

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

NOVEMBER 14, 1997

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Special Issue: SGI President in India

Rajiv Gandhi Photo Exhibit Opens in New Delhi

More articles from SGI President Ikeda's trip to India, pp. 4 & 5.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
New Delhi, India, Oct. 19

A gentle rain, cooling the air and moistening the earth, blessed the opening of "Rajiv Gandhi: An Intimate Vision." A joint effort by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, this exhibition of photographs taken by the late Indian prime minister is being shown in India for the first time.

The arrangement of the photographs and the layout of the exhibition were lovingly designed by Sonia Gandhi, the late premier's wife, and her daughter, Priyanka, to create an atmosphere of simple elegance

and warmth. At a meeting with Mrs. Gandhi in Tokyo in 1994, President Ikeda first proposed the idea of exhibiting in Japan photographs taken by Rajiv Gandhi, whom he knew to have been a fine amateur photographer. It was his wish, the SGI president said at that time, to "convey the spirit of a great young leader of the people to the world."

After viewing the exhibit, well-known painter A. Ramachandran said that Rajiv Gandhi was a rare leader who genuinely loved the people. He said how wonderful it was that, through their contact with these photographs, many people in Japan developed an understanding and greater feeling of closeness to India. This, he said, underscored the importance of cultural exchange. ■



President and Mrs. Ikeda, along with Sonia Gandhi, view a small lotus pond at the opening of the Rajiv Gandhi photo exhibition in New Delhi.

SGI President Meets Indian Prime Minister

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
New Delhi, India, Oct. 20

The spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, human rights, India's good neighbor policy and even poetry were subjects SGI President Ikeda discussed with India's Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral at his official residence today.

"In this year in which we celebrate the 50th anniversary of India's independence, we have welcomed you to India," Prime Minister Gujral told President Ikeda. "Your visit serves to remind us in India anew of our duty to spread the spirit of Gandhi and its active application throughout the world."

The premier's parents were active in the independence movement, while Mr. Gujral himself joined the struggle when he was still in his early teens. As a university student, he was arrested and jailed for



The discussion is lively as Prime Minister and Mrs. Gujral talk with Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda at the prime minister's official residence in New Delhi.

his involvement in the Quit India movement, a campaign to achieve self-rule from Britain. Mr. Gujral said that everything he and his colleagues are today pursuing they learned from Mahatma Gandhi, and that they are doing their utmost to ensure his legacy is carried on intact.

President Ikeda praised Mr. Gujral for remaining true to the ideals of his youth and making ceaseless efforts to improve the lives of the Indian people.

The SGI leader also commended Mr. Gujral's speech at

PLEASE SEE PRIME MINISTER, 4

No More Hiroshimas and Nagasakis

By BILL LAWRENCE
BUREAU CHIEF
Seattle, Oct. 26

We, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live. Anyone who tries to jeopardize this right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster.
— Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, Sept. 8, 1957

Josei Toda was passionate in his commitment to nuclear abolition. In Japan at the time such views were opposed not only by the government but by the general public as well.

But for those forever scarred by the cruelty of war, Toda's cry has deep resonance. "At 11:02 a.m. on Aug. 9, 1945, an atomic

PLEASE SEE PACIFIC RIM, 5

VOICES

If you are encouraging someone to practice this Buddhism who says he or she believes in a supreme being, what do you say?

Members from L.A. #2 Joint Territory respond:



I say: "God is the same thing we refer to as the Mystic Law. It is the benevolent, protective source of all life throughout the universe. We do not see this force as embodied in a human-like form but as a great, sweeping rhythm of life that is manifest in everything throughout the cosmos — within us and around us. If you can relinquish the notion of a person who is watching you and judging and taking care of you, you will discover the freedom of Buddhism. You will see how your life embodies the Buddha or God-like nature." I would then advise them to chant for the wisdom to joyfully understand this concept.

— NATALIE BATES, Los Angeles



I say that in Buddhism we believe in a universal law. And although we don't treat it like a person, it is a law that governs things. It is the rhythm of nature itself, so certainly we believe in a universal presence and order based on this law. In Buddhism, we believe that we are a part of this universal law, and that it is part of us. Because we are part of this universal law, we can use our Buddhist practice to tap into it to change our lives in a positive way.

— AL ALBERGATE, Hermosa Beach, Calif.



