

World Tribune

No. 3158

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

SEPTEMBER 26, 1997

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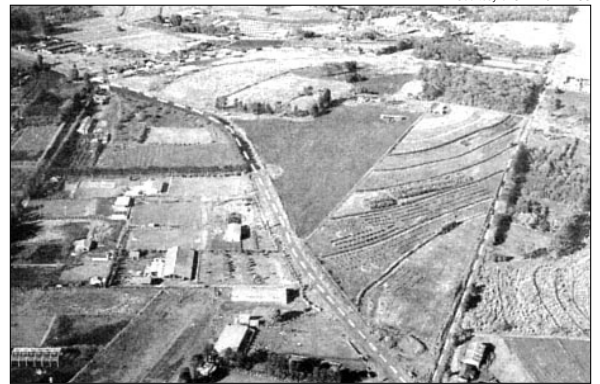
Brazilian City To Build Ikeda Peace Park

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

The Brazilian city of Londrina, in Paraná state, has announced plans to construct a public park called the Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Peace Park. The park, which will cover some 80 acres, is one of a number of urban projects the southern Brazilian city is undertaking under the leadership of Mayor Antonio Casemiro Belinatti. The park will include an Event Center with facilities for international trade fairs, conventions and other cultural and industrial events. The city also plans to preserve forests covering 60 acres within the park.

Mayor Belinatti said he hoped the park would become a place where citizens would be encouraged to work for peace. City Councilor Carlos Kita, former president of the municipal assembly and a key proponent of the project, said that the park would be a symbol of Londrina, and that he felt the city had made the best possible choice in naming the park after Mr. Ikeda, in honor of his commitment to global peace. The park's architects, Elisa Koyama and Márcia Ivale, indicated that the park was designed around the themes of

PLEASE SEE PARK, 4



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

The 80-acre park to be named after the SGI president will include facilities for trade fairs and cultural events. Architects say they designed the park around the themes of harmony with nature and international friendship.

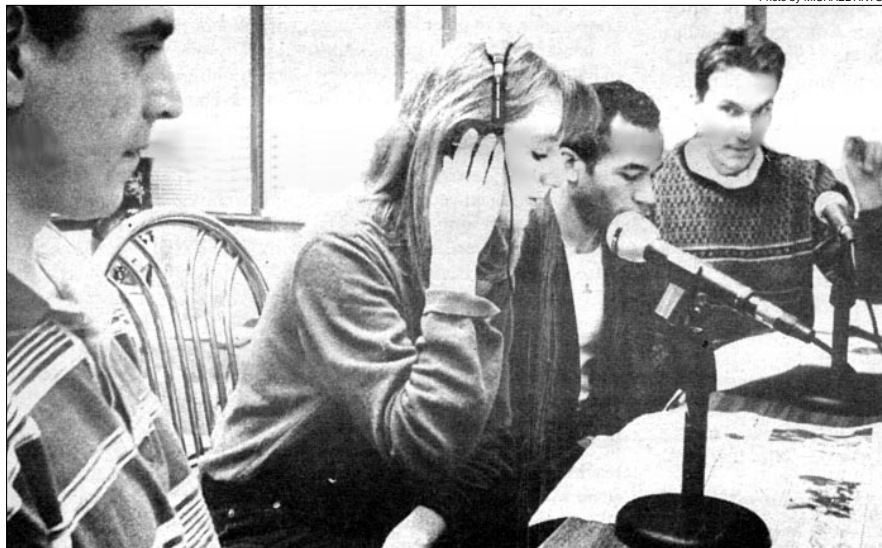


Photo by MICHAEL ANTON

(L-r) Tom De Simone, Monica Gaydos, John Anderson and Steve Sparagen record an issue of the 'World Tribune' for blind members in New York. Volunteers meet each Saturday for about three hours to record the latest paper.

Second Sight

SGI-USA members in New York record issues of the 'World Tribune' for their visually impaired friends.

By **BILL BLACKARD**
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

Imagine that you have received the Gohonzon, do gongyo twice a day and share the practice with others. But there's one thing missing: reading the publications. Not because you don't

want to, but because you are blind or visually impaired.

Tom Montauderes, a successful composer and musician, has been clinically blind since childhood. His wife, Rita, read the *World Tribune* to him until her own sight started to deteriorate in 1993. She realized there might be other members faced with this difficulty and decided to find a way to have the newspaper recorded.

Pat Vega, a fellow member, got the ball rolling by recording two issues on cassette tape. Tom and Rita were thrilled to once

again connect to the world of study, and the three of them decided that recording the *World Tribune* could be turned into a meaningful activity for other members as well.

After singing in the World Peace Youth Culture Festival at Carnegie Hall last summer, Steven Sparagen, a one-year youth division member, wanted to use his voice for kosen-rufu. When he heard about this idea, he devised a format, described below, for recording the news-

PLEASE SEE NEW YORK, 4

Interfaith Conference Points to Action

By **JEFF FARR**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Sept. 14

The true meaning of being a religious person is found in compassionate action. So agreed representatives from several world religions at today's 2nd Annual Westside Youth Interfaith Conference, held at the Santa Monica Community Center.

From Dr. Joyce Kovelman, a Jewish author of two spiritual books and a psychiatrist focusing on fostering people's uniqueness, to Nazareen Haroon, a Muslim woman who has helped open 40 one-room schoolhouses in rural Pakistan, all 70 participants had stories to share of "Changing the World Through Individual Action," the conference theme.

A small group of SGI-USA members, who began preparations for today's event nine months ago, chose this theme because they wanted to focus on the participants' experiences — how their beliefs had led them to take action in their communities. "It was hoped that this year's theme would pull out the real human struggles that we all go through, regardless of our different beliefs," explained Darin Nellis, one of the event organizers. This was

PLEASE SEE INTERFAITH, 4

VOICES

What have you learned about yourself since participating in recent diversity discussion groups?

Members from Philadelphia Joint Territory respond:



Although nothing profound is going on in our group, this experience has profoundly affected my life. I've realized that I viewed African Americans as a monolithic group. But this activity has enabled me to look at African Americans as individuals. I've been freed from my preconceptions and can now ask myself, "How can I help other human beings?" As a group we haven't tried to tackle the larger issues. But I feel we are building bridges to one another as individuals, based on faith in the Gohonzon. Through this training and dialogue I feel we will have an impact on society.

— JIM WALLERSTEIN, Bryn Mawr, Pa.



As an African American, it has occurred to me that I have altered my behavior and speech depending on the kinds of people I am with. Despite my intellect...I find myself choosing my words carefully while talking to European Americans. I don't feel as comfortable due to the fact that I feel I am being judged with more scrutiny by European Americans.

— THOM WILKINS, Philadelphia



By participating in our group, I've learned how to be even more vigilant about how I stereotype and make assumptions about people. It's something I did before, too, but now I'm even more aware.

— KITTY WATTS, Glenside, Pa.

I've come to realize that it takes a tremendous amount of effort to have an open and honest dialogue that's void of emotionalism, blame or anger. Participating has opened my perspective that my view isn't the only view — that there are many other views out there as well.

— DIANE MOORE DAVIS, Cherry Hill, N.J.



What I've seen more clearly is that human beings are human beings. If you get past features, you realize that we all have the same basic nature. Everyone experiences pain, joy and suffering. I've gained a better understanding of the need to develop more compassion for other human beings and overcome the feeling of victimization. And that I can't wait for someone else to change but must change first.

— WANDA FLOWERS, Philadelphia



Our group has been talking about how each nationality has its own idiosyncrasies and how hard it is to hear oneself. Only by hearing oneself can you correct the way you behave. Lately I've been trying to listen to myself, and I am often surprised with what I hear. Now that I've discovered this, I'm trying harder to grab hold of this devilish function and purify it.

— QUINTINE DRAPER, Philadelphia

It's Not Just Niceness

EDITORIAL

Interfaith activities aren't just about "niceness toward each other," the Rev. James Lawson said at an interfaith discussion held recently at the SGI-USA community center in Santa Monica, Calif. They're about uniting toward a common goal. "Human solidarity is a *must* for the kind of world we want," the noted civil rights activist stressed.

These sentiments resonate strongly with the spirit underlying the SGI-USA's efforts at interfaith dialogue in recent years. The world's problems cannot be solved by one person, one country or one religious organization alone. People must transcend religious differences and work together for solutions, an idea expressed in Article 7 of the SGI Charter: "SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity."

As good neighbors, we join with others in our communities to deal with the tough issues facing people of all faiths. "It is no exaggeration to say that human solidarity, the bonds of humanity, are at the very core of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism," SGI President Ikeda writes in his 1996 peace proposal.

He goes on to raise an important point about how cooperation with other faiths squares with Nichiren Daishonin's harsh criticisms of the major religions of his day. "Because of its doctrinal vigor, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has often been viewed historically as rejectionist or dogmatic," he says. "This, however, must be termed a biased and one-dimensional view. While he consistently maintained the rigor and purity of his teaching, Nichiren Daishonin also emphasized: 'The Nirvana Sutra states: 'The sufferings of all living beings are the sufferings of the Buddha.' And I say: 'The sufferings experienced by all people are the sufferings of Nichiren'" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 758)."

As is clear in this and other statements, Nichiren Daishonin's intent was to relieve the sufferings of and bring happiness to all people. When he spoke harshly of other faiths, he did so in a climate where he had to distinguish and protect the integrity of his teaching. Because the other sects were united to destroy him, there was no basis on which the Daishonin could work together with them. Nevertheless, his underlying desire was to show people the way to happy, fulfilling lives.

When we, as followers of Nichiren Daishonin, engage in interfaith activities, we do so embracing this same concern. As

practitioners of a world religion, we are well aware of our social mission to use the wisdom that arises from our practice to deal with issues of the day. And toward that end, we need to talk with like-minded people to create ways in which we can cooperate toward our common goals.

For much of the SGI-USA's history, we were concerned primarily with establishing a viable organization in this country. Now that such a foundation has been laid — and we have been freed of the parochial ideas of a conservative priesthood — interfaith activities by appointed representatives are becoming more common, as are all manner of community outreach. (Official interfaith activities are approved by the joint territories and joined in by representatives the joint territories appoint.)

Our interfaith activities are not about doctrinal debate or compromise. As SGI members, we maintain the spirit to spread our teachings to individuals who are seeking answers in their daily lives. Our conviction does not preclude us from respecting others, though. Through religious dialogue, we can learn about other faiths and others can learn about us and our beliefs. In the end, we will likely find much common ground on which we can stand together.

"We can start by discussing the mutual problems that we face as human beings," Shin'ichi Yamamoto says in *The New Human Revolution*. "Or we can discuss the imperatives for achieving world peace from a humanitarian standpoint." He goes on to share Josei Toda's view that if the Daishonin, Shakyamuni, Jesus Christ and Mohammed could meet, they would quickly reach a consensus on what needed to be done to ensure humanity's happiness.

"Since such a conference, unfortunately, is not possible, the only solution is for the different groups' believers today to return to the spirit of these religious teachers — who devoted their lives to the people's salvation — and talk with one another from that standpoint," Shin'ichi concludes.

The SGI promotes various activities in the realms of peace, education and culture — all to contribute to the betterment of society. Based on Nichiren Daishonin's compassion for all people, the SGI will continue to make interfaith activities a natural and important aspect of our movement.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Let's Move On

I apologize from the depths of my life to those of you who were offended by words I used in my head to ward off death (twice). It's true I wish I had thought *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. However, I didn't. The phrase I used was ugly, fearful and vicious; it is not a phrase I use in daily life. [See Ms. Bundy's experience in the *May 23 World Tribune*.]

Death was pulling me, as I flatlined twice. Both times, I thought the same thing in my mind, like a silent scream. I fought to remain in my body and not to hover above it. I seemed to know with my life that if that happened, I would never return. I was furious. I could not die, although it would have ended the excruciating pain I was experiencing (about six times that of an appendicitis attack).

So I fought with everything I had, despite cardiac arrest, etc., because I would have left my daughter basically without a parent (yes, she is an adult, but we are very close because of this practice), and because I feared the precious members of our district and all the precious people I introduced to this practice would be discouraged by my demise. This was my attitude and my determination.

So I ask you: Please, let's move on. And thank you, *World Tribune*, for printing that "phrase" — it took courage. I shall continue to chant with deep and sincere appreciation for my practice and my life, and to fight for my happiness and the happiness of others.

