind is our action. Any decision we make is worthless without expressing it in action. This requires courage, and courage arises from chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. As SGI President Ikeda tells us: "Those who stand up at a crucial moment demonstrate genuine greatness. They are people who leave behind an immortal history" (June 28, 1996, *World Tribune*). **W**

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

Please be specific and limit your response to 50 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your response 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

Violence Has No Boundaries

We are writing to take extreme exception to the photo that you published on the front page of the July 18 *World Tribune*. [The photo illustrated an article about] a conference on violence that was held in New York. Why, then, are you using a photo that was taken in Philadelphia...? Your action can lead to many dangerous stereotypes and judgments about the poor and other disenfranchised groups of people who live in...Philadelphia. The inner-city violence depicted in this photo is violence that springs from poverty and racism and has no boundaries.

Philadelphia is a city of infinite potential because of the commitment of its citizens — members and nonmembers. It is a beautiful city rich with cultural and research institutions, professional schools, colleges and universities, innovative theater groups, outdoor festivals, etc. You could have easily put this particular photo into the *World Tribune* without designating any city, because it represents ANYWHERE, unfortunately....

We have both worked in human services for a number of years and will fully acknowledge the insidious nature of violence. We both believe that the SGI is the organization that will change this condition of life for all people.... Please let us refocus our efforts on unifying instead of actions that can only be disunifying.

— EVE GREENSPAN, LSW,
and SARA GREENSPAN, M.Ed., Philadelphia

Editor's Note: We agree with you and regret our oversight. Thank you for helping us to make the problem more clear.

Face the Facts

I'm writing regarding the article "Stop! In the Name of Peace," by Leslie Wines (July 18 *World Tribune*). Specifically I am addressing the workshop Ms. Wines attended, "The Roots of Violence."...

The workshop was led by Sharon AND CHANCE O'Connor. Sure, I led it, but Chance was the reason I was there. He signed up, did the research, and certainly the facet he presented to the group was equally as valid and informative as the piece I did. Why wasn't his name mentioned and his contribution acknowledged?

This next sentence was both frustrating and disappointing: "Combating crimes against children is a key to reducing violence over time, Ms. O'Connor believes." First...the reason we have a violent society is because we are brought up in a violent manner. In our society, children are abused regularly and with such devotion that we have actually come to believe that striking a child, fondly referred to as *corporal punishment*, is acceptable behavior.... Not every child is beaten, but the insidious thing is that abuse is not just physical, it can be and many times is emotional.... Any of these things need only to happen one time for them to devastate a child forever. Therefore, there is NO DOUBT that if we are abused as children we will grow up to abuse ourselves as well as others. This is not my "belief," as the article so erroneously states. This is your very basic case of cause and effect. Accepting these facts is tantamount to ending violence. If we continue as we always have, to deny this reality...we will continue to travel down the same sad road we are currently on. It is only by acknowledging the facts that we can change our behavior.... We must take responsibility and change our karma, not ignore it.

Yes, I understand because the facts are painful to accept.... As we all know, tragedy only happens to someone else and is probably why denial about child abuse has been the biggest obstacle to ending it. Sadly, the crippling shame we feel as abused children is carried into adulthood and remains there, profoundly deep, difficult to perceive and practically impossible to eradicate.

Finally, I am Mrs. Sharon O'Connor, CSW, psychiatric social worker.

— SHARON O'CONNOR, Riverdale, N.Y.

Beyond Here There Be Dragons

PERSPECTIVE

By MICHAEL COCHRANE
BELLINGHAM, WASH.

In 1275, Nichiren Daishonin wrote a letter of thanks and encouragement to a widow who was having a difficult time raising her two children alone. He wrote, "Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, which never fails to turn into spring" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 150).

Winter turning into spring is not only something that happens annually but is an image that is commonly understood by many cultures, and has been for a very long time — the image of darkness, heaviness, hardship and suffering giving way to lightness, joy and delight. Most of the Buddhists I've talked with about the concept of winter turning to spring think of winter as some sort of personal suffering. The image of spring and light are associated with the end of that suffering. Imagine health after a long illness. Love after loneliness. Wisdom after ignorance.

For me, winter is a life-condition that stinks. It usually occurs for me when I determine to challenge something and it doesn't change fast enough. Or relationships hit a new low or I lose my job or I don't get what I think I want. When my life-condition stinks and I experience

feelings of hopelessness or fear or inadequacy, I tend to simply endure and wait for the environment to change.

As an American in the 20th century, I tend to look for a pill or a god or a new place or a different distraction, as well as money, to relieve my suffering for me. And I want my quick fix to be permanent — so that I won't have to suffer ever again.

From a Buddhist standpoint, there are some obvious pitfalls to this approach. It's like living in an outhouse for so long that it begins to smell like a garden.

Nichiren Daishonin said in "On Attaining Buddhahood," "If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured throughout eternity, you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life" (MW-1, 3). He also strongly recommended chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. More than once. Since the Gohonzon and the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the mirror of our lives and the tool for change, this practice is essential for changing winter into spring.

Obstacles and suffering are required. This is a difficult concept for me. I keep thinking obstacles and suffering are to be avoided. I want to just kick back and smell the garden. Fortunately, obstacles and sufferings tend to show up in my life regularly.

Back when people thought the world was flat — which is

the equivalent level of my Buddhist understanding — map-makers used to draw a line at the boundary of the known world. Beyond the line they put the words "Beyond here there be dragons." Now, the last thing I want to do is sail out past my known world. My desire to rid my life of suffering provides the motivation and courage necessary to confront the possibility of dragons, just like we did back when the world was flat.

I think a number of people start practicing from just such motivation. This voyage of discovery is how I think of human revolution, the development of hope and courage and confidence through the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

We turn winter into spring by making more good causes than bad ones. What we need to do is muster courage, find wisdom and take correct action. Courage comes from our determination to change. Wisdom arises from our study. It takes both courage and wisdom to take correct action for ourselves and others.

What we get when we do so is actual proof. And actual proof is spring. It may manifest as a successful resolution of a problem. It may manifest as the acquisition of hope or confidence where there was none before. Actual proof results in the conviction that this practice is the tool for turning winter into spring. WT

We Want Your FNCC Impressions!

Have You Been to the Florida Nature and Culture Center Yet? Share Your Experience With the World!

What was your visit to the FNCC like? Did you make any new friends? Did you learn something new about your practice? Did the FNCC change your view of the SGI? Was there a leader there who impressed you? What did you bring home to your family, work or local organization?

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.

Contact us via the Internet . . . SGI-USA Web Page: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>
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The setting of the Florida Nature and Culture Center is conducive to the young women's open discussions.

Young Women Strengthen True Identity

YWD, FROM PAGE 1

head with big bulb earrings.

Determination to study, resolve to challenge the temple issue and creativity also emerged from the four-day conference where 183 young women met under the theme "Strengthening Our True Identity."

The opening Goshō lecture on "On The Treasure Tower" laid the foundation for understanding exactly what true identity is. We have to recognize and treasure the Buddha nature of compassion and wisdom that exists within each of our lives, said SGI-USA Women's Division Chief Wendy Clark. "Please treasure yourself," she said. "Then, you can treasure the Buddha nature within others even more."

At the closing open-mike session, Paula Lambertson of Palm Beach Territory reflected on her effort to see the beauty of her true self. "In my corner of the universe, I really fight with myself to be happy and for my members to be happy. But whenever I feel little devils coming up, I forget about kosen-rufu," she said.

She then shared the following from SGI President Ikeda: "When we slander ourselves and think we're not growing and that we will never change, we are making the mistake of thinking that the negative part of us is our essence. This is not true. Our essence is Buddhahood.... Don't slander yourself."

"The Role of Young Women" panel discussion sought to fortify a sense of identity by focusing on second Soka Gakkai pres-

ident Josei Toda's eternal guidelines to young women:

- Make study of the Goshō and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism your foundation.
- Forge your character.
- Practice Buddhism with selfless sincerity.
- Courageously fight evil and injustice.
- Develop a strong sense of mission.

With gutsy sincerity and honesty, women on the panel shared experiences in faith, such as overcoming eating disorders and accepting a father's imprisonment.

Study and the application of Buddhism helped Beth LaMure of Los Angeles, she said in her experience. "I don't think I would've lasted through times of suffering if I hadn't studied and studied," she said of her battle to overcome her deep rage, the byproduct of growing up in a dysfunctional family. "You don't change your karma sitting in front of the Gohonzon chanting," she said. "You have to change it when you are about to blow up" at someone.

"I didn't understand that study meant actually applying Buddhism to my life," she said. "Always maintain self-control. Keep a smiling countenance at home. Be courteous to members. That sounded nice, a little Pollyanna. But when I started to apply it, I saw such a change in my environment."

A nitty-gritty session on the temple issue clarified the SGI's identity as the organization carrying out the true practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Bud-

dism. Actively refuting Nikken's erroneous, distorted teachings is practicing Buddhism just as Nichiren Daishonin taught, said Theresa Hauber, vice women's division secretariat chief. The Daishonin fought against the heretical sects of his time, which were rooted in the political power plays of a feudalistic society, she said, rather than the common person's ability to attain happiness.

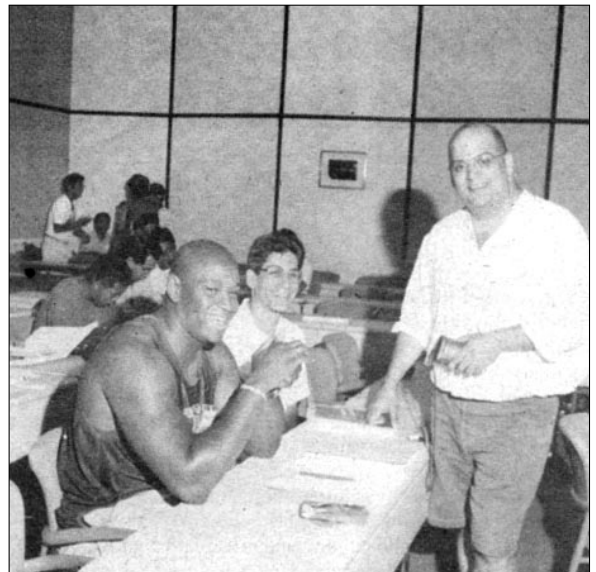
A clear explanation of the temple issue should be a natural part of introducing others to this Buddhism, she added, so that from the very start it is clearly distinguished from erroneous practices. "Make this issue your own," she urged. "Be comfortable discussing it with members, non members and new members."

She went on: "We as an organization need to look at how we are failing members who're joining the temple. Use this issue to improve our organization. Because of this issue, we have an opportunity to take better care of our members and expand our capacity."

The diversity of the group impressed many young women. Said Kathleen Morelock of San Francisco: "This is, hands down, the most diverse group of individuals I've ever seen doing one thing. I hope all of us can pledge that we can keep the kind of diversity that we see in this room — especially with the new neighborhood reorganization — because I think this is the hope of our organization and our country."

Yet, said Aisha Henry, a YWD

PLEASE SEE YWD, 5



Study sessions help young men learn about the mentor-disciple bond.

Young Men Empower Selves

YMD, FROM PAGE 1

complished that by bringing so many diverse people together. Young men who are struggling alone in their districts got together to encourage one another, share their dreams and see that others have the same struggles."

That was the experience of Francesco Miniati, who began to practice in his native Italy eight years ago and is now getting his Ph.D. in astrophysics at the University of Minnesota. "Recently I experienced some difficulties in doing activities, mostly having to do with my ego and arrogance," he confessed. "In Florida, I realized that there is something incredible that connects people who strive to protect and advance kosen-rufu."

"I didn't talk to a lot of people, but the people I had a chance to meet made a big impression on me," he elaborated. "I felt that I established this deep connection with people. And these people I will meet again as we fulfill our missions in society.... We really have to support one another." The emotion-packed dedication of a tree in memory of Sergio Jacala of New York, who died in May, highlighted the importance of cherishing comrades as the young men strive together for the people's happiness.

Study presentations throughout the weekend illuminated the mentor-disciple relationship from many angles, including those of combating evil in the priesthood and in society, self-reliance, and the future of propagation activities in this country. For many, the weekend was an

unprecedented chance to gain greater understanding of SGI President Ikeda's life and vision for the future.

"I picked up the idea of modeling myself after President Ikeda's spirit and saw he's so deeply compassionate," 16-year-old Jason Evans of Norfolk, Va., the youngest person there, said. "I got a lot of fresh ideas that I want to try to implement in my area."

The conference seemed to have conveyed its message that to understand the mentor-disciple relationship means to have the same commitment as President Ikeda to protect the organization and each individual from authoritarianism and injustice. As President Ikeda is doing with the temple issue, showing us how to fight evil. I feel I have to try harder to take the kind of actions he is. One day I will be facing my own particular situation and I will be on my own and will have to show how strong I am."

Newly appointed Soka Group Chief Dave Eisenberg referred to the weekend as the "line in the sand that separates what the SGI-USA has been from how we will be as an organization in the future."

As an example, Mr. Eisenberg shared his vision for the Soka Group, where the national committee will serve more as a "clearinghouse for information" instead of only to provide direction.

That way, Soka Group members around the country can benefit from one another's accumulated experience and wisdom.

PLEASE SEE YMD, 5

Photo by DIXON HAMBY

Tempers and Toddlers

Houston's mothers group talks with a professional about ways to handle temperamental tots.

By MAUDE O'DONNELL & DORIS BRYANT
CORRESPONDENTS

Houston, July 20

Why children misbehave was a theme of a mothers group meeting today. Guest speaker Ballard Burgher, a clinical psychologist and licensed social worker, fielded questions from parents and grandparents seeking how best to deal with children who have temper tantrums, and the most effective discipline for them other than shouting, threatening or spanking them.

"If parents want to teach their children how to communicate their needs through appropriate behavior, there are two things that must be done," Dr. Burgher said.

"First, give children positive attention or praise when they act appropriately. Second, remove your attention from misbehavior. In other words, ignore it. This teaches them a new philosophy."

He also stressed that children's needs change with their growth and development. Therefore, effective parenting skills will vary from child to child. There are many other parenting techniques available, such as rewards and privileges, time outs and commands that parents may also find helpful, he said.

Andrea Batsche, mother of three, including two toddlers, said: "Dr. Burgher's emphasis on the use of constant 'correct praise' in rearing children is an important factor which allows them to develop a sense of respect for other people. I've attended many parenting classes in the past, but this one was a lot more personable, and I could have my concerns addressed. I like the idea

that the SGI is beginning to tackle the parenting issue."

Two-year-old Noel Reyes' father, who is Catholic, asked Dr. Burgher what impact having parents who are of different religions has on a child's upbringing. "Parents need to agree on the values they want to impart to their children," Dr. Burgher said. "Furthermore, having parents of different religions can teach the child to appreciate differences."

Tonya Ayers, mother of two active boys, had this to contribute: "As a Buddhist and a mother, I realize that children misbehave in order to test our limits and because it is the nature of children. More important, children help parents do their human revolution. In turn, we help them build the foundation for their practice and future. This parenting session gave me some new insight into methods of problem-solving, and I'm glad I came." ❧

Four Radio Stations Pick Up 'My Recollections'

RADIO, FROM PAGE 1

Recollections of World Figures" respectively). In this series, President Ikeda has shared his insights into what makes figures like Rosa Parks and Cornell Capa great and talked about his encounters with them. Many Los Angeles listeners have been calling GMG, Ms. Kimura's production company, with comments on the show, about 90 percent of them positive, she says.

Broadcast every Saturday at 1:30 p.m. on KALI-FM (106.3) in Los Angeles, *Values and Visions* has attracted a largely Japanese-language audience, although English-language listeners have also shown interest. (The show is half in Japanese and half in English.)

Many listeners were impressed by President Ikeda's

piece on Jose Abueva, former president of the University of the Philippines. Japanese forces occupying the Philippines during World War II killed Abueva's parents, but he has harbored no hatred toward the Japanese and has in fact worked together with them for peace as the university secretary of the U.N. University at its Tokyo headquarters.

One listener, a soldier stationed with the Japanese army in the Philippines at that time, said Abueva's story reminded him of the many friends he lost in the war. Another listener, a Hiroshima survivor, said the show made her recall her parents' death in the Hiroshima bombing.

Ms. Kimura's original intent in producing the series was, through the insights in President Ikeda's essays, to give hope and courage to people who are struggling. Although not an SGI mem-

ber, Ms. Kimura also felt it her responsibility as a member of the media to introduce President Ikeda's efforts for peace to an audience that may only know the negative image of him created by the Japanese media. Many listeners have called to say the series has indeed changed their idea of the SGI and President Ikeda, Ms. Kimura says. Many said they were impressed by the SGI president's activities in society, and now realize the SGI's excommunication by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood was a good thing.

So far, GMG has completed 16 segments. Ms. Kimura is planning to finish 10 more episodes in coming weeks. Plans for an English-only version of the show are also in the works. ❧

YMD, FROM PAGE 4

dom.

Sensitivity to diversity is another area of growth for the young men's organization. One of the presentations elicited some discomfort by not being inclusive enough in discussing sex and gender issues. One young man reminded participants that there are many gay young men who will never get married or have children and

that the YMD organization needs to be more respectful of diverse lifestyles.

"This conference was not built on hype," Mr. Herrmann said, summing up the weekend, "but on very concrete ideas and personal exchange."

"I hope this experience will be engraved in the young men's lives as opposed to being only temporary. As young men, we need to focus on a new, fresh motivation," he said. ❧

YWD, FROM PAGE 4

territory leader in Brooklyn, New York: "We are so much more alike than different. I'm returning home with a renewed determination to focus on those likenesses rather than those differences."

Kim Gregory of New York enjoyed a quiet moment the morning of departure. "I took a walk to the top of the hill and saw this shape in the water," she said. "Suddenly, it spread its wings and took off, and I thought: 'Wow! What a symbol for this whole experience.'" ❧



Visitors from Islamic countries enjoy the dialogue at the Seattle center. The guests were on a fact-finding mission about religion in the United States.

Commonalities Found Between Islam, Buddhism

By JENIFER MILLER

CORRESPONDENT

Seattle, Aug. 7

Eight visiting Islamic academic and government leaders met with several SGI-USA members at the Seattle Culture Center on July 22 to talk about religion, politics, war, the sexes and, most important, happiness in this world. "The exciting part was how open and relaxed everyone here was," member Dave Harris said. "The Islamic visitors were as anxious to dialogue as we were. Differences in language and religion were not a barrier."

The eight guests, representing six Islamic countries (Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, the West Bank and Yemen), were traveling to different U.S. cities under the auspices of the World Affairs Council of Seattle.

The WAC International Visitor Program selected the SGI-USA to play host for this exchange because SGI-USA members practice a "non-traditional" religion in America, and because they were looking for an organization that could organize such a meeting quickly and make the Middle East visitors feel welcome.

With the short notice, an elaborate reception was still put together. A children's exhibit on diversity filled one end of the lobby. Flower arrangements adorned walkways. A photo exhibit of SGI President Ikeda's travels for peace was set up.

When the visitors arrived, people from all backgrounds were waiting with big smiles to greet them. And John MacFarland, city administrator of Tukwila, where the culture center is located, was on hand to offer welcoming words.

After a formal opening, the

reception moved to a conference room for free-flowing talk on many subjects. What is the status of women in Buddhism? What is happiness? How can one overcome suffering? How do SGI-USA members propagate their faith?

"It was just like the scene in *The New Human Revolution*," said Dave Harris. "Shin'ichi Yamamoto imagines a conference taking place among Nichiren, Jesus, Shakyamuni and Mohammed, religious leaders who fought for the people's happiness throughout their lives. Shin'ichi says that a common understanding among people could be quickly reached based on such a conference. However, because such a conference is not actually possible, Shin'ichi says that it is up to the different groups' believers today to return to the spirit of these religious teachers and talk with one another from that standpoint," Mr. Harris said.

"As I saw from today, this is absolutely true," agreed Waheed Ali Ahmed Rasheed, deputy governor from Yemen. He added that "people should continue to talk about commonalities to discover universal principles that in turn lead to fundamental solutions to world problems."

Art Hoover, head of the joint territory's Culture Department, said: "This conference was a real answer to my prayers. It was an affirmation that we can live out our faith on the world stage."

Before leaving the United States a few days later, the eight visitors reported impressions of their trip to WAC, saying that their visit to the SGI-USA was the highlight of their stay and how they looked forward to similar get-togethers. ❧

SONDY NIETHAMMER, LONG BEACH, CALIF.

I Am a Winner

Eighteen years ago, before I discovered the SGI and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, I could never have imagined what human revolution meant, let alone dreamed that I could ever change my self-destructive nature into one of absolute happiness.

Growing up near Evansville, Ind., I was sixth in a family of seven children. My earliest memories are of my family yelling and screaming at one another. I know now that my parents did their best, but they were

bedroom and gang-raped me. I was traumatized and scared, and I escaped as soon as I could. I was more afraid of having to tell my parents what had happened than I was that the boys might attack me again, so I ran to an abandoned church. I was there for days before my older brother found me.

I felt so ashamed and worthless that I didn't tell anyone what had happened. (I would be 30 before I would feel safe enough to deal with the emotional damage I had suffered.)

dealing drugs for the kids at school.

Things went from bad to worse, and as soon as I turned 18 I left home and took off for Columbus, Ohio, to attend modeling school. I found work at hair show conventions, where drugs were easier to find than ever. The hair stylists had their hair products in one bag and drugs in the other. I stayed high constantly. I wouldn't allow myself to feel any emotions. I just wanted to stay numb and pretend I was someone else. I had no self-respect, no dignity, no confidence.

One night I met a girl who danced at Larry Flynt's Hustler Club in Columbus. This started two years of prostitution and performing in orgies with Larry and Althea Flynt and countless members of the publishing industry. On several occasions I was beaten black and blue, and I even contracted gonorrhea.

It was an endless cycle of drugs, prostitution, partying and money. I was earning thousands of dollars a week and blowing it all on my \$500-a-day cocaine habit. I was sinking deeper and deeper into nonexistence, and soon there was no reality in my life. I had become a marathon runner — running from my problems. Finally, I ran all the way to Los Angeles for another shot at modeling. Instead, I hooked up with a madam and a cocaine dealer, continuing my routine of prostitution and partying all night, then sleeping all day.

A girl I knew from modeling gigs invited me to a party in North Hollywood. Little did I know that inside was an SGI meeting. I sat in the dining room, high on cocaine, snickering while I heard Nam-myoho-enge-kyo being chanted in the living room.