— BROOKE BUNDY, Los Angeles

The Priesthood Problem

Kudos and much appreciation to the publishers of *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*! The timing could not have been better, at least for me. I've been struggling with the priesthood problem for the past few years, reading what I could, chanting about it, trying to arrive at a clear, personal position. It's only been this summer that I've come to some confident conclusions, and the appearance of this pamphlet has reinforced them. Thank you.

— DOMINIC GOMEZ, San Francisco

Big Business Blues

While riding the bus to work this morning I was reading Bill Endsley's article "Taking Care of Business — as Buddhists" (Sept. 12 *World Tribune*). Wow! As I read the article, I consciously became aware that I, too, am struggling with some of these same major business issues.

Tom Friese was quoted in the article saying: "I found the world of big business to be a world of jealousy, hatred and grudges. Executives were constantly covering for one another and in the end hurting people and the business." Exactly. Exactly. I have chosen an approach similar to Tom's, by not playing along with their games.

Unlike Tom, I've chosen to stay in the corporate world. It has been difficult as far as personal promotions go, but as far as building bridges with my peers, it's been very successful. Who do my peers trust and to who do they turn when they need help and advice? I'll just say it's not anyone on the executive level. Thanks for the great article.

— ALBY ZATKOFF, Minneapolis, Minn.

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

The Perception of Color

PERSPECTIVE

By ANNE M. HUDSON
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

I sat in the audience at the Boston Community Center, listening to the woman tell about encountering racism in circumstances that otherwise would have been unremarkable, and as a Buddhist how she conducted herself and addressed the offenders with impressive results. The woman, Marilyn Busby, was a district leader in the Cambridge Chapter to which I belong. Marilyn was also, as a personnel officer for a major Boston employer, denied access to the coffee service while setting up her booth at a job fair, then given the insulting excuse by building management that they wanted to protect the place from vagrants (yes, vagrants!).

As she spoke, I was struck by the banality, thoughtlessness and mean-spiritedness of this expression of prejudice — the assumption made only on skin color that the woman I knew to be articulate and capable did not belong, did not deserve the most minimal consideration. The thought occurred to me, "What if it were me?" If it were me, I'd be outraged.

As I sat there, I remembered becoming aware of racism for the first time: It was the summer of 1957, and my family was traveling from California to Texas by car. We stopped at a gas station, where I got out to use the bathroom. It was a hot afternoon, the air filled with dust, and in my mind's eye I can still see myself, in my pedal pushers, ankle socks and pigtailed, following the station attendant's directions, walking past the red Coca-Cola machine and rounding the corner of the fly-specked stucco building. At the far end of the side wall, past the doors labeled *Ladies* and *Gentlemen* and the water fountain between them, hung a sign that pointed to the back and bearing the word *Colored*.

I hesitated, confused and uncomfortable. I had seen African Americans before, but by some accident or naiveté had failed to pay attention to their skin color. The rainbow of human races was a Sunday-school poster, a UNICEF card, to me. What could this sign, this racial seg-

regation of toilet facilities, mean other than that someone (or several someones) thought that my pale-skinned rear end should not touch the same toilet seat touched by a "colored" rear end? What if it were me being directed to the back of the building, away from the facilities for Ladies and Gentlemen? How would I feel?

Around this time, some Christian churches took up the

as I expected, the rage of the oppressed gave way to riots. Sadly, as a young white woman, I came to fear for my safety on city streets. Another wedge was driven between my idealism and reality when minority advocates, opposing assimilation that denied history and culture, asserted the inaccessibility of the black experience to white people. Also, as I learned more about my family's history — owning slaves in the South and discriminating in hiring in the North — I was tormented by guilt.

Sitting there listening to my fellow member, the indignation born of identification rose in my heart: I remembered the girl seeing the sign to a racially segregated bathroom for the first time. In the wake of the heightened awareness of cultural diversity that has arisen since then, I wanted to appreciate the uniqueness of other people and their cultures. However, I did not want to console myself about the world's injustices just by feeling guilty.

After all, Buddhism teaches us that guilt is contrary to the fundamental law of the universe. It is backward-looking and undermines constructive effort in the present. Further, guilt separates us from ourselves and others. According to the Mystic Law of True Cause, or *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, we begin anew each moment. Instead of giving in to guilt, we can assume responsibility, take compassionate action and open the way to the future.

Deepening our human bonds underlies the SGI's promotion of culture and education in the pursuit of peace: Art has the power to transcend differences because it appeals to our common humanity; and education enlarges our knowledge of ourselves, others and the world we inhabit together. To overcome the debilitating emphasis on what divides us, I believe we need to work with many kinds of people whose humanity, character and individuality we can learn to love and respect. This is the opportunity the SGI provides. Standing for the equality and potential of all people, the SGI champions justice and compassion.

As for me, I never want to forget the girl who despised injustice, who could ask the question, "What if it were me?"



Anne Hudson at home with Randall.

cause of racial justice, speaking out publicly against segregation and participating in peaceful demonstrations. One Sunday in 1964, my minister related the message of his sermon to the Fair Housing Act, then before the voters of California, which prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of property. Parishioners walked out, declaring that they came to church for peace of mind, not social involvement. They said they objected to the Fair Housing Act because "private property is sacred" — and I was astonished.

With the uncompromising zeal of youth, I denounced discrimination as inimical to the church's teaching of unconditional love and the spirit of democracy enshrined in the Constitution. Racism was nothing other than cruel oppression. I fully expected its objects to be enraged. "Sow the seeds of oppression ever again," I reflected, with help from Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "and ye shall reap fruits according to their kind." Again, what if it were me?

My youthful idealism would become tarnished, however. Just

Photo by SUSAN BRUMFIELD

ArtsFest Brings Art to Life

By FLETCHER DALTON
BUREAU CHIEF
Boston, July 26-27

Jeff Vachon brought 11 guests to ArtsFest, Boston's first major celebration of the arts, held this weekend.

"They all loved it," he said. "This was because it was hands-on, interactive, appealing to everyone, and open to all," said Steve Potoff, Boston's joint territory chief, explaining that although ArtsFest was produced by the arts division of the Culture Department, one did not have to be a recognized artist to present creative work.

Almost the entire square footage of the community center became exhibit space for painters, photographers, poets, sculptors, storytellers, musicians, writers, designers, weavers, puppeteers, a jester, a juggler and a chorus. There was also music by and for children.

In an intimate coffeehouse

setting — minus espresso — poets and comedians held sway, some live, some on film. Although the length of Buddhist practice of the performers ranged from several months to a quarter of a century, the general attitude here, as indeed everywhere at the festival, seemed to be one of sharing life's experiences with the audiences, not just entertaining them.

Guang Wong found the ambiance of the coffeehouse refreshing. "The poetry was by common people, writing about ordinary things like friendship, their frustrations, and dreams," he said. "I have great appreciation for these people who have the courage to take up a pen and write, not concerned about criticism or whether they are great poets or writers, but willing to share their feelings with others."

ArtsFest was a mere sketch of an idea 10 months ago. Through continuous effort and concen-



African drums provoke excitement among the crowd at Boston's ArtFest.

trated daimoku by members, the idea expanded and caught the imagination of the entire joint territory. In a unique, irresistible preview of the festival, Arts Division Chief and ArtsFest Coordinator Flo Chien, accompanying herself on an acoustic guitar, regaled the joint territory planning board with song. The board responded and

helped by assisting with communication and promotion.

Although many of the performing artists had been heard previously — at their own gigs or various Buddhist activities — never had so many been heard and seen in one place at one time.

"This festival is bringing the arts back from a marginal position

in society and restoring them to their humanizing role," said Carol Sylla, a choreographer and teacher who specializes in African movement and dance. "Here, everyone can express themselves in a non-censuring atmosphere. The arts embrace everyone. As SGI President Ikeda says, 'The arts are vital to our lives.'" **WT**

PARK, FROM PAGE 1

harmony with nature and international friendship.

Members of the local SGI organization, including the Fife and Drum Corps and Brass Band, have in the past taken part in

many civic events in Londrina. The Brazil and World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition, shown there in May, was viewed by 130,000 citizens. In 1993, the city bestowed honorary citizenship on President Ikeda.

The city of Curitiba, also in

Paraná, has opened a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park, and São José dos Campos has announced plans to build a Josei Toda Park. Thus Brazil will soon have parks named after each of the first three Soka Gakkai presidents. **WT**

NEW YORK, FROM PAGE 1

papers and sharing the tapes with members. Soon after, 10 members came to a kickoff at the Montaures home at which Robert Miller, who runs the audiovisual equipment at the New York Culture Center, offered the use of the center's AV facilities.

Since that time, the committee, which has swelled to 35 members, has recorded 45 issues. Each Saturday, two or three members meet at the culture center's library and read the entire paper cover to cover within a three-hour period. The photographs are described, and even the cartoons are explained.

The members who request the cassettes initially mail in four blank tapes to the reading committee. Every two weeks, the committee sends the members two recorded tapes containing the contents of two issues. After listening to the tapes, the members return them to the library and receive two more with the latest two issues recorded. The tapes are mailed in special postage-free cartons available from the American Printing House for the Blind, located in Louisville, Ky. (telephone: 1-800-223-1839).

Lorna Duff, who has sight in only one eye due to a childhood accident, is a big fan: "I love to study, and now I can use the

tapes to thoroughly read the newspaper."

Sophie Theven agrees: "I can read the *World Tribune* with my whole life now."

Members involved in recording the *World Tribune* are happy about the project, too. Jane Young, a journalist, has taken up singing again. "I feel so uplifted after recording the newspaper," she explains. Mr. Sparagen is teaching voice and speech full time.

Actor Philip Suraci says, "Since recording these tapes, my job benefits have increased tremendously."

Meanwhile, Tom and Rita Montaures have moved to a beautiful new apartment. "Anything is possible with this great Gohonzon," says Rita, who has regained partial sight after several operations. "To know that so many people will benefit from this activity makes me eternally grateful to President Ikeda and all the SGI members who are making it possible for everyone to read our wonderful *World Tribune*."

Editor's note: This is a regional project in New York. Please don't send blank tapes to New York, as they cannot handle requests from outside their joint territories. Thank you for your understanding.

INTERFAITH, FROM PAGE 1

thought of as a stepping stone toward future dialogue in which the participants can decide on appropriate projects to work on.

The Rev. James Lawson, pastor of the Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles and the keynote speaker, came at the term "individual action" from an interesting angle, pointing out that individualism can be a negative force. It can make us into "billiard balls," he argued — we sometimes pursue change as individuals, forgetting how much more we can do together. "Being an African American man who's been in this country for 68 years," he said, "I am persuaded that when we talk about individualism, we're talking about an American cultural feature that is probably very destructive."

The Rev. Lawson, a colleague of Martin Luther King Jr. and who has been jailed in seven states for his civil rights activities, proposed "personal action" as an alternative. He defined this as each of us



Photo by MARTIN COHEN

The dialogue at the Santa Monica Community Center brings together people of various faiths, including Islam and Baha'i.

working with other religious people toward concrete common goals, making the most of whatever we each can give to the combined effort. "Human solidarity is a *must* for the kind of world we want," Dr. Lawson emphasized.

Painting a dark picture of the social machinery, especially economic policies that tend to oppose solidarity of the people, he harshly criticized religions in America — especially his own,

Christianity — for being too quiet about an economy in which "people who work do not matter, are less than human." Asked to describe what things might be like in 10 or 20 years if policies don't change, the Rev. Lawson imagined an "authoritarian society" where "economic inequalities would be justified and exaggerated." Interfaith activities

PLEASE SEE INTERFAITH, 13

Shin'ichi Yamamoto rose to the microphone amid thunderous applause. Smiling warmly at the crowd, he opened with a bit of humor: "I heard that you've been waiting for your president to arrive. But I was a little worried that some of you might think when you actually set eyes on me: 'Oh my! What a short, rumped, ordinary-looking president he is!' Unfortunately, I was born this way, so I hope you'll put up with me!"

The audience roared with laughter.

Shin'ichi was perfectly relaxed.

Shikoku had been one of Japan's most progressive centers of democratic ideals in the latter 19th century and produced such great intellectuals as Itagaki Taisuke,¹ founder of the Risshisha (Self-Help Society),² and Nakae Chomin,³ the Japanese translator of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*.⁴ Given this background, Shin'ichi chose to speak about the Soka Gakkai's mission to create an era of genuine democracy.