I'll never forget the initial impact of meeting Cleve Ford, the gentleman who was leading the meeting. I sensed his electricity, warmth and compassion. He explained to me briefly why they were chanting and said that my life could become better — it could be anything I dreamt it could be. I had the power inside to change any type of suffering and truly become happy, he said. If I wished, he'd show me how to chant for a better, fuller life.

I felt a spark of hope. A simple conversation with a stranger

may seem minor, but in my life's travels, no one had ever spoken to me unless they wanted drugs or my body. I could sense that this man genuinely cared for my life when I didn't.

During the next two years, Cleve and eight other members continued to chant for my protection and happiness, even while watching from the sidelines as I continued my old lifestyle. The amazing thing, though, is that they never gave up on me. Cleve remarked at one time, "I'm not coming after your body, I'm coming after your life!" Those words touched me deeply and I began to cry; all he wanted was for me to have some sort of expectation to change and become happy.

Meanwhile, the circle of my old life was diminishing. The madam was arrested. The cocaine dealer was killed by the Mafia. Others were dying. Most of the people I had run with were either in jail or dead. I desperately wanted to change, but I was afraid to let go of drugs, not wanting to face what I might find deep inside. I thought, I can't possibly change; partying is all I know.

Then one night I overdosed on cocaine. I survived, but, boy, was that my wake-up call. I had no choice but to chant. There was no turning back.

The night before I received the Gohonzon, Cleve and those eight other members prepared a dinner party for me, including a video of the 1975 Hawaii culture festival. That night I chanted to join the young women's division Drill Dance and dance for world peace.

I was determined to change my life, no matter what it took. I consciously disassociated myself from my old friends, from the damage and the pain. On Sept. 16, 1979, I received the Gohonzon. That was the beginning of a slow, 18-year uphill climb of cleansing, healing, discipline, growth and happiness.

The first thing I did was create a dream/goal list, and I consistently chanted morning and evening along with gongyo. Without partying, I discovered I was sleeping at night, then rising at 5:00 a.m. and chanting for two hours before going to my new 40-hour-a-week job as a receptionist.

This period was my education — as I immersed myself in SGI activities, including Drill Dance and district discussion meetings, I was learning about the power of my life.

Gradually, something in me was awakening to the chanting. It was as if my heart had been

buried under layers of darkness. At times it was painful to keep going — I begrudged my life and hated how I grew up. I was filled with self-doubt. However, as I continued to chant, day by month by year, my life began to expand and shine, and I felt a deep, strong identity.

I spent every moment I could sharing and teaching others what I knew about this Buddhism that had changed my life. I sought guidance frequently from senior leaders. But one area, one significant weakness, was my study of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. And it was partly because my reading ability was poor.

On several occasions, my young women's division leader, Portlyn Benson, encouraged me to participate in study meetings. I forced myself to get up in front of the members and struggle to read the *World Tribune*. To this day I am so thankful that I found the courage, because it helped strengthen my reading skills. It really was like school.

One of the things I studied over and over was an excerpt from the Gosho "Reply to Kyo'o": "Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like the roar of the lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" I thought of that as I chanted.

Studying has given me the confidence to overcome any doubts that arise when I've experienced hardship or suffering in the areas of money, career, family, health and so forth. Chanting at the crucial moment has helped me tap unlimited ability and brought out limitless hope and inner strength to surmount every obstacle.

After 10 years of practice, I returned to Indiana to help care for my oldest sister before she died. She would chant from time to time, and prolonged her life by a year. My parents acknowledged the change in me and totally supported my practice.

During that year, before I returned to Los Angeles, I was appointed a young women's division chapter leader. A handful of members and I would drive the eight hours one way, even through the snow, to attend meetings in Chicago. I gained immense appreciation and respect for the members and for this practice.

Each day I polish my mirror by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to bring out my courage, wisdom and confidence so I can help others change their destinies. Today I have a career in human resources, with the re-

Photo by DON HODGSON



Sexual abuse sent Sondy Niethammer's life into a negative, downward spiral until she encountered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

completely overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising all of us. I received little nurturing, discipline or guidance. I was intimidated by my brothers and sisters because they learned much faster than I did. On top of that, the kids in school made fun of me, making me feel like I was stupid. As a result, I didn't even want to try. And I blamed my parents for everything.

At age 12, I was hanging out in my front yard one summer day when three guys from the high school drove by in their new convertible. They stopped and asked me if I'd like to go for a ride. I made a decision that would bring the end of my innocence and would have a tremendous and severe impact on the rest of my youth. I got in the car!

The boys took me to their parents' home, locked me in the

Three months after the attack, I began hemorrhaging. I don't remember much about it, but a surgical procedure was performed at the local hospital. Since that time I have been unable to have a child. That was the physical side of the rape.

But it brought out an emotional side I was unprepared for. I was starved for attention and love from someone — anyone — and I didn't get it at home.

More emotional abuse occurred daily. When I entered high school I had to face one of the boys who had raped me each day in my classes. He laughed and told his friends what he had done.

I survived by burying my pain deep inside and becoming a wild, class-cutting party girl. My grades hit bottom, and drugs made a sweeping entrance into my life. I became popular by

The Headquarters Leaders Meeting for February 1962 was held on the 27th at the Tokyo Gymnasium. President Shin'ichi Yamamoto was present, fresh from his visit to the Middle East. Brimming with joy and determination, the members had braved the winter cold to wage a great campaign toward achieving a new propagation record this month, in keeping with the Gakkai's February tradition,¹ and opening another new page in the history of kosen-rufu.

When it was announced at the meeting that a total of 117,547 households had received Gohonzon that month, there was an excited buzz. Loud applause rang through the venue. The figure was a new monthly record.

In the year and 10 months since Shin'ichi had become president, the Gakkai's movement to spread the Daishonin's teachings had become an unstoppable current of the times. Shin'ichi had steadily watched its progress and given continuous thought to what would be necessary if the great number of new members who joined each month were to continue practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout their lives, walking unerringly on the path to happiness. Development depended on these new members' growth.

He concluded that this could only be achieved by all members engraving the teachings of the Goshō in their lives and making the Goshō their foundation. The Daishonin's teachings are clearly expressed in his writings. The Goshō elucidates the laws of life and guidelines for our behavior and existence in this world. It explains why it is important to strive hard in Buddhist practice and why obstacles and persecution beset those who uphold the True Law. Reading the Goshō also helps people understand and appreciate the Daishonin's spirit and indomitable conviction. This would serve as a driving force for people's faith, giving rise to courage, hope and wisdom, and forming a solid foundation for their lives.

To achieve this, Shin'ichi felt it vital to establish the Gakkai spirit as an integral core of each person's life. And that this be achieved through a great study movement — not one dedicated to abstract Buddhist theory but to living Buddhist principles relevant to actual practice. This, he felt, would first necessitate strengthening an awareness among the Study Department leaders, the professors and assistant professors, that they bore full responsibility for kosen-rufu.

The commitment and determination of the Study Department leaders and their dedicated efforts to study the Goshō would have a great impact on their Goshō lectures at the district level — where the members striving in the very front lines of the organization gathered to study the Daishonin's teachings — and on the personal guidance and en-

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 3

Acceleration

Translation of parts 13–17 of the 'Acceleration' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

couragement they gave to members.

After that evening's Headquarters Leaders Meeting, Shin'ichi had arranged to convene a meeting of Study Department members of the assistant professor level and higher for the first nationwide assistant professors meeting. His aim was to reconfirm the fundamental spirit of the Study Department leaders and make a fresh start.

At the nationwide meeting for Study Department assistant professors, Shin'ichi began: "President Toda said that 'understanding gives rise to faith, and faith seeks understanding.... The depth of one's understanding elevates one's faith. And elevated faith enhances understanding of our religious practice.' If one has an excellent understanding, that is, knowledge of the Buddhist teachings, then anything less than an excellent practice of faith would run counter to both the Daishonin's teachings and President Toda's spirit, preventing one from enjoying the real benefits of faith.

"People who neglect their practice and just pride themselves on their knowledge of Buddhist doctrine are arrogant. Such individuals ultimately betray the Buddha's teachings. President Toda often stated strictly that people who master theory but lack real faith are like myna birds or parrots.

"I hope each of you will strive to read with your life even one passage of the Goshō by actively putting it into practice. If you do so, it is the same as reading all the Daishonin's teachings. I also hope you, the Study Department leaders, will be fully aware that the entire responsibility for kosen-rufu rests on your shoulders. If you possess a deep awareness that you are the driving force

behind the Soka Gakkai's efforts to spread the philosophy of the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world, then naturally you will bring to your Goshō lectures great passion and enthusiasm, making every effort to ensure they are clear, easy to understand, and yet profound.

"A deep inner resolve will surge within you — a determination to convince those at your lectures of the greatness of Buddhism, to encourage them to overcome their suffering and develop as capable people who will join you in dedicating their lives to kosen-rufu. You will be making every effort, marshaling all your creativity in the process, to explain Buddhist teachings and principles in a way that is thorough and satisfying for your audience. On the other hand, if



your lectures are lackluster or so abstract and theoretical that people are left confused, or if they fail to touch people's lives, it means that you are not really committed to achieving kosen-rufu."

Everyone wore a tense expression as Shin'ichi continued with even greater energy:

"Today, I propose that we designate next year the Year of Study and devote ourselves thoroughly to Buddhist study. Study is going to be especially important from now on. Kosen-rufu is a philosophical movement deeply rooted in people's daily lives. The time has come for it to flourish in earnest. I look for-

ward with all my heart to your valiant efforts as the leaders in this undertaking."

Shin'ichi had resolved to begin by exhaustively studying the Daishonin's teachings himself and to lecture on the Goshō to members whenever possible. He was prepared to do all in his power to help them understand the profound mission they possessed from the eternal past as disciples of Nichiren Daishonin.

On March 3, Shin'ichi attended the completion service of the Dai-bo lodging complex at the head temple Taiseki-ji, a construction project initiated by the Gakkai. The new facility would contain the living quarters of the high priest as well as the head temple's administrative offices and a training center for acolytes. After reciting the sutra, High Priest Nittatsu delivered a congratulatory speech, in which he said:

"Due to the Soka Gakkai's dynamic propagation activities in recent years, the prestige of our school has been dramatically enhanced. Those embracing the Mystic Law increase day by day and 60 new temples have been built to date around the country. At the head temple itself, we have seen the renovation of the five-storied pagoda and the improvement and expansion of the lodging temples on its grounds, followed by the donation of a modern Grand Lecture Hall, facilitating study of the True Law. In addition, the construction of the Daikejo (Great Transient Castle) has provided a comfortable rest hall for many believers who visit the head temple."

The high priest went on to say that the donation of the spacious new lodging complex, a showpiece of modern architecture built at the proposal of the Soka Gakkai's president, had completely transformed the head temple's appearance. He also acknowledged the other vast contributions of President Yamamoto, who was energetically devoting himself to realizing the great hope for kosen-rufu and sincerely working to protect and donate facilities to the head temple and priesthood. Calling him a model for all believers, High Priest Nittatsu then announced that, in recognition of his great contributions, the head temple was appointing President Yamamoto as the senior lay representative of Nichiren Shoshu. None of the Soka Gakkai leaders had known that this announcement was to be made.

As High Priest Nittatsu handed the

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ACCELERATION, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

certificate of appointment to Shin'ichi, he said: "As the senior lay representative of this school, as the representative of all lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, please lead our lay believers responsibly and protect all temples of Nichiren Shoshu." Having been entrusted with the mission of guiding the laity and protecting Nichiren Shoshu, Shin'ichi resolved to respond with utmost sincerity.

And for the next 30 years — until in December 1990 he was summarily dismissed as chief lay representative of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations through the plotting of High Priest Nikken — he served the head temple with a deep sincerity and loyalty that words cannot express. He did so believing that if the high priest and entire priesthood were working earnestly to perpetuate the Mystic Law in the spirit of the school's founder, Nichiren Daishonin, then for lay believers to support Nichiren Shoshu constituted protecting Buddhism.

That same day, prior to the completion ceremony for the new building, Shin'ichi planted two trees in front of the head temple's Sammon Gate as Soka Gakkai youth division representatives looked on. These were planted to commemorate the general meetings of the young men's and young women's divisions in November the year before, which had seen record-breaking attendances of 100,000 and 85,000, respectively. He planted a Himalayan cedar sapling for the young men and a Chinese black pine sapling for the young women, wishing to leave behind a lasting record of those milestone meetings in the history of the kosen-rufu movement.

In the latter part of March, the pace of Shin'ichi's activities picked up rapidly. After attending the 2nd Youth Division Music Festival at the Bunkyo Civic Hall in Tokyo on March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, he flew to Okayama² to attend a meeting of district chiefs at the Chugoku³ Headquarters. There, he gave a 90-minute lecture on the Goshu "On the Buddha's Behavior." As he spoke, he prayed fervently that the Buddhist principles and philosophy would deeply touch the hearts and minds of those present, and that the spirit of the Daisho-

nin's teachings would pulse vibrantly in their lives.

In his travels throughout Japan that year, Shin'ichi not only attended leaders meetings in each area, but without fail conducted Goshu lectures for leaders district level and up. He put his whole heart and soul into these lectures. Determined to make each a decisive victory, he expended so much energy that often he would be completely drained afterward. His preparations



would frequently find him pouring over the Goshu, engrossed in study into the middle of the night. And to ensure that he would have a correct grasp of each small detail of a particular work and the historical background against which it was written, he would read other related writings by the Daishonin, refer to passages in the Lotus Sutra and even wade through history books.

In addition, he put great thought into what points to stress in his lecture, and what examples or anecdotes to use and where to use them in his lectures, in order to make those points easily understandable. He would also confirm what guidance Josei Toda had given pertaining to that particular Goshu by going over his mentor's lectures, speeches and writings or the notes he had taken of Toda's guidance.

And he would consistently chant earnest daimoku that those attending his lectures could savor the deep joy of faith and go about their activities with absolute conviction. This daimoku was infused with a powerful prayer, driven by a fierce determination to without fail bring forth the life force he needed to adequately convey the spirit and immense compassion of the Daishonin, whose goal was to save all humanity.

Shin'ichi's lectures on the Goshu in-

deed deepened the joy, pride and confidence felt by members all around Japan with regard to their mission as emissaries of the Buddha working for kosen-rufu. The great surge of propagation that resulted in the Gakkai reaching a membership of 3 million households in November later that year could be traced to the energy generated by Shin'ichi's powerful Goshu lectures.

After his meeting with district leaders in Chugoku, Shin'ichi the next day traveled to Kagawa Prefecture⁴ to attend the completion ceremony of the new Shikoku Headquarters Building in the capital, Takamatsu. This marked the Gakkai's first community center in the Shikoku region.⁵ The two-story structure housed a modest Gohonzon room with a floor area of approximately 1,440 square feet on the first floor and a hall of about 590 square feet on the second floor. Compared to the size of the

Gakkai's main community centers in each area today, the building was extremely small. But the members' joy was immense.

After the opening festivities for the new Shikoku Headquarters, Shin'ichi met with the local leaders.

"How long does it take the members who live furthest away to get here?" he asked.

"Let's see...coming from a place like Uwajima in Ehime Prefecture would take about five or six hours, even traveling by express train," one of the leaders replied. "But for those who can't afford that added expense and use the regular train, the trip probably takes about nine hours."

With the Gakkai's membership now at more than 2.5 million households, at least one or two community centers were needed in each prefecture. However, it was not easy for the Gakkai to provide even one small center per prefecture. The first priority at that time was improving and developing the Nichiren Shoshu facilities. This included building the Grand Reception Hall at the head temple and increasing the number of local branch temples throughout Japan.

"That long?" Shin'ichi asked. "I feel bad about that. But in the future, we'll build community centers throughout Shikoku — ones many times bigger than this. So please ask the members to bear with us a little longer."

"We're happy and grateful just to have this wonderful center," one women's division leader exclaimed. "We couldn't possibly ask for anything more."

"Certainly, in terms of our spirit to seek the teachings of Buddhism," Shin'ichi told her, "we shouldn't complain about having to travel long distances to attend meetings. And it's natural to be appreciative when a new community center is built — such an attitude brings us great benefit and good fortune. Even so, I still want to reduce the members' hardships as much as possible."

"That's a leader's job and responsibility. Leaders in our organization should always think of those who are suffering most or experiencing the greatest difficulties. They should think about how to relieve the burden on members who have to travel hours to get to a meeting, for example, or how to make building an additional community center in a certain area possible. If leaders lack such concern, they will fall out of sync with and alienate themselves from the very people who matter most — their fellow members."

"I also want you to keep pace with me. That means having a strong inner resolve and the commitment to take full responsibility for achieving kosen-rufu. It means giving your all to serving our hardworking, dedicated members, being constantly concerned for their welfare and offering them your unstinting support and encouragement. I am determined to protect the members above all."

(To be continued)

1. February tradition: In February 1952, SGI President Ikeda, then 24 and a newly appointed chapter staff of Tokyo's Kamata Chapter, paved the way toward an unprecedented achievement of 201 families joining the Soka Gakkai in a single chapter in a single month. This was the start of what became known as the February tradition, the spirit to redouble energies to share Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with others and to promote greater understanding of the Soka Gakkai's activities.
2. Okayama: capital of Okayama Prefecture in Japan's Chugoku region.
3. Chugoku region: encompasses the western tip of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands, consisting of Hiroshima, Okayama, Shimane, Tottori and Yamaguchi prefectures.
4. Kagawa Prefecture: in northeastern Shikoku. Takamatsu is the capital of Kagawa Prefecture and the economic and administrative center of the Shikoku region.
5. Shikoku region: consisting of Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands, and numerous surrounding islands. It comprises Kagawa, Tokushima, Ehime and Kochi prefectures.

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DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

The Meaning of Being Considerate

This is the 11th installment in 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 high school division members.

Kimura: Today's topic concerns what it means to be considerate.

When asked in surveys what qualities they look for most in a person, many people, male and female alike, are found to respond, "Someone who is considerate." And when questioned as to what kind of person they themselves hope to become, a large proportion give the same response.

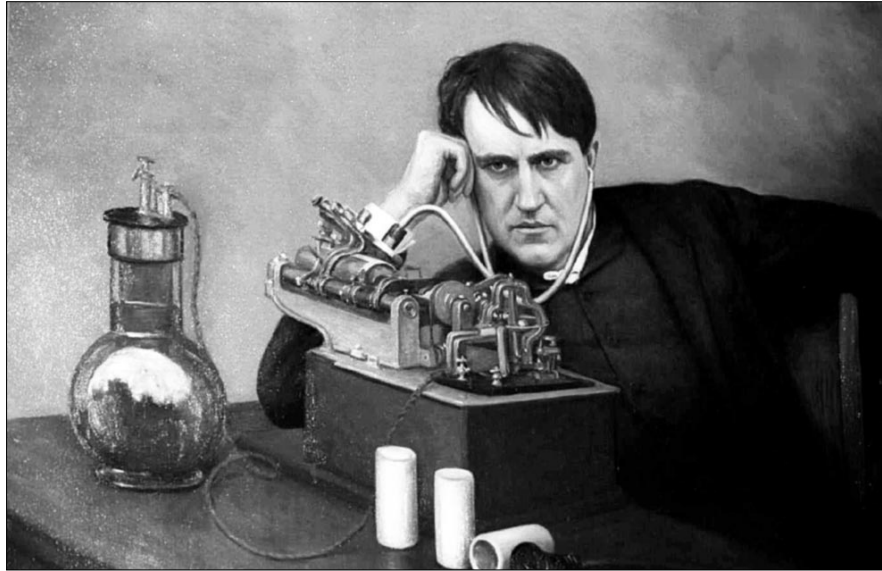
Igeta: However, many people have no idea what being considerate is; they think it's keeping a safe degree of distance from others so as not to hurt them or be hurt.

The other day a friend told me about a mutual friend who was moping around at home by herself, thinking about quitting her job. My friend suggested that the best thing we could do right now would be to leave her alone. I was shocked and told her she was wrong — that if we didn't offer her support when she needed it most, we weren't being good friends.

Ikeda: I see. It seems that, on the one hand, people treasure consideration in others and want to be considerate, but at the same time don't want to get too involved. Many of our readers may share such conflicting emotions.

Being considerate is a matter of the heart. The heart is not something we can easily comprehend; it is subtle, complex. Therefore, it would be difficult for anyone to describe what it means to be considerate in a few words. It is a profound question, tantamount to "What does it mean to be human?"

Someone said that the Chinese character used to depict the word *consideration* in Japanese is made up of the pictographs for *person* and *concern*. Thus, to be considerate is to have con-



A portrait of Thomas Edison is among the millions of documents and artifacts found at the Thomas Edison Historical Site in West Orange, N.J.

cern for others. It is to empathize with the sadness, pain and loneliness of other people. This Chinese character can also mean *excellent*. A genuinely considerate person, someone who understands others' hearts, is an exceptional human being, an honors student in life. To possess such concern for others is living the most humanistic way. It is a sign of outstanding character.

When I was about 12 or 13, I delivered newspapers. I wanted to build up my strength and do whatever I could to help my family since my brothers had gone off to fight in World War II. Our family business was farming seaweed, so there were many chores to do, starting early in the morning. Afterward, I would go on my paper route while the rest of the town still slept soundly. In winter, riding my bike in the bitter-cold wind, my fingers froze and my breath came out in white puffs.

There were many families on my paper route. I rarely saw their faces, but on the odd occasion I did, they weren't friendly. Dogs also gave me a hard time.

It was difficult, but I will never forget the warmth and consideration shown to me by one young couple. They lived in a single-story apartment building, home to 20 families. One day, as I entered the building, the young wife was bringing a

charcoal stove into the corridor to cook rice. You are probably too young to know what a charcoal stove is, but it's like a portable earthenware cooking range. Anyway, I said good morning and handed her the paper. Greeting me with a warm smile, she said thank you, and commented that I was always in high spirits.

As I turned to leave, she asked me to wait and handed me a bundle of thick slices of dried sweet potatoes, which we called *imokachi* in those days.

Explaining that they had been sent from her hometown in Akita Prefecture in northern Japan the previous day, she said, "I hope you'll enjoy these." Then she offered her regards to my parents. Her husband, a tall man as I recall, also said: "It must be tough delivering papers in this cold weather. Study hard and you will achieve great things."

On another occasion, after I finished my evening paper route, the couple invited me to stay for dinner. They asked me many questions about my family. I told them about my father, who had fallen seriously ill and was bedridden. The husband then began to encourage me, sharing an anecdote about the American inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931): When Edison was a boy, he sold newspapers,

while at the same time keeping up with his studies. The husband said, "People who struggle when they're young are truly fortunate." The young couple moved away not long after that.

Though these things took place more than 50 years ago, the great kindness and concern this couple showed me remain etched in my heart to this day. There was nothing arrogant or pretentious about them.