The Gakkai was committed to working for the happiness of all people based on the Gohonzon. To achieve this goal, he stressed, it was important for all members to prove the value of faith by leading happy lives and winning the respect and praise of those around them. He concluded his speech with a call that everyone unite firmly, with strong faith, to make further great strides in spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism.

After the entire audience joined in a grand chorus of "Song of the New Century," the Shikoku Headquarters Leaders Meeting came to a close at 1:15 p.m.

To encourage the members, Shin'ichi went down to the stadium field and began walking around the track, waving as he went. The people in the stands stood up to cheer and applaud him as he passed. The senior leaders who knew about the threatening phone call followed anxiously behind.

Smiling at each person as he passed by, Shin'ichi waved in response to the members' cheers, slowly making his way around the stadium.

Now and again, he would shake hands with members who held out their hands, telling them: "Thank you." "I appreciate your efforts." "Let's meet again soon." He gave of himself unstintingly to encourage and inspire the members.

Suddenly, he stopped in front of one section of the stands. A group of members was calling out, though what they were saying was indistinct to those around them. Shin'ichi, though, immediately recognized them and understood their cry — it was a group of deaf members. They were calling "Sensei!" to him, with all their heart and being. During the

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 4

Rough Seas

Translation of parts 3–8 of the 'Rough Seas' 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.

meeting, Shin'ichi had noticed that there was a large contingent of deaf members in the audience when he saw people using sign language to convey to them the content of the speeches.

Shin'ichi had heard from the Shikoku leaders that in Takamatsu⁵ Chapter was Saiwai District, comprised mostly of deaf members. He had also been informed that the Saiwai District chief, Shizuya Fukuyama, a man in his mid-40s, had decided to dedicate his life to working for the welfare of the hearing impaired.

Fukuyama, driven by the wish to help others since a young age, learned sign language and became a teacher at a school for the deaf. However, when the war broke out, he was drafted into the Japanese army. He was in China when the war ended, where the Soviet army put him aboard a freight train bound for Siberia with other Japanese prisoners. En route, however, he escaped and was hidden and assisted, as fate's mysterious workings

sign painter. But this brought him little income. He fell deeper and deeper into debt.

It was amid these difficult circumstances that he heard about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and, in 1956, became a Soka Gakkai member along with his wife. Learning how life's fundamental sufferings could be surmounted through faith, Fukuyama enthusiastically told the deaf people he knew about Buddhism. And with his proficiency in sign language, many other deaf Gakkai members began to gather around him. With a deep conviction and commitment that this was his life's mission, he devoted himself earnestly to supporting and encouraging these members to stand up in faith.

District Chief Shizuya Fukuyama attended the Shikoku Headquarters Leaders Meeting along with 240 deaf members. He stood in the very front row of the stand where they were seated, a slightly built, bespectacled man.

Shin'ichi saw Fukuyama and conveyed his appreciation and approval with a firm nod. He then gazed intently at each member in the group, wanting to engrave their faces indelibly in his heart. Each possessed a truly important mission, each was a precious child of the Buddha.

"I've heard all about you," Shin'ichi said. "The Daishonin promises that we can become happy without fail. So no matter what happens, please keep chanting and never lose hope. You must not be defeated. You must win against yourself!"

Fukuyama conveyed these words to the members by signing, his eyes overflowing with tears. And tears glistened in the members' eyes as well, as they intently followed his translation.

Smiling through their happy tears, they waved to Shin'ichi, wordlessly expressing their joy.

Shin'ichi waved back with all his strength. Through faith, these members had stood up resolutely from the brink of despair and begun to walk the great path of their mission.

The Soka Gakkai was the only organization committed to going among the people burdened with suffering and grief, teaching them the way to happiness, sending them a light of courage and hope and showing them how to tap their inner life force.

To all enemies of the people's happiness, now unseen, Shin'ichi cried out in his heart: "Draw your arrows at

this noble organization if you dare! Shoot at me if you will! But I will keep fighting — I'll let nothing defeat me!"

With his fists clenched in determination, he looked into the distance at the serene, forested mountain rising into the overcast sky beyond the stands.

As he continued on his round, a united cry erupted from another section of the stands. "Kochi!" they shouted. This was the name of a neighboring prefecture.

Shin'ichi answered: "Thank you for your efforts! Please have a safe trip home. We'll build a community center in Kochi soon."

The Kochi members' cheers echoed in the stands.

As if trying to embrace each of the 30,000 participants, Shin'ichi made his way around the stadium, waving and offering words of encouragement. By the time he finished his circuit, his voice was hoarse, throat sore. His arms and shoulders ached.

Fortunately, despite the threatening phone call, no trouble had occurred. After the leaders meeting, Shin'ichi attended a gathering of district chiefs at the Shikoku Headquarters Building and delivered a lecture on the Goshō "A Letter to Choraku-ji Temple" (*Goshō Zenshu*, pp. 176–77). Then he discussed future activities with Shikoku leaders until late in the night.

The next day, June 3, Shin'ichi traveled from Takamatsu to Okayama⁶ for the Chugoku Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Okayama Prefectural Gymnasium. The meeting began a little before noon. Twenty-five thousand people had gathered, and the venue could not accommodate all of them. The rainy season in the Chugoku region⁷ had set in the previous day, so many had to stand outside in the rain, straining to hear the guidance over the loudspeakers.

In his speech, Shin'ichi declared that Gakkai meetings were truly joyous, momentous events. In them, one could find irrefutable proof of the power of faith. This was evidenced by the members' experiences of becoming happy as well as guidance based directly on the unsurpassed teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

In addition to speaking on the importance of studying the Goshō and Buddhist philosophy, he announced the de-



would have it, by a deaf Chinese citizen.

When he finally made his way back to his hometown, Hiroshima, he attempted to establish a charitable organization and a company to aid the hearing impaired, to repay in some small way the kindness of his Chinese benefactor. But both projects failed.

Eventually, he moved to Takamatsu, his wife's hometown, and took a job as a

ROUGH SEAS, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

cision to designate 1963 the Year of Study.

After his lecture, he stood up to lead the assembly in a chorus of "Song of Dynamic Advancement," which had originated from Chugoku. Shin'ichi infused his movements with a powerful spirit and resolve to inspire courage and determination in every member.

When the leaders meeting ended, Shin'ichi went outside immediately — he wanted to encourage the members who had been in the rain listening over the loudspeakers. As he emerged from the gymnasium, one of the leaders traveling with him from Tokyo quickly opened an umbrella and held it over his head.

"I don't need an umbrella," Shin'ichi said. "As long as our members are standing in the rain, so will I." He began to walk in the rain. Applause and cheers suddenly rose as the members spotted Shin'ichi.

"Thank you for coming!" Shin'ichi shouted. "Please be careful not to catch cold in this rain."

He walked around the area, talking and waving to members. Soon his suit was drenched.

He would do anything for his fellow members if it would inspire them in their mission for kosen-rufu. If he could, he would have embraced and encouraged each and every rain-soaked member. And so he walked through the crowd, continuing to offer encouragement with his entire being and stir the members to even greater achievements.

The leaders meeting was followed by a gathering for district chiefs. Shin'ichi lectured on the Gosho "The Day Before Last" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 183–84). Written in Kamakura on Sept. 12, 1271, and addressed to Hei no Saemon-no-jo Yoritsuna, Nichiren Daishonin in this letter pointed out the accuracy of the predictions he had made in the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" (written in 1260) and discussed the proper course of action for the nation's leaders.

Two days before the Daishonin composed the letter ("the day before last" of the title), Sept. 10, he was interrogated by Hei no Saemon, the de facto leader of the government who was controlling its military, police and administrative functions. During the interrogation, the Daishonin remonstrated with Hei no Saemon to abandon all mistaken teachings and embrace the correct teaching. But the official showed not the least readiness to do so, which led the Daishonin to compose and dispatch this letter two days later.

But on that very day, Hei no Saemon directed a force of several hundred armed soldiers to arrest the Daishonin and execute him that evening at Tatsunokuchi. This is the famous Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

The Daishonin was fully aware that his remonstrance of Hei no Saemon would provoke a life-threatening attack. In his lecture, Shin'ichi discussed why the Daishonin, who sincerely loved his

country and thought only of saving it, should become the object of persecution. He wanted to highlight the true nature of this oppression.

Shin'ichi declared: "If the Daishonin had not remonstrated with the regent Hojo Tokiyori, Hei no Saemon and others in government, it is very likely that the foul plot against him and the persecution that followed would never have occurred. But to relieve the people's misery, the Daishonin had no choice but to try to correct the way the government leaders thought and lived, since the social influence and political power they wielded so greatly affected the country's destiny.

"In most cases good advice still only gives offense, and those in power hate people who stand up and speak out, who refuse to bow down to their authority. Such is the arrogance of the powerful, the demonic nature of authority. In addition, Ryokan⁸ of Gokuraku-ji temple and the Nembutsu school priests feared that they would lose their patronage and privilege if Tokiyori heeded the Daishonin's remonstrance and adopted the Lotus Sutra, so they painted the Daishonin a villain. Of course, as he himself said, 'My present exile is not because of any crime' (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 38) — the Daishonin was completely without fault or blame.

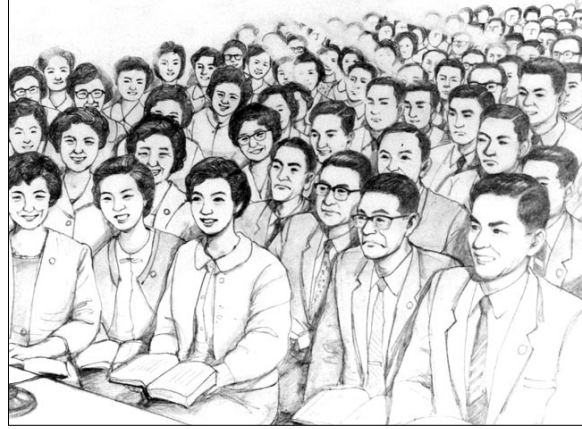
"Ryokan and the Nembutsu priests hired underlings to set fires and murder people, and then loudly complained that those crimes were perpetrated by the Daishonin's followers. Their intent was to have the Daishonin exiled to Sado Island. Such persecution and oppression fit a pattern that has remained unchanged throughout the ages: The victim is accused of crimes he or she did not commit, made out to be an evil person and then condemned as guilty."

After this introduction, Shin'ichi began the main part of his lecture, quoting a passage from "The Day Before Last":

One who knows the Law and is concerned about his country should, by all rights, be praised and honored to the highest degree. But because the followers of false doctrines and heretical teachings have slandered and defamed me, I have not yet been able to carry out even the smallest part of the great purpose I have embraced for so long. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 183)

"The Daishonin should have been most highly applauded and esteemed for his profound grasp of Buddhism and wish to save the country. However, the slanders and false rumors spread by the priests and followers of other Buddhist

schools had poisoned the minds of those in power, causing them to see the Daishonin as an enemy and rebuff his counsel. This had thus far prevented the Daishonin from realizing, in even the smallest way, his long-cherished goal of saving the nation.



"Slander is the standard method to waylay a just cause, and the Gakkai faces the same situation in present-day society that the Daishonin did centuries earlier. We have worked earnestly to improve Japan, bring happiness to people and peace to the world. No other organization's motives are so pure, honest and sincere."

All eyes were riveted on Shin'ichi as everyone listened intently to his lecture, eager to catch every word.

His voice resounded: "Certain elements of the mass media spread lies and demagoguery about the Soka Gakkai, calling this organization of sincere, concerned people a violent religion, or claiming that we plan to take over the Japanese government and impose our beliefs on the nation. Unfortunately, society unquestioningly accepts those lies as facts and rejects the Gakkai because of them. In this way, the Soka Gakkai is being directly attacked. And slander is the weapon of choice.

"The struggle to achieve kosen-rufu is, from one perspective, a struggle against slander and lies — a war of words in which our goal is to break through the web of lies, and let people know the truth about Buddhism and the Gakkai, and thus win support and empathy for our cause. It is a battle we must fight with our humanity.

"In this struggle, the Soka Gakkai's victory is certain. No matter how one piles up lies and distortions, the truth can never be overturned. As the Daishonin says, 'Many evil forces are vanquished by a single great truth' (MW-1, 154). Still, we cannot overlook the fact that no matter how absurd and outrageous a lie may be, it cannot be recognized as a lie unless the truth is also known. Even those who first doubt such a lie may come to accept it if it is repeated often enough and no one speaks out against it.

"There is a proverb 'Speech is silver,

silence is golden.' But that doesn't mean we can afford to be silent. The proverb means that there are cases in which silence is more persuasive than eloquent argument, but that when the time comes to speak out one must do so, and fight for the truth. To fail to do so is simply cowardice.

"As the Daishonin's disciples, and with as many members as we have today, it would be a truly shameful thing if we were to be defeated by slander. Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda would be deeply disturbed and saddened by such a turn of events. If any of you think for even a moment that you don't need to stand up for the truth — because others will do so in your stead — you are paving the way for a pitiful, tragic defeat.

"What's crucial is whether we have the courage to fight injustice. Slander can be vanquished by sincerity, by an impassioned cry of the truth

for all to hear. We will win when each and every member of the Soka Gakkai stands up, brave as a lion, and testifies to the rightness of our cause, pleading our case with honesty and sincerity."

The Chugoku members were inspired by Shin'ichi's lecture, and they rose intrepidly to the challenge of letting the truth be known.

(To be continued)

1. Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919): politician born in Kochi, Shikoku. He was the leader of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement and founder of Japan's first major political party, Jiyuto (Liberal Party), in 1881.
2. Risshisha (Self-Help Society): political association active in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, which Taisuke formed in 1874.
3. Nakae Chomin (1847–1901): philosopher and political theoretician born in Kochi, Shikoku. He was a leading spokesman of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. In addition to being a prolific writer, Chomin, who studied for a time in France, translated Rousseau's *The Social Contract* into Japanese and later came to be called the "Rousseau of the East."
4. *The Social Contract* is the major work of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). Written in 1762, it maintains that government authority must be derived from the people as a whole and reflect their will, which will always be directed to the common good. It was one of the writings that influenced the leaders of the French Revolution.
5. Capital of Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku.
6. Capital of Okayama Prefecture in western Honshu, across the strait from Shikoku's Kagawa Prefecture.
7. Area encompassing the western tip of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands, comprising Hiroshima, Okayama, Shimane, Tottori and Yamaguchi Prefectures.
8. Prominent priest of the Shingon-Ritsu school of Buddhism. He was one of the leading persecutors of Nichiren Daishonin and his disciples, both openly and covertly, using people in positions of power to assist him.

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Keep Moving Forward

By VALERIE THOMAS

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Be diligent in developing your faith until the last moment of your life. Otherwise you will have regrets. For example, the journey from Kamakura to Kyoto takes twelve days. If you travel for eleven but stop on the twelfth, how can you admire the moon over the capital? (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 254–55)

On the way home late one night, driving in an area that I was not at all familiar with, I managed to get myself very lost. What should I do? Should I try to retrace my route? Should I stop and ask directions? Quickly weighing my options, while at the same time trying to not get even more lost, I decided to just keep going. Taking highways I had a feeling were going in the general direction I wanted to go, I eventually got home. I kept moving forward and I got where I wanted to be.

OK, maybe developing my faith and my life is a little more complicated than maneuvering unfamiliar streets and highways, but I think that what Nichiren Daishonin is stressing in this Goshō is similar to what I experienced that night. “Don’t stop — keep moving forward and you will reach your goal,” he is saying.

September marks the anniversary of starting my practice within the SGI. Whenever this month comes around I reflect on what I have accomplished and how far I have yet to go toward my goal, toward developing my faith. When I started to practice, I figured it would take me a few years to become “happy” and then I wouldn’t need to practice so strongly. But when I look back now, I realize that I didn’t really understand what that goal was — I didn’t know what happiness was.

Now I understand that happiness means to achieve all that I want to in my life so that I can live without regret. To do this, I need to develop my faith and practice for the rest of my life. “The journey from Kamakura to Kyoto takes twelve days” — I am not sure how many days the journey of my life will be, but I am sure I will continue to advance in my faith and practice until my journey ends. ☐

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

Why Did the SGI Support the Priesthood?

Q If the priesthood has been misguided all along, why did the SGI support it in the past?

A Historically, the SGI supported the priesthood on the premise that both parties shared a mutual commitment to the realization of kosen-rufu. Nichiren Shoshu, the Fuji School, was the order of Nichiren Buddhism that doctrinally recognized the Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day and appeared to revere the Gohonzon as the embodiment of the oneness of the Person (Nichiren Daishonin) and the Law (Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo). It was the Buddhist school to which the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was introduced, and through which he and the second president, Josei Toda, became aware of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings as revealed in the Goshō.

It was through the spread of his teaching that Nichiren Daishonin sought the spiritual empowerment of ordinary people for the purpose of building a peaceful society; this is the concept of his religious ideal called kosen-rufu, literally, to “widely declare and spread.” Kosen-rufu is indeed the ultimate goal of the Daishonin’s life and of his teaching as seen in his statement:

If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 272)

And:

Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. (MW-1, 93)

In truth, however, the propagation of Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo and the Daishonin’s philosophy had become quite stagnant by the time Makiguchi and Toda encountered it. Nichiren Shoshu itself was an impoverished and tiny Buddhist denomination by that time. Nevertheless, Makiguchi and Toda devoted themselves to its development and to making the Daishonin’s prediction in the above passage a reality.

This does not mean, however, that they unquestioningly followed the instructions of the priesthood or the high priest. This was clear at the outset, when both Makiguchi and Toda refused the high priest’s instructions to follow a governmental order during World War II that would have them incorporate worship of an amulet dedicated to the Shinto Sun Goddess into their daily practice. Both refused because they were deeply aware that this violated the Daishonin’s teachings and spirit; that

the Daishonin himself would never have compromised Buddhism in this way. Based on the “Twenty-Six Admonitions of Nikko Shonin” — Article 17 of which reads: “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” — they were convinced that, as the Daishonin’s disciples, they must take the same stance. Both were arrested for their stance and Makiguchi died in prison, a martyr to his convictions.

Both men had grown deeply aware of the Daishonin’s real spirit and intent, and lived that spirit even at risk to their own lives. As a result, they were also acutely aware of which priests within Nichiren Shoshu shared that spirit and commitment and which did not.

Even after the war, Toda frequently and forcefully chastised those priests who had forgotten the Daishonin’s spirit, were lax in faith or practice, or looked down on the members and complained about donations. Nevertheless, he was committed to protecting and nurturing Nichiren Shoshu, which he viewed as the most orthodox school of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, and he dedicated himself to encouraging the development of priests who could devote their lives to kosen-rufu and the members.

This, too, has been SGI President Ikeda’s conviction. Despite the awareness that there were many priests within Nichiren Shoshu who hated and resented the Soka Gakkai, so long as the priesthood as a whole supported the movement for kosen-rufu, the Gakkai devoted itself to the temple’s protection and development.

The Soka Gakkai had over the years been aware of abuses or problems with specific priests. At times, the Gakkai pointed out such abuses, thereby meeting resistance and pressure from Nichiren Shoshu.

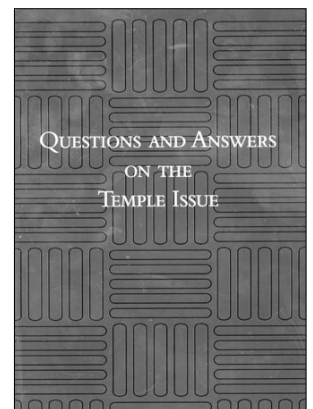
In the late ’70s in particular, a group of younger priests became dissatisfied at the rate at which new temples were

being donated by the Gakkai. They were growing impatient, because there were more of them than new temples to which they could be assigned as chief priests. They also railed against what they perceived as the Gakkai’s view of priests and laity being equal. Some even held that the Gakkai had no right to receive contributions or build its own facilities for its members, that all donated monies

Key Points:

- **The SGI supported the priesthood in the past with an expectation that the priesthood would live up to the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.**
- **While aware of shortcomings within the priesthood, the SGI protected the priesthood, supported and developed it. This was in line with the Daishonin’s teachings about creating harmony among all believers, lay and clergy alike, and because the stance of the high priests before Nikken supported the Gakkai and its movement for kosen-rufu. However, Nikken later shattered the harmony created between the priesthood and the SGI to pursue his personal agenda, cutting off the organization.**

PLEASE SEE PRIESTHOOD, 13



The SGI-USA has published a pamphlet, *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*, which seeks to provide succinct information on this important issue. It is available free of charge through the organization and can be downloaded from the SGI-USA web page (www.sgi-usa.org). The study page is reprinting each of the questions from the pamphlet as a service to our readers.

The Great Teaching of Perpetual Youth

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 13th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, July 9.

I thank you all for your tremendous efforts despite the scorching heat. Also, I extend a warm welcome to all those visiting from overseas. Thank you very much for joining us today.

The famed developer of the cultured pearl, Kokichi Mikimoto (1858–1954), lived to the grand age of 96. When he was 95, he declared that he would live to be 100 and that during those five years he would accomplish as much as he had the preceding 75. The reason he felt so confident, he explained, was that in those seven-and-a-half decades he had *wasted* a great deal of time and effort — his accumulated experience would allow him to proceed without waste or inefficiency.

What he says rings true. These are the words of someone who has gained a profound understanding of life. Today I share much the same sentiment.

This “king of pearls” never came to a standstill. To the very end of his days, he remained vibrant and active, his passion for life undiminished.

In Buddhism, not advancing is the same as regressing. We have to keep going forward.

The German author and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) also epitomized this spirit of never standing still. He once came across an old scrap of paper with something written on it. Later, to a friend, he recalled his reaction: “‘Hm!’ I said to myself, ‘What is written here is not bad at all; you do not think differently either and actually would have expressed it in very much the same way.’”¹ On closer examination, he realized he himself had written it, many years earlier. “Because I am always pressing onward,” he said, “I forget what I have written, and so I get very quickly to the point where I regard my own things as completely alien.”² Goethe was 81. [He died at 82.]

Because he was always moving ahead, he soon forgot things that had occupied him in the past. His words contain profound meaning. Forward! Always forward! This is also the basic spirit of Buddhism.

Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching is the Buddhism of true



Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

‘In Buddhism, not advancing is the same as regressing. We have to keep going forward.’

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is the great teaching of perpetual youth and eternal life, SGI President Ikeda explains. The key is keeping ‘the flame of faith alive,’ he says.

cause. We live with our gaze fixed on the future, not on the past. To advance eternally — this is the essence of life, the essence of what it means to be a practitioner of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Many leaders in all spheres of Japanese society are concerned only with popularity, prestige and profit. They have entirely ceased the wholehearted effort needed to move toward genuine progress. This is a great misfortune for Japan. If things continue this way, the country’s future is bleak indeed.

In the Soka Gakkai as well, there have been members who, upon gaining status and wealth, stopped striving in faith and making any efforts for kosen-rufu despite the generous support they had received from fellow members. This is deplorable. From the standpoint of Buddhism, their offense is truly great.

Leaving Our Mark

Shortly before Goethe’s 75th birthday, he wrote: “I have always been singled out as particularly favored by fortune.... Yet basically [my life] has been nothing but toil and work, and I may well say that I have not had four weeks of real enjoyment in all of my 75 years.”³

Goethe did possess excep-

tional talent. He also had status, wealth, health and good looks. Others envied him. But here Goethe is saying, when he honestly looks back over his 75 years, he finds that the number of truly enjoyable days would not even fill a month. That works out to less than one enjoyable day every two-and-a-half years!

Such is the stern reality of human life. Goethe’s words could not be uttered by those who squander their lives in frivolous diversions.

Striving to accomplish something meaningful, to leave our mark in this world, is a labor fraught with agony and hardship — the crucible in which human greatness is forged. The brief quote I just mentioned gives us a revealing glimpse of Goethe’s towering stature.

When we consider that the life of someone of Goethe’s caliber was “nothing but toil and work,” we should appreciate that making painstaking efforts in Buddhist practice is natural — certainly it’s no cause for complaint.

Also, we are more fortunate than Goethe in that we embrace Buddhism. Through our faith in the Mystic Law, we can live with true joy, savoring profound fulfillment in the depths of our being. Based on the Buddhist principle that earthly desires

lead to enlightenment, we can transform all problems and hardships into sources of joy. What incomparable lives we lead!