Buddhism teaches that "calmness is [the world] of Humanity" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 52). It is a state of tranquillity where one embraces all people warmly, without discrimination. The flip side of humanity is arrogance — arrogant people cause others to suffer. They flatter those stronger than them and intimidate those weaker. Such people live in the lower worlds of Hunger and Animality. Their behavior is despicable.

I understand that in British public schools, there is a tradition of evaluating a student's character by giving him or her some position of authority or leadership. They say a student's character is revealed by how he or she behaves toward juniors.

Kimura: That's a good point. A friend of mine who works at a publishing company and has a lot of interaction with

influential people like professors and celebrities said that such people are often full of themselves. He said it's amazing how many times he's seen them fly off the handle over the slightest mistake, and that one even threatened him, saying, "Do you know who you're dealing with?!"

Igeta: That's hardly the behavior one would expect from people in their position!

Kimura: Of course, there are many humble professors, too.

Ikeda: Being considerate means valuing and respecting each person's dignity.

An acquaintance told me about an educator who taught for 38 years in Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu [the southernmost of Japan's four main islands]. He was a warmhearted teacher who was deeply loved by all his students. What was the decisive turning point in his life? When he was in the second grade, one cold day during winter vacation, a woman and her daughter, who made their livings as street performers, came to his house. The mother played the *shamisen*, a traditional stringed instrument, and sang, while the daughter danced. A light snow was falling and the young boy sat eating pastries while he watched them. When the song finished, he handed the girl his half-eaten pastry.

Seeing this, his father, who had been close by getting his ox ready for work, ran over angrily and smacked him. The father turned to the performers, who were a bit surprised by this, bowed deeply and apologized for his son's bad manners. He also made his son bow and apologize. In addition to giving the mother and daughter some grain, he seized the bag of pastries from which his son had been eating and handed it to the girl. Then, without even looking at the boy sitting on the ground crying, he took his ox and went into the mountains to work.

The father wanted to drive home that all people are equal and worthy of respect. When the

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boy grew up, he was always grateful for this lesson. In Japan, it is rare these days to find fathers who are actively involved in raising their children.

It's important never to judge people by appearances. As a young man of 20, Josei Toda, who later became the Soka Gakkai's second president, left his home in Hokkaido and came to Tokyo to pursue his dream. However, carving his niche in Tokyo was harder than he had anticipated.

One summer day, having reached his wits' end, Toda visited the home of one of his mother's distant relatives, an army general. He arrived at the doorstep wearing a dark blue-and-white padded jacket over a threadbare *hakama*, a traditional pleated garment for men. Though he was shown into the living room, it soon became apparent that the general was patronizing him, only pretending to be interested. Far from empathizing with the young man's hopes and dreams, he did everything possible to keep his distance.

Toda was at first oblivious to this. Having been received courteously, he began talking enthusiastically about his goals. But when he realized his relative was only being polite, he made to leave. As he did so, the general's wife wrapped in white paper some cakes that were sitting on the table and handed them to Toda, but he refused them, saying, "I didn't come here for your charity!"

Toda never forgot that humiliation as long as he lived. Whenever he recalled the incident, he would admonish his wife: "One must never judge people by what's on the surface! It's impossible to make a decision about a person's future or know what their mission is based on their appearance. Evaluating others at first glance is forbidden in our house!" Toda had great inner strength and his generosity knew no bounds. He never scorned people because they were poor. His compassion was indiscriminate.

Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whom Toda chose as his mentor, was also a strong, warmhearted person. As an elementary school teacher in Hokkaido, he would go out to meet students walking to school when it was snowing, and would walk them home after school. When he did so, he tried to make sure that students in poor health didn't fall behind the others, carrying them on his



'Makiguchi (third row, center) became a noted school principal in Tokyo, but the education authorities kept close tabs on him because he refused to ingratiate himself with them. He was constantly being moved around and sent to schools where no one else wanted to go.'

back or leading them by the hand if necessary. He would also always have hot water ready to gently soak the children's frozen hands. He would ask them: "How's that? Does it feel better?" And the students would say, "Uh-huh, it just stings a little." What a beautiful scene!

Later, Makiguchi became a noted school principal in Tokyo, but the education authorities kept close tabs on him because he refused to ingratiate himself with them. He was constantly being moved around and sent to schools where no one else wanted to go.

At one point, Makiguchi was transferred to Mikasa Elementary School. All the students came from poor families. Some were so destitute that they didn't even have umbrellas to shield them from rain. Out of his own pocket, Makiguchi would prepare lunch for the children who came to school without one. This was more than 10 years before lunches were supplied in Japan's schools. There were eight members in his own family to feed, so you can imagine how difficult it must have been. He was also so considerate that he would place the prepared lunches in the janitor's room, where the needy children could get them easily without having to feel ashamed or embarrassed.

Kimura: If he had placed the lunches in the staff room or in the classroom in front of the other kids, those students would probably have been embarrassed and hesitant to take them. How thoughtful of him!

Ikeda: Makiguchi would have done absolutely anything for his students' happiness. That's how kind he was. He once wrote that when he thought of the Japanese

system of teaching by rote learning, which only stifled the children's individuality, he wanted so desperately to free them that it nearly drove him insane.

For the sake of his students, Makiguchi would readily confront and indignantly challenge any authority. Once, he even declared to the school inspectors, who wielded immense power over education at that time, that the inspection of classes was unnecessary since it only led to the undesirable standardization of education. That's why he was on the authorities' blacklist.

That's also why everyone else loved and respected him. Whenever Makiguchi was transferred, the students at the school where he'd been principal would burst into tears. Even the parents and teachers would break down.

Makiguchi later defied Japanese militarism and subsequently died in prison, a martyr for his convictions. No matter what might happen to him, he couldn't look on while oppressive government authorities inflicted suffering on the people. Nor would he accept an incorrect philosophy.

People with concern for others stand firm when faced with injustice. Buddhism teaches that anger can be constructive or destructive. When justice or good is imperiled, anger becomes necessary. On the other hand, anger that arises from emotionalism is a manifestation of Animality. The greater the person, the more all-encompassing his or her love for others. This love is the source of strength and compassion.

Igeta: Precisely because one cares for others, one should never betray one's beliefs — even if imprisoned. That is noble! This is a little different from our usual understanding of

what it means to be considerate.

Ikeda: Being kindhearted doesn't mean being considerate. Not to fight injustice or take action at a crucial moment is weakness.

Kimura: The other day someone pointed out that human relations today seem to be pervaded by the desire to not make waves or keep the status quo. Many feel that opening up too much to others puts one at risk of being hurt. In a recent public opinion poll in Tokyo, approximately 70 percent of the respondents said they didn't want to get too close to others. More than 50 percent said that they were reluctant to help others because getting involved could produce unforeseen problems; they could be held responsible in some way [according to a survey by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government on Jan. 16].

Ikeda: It's certainly a tough world we live in. I can see why one might want to shut oneself up in one's shell. But those who do so are deluding themselves if they think they can live without other people. They have forgotten that they have been, and continue to be, surrounded and supported by the kindness and generosity of many people.

We would never have come into this world, or grown into what we are, without the love and concern of our mothers. And what about our fathers, brothers and sisters, grandparents, relatives, friends, school teachers and seniors in faith? Haven't there been countless people who have embraced us with their warmth and consideration throughout our lives?

Igeta: Yes. One student shared with me her feeling of

deep gratitude when she found, a month before her high school entrance examination, that her mother was getting up early to chant for her to do well. She said that this was the most thoughtful thing anyone had ever done for her.

Another student said: "I can see how much my mom loves me. From when I was a little girl, she was always telling me to be considerate of others' feelings. We've been on our own since I was in the third grade, but my mom's love gives me courage because she's always concerned and takes good care of me."

Ikeda: That's heartwarming. Mothers are the strongest, most caring people!

Igeta: Another young woman told me that when she was in her first year of high school, she hated school because she couldn't make friends. She decided to drop out at the beginning of the second semester because she was miserable, but then one of her classmates called to cheer her up and invite her to have lunch together at school. Touched and encouraged by her classmate's kindness — not wanting to let her down — she went to school every day from then on. Now, she says, they are best friends who talk to each other about everything.

Ikeda: True concern for others manifests itself as unconditional friendship. To be considerate means that the more someone is suffering, the more love you show them. It gives you the courage to help another stand up. And it means recognizing another person's unhappiness for what it is, trying to understand and share his or her suffering. This will enable you to grow and at the same time help the other person become strong. Consideration is training ourselves in the art of encouraging others.

The important thing is not just sympathizing with or pitying others, but understanding what they're going through. Empathy is crucial. Sometimes having someone who understands can give us the strength to go on.

Kimura: Concern for others is not tangible. For that reason, we can't show someone that we're considerate unless we do something considerate. However, either people can't muster the courage or are afraid of being rejected if they do extend

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a helping hand.

Igeta: One student told me she had hesitated to offer her seat to an elderly person on the train because she feared that person would be offended by being treated like an old person. She was afraid of being thought a do-gooder.

Iked: Certainly, there's no knowing how another person is going to respond. There may be occasions when your sincere intentions are completely rejected, or you may be laughed at or even ridiculed. But turning around and getting mad at the person you're trying to help does nobody good. Letting fear paralyze you is foolish, too.

The thing that matters is what you want to do. You must have the courage to follow your instincts when it comes to helping people. Your life will expand only as much as you take action on behalf of others, regardless of how they may react toward your kindness. Consideration equals strength, so the more considerate of others you are, the stronger you will become.

Makiguchi had no time for people who had no guts — who just stood by and did nothing. The good but fainthearted, in failing to fight evil, are ultimately defeated by it. Makiguchi often said:

Not doing good is effectively the same as doing bad. Let's say someone places a huge boulder in the middle of the road. This is malicious, as it will cause trouble for those who pass by later. Then, someone comes along and sees the large obstruction, but, while knowing that it will cause serious problems, leaves it there with the attitude "Well, I didn't put it there." This may seem like simply not doing a good thing, but, actually, not moving the boulder is causing the same inconvenience for the future passersby as putting it there in the first place.

Most people have a spark of warmth or human kindness somewhere in their heart. I really don't think that anyone is born completely coldhearted. But if, as time passes, people bury their warmth deeper and deeper in their hearts for fear of being hurt, they will become cold and hard. Similarly, those who are self-centered and think everyone is against them gird themselves with the armor of authority, fame, status, callousness or conceit. Such behavior is devoid of humanity

— it is a sign of Animality.

Shakyamuni always initiated dialogue with people. He didn't wait arrogantly for others to speak to him first, nor did it ever occur to him to worry about what they might think of him. He addressed people warmly and with ease.

Kimura: To be concerned about others' welfare requires courage, doesn't it?

Iked: Exactly. Cowardice begets cruelty. Courage begets kindness.

I want to share with you something that happened to the famous Austrian writer Stefan Zweig (1881–1942), when a high school student.¹ One of his classmates was an excellent student and very popular. One day, this classmate's father, who was the president of a large company, was arrested for some incident. The media got hold of the story and printed sensational reports about the father, going so far as to print photos of the family in the newspaper.

The classmate was absent from school for more than two weeks. Then, one day, he unexpectedly showed up and sat down at his desk. He buried his face in his textbooks and didn't look up. Even during the break, he sat by himself and stared out the window, avoiding eye contact with everyone.

Not wanting to embarrass or hurt their classmate's feelings, Zweig and his friends kept their distance. Zweig could see that his friend could use a kind word, but while he stood there wondering what he should do the bell rang, ending the break. The classmate didn't show up for the next class. And he never returned to school.