Where the Greatest Joy Is Found

What is true joy? This is a difficult question — one that has occupied a great many thinkers and philosophers.

Joy can quickly give way to suffering. Joy is short and suffering long. Also, what passes for joy in society is superficial. It cannot compare with the joy derived from the Mystic Law, which, as the Daishonin says, is the “greatest of all joys” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788).

The key, then, lies in cultivating a state of mind where we can declare without reservation that life itself is a joy. This is the purpose of Buddhist practice.

Nichiren Daishonin writes:

Outside the city of Tranquil Light, everywhere is a realm of suffering. Once you leave the haven of inherent enlightenment, what is there that can bring you joy? I pray you will embrace the Mystic Law, which guarantees that one “will enjoy peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.” This is the only glory that you need

seek in your present lifetime, and is the action that will draw you toward Buddhahood in your next existence. Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 38)

In other words, true joy is found in working for kosen-rufu, in practicing and taking action for the happiness of oneself and others. The greatest joy is to be found in SGI activities. Our activities for kosen-rufu become memories that shine ever more brilliantly as time goes by.

As SGI members, we help others overcome suffering while at the same time becoming happy ourselves. What way of life could be more wonderful? Just sitting around at home watching television all the time only leaves one feeling empty. Such a lifestyle is nothing like a shimmering, joy-filled city of Tranquil Light.

But the city of Tranquil Light is the citadel of faith, the world of Buddhahood existing in our lives. It is an eternally indestructible realm shining with happiness.

The Source of Vitality

Nichiren Daishonin says that the Lotus Sutra is the great teaching of perpetual youth and eternal life (MW-1, 120). We who embrace the Mystic Law, in other words, will not suffer on account of old age and death.

As long as we keep the flame of faith alive, the fire of our life force will forever burn brightly within us. We can live with great confidence, transcending birth and death. Faith is the engine that enables us to live with hope throughout.

And the SGI is a model of a long-lived society. The SGI youth are energetic, and so are the men’s and women’s division members. Everyone is vigorous and full of life. The source of this vitality is daimoku.

There is no more sublime path in life. We must never permit this noble world of the SGI to be destroyed by malicious people.

Further, members who do not value the organization and stand aloof from activities fundamentally scorn the SGI in their

PLEASE SEE TEACHING, NEXT PAGE

TEACHING, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

hearts. They are destined to be scorned themselves — hundreds and thousands of times over — by the Buddhist gods, the protective functions of the universe. On the other hand, those who treasure the SGI are in turn treasured by the Buddhist gods and by all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Broadening Our Circle of Friends

Someone once said, “When an organization becomes well established, its leaders begin to diminish in stature.” This may well be true. It is precisely to prevent this that I am putting so much effort into nurturing capable leaders.

How can we develop a more generous, expansive state of life? By broadening our sphere of interpersonal relations, our circle of friends. It is key, therefore, that each leader work hard to form strong connections with others. A genuine leader works to maintain close ties both with members and with the people in his or her community or workplace. In contrast, a person who carries on arrogantly, who merely barks orders, is not a leader.

There are members who are negative about doing activities, divorce themselves from the organization and practice in isolation, thinking it’s easier that way. But what often happens is that things start to fall apart in their lives.

A TV program the other day focused on the importance of making many friends. It showed that those who do so have greater opportunities for growth and self-development. As such, they make society a better place and lead happy, satisfying lives.

In every situation, human relations — communication and personal interaction — are vital. We need to initiate and nurture friendships and contacts with many people, both within the organization and in society at large. Our lives will open and be enriched to the extent that we do so.

Just before his death, the great Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) called for his youngest daughter, of whom he was very fond, and related to her his last will. One important thing he said was that the more connections she formed with others, the more she would grow as a person. He enjoined her not to forget this. In the SGI, forming connections with others corresponds to engaging in dialogue, explaining the Daishonin’s teachings to others, and advanc-



“Tagore writes, “He [the human being] misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and truer self in his wide human relationship.””

ing kosen-rufu.

Tolstoy was persecuted by those in power. Both government and church authorities hated him. But the people — the laborers and the miners — were his allies.

Once, on a visit to the Tolstoy State Museum in Moscow, I saw a nugget of green glass that was presented to Tolstoy by laborers who supported his ideals. I was deeply moved. It was an accolade bestowed on him not by those in power but by the people.

It is my heartfelt belief that champions of the people such as yourselves deserve the highest decorations.

Working With Many Different People

The Asiatic Society of India, which named me the first recipient of its Tagore Peace Award, has invited me to visit India.

Tagore writes, “He [the human being] misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and truer self in his wide human relationship.”⁴ People lose sight of themselves when they cut off contact with others — this is precisely what happened to those who distanced themselves from SGI activities and finally left the organization to turn against it. Such individuals truly lost their bearings. Their judgment became distorted by frustration and jealousy.

Tagore’s belief — that within broad-ranging human relations we can discover a “larger and truer self” — resonates strongly with Buddhism and the SGI’s ideals. People of the highest caliber are on the same wavelength.

In contrast, some people are ruled by petty emotions. Gripped in the thrall of prejudice, malice and jealousy, they lose sight of the truth, of right and wrong.

Just giving speeches or holding a position in the organization does not make us genuine leaders. Developing ourselves as human beings and learning to serve and support others, with warm concern for their welfare, does.

Only when you interact openly and genuinely with many people can you be called a leader in the true sense. Those who shun human contact tend to withdraw into themselves, becoming selfish, small-minded and egocentric. In short, people who have an aversion to organizational activities are callous and unfeeling. They have no true compassion or love for their fellow human beings. By failing to participate, they also miss the opportunity to forge and temper themselves by working with many different kinds of people.

Those Whose Opinions Differ From Ours

Goethe once said:

It is a great folly to hope that other men will harmonize with us.... For it is in a conflict with natures opposed to his own that a man must collect his strength to fight his way through, and thus all our different sides are brought out and developed, so that we soon feel ourselves a match for every foe.⁵

Leaders who try to get everyone to comply with their wishes or listen meekly to them are foolish. We should not avoid

those who are disinclined to listen to us or whose opinions differ.

Cultivating harmonious relations with and winning the support of people of diverse characters and persuasions is part of Buddhist practice. This is necessary for the organization to move forward as a whole and for our individual development. This also enables us to forge a solid self-identity, so that we can confidently meet and talk with all kinds of people.

I have done this with leaders around the globe. This is the kind of strength we can develop through practice.

Those who embrace Buddhism and persevere in faith — even if their lives are otherwise ordinary — can achieve spectacular success. On the other hand, those who manipulate others to work hard, yet take no action themselves, are only short-changing themselves.

Those who share the philosophy and ideals of the Daishonin’s Buddhism with as many people as possible are victors in life. As leaders, our victory is determined by how much energy we put into caring for the members and working for their welfare. Only by forging close unity with all kinds of people, and helping them advance toward kosen-rufu, can we be victorious.

Working Together With Toda

In July, exactly 40 years ago, the Japanese authorities turned savagely on the Soka Gakkai. This was the Osaka Incident.⁶ Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was the target of the

attack. But as his disciple, I stood up to shield and resolutely protect him, which I am happy to say I accomplished, from this onslaught of persecution. This is my eternal pride, an indelible page in my life’s history.

The situation today is the same. No matter how I might be maligned or insulted, I continue to endure everything and single-handedly protect the Soka Gakkai and the SGI.

President Toda once said: “To protect me, Daisaku confessed to a crime he did not commit. He is truly good-hearted. As long as Daisaku is around, I have no worries about the Soka Gakkai.”

On July 17, 1957, at the Osaka Rally held the evening of my release from police custody, President Toda stood up at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall and cried out: “Without a fight, even justice will succumb. Because the Soka Gakkai is in the right, we cannot afford to lose. We must win, no matter what. For this reason, we continue our battle. A lion is truly a lion by virtue of its roar.”

Ours is an eternal struggle. As the Daishonin says, “This world is the province of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven” (MW-1, 135).

At that time, President Toda told me, “Should death overtake you, I will rush to your side and throw myself upon you and accompany you in death.” President Toda treasured my life more highly than his own.

There was a difference of 28 years between us. Often when talking about projects, President Toda would say, “Daisaku, let’s do it together.” In every endeavor, we worked together.

President Toda was strong. He was strict. And I did everything in my power to respond to and learn from his rigorous training.

Like President Toda before me, I cherish the youth division members — they are precious. I have the highest expectations and respect for them.

Men’s division leaders mustn’t look down on the youth. They must never berate them out of emotionalism. Instead, we have to do everything we can to raise the younger generation. Youth division members, after all, will inherit our legacy.

Makiguchi’s First Mention of Kosen-rufu

Since the time of founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s purpose has been to accomplish

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kosen-rufu — the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.

When do you suppose was the first time that President Makiguchi used the term *kosen-rufu* in a public forum? When did he declare that the Soka Gakkai was dedicated to this goal? It was not when everything was going smoothly — it was when the Soka Gakkai was being severely attacked by the authorities.

Swept away by the insanity of nationalism, Japan had launched into war. People were stripped of their freedom under military rule, and the hand of oppression had come down hard on the Soka Kyōiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education).

A dark cloud had engulfed the country. As time passed, the shadows only grew more ominous. It was precisely then that President Makiguchi proclaimed that our organization's mission lies in achieving kosen-rufu. He was truly a great leader.

Japan is once again heading down the path of nationalism. I am deeply worried by the direction in which it is headed.

Fifty-five years ago, in May 1942, the 4th General Meeting of the Soka Kyōiku Gakkai was held. That was a little more than six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Initially, the Japanese military had won a string of victories, but there was no way this could continue. The country was soon in a deadlock, mired in a war that it could not win. Its fall had begun.

The Japanese people, having been fed lie after lie by the state-controlled media, were ignorant of the actual situation. Consequently, throughout the country there was an intoxicating euphoria of victory. "Japan is great!" people shouted. "Japan is a divine land!"

Already, President Makiguchi had keenly discerned that devastation lay in store. "Japan will be ruined," he declared. "The country is sure to be destroyed." Whether you call his insight the eye of the Law or the eye of the Buddha, he certainly perceived events correctly in the bright mirror of his pure faith and upright character.

Armchair Buddhists

President Makiguchi appealed to the general meeting participants: "We have to lead the nation to great good. It's like making a landing in the face of enemy forces."⁷ In other words, they had to go among people steeped in ignorance

It's crucial for leaders to take action in the most troubled times, the most troubled places. It is there that history is created, where true history begins. I want you all to reflect on this Soka Gakkai spirit. President Toda stood up after the war, in the most dire of times, with the determination 'Now is the time for kosen-rufu.'

and destructiveness and try to teach them of great good — this was like landing in the midst of an enemy stronghold. That they would be attacked was inevitable.

Also in May 1942, the organization's publication, *Kachi Sozo* (Value Creation), was banned.

President Makiguchi firmly declared: "Even among those belonging to Nichiren Shoshu, those believers from before, who have demonstrated a self-righteous attitude and concern only for themselves, are practicing egoistic faith."⁸ By "believers from before" he was referring to the priesthood and Hokkeko lay organization members. He directly rebuked such people, calling them self-serving, saying that they were not practicing correct faith.

Those who just chant *daimoku* for their own happiness, with no concern for other people and society, are armchair Buddhists. The priesthood and Hokkeko had entirely forgotten the spirit of propagation. They were oblivious to the Daishonin's will for kosen-rufu.

President Makiguchi did not compromise with such people — he took them to task. As a result, he incurred violent resentment. It was no surprise, though. Regardless of the rancor and ill-will directed at him, President Makiguchi continued on the path he believed was right, the path of his convictions.

"I am confident that we will realize happiness for our families and society at large," he proclaimed, "and that we can accomplish at least a part of the great work that will culminate in the realization of kosen-rufu."⁹ This was his first formal articulation of the goal of kosen-rufu.

President Makiguchi declared that he would continue to give his all until that aim had been achieved. He concluded, "Since we have been charged with this important mission, we must pledge to advance assiduously at all times, neither following a self-centered course nor exploiting others, with the unwavering recognition that each of us is a person of great good who has been chosen for this task."¹⁰

And just as he said, President Makiguchi strode boldly toward kosen-rufu. Amid persecution, despite his advanced age, he held more than 240 discussion meetings [May 1941–June 1943]. He set out alone on trips throughout the country.

President Makiguchi is said to have personally led about 500 people to faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. That was at a time when the priesthood had completely forgotten about kosen-rufu.

He had a profound, awesome mission. The more I study and learn about President Makiguchi, the more deeply I sense this.

Choose The Most Challenging Place

It's crucial for leaders to take action in the most troubled times, the most troubled places. It is there that history is created, where true history begins. I want you all to reflect on this Soka Gakkai spirit. President Toda stood up after the war, in the most dire of times, with the determination "Now is the time for kosen-rufu."

Though this may sound presumptuous, throughout my life I have tried to put this spirit into practice. When I was around 37

or 38, I determined to create ties of friendship with the communist world and began making preparations accordingly. That was a time when many Japanese viewed communist countries as enemies. When I was 40, I advocated the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

And when I was 46, in 1974, I visited both China and the Soviet Union for the first time. That was at the height of the Cold War. Also, relations between the Chinese and Soviets were at an all-time low then.

Nevertheless, I determined, "Now, when things are at their bleakest, is the time to open a path for peace." Everyone around me was dead set against it. From the priesthood, too, I received ridiculous criticism. "Isn't it the case that communist countries don't have any need for religion? So why bother even going?" That was the kind of shortsighted objection that came from the priesthood and people throughout Japan.

I deliberately chose to begin in the most challenging place. And I have since constructed a path of friendship and trust spanning the globe. Today the SGI boasts a worldwide network of friendship.

When conditions are most hostile, that's precisely the time to summon forth courage and take action. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "When an evil ruler in consort with heretical priests tries to destroy true Buddhism and banish a man of wisdom, those with the heart of a lion will surely attain Buddhahood" (MW-1, 35). A coward cannot become a Buddha. We cannot attain Buddhahood unless we possess the heart of a lion. The harsher the situa-

tion, the bolder the stand we must take. This is the essence of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

By taking the time and effort to go to areas that are most troubled or embattled, we can open a path.

The Priesthood's Betrayal

What was the priesthood doing at the time that President Makiguchi was issuing his call for kosen-rufu. It was trying to destroy kosen-rufu! What it was doing then is no different from what it is doing now.

At the time, hoping to ward off persecution by the militarist government, which was promoting State Shinto as a means to spiritually unite the Japanese nation, the priesthood had banned publication of the Goshō and ordered 14 key passages of the Daishonin's writings, including the line "I am the foremost sage in the entire land of Jambudvīpa"¹¹ (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 223), to be blacked out in the existing volumes.

Who could condone such an abomination? Certainly not us. Nor the Daishonin. Moreover, the priesthood has never apologized for its actions, either to the Daishonin or to its lay followers.

The priesthood enshrined the Shinto talisman at the head temple Taiseki-ji and insisted that President Makiguchi and the Soka Kyōiku Gakkai members also accept the talisman. This amounted to an outrageous slander of the Daishonin's teaching. When President Makiguchi declared his absolute refusal to comply, the priesthood secretly allied itself with forces persecuting the Soka Kyōiku Gakkai.

A short time earlier, thanks to the advice of a person introduced to the head temple by President Makiguchi, Nichiren Shoshu narrowly avoided a government-forced merger with other Nichiren schools, centering around the Minobu sect. Forgetting this debt, the priesthood banned President Makiguchi and Josei Toda from visiting the head temple.

Such backstabbing is typical of the priesthood. "That is the nature of corrupt priests," President Toda would often say. "It's really frightening."

To exploit lay believers for all they're worth and then simply discard them — that is the reprehensible nature of the priesthood. President Makiguchi also saw through their self-serving nature.

And their disposition today

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is no different. We must absolutely — never again — place our trust in the priesthood.

Appreciation for Going to Prison

What became of President Makiguchi's disciples then? They were, on the whole, surprised and alarmed by the intensity of Mr. Makiguchi's stance. Rather than being lions, they were merely cats and mice.

President Makiguchi had called out for kosen-rufu and to remonstrate with the state. But his disciples, rather than rally around him, fearfully muttered things like: "It's too risky right now." "The time is still too early." "We will all be carried off by the military police."

Leaders who had always shouted, "Let's advance together with President Makiguchi!" showed themselves to be spineless. Just because someone is a leader doesn't mean you can necessarily trust him or her. More often than not, the members on the forefront of activities are more trustworthy.

While everyone else was defecting, Josei Toda alone had calmly made up his mind: "I am President Makiguchi's disciple! I will stay by my mentor's side to the end." This is the solemn spirit of mentor and disciple.

Josei Toda later expressed gratitude to his mentor, saying, "In your vast and boundless compassion, you allowed me to come with you even to prison." Rather than complaining about having to go to prison, President Toda felt nothing but appreciation. He thanked his mentor for letting him undergo persecution alongside him. Such is the mentor-disciple relationship.

On his release, President Toda stood up alone and boldly unfurled anew the banner of kosen-rufu that his mentor had held aloft. Mentor and disciple were inseparable. Thus Toda



'More often than not, the members on the forefront of activities are more trustworthy.'

rose above his sorrow at his mentor's death and set about creating a great current of kosen-rufu. We must never forget this path of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

The Only Formula for Triumph

Congratulations on the fresh departures of Yamanashi and Hachioji! Yamanashi Prefecture has the power to invigorate Tokyo and the entire Kanto region. And Hachioji is on Yamanashi's doorstep. I hope Yamanashi and Hachioji will join forces and work together to inspire and stimulate each other, forging strong ties of friendship and generating a new wave of kosen-rufu.

During the Warring States period (1467–1568), Yamanashi was home to the powerful forces of the famous warlord Takeda Shingen (1521–73). Hachioji, meanwhile, was the site of Takiyama Castle, one of the foremost strongholds in the Kanto region.

While the castle no longer stands, last year there was much excitement when a 400-year-old

stone pathway there was uncovered — in nearly perfect condition. Takiyama Castle was an impregnable fortress that, in 1569, withstood the fierce attack of Takeda's forces.

Under fire from Takeda's forces, which were renowned for their overwhelming strength, General Hojo Ujiteru stood in the vanguard and directed the forces of Takiyama Castle to repulse the attacks. Inspired by his heroic stance, the defending army succeeded in protecting the castle throughout the siege.

Unless leaders stand in the forefront, the battle cannot be won. Leaders who don't take action themselves, but compel others to do so, undermine everyone's morale and will to fight.

To this day, no matter how tired I have been, I have never retreated a single step. I have continued to lead the way in the vanguard of our movement. Inheriting the spirit and very life of President Toda, I have struggled tirelessly, solely for kosen-rufu, for the SGI. Probably no one could ever come close to repeating what I have accomplished.

In the struggle for kosen-rufu, too, when the leaders advance, everyone advances. When the leaders grow, everyone grows. But if the leaders are all words and no action, there will be no victory.

When a leader resolves: "I will challenge my human revolution! I will develop myself!" and then takes action, the driving force for continual victory is born. This is the only formula for continuous triumph.

We Need Fresh Talent

A song about Takeda goes, "People are the walls, people are the castle." His efforts to appoint people to responsible positions on the basis of talent, allowing them to give full play to their abilities, led to his resounding victories.

Everything depends on people — not on buildings. The rise or fall of an organization, or of society as a whole, depends on people. And it is the leaders' responsibility to see that capable people are produced. This was Takeda's conviction.

Nichiren Daishonin says:

"The Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856). In every respect, accomplishing kosen-rufu depends on capable people. We have to find, raise and gather fresh talent. Those who can succeed in this endeavor are themselves people of outstanding ability.

I hope the Soka Gakkai and SGI will redouble their energies in this effort — a revolution in fostering capable people — for the coming century. On that note, I conclude my remarks today. Thank you. Also, I appreciate your traveling so far despite the heat. ☐

1. J. P. Eckermann, *Conversations With Goethe*, trans. Gisela C. O'Brien (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), p. 204.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 29.
4. "The Religion of Man" from *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, ed. Sisir Kumar Das (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996), vol. 3, p. 88.
5. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann* (New York and London: M. Walter Dunne, Publisher, 1901), p. 67.
6. Osaka Incident: President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in an Upper House by-election in Osaka in 1957. At the end of the court case that dragged on for almost five years, he was fully exonerated of all charges (January 1962).
7. Translated from Japanese: *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1987), vol. 10, p. 147.
8. Ibid., p. 146.
9. Ibid., p. 148.
10. Ibid.
11. Jambuvipa: a term from ancient Indian cosmology indicating the entire world.

GLOSSARY

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

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

Gohonzon: The embodiment of the law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the

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

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism,

gongyo means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd chapter and the "Life Span of the Tathagata" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

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

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

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the past have shaped one's reality at present, and actions in the present determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

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

Photo by JEFF JONES

After returning from the Vietnam War and finishing school at the University of Delaware, I moved in 1976 to Los Angeles, where my sister took me to my first SGI discussion meeting.

I am a singer, so the sound of everyone chanting this wonderful, warm Nam-myoho-renge-kyo fell on my ears like honey and touched something inside of me. No one had to convince me. All I wanted to know was how to get started, and how and when could I receive the Gohonzon.

At the beginning I did not have a clear idea what I was doing. I believed that the source and the solution to all my problems were on the outside; I was waiting for some outside force to rescue me.

In the early 1980s, I became a group leader. The whole group was youth division members, and we became propagation champions. Eventually I became Silverlake District chief for three wonderful years. There were 25 young men's division members and 20 young women's division members.

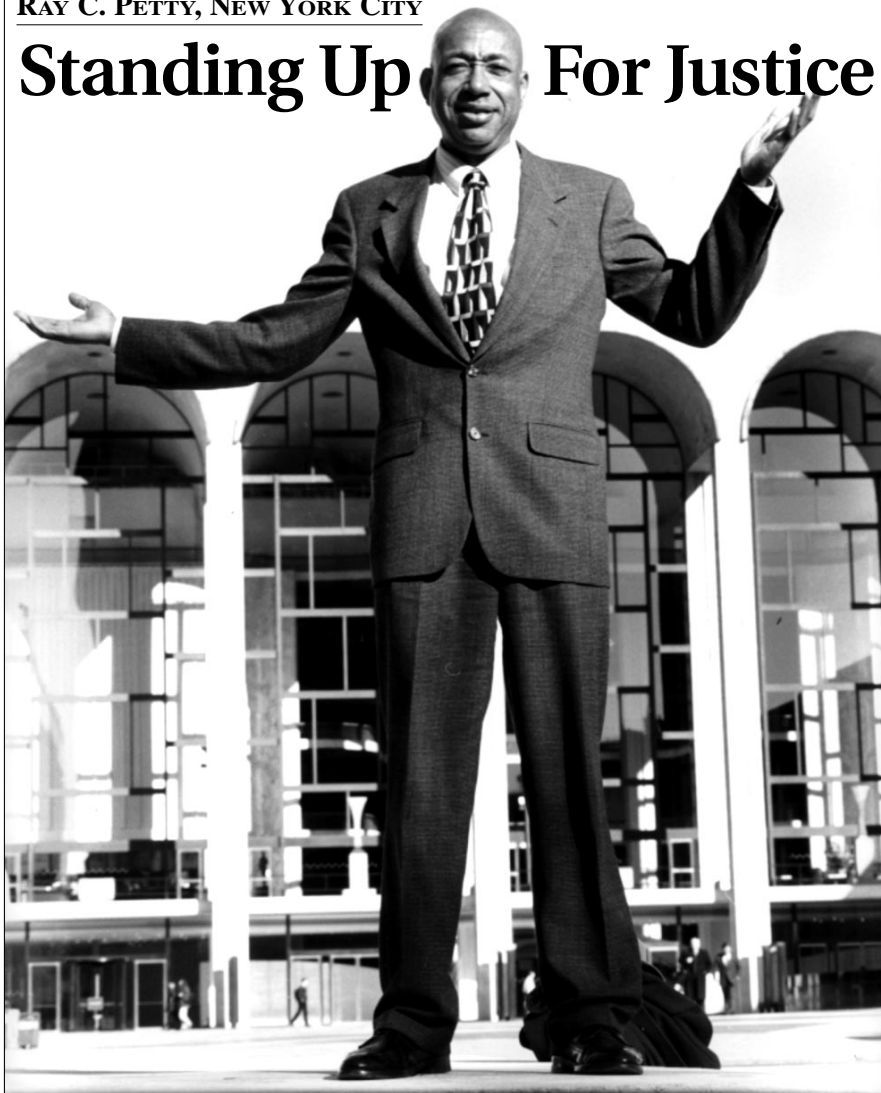
I was in the world of Rapture. I neglected my personal life. I did not think about anything but my district and its beautiful members. I totally ignored my finances and my health, and I abandoned my career, never chanting for my personal happiness or success. I would walk up into the Hollywood Hills in 90-degree heat to lead a meeting because I had no money to catch the bus. I lived in sleazy hotels in Hollywood filled with drug addicts and prostitutes.