This must have weighed heavily on Zweig. He must have regretted that he didn't act on his instincts when he had the chance.

Japanese often take slanderous rumors about people as truth and spread them around without checking the facts. This is the opposite of being considerate. To be considerate also means being fair. It means being open-minded enough to find out the truth for oneself.

Kimura: It seems the way we show or express our consideration for others takes different forms depending on the situation.

Iked: Yes. The most important thing is the sincere wish to see others become happy. Makiguchi talked about the idea of small, medium and great good.



Anne Robertson and daughter Emily, 11, stand in front of Casey Elementary School in Jackson, Miss. Anne is a parent of two children and a member of 'Parents for Public Schools.' The group supports the enrollment of students in inner-city schools who would normally have attended suburban or private schools. It stresses the importance of children learning in real-world classrooms with black and white, rich and poor, struggling and studious all together — society's true mix, not a sheltered refuge.

This can be applied to consideration as well: small, medium and great consideration.

Mr. Makiguchi once said: "Friendship can be divided into three levels. Say you have a friend who needs ¥10,000 (about U.S. \$100). Giving your friend the money needed is an act of small good, whereas helping him or her find a job is an act of medium good.

However, if your friend is suffering because of a basic tendency to be lazy, then a gift of money or a job will only cater to and perpetuate his or her negative habits. True friendship is helping that person uproot the indolent nature that is the source of all his or her suffering — in other words, teaching a correct belief system." In this sense, sharing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with as many people as we can is the most considerate, most humanistic thing we can do.

Often, attempts to do great good are misunderstood. One example is how children are sometimes unable to appreciate the way their parents try to discipline them. No doubt, you, too, will run into resentment when you try to help someone with your great consideration.

But, surely, the ultimate act of consideration for others is chanting for their happiness and doing everything you can for them. Though your efforts may not be valued now, as long as you act with utmost sincerity, people will come to trust and rely on you. They will in time be truly grateful for the love and kindness you have shown them.

Igeta: It seems from what you're saying that a person is only as great as they are consid-

erate of others. I think it's important that we strive to become people who don't just wear generosity on the surface, but who can really touch people's lives.

Iked: The noble side of a person is manifested in kindness and consideration to others. Kindness and consideration for others resonate with both the Buddhist concept of compassion and the core Christian concept of love. I said earlier that every person has grown up supported by the warmth and kindness of many people. Actually, when viewed from a larger perspective, we exist here thanks to the support not only of the people around us, but of everything on this earth and in the entire universe.

Every single living thing — the flowers, the birds, the sun, the soil — supports one other in a beautiful symphony of life. Since the birth of this planet more than 4 billion years ago, life form after life form has been conceived and nourished. And human life is a part of that chain. If at any point a link were missing from this chain of life, none of us would be alive today.

Kimura: I guess we are all proof that the chain hasn't been broken!

Iked: Life produces new life — surely this is consideration in its most basic form. Delving deeper into this idea, I think we can say that the Earth itself is a giant living organism and is great consideration incarnate. President Toda once said that the activity of the entire universe is essentially a function of compassion.

Igeta: There is the popular

catchphrase "Be kind to our planet," but in reality, the planet has been kind to us.

Iked: Behind each of us stands not just 4 billion years of kindness from the Earth, but the compassion of the entire universe since time without beginning. Therefore, you mustn't slander or devalue your life. Life is the most precious of all treasures. Each of you has been given this invaluable gift and each of you is irreplaceable. Those bearers of life — the universe, the Earth and mothers — cherish their children. The most important thing for the 21st century is that we expand throughout society that absolute, fundamental consideration, that profound compassion toward life.

Kimura: If we do so, war and the oppression of human rights will disappear.

Igeta: It will also put a stop to the destruction of the environment.

Iked: That's why the first thing we must do is develop ourselves. A truly commendable person is one who possesses the spirit to improve and grow, and this is in itself true consideration for others. In contrast, to be completely self-absorbed and utterly indifferent to other people's happiness shows arrogance and a mean-spirited nature that is ruled by the world of Anger.

I hope that all of you, the protagonists of the 21st century, will work diligently to become people of great strength and genuine consideration. ㊦

1. This episode appears in: Masataro Miyake, *Saiban no Sho* (The Book on Trials) (Tokyo: Makino Shoten, 1942), pp. 184–85.

SIGN POSTS APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

People of Good Character

By MALINA MOORE
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Those who associate with people of good character, though they themselves may have no particular virtue, will consequently become upright in heart, deed and word.... Though one may not be outstanding in other ways, if he puts faith in this sutra, the Buddha will look upon him as a good person. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 268)

Sometimes I wonder about my capability. When things are particularly hectic and busy, and I feel like screaming or ripping out my hair, I think, "How does President Ikeda do it?" I know that he isn't going 24 hours a day, but when I look at his life, what he has accomplished over the past 50 years, I am in awe. Of course, we all have our unique paths and I am not comparing mine with his per se. But reading this letter and especially this passage, I think how fortunate we are to have in Daisaku Ikeda a living example of how to practice Buddhism and live life — an exceptional example of a person of "good character."

In today's hectic, often narcissistic society, it is so easy to associate with people of less-than-noteworthy character. As Dr. Cornel West says in *Race Matters*, in today's society "the predominance of the market-inspired way of life over all others...edges out non market values — love, care, service to others." It's so easy to be influenced or swayed if we don't have a solid spiritual base. I think it is extraordinary that there are thousands upon thousands of us in the SGI struggling day after day, obstacle after obstacle, consciously creating value and trying to set good examples.

As the Daishonin says in this letter, "Though one may not be outstanding in other ways, if he puts faith in this sutra, the Buddha will look upon him as a good person." Here, "look upon him as a good person" means that, whatever our state of life or karma, we can absolutely achieve an enlightened state through assiduous Buddhist practice in daily life and society. I have realized that my capability isn't static. It's ever-developing and expansive. □

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

Who Is Nikken?

Key Points:

- Nikken's behavior suggests that he is concerned with preserving his own and the priesthood's authority rather than with propagating the Daishonin's teachings, the happiness of believers, or the development of kosen-rufu.
- Because he is ignorant of the significance of the SGI's kosen-rufu movement and bears a personal grudge against SGI President Ikeda, Nikken has succumbed to his own emotions to become an enemy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Q What should I know about Nikken?

A The pamphlet *Issues Between the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood and the Soka Gakkai*, vol. 5, describes many ways in which Nikken Abe, as head of Nichiren Shoshu, has acted counter to the teachings and spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Among them:

1) He plotted to destroy the harmonious unity of believers.

This refers to the scheme that Nikken himself dubbed "Operation C" (the plot to discredit SGI President Ikeda and dissolve the Soka Gakkai. Details of this operation are reported in *SGI-USA Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 6, Nov. 18, 1991, issue.)

2) He is the cause for the decadence and corruption of the priesthood.

Nikken's personal grudge against the SGI seems to stem in part from SGI's decision to speak out against the widespread extravagance and corruption within the priesthood, as typified by Nikken's own opulent lifestyle.

3) He conspired with disgruntled former members and sensationalist journalists to defame the SGI.

It is well known that long-time anti-Gakkai plotter Masatomo Yamazaki and anti-Gakkai journalist Isao Dan have conspired with Nikken in his campaign against the Soka Gakkai. Yamazaki, who was imprisoned three years for extortion, wrote a letter to Nikken advising him which publications would be willing to print scandalous articles about the Gakkai without verifying facts.

4) He rejects dialogue and treats members with disdain.

Nikken never responded to the Soka Gakkai's repeated requests for dialogue after the temple unjustly accused it, although the Gakkai leadership—including President Ikeda—had visited Taiseki-ji on a monthly basis for many years. Nikken has instructed priests explicitly to be more concerned about getting members to leave the Gakkai than about those members' faith and happiness.

5) He betrayed the laity's sincere faith in the priesthood.

Hundreds of Nichiren Shoshu temples, from which the priesthood operates to attack the SGI's kosen-rufu movement, were donated by the Soka Gakkai. In addition, much of the priesthood's finances and assets derive from the donations of Soka Gakkai members made over the decades. Nevertheless, he has been using these venues to denounce these very people.

6) He promotes the danto (direct temple membership) movement, which he has formerly regarded as an incorrect way of propagating the Law.

Nikken is behind efforts by temples to mislead SGI members about their organization in order to entice them to join the temple. He also plays a key role in the global dissemination of false and defamatory articles and rumors about the SGI.

7) He stopped issuing the Gohonzon to SGI members.

Nikken used the Gohonzon and the members' faith in it in an attempt to bait Gakkai members to join the temple. He eventually refused to issue the Gohonzon to SGI members. His aim was to gain adherents by being the only source of Gohonzon for new believers.

8) He excommunicated the SGI.

It is now a historical fact that Nichiren Shoshu, a clerical body headed up by Nikken and consisting of no more than 1,000 priests, excommunicated the global organization of the Daishonin's Buddhism that comprises some 10 million practitioners in 128 nations. This is an act unprecedented in the history of world religion.

9) He altered the doctrines of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

In the Daishonin's teaching, any ordinary person who sincerely embraces the Gohonzon and chants the Mystic Law is viewed as a true Buddha. Nikken preaches the view that he is the sole possessor of true enlightenment; that others can only hope to attain this state in the future through their connection to him.

10) He exerts the power of an absolute dictator within the priesthood.

Nikken has changed Nichiren Shoshu's bylaws arbitrarily, time and again, to stifle any criticism of his leadership from the laity and any opposi-

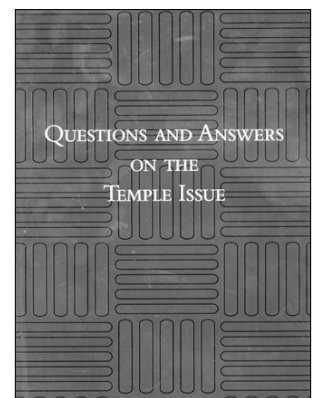
tion from within the priesthood.

Priests who have left Nichiren Shoshu in protest of Nikken's actions unanimously agree that the priesthood had no justifiable reason for attacking the Soka Gakkai from the outset. From their view as insiders, the entire situation was triggered by Nikken's ego and emotionalism.

While the Soka Gakkai's original purpose remains unchanged, Nikken's perverse nature has placed him in direct opposition to the noble cause of kosen-rufu. While he may insist that as high priest he is the sole possessor of the Law, the Law is not something one can possess. It belongs to everyone, and is inherent in everything.

These are among the many reasons why Nikken is unfit to serve as high priest, and why the SGI has called for his immediate resignation.

Three in a series



The SGI-USA has published a new pamphlet, *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*, which seeks to provide succinct information on this important issue. It is now available free of charge through the organization. The study page is reprinting each of the questions from the pamphlet as a service to our readers.

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 11th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, the 3rd Nationwide Women's Division Leaders Meeting and the 2nd Kansai Youth Division General Meeting, held at the Kansai Toda Memorial Hall in Osaka, Japan, May 19.

Not Dependent on Anyone

Congratulations on this lively meeting! I join you in proclaiming, "Long live 'Ever-victorious Kansai'!"

While in Shanghai recently, I was interviewed [on May 14] for a TV program on Zhou Enlai that will air next year to commemorate the centennial of the late Chinese premier's birth. With the welfare of the people his primary and constant concern, Zhou Enlai wrestled tirelessly with the challenge of constructing a new China, literally putting his life on the line. Directing this effort, a kind of grand historic experiment, he faced an unending succession of difficulties.