In effect, I did not believe the Gohonzon could effect a change in my personal life. I had resigned myself to only taking care of my district, ignoring the pain and suffering in my personal life and getting satisfaction only from watching the members be happy. I was sacrificing myself on the proverbial "cross" for my district and using it to escape from my life and my responsibility to do human revolution.

In the middle of all this, our women's division territory leader, realizing that I had no plans to marry — in other words, that I'm gay — arranged to remove me from my position. (I know this would never happen today, and I am proud to once again hold leadership responsibilities.) I was devastated; my fellow members were in shock. They could not understand what was happening. I chanted not to be angry and not to hold a grudge, and in the end I did not. I consider that a victory.

RAY C. PETTY, NEW YORK CITY

Standing Up For Justice



Ray Petty, in front of New York's Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center: 'My activities with the SGI and my practice to the Gohonzon are now the center of my life, and at the age of 52, I am starting to see my lifelong dream of becoming an operatic tenor coming true right before my eyes.'

Since I no longer had district responsibilities, I had plenty of time to focus on my horrible life. I could no longer ignore or hide from the pain. My situation started slowly worsening.

I landed a great job, but it soon became apparent that my boss was doing drugs on the job. She, out of fear that I would tell other people in the company, eventually forced me out of my job.

During my short employment, I had moved into a great apartment. But now I was forced to search for a new job, and for six or seven months I could not pay rent.

I was at the lowest point in my life. My district leader took me for guidance. The person helped to show me that my life is precious, that it actually is the Buddha. He taught me how and why to pray to the Gohonzon for happiness and success. My mission for kosen-rufu, he said, was to become happy and success-

ful, always striving for the attainment of enlightenment so that I could encourage others to overcome their own suffering. He told me that it is not necessary to be a leader to have a positive impact on people or to contribute to kosen-rufu, and he helped me to understand that I must stop slandering myself for thinking I had failed, stop "crucifying" myself, face my negativity squarely and win.

He read the Goshu "On Attaining Buddhahood" to me. I had read it before, but I gained a new understanding of what Nichiren Daishonin was saying and started to see that my life was worthy of respect. I was not moving forward because I was constantly slandering my life. No one up until then had explained this to me with such confidence.

Soon I was in the process of being evicted. Though the management company received a

court order to evict me, the apartment manager saw me job hunting day after day and would not call the sheriff to evict me. Finally her supervisor forced her to call the sheriff.

I went back to the apartment complex and asked her if I could get some things out of the locked apartment. The manager said yes. In the elevator to the sixth floor, she began to cry because she had watched me go out day after day walking to interviews. She was not about to let me be on the street in Hollywood. She let me back into the apartment and asked me not to chant too loud so that other tenants would not discover that I was back in the apartment and report her to her supervisor. It would be months, she said, before the company would repaint the apartment and rent it to someone else.

Later that evening, sitting in my apartment in front of my altar, doing gongyo with my cat on my

lap, I asked myself, "Didn't I just get evicted?"

I began to face my negativity squarely, without fear. I chanted daimoku as if there were no tomorrow. If a little daimoku is good, I figured, then a lot had to be fantastic. I had such a hunger to chant for my life and my success that I could not get enough. This was the turning point in my life and in my practice.

I received disability because of duress at my old job. This gave me food to eat and bus fare, while I continued to chant and interview for jobs.

I read "On Attaining Buddhahood" until I understood it with my life. I have memorized this Goshu until it has been engraved in my brain, and I still read it when I am going through difficult situations. Every time I was victorious after an obstacle, my faith doubled and quadrupled, and I learned that faith is the key.

Soon I got not one but three excellent job offers. I accepted a position with O'Brien-Kreitzberg (the largest and oldest construction management company in America), which was building the Metro Greenline for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the new Los Angeles Central Library.

I began to realize that if I continued to slander myself, I would never be happy. Once I began to really understand that my existence is the Mystic Law and that my life, the Gohonzon and the universe are one and the same, not only did I stop slandering myself, I became very sensitive about anyone else slandering or diminishing the value of my life. I was learning to fight for my life and understanding that it is my obligation to do so.

I was assigned to the Metro Greenline project in Los Angeles. At that time, Los Angeles was in the grips of great racial tension and hatred due to the Rodney King incident. I remember sitting in my office, looking out the window, watching the city go up in flames. Unbelievably, at this time the Metro Greenline was actively seeking to keep its African American employees in check, openly hindering their careers and subjugating them. Although the Greenline was built straight through about five predominately black areas, the company would not hire any blacks from those areas — even though their tax money was being used.

Although I was very qualified, they paid me as a regular secretary yet worked me like an executive assistant, making me the deputy project manager's secre-

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tary. I was compelled to stand up for myself. If my life was truly the Buddha, then it was worthy of respect, and if I was not allowed to slander my life then no one else was going to, either.

The guidance finally sunk in, and I began to defend my life and its dignity with a great amount of daimoku and conviction. This love for my life and the desire to protect it were totally new for me. It affected every part of my life. I stopped going out and squandering my money, ruining my health and wasting time partying. I had friends who opposed me when I started being more responsible; they accused me of thinking that I was too good to go out with them anymore. I began to love my life and to prepare it for success and happiness, because I finally believed I deserved success and happiness.

I began to chant eight or 10 hours a day. I am not saying that this is what everyone else should do, but this was what I, because of my great negativity and the fact that I planned to take on a whole corporation, had to do. Every morning I would chant three hours before getting on the bus. I would read the Lotus Sutra and the Goshō for two hours all the way to work.

My friend, co-worker and courageous SGI-USA women's division member, Linda McShan, and I would ride home together after work and chant for an hour every day to resolve the negativity at work. Linda was the only black female supervisor in the entire company, and in retaliation, they first took the computer equipment away from her staff and eventually took her staff away from her, constantly harassing her. She chanted daimoku and courageously stood up to them as we have

been taught to stand up by Nichiren Daishonin, and our leaders, especially the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai.

She rallied her staff around her, showing them by example how to be strong women. Linda was magnificent. As the persecution continued, she wore her Christian Dior suits and her Ferragamo heels to work every day and held her head high with pride.

We would always read SGI President Ikeda's guidance together: "A strong-willed or courageous person is always the master of his or her own heart. Therefore, he fears nothing, is defeated by nothing, and shrinks from nothing. As the Goshō states, 'The wise will rejoice and the foolish will retreat.' No matter what may happen, a courageous person advances against any obstacle like a fierce, raging wave. He is, with head held high, confident like the sun, king of the heavens, shining above the clouds."

I have never fought for my life more intensely. I received guidance from a leader who told me that this was not only a personal issue but an issue of justice, and that I must stand up using Mr. Ikeda as an example. Another leader told me that the universal forces would protect me as long as I was fighting for the larger goal of justice.

Every time the project tried to fire me or attack me in any way, it would backfire and turn around on them instead. Finally the pres-

ident of O'Brien-Kreitzberg, Inc., got wind of the situation and sent his second man to the project to investigate and calm the situation. The president of the company even gave me his direct phone number in San Francisco. I received calls from the head of corporate human resources in San Francisco every other day inquiring about my welfare.

The individuals who were persecuting me became furious and tried tactics such as trying to make me so angry that I would quit or do something that they could fire me for. They even had one manager come into my office and make a racial slur at me during working hours. I followed my guidance and remained calm.

In January 1995, out of the blue, I got a phone call from my present boss here in New York City, who had been looking at resumes on our computer network and noticed mine. He saw that I had a great job background and my qualifications were perfect for the position of project coordinator that he needed to fill. He hired me after talking to me an hour on the phone and asked me to report to my new position in New York City on Feb. 8, 1995.

Instead of being stuck in a cubicle, harassed and subjugated, struggling for my dignity, I now work in Times Square on the 35th floor of the Viacom Building, with a view of the Hudson River and the coast of New Jersey. I am the project coordinator and administrative assistant for the No.

1 marketing person in the company.

Out of my struggle and Linda McShan's struggle, the company has developed a comprehensive Equal Opportunity Policy. This policy not only protects the employees but also the company. In our industry, all major public works projects have a strict minority business hiring requirement. This policy helps to demonstrate my company's active involvement in equal opportunities for minorities when bidding for multimillion-dollar contracts. Additionally, it has developed a very sophisticated human resources program.

The company now is also involved in mentoring young interns and young people from minority communities. I am very proud and honored that six female engineers and architects from O'Brien-Kreitzberg participated in the SGI-sponsored career expo on March 22 at the New York Culture Center, which was organized for the junior high school, high school and first-year college students of our community.

I am now working for a very humanistic company. My boss is a brilliant man who treats me with respect. When I first arrived I was so used to being abused that he had to sit me down in his office and tell me to relax, trust the people in this office, and above all have confidence in myself (sounds like guidance, doesn't it?). He told me that he was aware of what I had been through and reassured me that his office had a different policy, one in line with the company's policy. Instead of withholding computer software from me, like the managers on the Greenline did, he sent me to computer graphics classes so

that I could help him prepare professional proposals for new multimillion-dollar projects.

Because of my Gakkai training I follow and support my boss, working alongside him many long hours no matter what. I've become indispensable.

I have learned that no matter how bleak and hopeless my situation may seem, I can turn it around and change poison into medicine through this wonderful practice, accepting my human revolution and having faith in the Mystic Law.

At the beginning of my practice, I had no idea how profound it was or that I would continue. After 21 years with the SGI I have seen growth and change in our great organization to the point that diversity is one of our major campaigns and is among the SGI-USA guidelines for 1997.

I am now a group leader in Schomburg District in Columbia Territory. I live in Harlem, where I am very active in my neighborhood group, and I make causes every day to improve life in this community for its residents and particularly for its young people.

I now have the opportunity to pursue my goal to sing opera, and I am around people who are doing the same. There are many world-class voice teachers here in New York and the No. 1 opera house in the world — the Metropolitan Opera. I am now studying with a master teacher, a voice coach and an exercise coach, and with my great job I can afford the fees.

My activities with the SGI and my practice to the Gohonzon are now the center of my life, and at the age of 52, I am starting to see my lifelong dream of becoming an operatic tenor coming true right before my eyes. ❧

I prepared my life for success and happiness, because I finally believed I deserved success and happiness.

The SGI's Aim Was To Maintain Harmony

Q&A, FROM PAGE 7

should be handed over to the temple, and advocated a hard line of sanctions to put the Soka Gakkai in its place.

Pressured by the demands of these priests, however unjust they may have been, the Soka Gakkai cooperated with Nittatsu, the high priest of the time, and took a humble stance, publishing an "apology" that had to be pre-approved by the priesthood and endeavoring over the ensuing years to build hundreds of new temples. Nittatsu had always supported and shown understanding toward the Gakkai in the past, though he was often

pressured by priests within the temple and others who felt enmity toward the organization. The Gakkai's concern was to maintain its harmony with the priesthood and avoid any undue harm or trouble to the members that might result from further sanctions or denunciations by disgruntled priests.

It was not until Nikken, the high priest himself, together with the executive leadership of the head temple, hatched and began to implement their plan in late 1990 to attack the SGI that the Gakkai began to admonish the priesthood as a whole for its actions. In addition, since the head temple had begun to twist inter-

pretations of the Daishonin's teachings to justify those actions, the Gakkai began to refute their erroneous interpretations in the spirit of admonishing slander.

Even then, it was the priesthood and not the Soka Gakkai that perpetrated the ultimate act of separation: In November 1991, having rejected repeated requests for dialogue, they indulged in the final self-destructive act of excommunication, in effect removing themselves from the body of believers who had contributed most to their development and who were working hard to make the Daishonin's teachings known to the world. ❧

INTERFAITH, FROM PAGE 4

aren't about "niceness toward each other," he concluded, but about taking a unified stand on such issues.

Valerie Thomas, an event organizer, found the Rev. Lawson's talk and the entire conference an eye-opening experience. "This was my first time to participate in an interfaith activity," she said. "I now realize how important this kind of activity is for improving our society."

Participants who also attended last year's inaugural conference noticed much progress this year, as the participants went beyond just sharing their doctrines to sharing their activities and discussing working together.

"Last year many people from the SGI and other religions had difficulty finding value in interfaith, because they felt as if they would have to compromise their own religious values," Mr. Nellis reflected. "This year I saw this change in many of the SGI members involved, although there are still some who are skeptical."

Mrs. Haroon agreed, saying that "even if we affect one person, that is enough. Even if one person becomes more understanding, more tolerant, more loving, it's well worth the effort." Like many participants today, she was already expressing excitement about next year's conference before today's conference was over. ❧

右衛門大夫殿御返事

(斯人行世間事)

弘安二年十二月 五十八歲作

十月 御書

久未奉教，正企望間，忽接大函。

更承惠送書裡小袖一、帽子一、衣帶一、鷄目一貫文、栗一籠、如數敬領。持信心云。一二七六年宗仲的父親原諒他，但一年後再度和他斷絕關係。雖然他勇敢地面對這個困境，他的弟弟經五字，授與日本國一切眾生，經文分明。又當得流罪死罪之事，亦明有說示。曰：這似為上行菩薩之使，而弘此法門也。神力品云：「如日月光明，能除諸幽冥，斯人行世間，能除眾生間之」人。經云：「於我滅度後，應受持斯經，是人於佛道，決定無有疑」云云。貴君當是助上行菩薩之化儀者也。

弘安二年己卯十二月三日 右衛門大夫殿御返事 日蓮花押

背景大意 大聖人於一二七九年在身延山寫道封信，時年五十八，大約是他入滅前三年。標題「斯人行世間」出自法華經。收信人是池上宗仲，他約在二一五六六年，也就是立宗三年後入信的，他的弟弟宗長不久之後也相繼入信。這兩兄弟的父親左衛門大夫康光，當時任鎌倉幕府的管轄官，他熱烈支持極樂寺的良觀。大聖人和弟子受到的許多迫害都是他勾結教院幕府官員造成的，他強烈反對兒子的修行長達二十多年。

長子宗仲在拒絕放棄信仰後，康光曾於一二七五年和一二七七年兩度和他斷絕關係，良觀是幕後的主謀，大聖人在信中告訴池上兄弟：「良觀等之天魔法師，誑惑令尊左衛門大夫殿，圖陷汝兄弟二人……」(御書選集五、四六頁)。在十三世紀的日本，被父母逐出家門的人，在經濟和社會地位方面都會遭受嚴重的後果，不僅喪失財產繼承權，而且會變成「非人」，幾乎沒有社會或市民的權利。

宗仲第一次被逐時，大聖人寫了「兄弟抄」鼓勵兄弟二人互相支持，堅持信心。一二七六年宗仲的父親原諒他，但一年後再度和他斷絕關係。雖然他勇敢地面對這個困境，他的弟弟經五字，授與日本國一切眾生，經文分明。又當得流罪死罪之事，亦明有說示。曰：這似為上行菩薩之使，而弘此法門也。神力品云：「如日月光明，能除諸幽冥，斯人行世間，能除眾生間之」人。經云：「於我滅度後，應受持斯經，是人於佛道，決定無有疑」云云。貴君當是助上行菩薩之化儀者也。

由於大聖人不斷的支持和鼓勵，池上兄弟和他們的妻子的信心都在這些困境中更加成長強盛。結果，他們的父親不僅原諒了宗仲，並在二一七八年死前不久歸依大聖人。一二七九年宗仲收到此信時，已經經歷了種種困難，但仍然是大聖人的忠實信徒。他也目睹了恩師一再受到政治和宗教權勢的迫害，當他讀到大聖人這封提及「流罪死罪」及法華經「斯人行世間」的信時，心中必定有很深刻的感受，而大聖人稱他為「助上行菩薩之化儀者」，無疑地也帶給了他身為大聖人弟子的強烈喜悅感和驕傲。

這封信雖然相當短，但卻說明佛法的根本原則——佛的基本特色就是和人們一起修行，分享他們的痛苦和快樂，使他們幸福。在信中大聖人說：「日蓮似為上行菩薩之使」，並引用法華經「斯人行世間」這句話。他說「斯人」指的是「上行菩薩再誕之人」，在法華經「從地涌出品」第十五中，釋迦的弟子和十方諸佛、諸菩薩都在虛空中宣誓要在釋迦滅後，宣揚此經，但釋迦佛拒絕他們的請求，因為他的召喚，無數的菩薩從地涌出，由上行菩薩為首的四大菩薩帶領。釋迦佛囑咐他們受持、讀、誦、廣宣法華經。因此，上行菩薩可以說是代表所有在佛入滅後宣揚此經的人。

虛空會、寶塔、和虛空會上的十方諸佛和菩薩以及地涌菩薩，都是在佛入滅後宣揚此經的人。生命進行的儀式的表現。釋迦牟尼以這種方式將他悟得的莊嚴的生命境界傳達給世人。因此，我們不可將上行菩薩看成出現於某時或某地的歷史人物，而應視之為佛生命的一種作用。當大聖人提到上行菩薩再誕之人時，就某種意義而言，他指的是這種極其重要的作用的再生，也就是佛宣揚使人脫離苦難的教導的行為。大聖人將自己比成上行菩薩時，他只是藉此表示他確信他就是在末法時代第一個發揮這個作用的人。為了將他自在的佛界生命傳達給法眾生，使他們也能顯現同樣的境界，大聖人把他自己的「虛空會」以御本尊的形象表現出來。池田會長解釋：「虛空會」並非發生於歷史某時或某地，正因此，我們能夠在任何時、何地、任何地點參加虛空會。在我們向著描述虛空會的御本尊祈求時，是誤導人們的思想和宗教，或否定、一年至二一七四年間被放逐到佐渡。菩薩之化儀者也。」(接下頁)

就在這一刻中，我親視人類根源於妙法的潛能的高貴和我們和宇宙永恆的生命力量。換言之，地涌菩薩扮演的角色命合而為一，同時就是幫助人們消除迷惑，覺悟自己的高貴和力量，同時駁斥障礙人類心性的思想和見解。個宇宙的浩大的生命狀態。因此地涌菩薩的任務是使一般人發揮生命本有的力量，他們必定會遭受他如神，因為他捐款造橋以及麻瘋病，那些利用大聖人的無知和利己獲取利益，他運用他的政治影響力，在關卡向旅人收費，積聚了大量財富，同時還放將遭遇的口舌兩方面的屈辱，也說明大聖人揭開了他的虛偽面目之後，與親聯合其他鎌倉的僧侶要求政府驅逐大聖人，甚至將他處決。而且，這也是設計斷絕池上家人關係的人。這種狠毒的個性，披上僧侶權威的外衣，利用他們的順從獲取利益。他揭發他們言行不一的面目，駁斥他們的教導，讓人們覺察自己生命本有的高貴和力量，因此，很自然地，大聖人受到權力結構的種種迫害。

大聖人在信裡還提起法華經行者會構的種種迫害。在這些迫害發生時，池上宗仲一直都支持著大聖人，忠於自己的信仰，他的最後勝利就是折伏一向追隨良觀的父親，雖然他稱讚宗仲堅定勇敢的信心，他說：「貴君當是助上行菩薩之化儀者也。」(接下頁)

大聖人引述「如來神力品」第二十有一段話說明地涌菩薩的角色：「動持品」第十三中所說的：「數數見他的最後勝利就是折伏一向追隨良觀的父親，雖然他稱讚宗仲堅定勇敢的信心，他說：「貴君當是助上行菩薩之化儀者也。」(接下頁)

「須勤修行學二道」(諸法實相抄)是實踐日蓮大聖人佛法的永遠規範。「行學二道」是實踐佛法的兩輪，行學兩輪齊備，信心才能穩定有力。創價學會、勤勵此行學二道，格遵大聖人教示，一心為廣宣流布而邁進。要想改變每個人的宿命，要想超越一切障礙，須有經由行學二道鍊過來的信心，才能在享受各自歡喜的信仰生活之餘，悠然邁向一生成佛的大道、廣宣流布的大道。「行」是日蓮大聖人佛法互及自行化他的實踐，也就是貫徹「自他同享幸福」之大願的菩薩行。每天挑戰「行」，「行」也好，一定要讀御書。要緊的是以行學的磨鍊，自我成長為「人材」，要能為此決意實踐。以折伏、弘教的實踐，磨鍊出行動之力。以拜讀御書，深化信心。勤勵且持恆於行學實踐的人，必能一直成長。而，由此

以「行學二道」磨鍊人材

大白蓮華九月號卷頭言

秋谷榮之助

顯現出佛力、法力。貫徹實踐的根本，是與惡作戰，見惡不與作戰而放棄，不能算是佛弟子。經文明說，必學惡之罪狀，強為實之，予以追放，才是真實佛弟子。與惡奮戰之中，才有廣布，才有自身的一人間革命，這一點不可忘記。又，投身學會活動，每一行動都有偉大的人格成長。連結於廣宣流布的信心，又，祇在佛法精隨的師弟精神中，才有大聖人佛法的脈，一生成佛的可能。厭離指向成佛正道的組織活動，任意性的佛道修行，不能有所成就，輕度組織、傲慢的人，把觀念的教學掛在鼻上的人、最後，在美好的學會組織中，耐不下，終至嫉妒、退轉日蓮宗的惡習，不以大聖人的本義為根本而作折伏、弘教，也不研讀教學。「行學絕則佛法滅」(諸法實相抄)。是徒以非信心的儀式、形式為炫耀的職業惡習。蔑視信者，擅弄權威的日蓮宗，很明白的沒有真實佛法存在。我們該是，每一個人去擴大理解學會的圈子，以折伏、弘教的實踐，教學的研鑽，磨鍊自己生命，提昇人格，去成長為堂堂的廣布人材吧！

A Blanket of Caring

Photo by DEBRA MULLIS



'It's hard for some parents to accept the constant caring of an atypical child,' Vantrese Russell says. Mrs. Russell, 84, thinks all the kids she's raised are 'normal kids,' though, and continues her work with her non-profit institution for brain-damaged children, with no plans to retire.

So many children — Vantrese Russell has raised 34, seven of them her own and the rest special needs kids. 'They're the best kids in the world,' she says.

By SHIRLEY ZAGOREC
ORLANDO, FLA., CORRESPONDENT

At 84, Vantrese Russell is the image of a grandmother. Her youthful spirit and friendly nature are a blanket of caring, and she welcomes everyone into her home. On Nov. 13, 1951, Mrs. Russell and her husband, James, opened the first non-profit institution for brain-damaged children in Orlando County, Fla. Herself the mother of seven, Mrs. Russell has put every ounce of energy into 46 years of caring round-the-clock for another 27 special needs children, some of whom are now adults. And she's never regretted this lifelong occupation as a mother. "It's what I do best," she says.

Some of the children's parents were deceased, a few children were deserted before they arrived at Mrs. Russell's home and several others were dropped off by their parents and never picked up again.

"It's hard for some parents to accept the constant caring of an atypical child," she says, explaining how she ended up with so many children. "Some felt it was confining, and it's hard to give undying love."

In Mrs. Russell's eyes, all her kids are "normal kids."

"They're the best kids in the world," she adds. "They're happy. Each shares a special, unconditional love with no judgment of each other. The most important commodity is loving them and making them feel wanted."

Mrs. Russell's goal for all her children is to develop their individual potential at their own pace. An important part of their learning, as in any home, is the daily personal routine of dressing, eating and playing. Although doing these are natural desires for the kids, it's often a challenge for them to develop the necessary coordination. The children are bused to private schools where they attend special classes designed to further their overall development.

Mrs. Russell's husband devoted his life to helping her and died in 1974. While she receives no salary for her work, she's blessed, she says, with many generous donations from the community. Today she has 21 paid employees to help her, serving as child-care attendants, nurse's aides, a cook, a housekeeper and a maintenance person. Four of her own daughters also have come home to live and help.

"Mother always gave of her life freely," says her oldest daughter, Janet. "She always provided lots of love, even with all the extra kids around. We all shared our toys, helped with chores and played well with one another."

While old age is slowing her down these days, Mrs. Russell doesn't think about retirement.

"You just don't put an end to this kind of life," she says, "like you would put a period at the end of a sentence." ■