While of an entirely different nature and dimension, the SGI's movement for kosen-rufu is a global experiment — one aimed at positively transforming humankind's future. It is an attempt to create eternal value that will endure throughout the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. Achieving this is Nichiren Daishonin's decree. Right now, probably few people are aware of the tremendous significance of our efforts.

The Spirit of Self-Reliance

In the past, Japan, along with a number of other countries, blindly warned against the birth of the new Chinese "people's republic." The Eastern and Western blocs joined to contain and isolate China. As a result, the new republic faced continuing difficulties.

Sometime after Premier Zhou's death, his wife, Deng Yingchao, told my wife and me: "We had enemies in front of us. And we had enemies behind us, too." When my wife commented on how harrowing this must have been, Madam Deng continued: "That was the situation every day — every single day. It was like that for years, for decades. We really fought hard."

I will never forget those words.

What did Premier Zhou stress to the people during these difficult times? It was self-reliance. This is well known. It implies a life of proud and digni-



"We had enemies in front of us. And we had enemies behind us, too," said Madam Deng Yingchao, wife of Premier Zhou Enlai, of the years she and her husband devoted to constructing a new China.

fied independence. In other words, the strength not to rely or depend on anyone or anything.

Don't be dependent on anyone — this is my sentiment, too. We each have to strengthen and develop ourselves through our own efforts. We must never surrender to any foe or difficulty. We must be fearless. This is the true spirit of self-reliance. And this was the strength that enabled the Chinese people to accomplish their great revolution.

This self-reliance arose from the Chinese people's struggle against Japanese aggression. What Japan did during the war was truly abominable. The Japanese army occupied China's main ports in an attempt to cut it off from the outside world and close the routes by which allies were sending supplies. But with *self-reliance* as their watchword, the Chinese dauntlessly surmounted the atrocities and oppression that the Japanese military perpetrated against them.

'Strengthen Oneself in Battles'

Premier Zhou once said, "One must strengthen oneself in battles, and temper oneself in the raging wind and rain."¹ Struggling in the midst of a storm — this aptly describes members' admirable efforts in

our movement's early days. Everyone fought with vigor and dedication. Leaders today who fail to wage such earnest efforts are lazy and shiftless.

When we exert ourselves earnestly for kosen-rufu, we are certain to encounter the three obstacles and four devils, as well as the three powerful enemies.² Therefore, a person who undergoes persecution for the sake of the Law, and those who fight alongside such a person, are on the true path of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Zhou Enlai called to the people of other countries, as well, to advance along the path of self-reliance. He believed in the power of the people.

We, too, place our trust in people.

Having survived oppression, abuse, humiliation and foreign invasion, the Chinese stood up with the determination to create their country and cause it to prosper through their own efforts and resources. Their strength was truly admirable. Zhou Enlai was determined that the Chinese would indeed prevail and their victory would go down history. He had no doubt that this would be done.

In the SGI, we believe in the Gohonzon and place our trust in the SGI members. The members are important, not the top leaders.

That is why I continue to endure all attacks and fight tirelessly, for the members' sake.

Those who have experienced great suffering must win in life and become happy. If you're always losing and miserable, then you are not practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism correctly. You are not following life's true path. Buddhism teaches the means by which the sad become happy and the happy become happier still. That is the reason for our practice. And isn't becoming happy one of life's most important goals?

Since my youth, I have yearned to support China in some way. That's because I had heard from my elder brothers about the brutality of the invading Japanese army in China. Now, at long last, I am in a position to actualize the ideal that I have cherished of someday exerting myself on China's behalf.

I am overjoyed to see China's confident advance. The development I saw in Shanghai on my recent visit was most impressive. Those who knew Shanghai in former times tell me that the city today is like a completely different place. That's how dynamically China is moving ahead. The determination and vision of Zhou Enlai, who firmly believed in the power of

the people, were right on the mark.

Victory Depends on the People

In Shanghai, where I received an honorary professorship from Shanghai University, I had a number of chances to speak with that distinguished institution's chancellor, Dr. Qian Weichang, and his wife, Kong Xiangying. Dr. Qian, an internationally renowned physicist, once conducted research with Dr. Linus Pauling in the United States. He also enjoyed the confidence of Zhou Enlai. He currently holds the important post of vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Madam Kong, by the way, is a 75th generation descendant of Confucius.

I said to Dr. Qian: "In the past, China was wracked by civil war and the war against Japan. The Chinese Communist Party was thought to be at a serious disadvantage in various respects, including lack of munitions and supplies. Many people felt certain the communist forces would lose, but in fact they won. There must have been many factors, but what do you think was the most important cause of their victory?"

Dr. Qian replied simply: "It was the power of the people. The communists had the people on their side." He added, "There was no corruption in their army and they treated the people well." In other words, the people felt that they had a true ally, and gladly provided cooperation and support. The communist forces won because they made an ally of the people. Victory, in short, hinges on whether one has made an ally or an enemy of the people.

Never Let Cowardice Defeat You

The Chinese revolutionary Qiu Jin (c. 1877–1907), whom I mentioned in a speech earlier this year, also called out for independence, especially for women. In her youth, she founded a progressive women's magazine, *China Women's Journal*, in Shanghai, and declared, "As a human being, to be spineless is truly a dreadful thing."³ Her words, like flames, roused people from their complacency.

Whenever I think of Qiu Jin, I am reminded of our young women's division members. Moved by the blazing spirit of Qiu Jin, flag-bearer of China's

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“young women’s division,” China’s “young men’s division” also stood up.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said, “If the Soka Gakkai becomes filled with cowardly, spineless people, that will be the end.” And founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi cried, “Rather a single lion than a thousand sheep!” This is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Qiu Jin’s conviction was that standing on one’s own feet is fundamental to becoming truly human. Zhou Enlai declared that true independence means taking responsibility for people’s happiness and exerting oneself earnestly on everyone’s behalf. This is also a key element of human revolution, of inner reform, and characterizes the lives of those awakened to their mission.

In response to Premier Zhou’s call, China’s youth stood up courageously. Among them was Chancellor Qian. The young Dr. Qian decided to dedicate his life to his country through science. He completely changed his direction, putting aside the studies he had pursued, and set himself to the difficult challenge of becoming a physicist.

This morning, I was talking with my wife about the similarity between the Soka Gakkai spirit — the Kansai spirit, in particular — and modern China’s spirit of self-reliance. “That’s exactly right,” a number present with us exclaimed. “That’s why Kansai is so strong,” they agreed.

The Kansai members aren’t bothered in the least by others’ petty jealousy or contempt. No matter what, they simply continue fighting on courageously. They exert themselves wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu. I loudly proclaim that the Kansai spirit is the model for all SGI members around the globe.

Entrusting the Future to Youth

Seven years ago, in May 1990, I visited Madam Deng at home in Beijing. We had met many times, but that turned out to be the last time we spoke. [She passed away in July 1992.] Madam Deng confided that she treasured our exchanges. For me, too, they will always remain unforgettable memories.

In October 1990, a group of schoolchildren visited Madam Deng. This “mother of the people” said to her young guests: “I want you to surpass us. Our country’s future depends on the efforts you make and the new



Teru Hasegawa (r) moved to China from Japan and fought against Japanese militarism there. ‘I am not a dumb beast; I have learned something about justice,’ she said.

paths you open.”⁴ She addressed the children with the same earnestness and sincerity she showed adults.

Zhou Enlai believed that “with the spirit of self-reliance, we can definitely outdo our predecessors and surpass their achievements.”⁵ Similarly, I hope that the youth division members, who will shoulder the SGI’s future, will far surpass their seniors and the achievements of all who have come before. Please realize the still greater advance of the SGI movement in the 21st century. Youth division members in Kansai and throughout world — I entrust you with this mission!

Madam Deng also told the children: “Although I am old, my ideals still possess the revolutionary spirit of my youth. This 85-year-old granny is ready to advance with all of you!”⁶

My heart is that of a youth dedicated to the revolution! — this spirit shows Madam Deng’s greatness. I hope that SGI members getting along in years will similarly continue to engage themselves in kosen-rufu activities with a youthful passion and sense of purpose.

I also want to charge Kansai members with the task of creating and constructing a new, 21st century Soka Gakkai that may serve as an example for the entire world.

‘Stop the Fighting!’

When Japan was waging a war of aggression in China, there was a Japanese woman named Teru Hasegawa (1912–47), who daringly moved to China and fought against Japanese militarism alongside the Chinese.

In every age, women are strong; they are courageous. The

same was true in the Soka Gakkai’s early days. In every respect, the women’s division has opened the way. And the Kansai women’s division is especially solid and trustworthy.

Hasegawa is famous in China. She published articles in a newspaper that was under the supervision of Zhou Enlai. And Deng Xiaoping praised her.

Witnessing the Japanese army’s assault on Shanghai, Hasegawa exclaimed: “Cannon fire and smoke shroud this cosmopolitan city, and there are rising screams of panic and fear... My heart cries out, ‘For the sake of both our countries’ people, stop the war!’”⁷ She felt that the “giant cloud of gray smoke” pressing upon China would suffocate not only the Chinese but the Japanese as well. “I can hear the tearful cries of the old farmers and the women [of Japan] robbed of their sons and husbands by war,” she wrote. “I hate with all my being our two countries’ slaughter of each other’s people.... I call out at the top of my lungs to my Japanese brothers: ‘Stop needlessly shedding blood! Your enemy is not across the sea in China.’” The “enemy” of the Japanese people, as Hasegawa correctly perceived, was not China but Japanese militarism itself. She was a most discerning, intelligent woman.

Hasegawa spent her youth here in Kansai, attending the Nara Women’s Higher Teachers School. She met and fell in love with a young Chinese man, Liu Ren, and they married. This fostered in her a broad international perspective, and when war broke out she could clearly recognize that Japan was wrong. She wrote: “Anyone with the least amount of decency and

clear common sense would definitely sympathize with China. I am not a dumb beast; I have learned something about justice.”⁸ That was an age when to oppose the government’s policies meant to be branded as a traitor and un-Japanese.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who later became the second president, were also condemned as traitors for failing to follow the militarists and support the war effort.

Hasegawa didn’t care what other people said about her. She was never intimidated. “If it pleases you, then go right ahead and call me a traitor,” she said. “I am not frightened in the least.”⁹ She was unshakable. “Rather, I regard it as a source of deep shame to consider myself as the same nationality as those who not only invade other people’s lands...but who think nothing of creating hell on earth,” she exclaimed. “That is not patriotism, it is jingoism.”¹⁰ She denounced the Japanese authorities’ refusal to tolerate anyone who didn’t toe the line.

Fighting for Humankind’s Future

Surmounting great difficulties, Hasegawa joined China’s anti-Japanese forces. On the radio, she tirelessly appealed to the Japanese soldiers for justice. Her parents in Japan were persecuted and threatened by those around them — some even demanded that they commit suicide for having a traitorous daughter. Hasegawa not only became the target of the Japanese, but was

treated with coldness and suspicion by the Chinese simply because of her nationality.

Nonetheless, she continued to cry out, “China’s victory will be the key to the future of all Asia and all humankind.”¹¹ She was extremely shrewd and saw right to the essence.

Hasegawa died before the age of 35 from an infection. She left behind a 5-year-old son and a 1-year-old daughter. There may be instances where SGI members, too, succumb to illness in the course of their kosen-rufu endeavors. Please remember, however, that our entire existence — both in life and death — is embraced by the Mystic Law.

The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “Let us live our lives!” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 228). This means that through our Buddhist practice, we increase our vitality and extend our lives. We also find the lines “sagacious beams shine without measure” and “this life span of countless kalpas” (LS, 231), which mean that the Buddha’s life is eternal and that there is no place the light of the Buddha’s wisdom cannot reach.

From the standpoint of the eternity of our lives, because we embrace the Mystic Law everything is moving in a positive direction. Everything is contributing to our happiness and attainment of Buddhahood.

We need to have confidence in the Mystic Law. We mustn’t be swayed by immediate circumstances or allow them to cloud our faith.

Although during her short life Hasegawa was called a traitor, her name now shines with an undying brilliance in Asia. Her two children have grown into fine Chinese citizens. I heartily applaud this courageous woman.

History repeats itself. Japan is now drifting dangerously toward renewed nationalism. Therefore, authoritarian powers are persecuting us for standing up for pacifism and internationalism. Let’s continue the struggle! We must never allow past tragedies to be repeated. Let us advance joyfully and confidently!

In Good Faith

A prominent Japanese journalist, whom I know well, recently said: “Japan has not yet honestly faced or made amends for its wartime past — especially not in a way that can be regarded as truly sincere or in genuine good faith. China treat

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sure sincerity and good faith above all. If Japan were simply to make an effort to address this issue in an honest, sincere manner, then all other issues between the two could easily be resolved."

As long as the Japanese blithely pretend they have come to terms with the war legacy — while failing to take an honest look at the past, for example recognizing certain historical facts and Japan's role as an aggressor in the war — there can be no true friendship between the two. Japan can pursue talks with China on trade and commerce as it might, but as long as it avoids or tries to gloss over these important issues of the heart, any relationship will be as shaky as a house of cards. This is why Soka Gakkai activities to promote friendship on a grass-roots level are so important.

A poll conducted by China's largest youth newspaper, the China Youth News, showed serious concern over glimmers of a revival of Japanese militarism. In Japan, a recent survey of Japanese youth found that for the first time more than half the respondents felt that China could not be trusted. Taken together, this data suggests growing mutual mistrust.

Defeating Obstacles

It's the first time in quite a while that we've held a Headquarters Leaders Meeting here at the Kansai Toda Memorial Hall. Congratulations! And thank you for making it such a bright, lively gathering!

I am reminded of the times President Toda visited Kansai. Here, as elsewhere around the country, he spoke at members' gatherings, giving guidance based on the Gosho. He also lectured on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at the Nakanoshima

Civic Hall in Osaka.

In 1956 — the year when a Gakkai-backed candidate for the Osaka district for the first time won a House of Councilors seat and the newspaper headlines screamed, "The Impossible Has Been Achieved" — President Toda lectured in Osaka on the Gosho "Letter to Misawa." Through his discussion of the Daishonin's teachings, he deeply engraved in the members' hearts what we today know as the Kansai spirit.

"Letter to Misawa" reads:

Even though one may encounter a good teacher and the sutra of the true teaching and thereby learn the True Law, inevitably, at the time when he resolves to free himself from the sufferings of birth and death and attain Buddhahood, he will encounter the three obstacles and four devils, just as surely as a shadow follows the body and rain is accompanied by clouds. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 252)

Just as one cannot graduate from school without passing a test, one cannot become a Buddha without defeating devilish functions. To the extent that we struggle against and defeat such obstacles, we approach Buddhahood.

Of the three obstacles and four devils, the most difficult to overcome is Devil of the Sixth Heaven, and his machinations. By defeating this devil — in other words, by triumphing in the battle against the devilish nature of authority, we can attain Buddhahood. I want you to have a clear understanding of this point today.

Creating a Pure Land Entails Obstruction

In the Gosho, the Daishonin explains as follows:

When a common mortal of the

Latter Day of the Law is ready to attain Buddhahood, having realized the true meaning of all the Buddha's teachings and understood the profound teaching of the *Maka Shikan*,¹² this devil [of the Sixth Heaven] is greatly surprised. He says to himself: "This is most vexing. If I allow this person to remain in my domain, he will not only free himself from the sufferings of birth and death but lead others to enlightenment as well. Moreover, he will take over my realm and change it into a pure land. What shall I do?" The devil then summons all his underlings from the threefold world of desire, form and formlessness and tells them: "Each of you now go and harass that votary, according to your respective skills. If you should fail to make him abandon his Buddhist practice, then enter into the minds of his disciples, patrons and the people of his land and thus try to persuade or threaten him. If these attempts are also unsuccessful, I myself will go down and enter the mind and body of his sovereign to persecute that votary. Together, how can we fail to prevent him from attaining Buddhahood?" (MW-3, 252)

This world is the domain of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, who can be compared to a feudal lord. It distresses him greatly to see his realm turned into a Buddha land and all his retainers and tenants abandon him. This is what he fears most.

Paralleling the above Gosho passage, there have been a number of instances when devilish forces have tried to seize control of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI. However, all such attempts have failed — I have been firmly resolved never to let that happen. This incenses the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. And this is why the attacks upon us continue.

In light of the Gosho, there is surely no greater proof that one is correctly practicing Nichiren Dai-

shonin's teachings than incurring the envy, hatred and persecution of devilish forces. This underscores that the first, second and third presidents have been following the correct path of mentor and disciple. And this is where the eternal and fundamental path of the Soka Gakkai is found.

The strong, resolute spirit not to be intimidated or deceived by those in power is the driving force that propels us toward Buddhahood. We must not forget this spirit — the essential point of President Toda's lectures.

Here in Kansai, as President Toda's disciple, I underwent persecution at the hands of the authorities, just like that described by the Daishonin. I was thrown in jail. And, with my comrades in Kansai, I surmounted every obstacle and achieved victory. Kansai called forth the forces of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven and soundly defeated them. Kansai is the stronghold of our movement, the Castle of Soka that will tower eternally.

I will continue fighting together with the Kansai members for as long as I live! Together, let's continue our advance!

Nurture Outstanding Individuals — Build a Great Organization!

Youth division representatives, heirs to our movement's future, are gathered here today. I would like the Kansai youth division to press forward joyfully, unflinchingly, to forge a network of youth — friends who share our commitment to justice and truth — 1 million strong, and thereby create a legacy that will shine brilliantly in the annals of world history.

The time to put the finishing touches on this century is now at hand. This will begin from Kansai. And Kansai also will lead the way as we make our departure into the 21st century. I place my whole-

hearted trust in the valiant Kansai members.

Kansai is the force that propels our advance steadily toward the 21st century, toward kosen-rufu. In this place of your mission, please raise many outstanding capable people and build a great organization! Please show the world that the Kansai spirit is one of indomitable struggle!

Thank you! See you again soon!

1. Translated from Chinese. *Zhou Enlai Xuanji* (Selected Writings of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), vol. 2, p. 54.
2. Three powerful enemies: three groups of people who persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after Shakyamuni's passing. They are: 1) lay people ignorant of Buddhism; 2) arrogant and cunning priests; and 3) false saints in league with corrupt secular authorities.
3. From her editorial carried in the first issue of *China Women's Journal*, published in 1907.
4. Translated from Chinese. Jin Feng, *Deng Yingchao Zhuan* (Biography of Deng Yingchao), ed. Wang Naizhuang (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1993), p. 971.
5. *Zhou Enlai Xuanji*, p. 414.
6. *Deng Yingchao Zhuan*, p. 971.
7. Quotes here and below are from Ichiro Takasugi, *Chugoku no Midori no Hoshi: Hasegawa Teru Hansen no Shogai* (Green Star of China: Teru Hasegawa's Antiwar Struggle) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1980), pp. 89-92.
8. Teru Hasegawa, *Arashi no Naka no Sasayaki* (Whisper in a Storm) trans. Ichiro Takasugi (Tokyo: Shinhyoron, 1980), p. 153.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
12. Here, "the true meaning of all the Buddha's teachings" and "the profound teaching of the *Maka Shikan*" refer to the faith and practice of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws.

Long History of Abuse Changed Through Practice

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warding opportunity to help others find work and succeed in their chosen professions. Barbara Reed Workman, an author I met last year, is working with me to write my life story. I sincerely hope my experiences will give hope to other young women and help them reach their dreams in life.

I've found peace regarding my early life and the pain I endured. My parents and I now understand each other as we grow closer day by day, weeding out the hurt in our lives and replacing it with love. My dad, who is suffering from cancer, has found new hope from my life, and we are working together to renew his strength so he and my mother can celebrate their 65th wedding

anniversary on Dec. 5, 2001.

One of my deepest desires before my parents die is to create family unity and harmony with my brothers and sisters. They do not speak, and instead throw blame, jealousy, greed, stupidity and anger at one another — it hangs like a dark cloud over them. It also affects their children. I'm the only one who has open communication

with all of them. I envied them when I was young, thinking they were smarter and stronger and on top of the world. But I know I have gained strength through Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and I want to help them find peace as well.

I thank SGI President Ikeda for being my mentor. My life has come full circle in this human revolution by taking on respon-

sibilities and helping members practice, which has filled me with a purpose and a mission. Without the SGI and all the leaders who stuck by my side with their warm encouragement, I surely would not be here today. I am honored and proud to be an 18-year member of the SGI.

Through it all I have endured. I am not only a survivor in life, I am a winner!

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

WILLIAM BRENNAN (1906–1997)

A Life of Justice

Imagine a political appointment that spanned eight presidents — from Dwight Eisenhower to George Bush. A time that took America from *Leave It To Beaver* to *Beavis and Butthead*. From segregated schools and bus strikes in the South through the Cuban missile crisis and political battles over abortion, the death penalty and civil rights.

That was the life of retired Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., who died July 20 at the age of 91. He managed through the most difficult of political and legal controversies to remain a person respected by both sides in an argument — a man who was known as much for his big heart and ability to forge consensus as for his tireless work and penetrating intellect.

During the memorial service at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Supreme Court Justice David Souter pointed out that Brennan left behind a legacy of 1,360 written opinions "on about every subject known to us."

"We will either have to accept his direction or grapple, year after year, subject after subject of national law," said Souter, who was appointed to the court by President Bush in 1990 when Brennan's health was failing. "We will either accept the inheritance of his thinking or we will have to face it squarely and make a good challenge."

Born on April 25, 1906, in Newark, N.J., Brennan was the son of an Irish Catholic immigrant and labor leader. When President Eisenhower selected him for the Supreme Court in 1956, Brennan already had made a name for himself on the New Jersey Supreme Court as a leading reformer of the state courts and outspoken critic of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's witch hunt against communists and communist sympathizers.

One of Justice Brennan's favorite references in legal opinions was to "human dignity." It reflected his belief that the Constitution exists to protect the rights of individuals. He saw the Constitution as a living body of great principles that adapt to the needs of the time.

"His devotion to the Bill of Rights inspired millions of Americans and countless young law students, including myself," President Bill Clinton said. "The force of his ideas, the strength of his leadership and his character have safeguarded freedom and widened the circle of equality for every single one of us." ■



Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, 91, died July 24 in Washington, D.C., after a long illness. Brennan, who retired in 1990, was appointed in 1956 by President Eisenhower. During more than 30 years on the Supreme Court, he wrote a number of its landmark rulings, including those on school desegregation and affirmative action. Brennan is considered to be the primary architect of individual rights in law throughout the 1960s.