If your notion of God is a personified entity, who created us and more or less controls our destiny, you may have difficulty accepting the Buddhist concept of absolute freedom and responsibility. But if your notion of God represents a force in the universe that is manifest in all life, that you can discover and cultivate through your efforts, your belief is in harmony with Buddhist philosophy. In either case, if you chant about this question, you will discover a solution that will make you happy.

— JOHN BATES, Los Angeles



I still believe in God. I believe that God is the force that is in me and in the universe that I am existing in. And I guess the "God energy" that I use to chant with is the same energy that comes back from the Gohonzon and that manifests in my life experience. It's a universal God energy and the Gohonzon is a mirror of that.

— KELLY WALSH, North Hollywood, Calif.



I would say that Buddhism comes from the inside, not the outside. In other words, we don't look outside ourselves for this. Then I would have to say that we don't have a God. We chant to bring out our best nature. All religions have as a bottom line for us to be good, happy people, and this is how we do it.

— BETTY DUNN, Inglewood, Calif.

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

The Future Is...Beyond Words

EDITORIAL

Fighting for peace. Isn't that an oxymoron, like "jumbo shrimp" or "sweet sorrow"?

Albert Einstein is often quoted as having said that people cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war. Similarly, can we simultaneously use the vocabulary of violence and talk convincingly about nonviolence?

When we in the SGI-USA talk about fighting, we're not talking about subduing an external enemy per se. Rather, we battle our own fears, weaknesses and darkness. Even with regard to Nikken, who is clearly out to destroy us, we're also battling something internal: authoritarianism, which originates from mistaken beliefs and to which we're all susceptible. The actions we take against the manifestations of authoritarianism are the echo of our internal efforts.

In other words, we fight for peace by doing our human revolution — a nonviolent one.

Nonviolent revolution. Isn't that an oxymoron, too?

Mahatma Gandhi used the Sanskrit word *ahimsa*, which does not contain the passive connotation of the English word *nonviolence*. *Ahimsa* implies that when all violence subsides in the human heart, the state that remains is love. It is not something we have to acquire, Gandhi would say; it is always present and needs only to be uncovered. Our true nature is not just to love two or three people, but to be love itself. So *ahimsa* is more than just the absence of violence — it's an intense love.

For Gandhi, *ahimsa* in action is *satyagraha*. In Sanskrit, *satyagraha* means holding on to truth, and, to Gandhi, this meant the action of holding onto the deepest truth of existence: that all life is one and indivisible.

As Gandhi explained: "*Satyagraha* is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence."

Underlying Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence was the idea that evil, injustice and hatred exist only insofar as we support them. They have

no existence of their own. Without our cooperation, unintentional or intentional, injustice cannot continue.

SGI President Ikeda, on his recent trip to India, praised the tradition of nonviolence demonstrated by the people of India and said that a new, holistic humanism must be based on this principle. "The fundamental failure of humanism in its various forms," Mr. Ikeda said, "has been a failure to fully believe in and trust people."

Gandhi likely would agree. He once said, "A *satyagrahi* bids goodbye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting his opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false 20 times, the *satyagrahi* is ready to trust him the 21st time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed."

Historian J.B. Kripilani, upon his first meeting with Gandhi, reportedly said: "Mr. Gandhi, you may know all about the Bible or the Bhagavad-Gita, but you know nothing at all about history. Never has a nation been able to free itself without violence."

Gandhi replied gently: "You know nothing about history. The first thing you have to learn about history is that because something has not taken place in the past, that does not mean it cannot take place in the future."

The future may have no limitations, but words do. The English language and most of the people who speak it are full of contradiction, paradox, imprecision and, yes, oxymoron. *Trust, nonviolence, kosen-rufu* — we have an idea of what these words mean, but we often feel their full meaning has yet to be realized. Their meaning is to be found, perhaps, beyond words — in the language of the human heart.

So maybe *fighting for peace* doesn't accurately or completely explain what we in the SGI are doing. But, for now, what else can we say? We're creating a new world — a world not based on the limitations of the past but born out of our dreams for the future. Maybe words can't fully describe this. As we discover new possibilities, how can we fail to discover new ways of communicating what's in our hearts? **WU**

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Future Hope

Great article by youth division member Brandon Nicholson (Sept. 12 *World Tribune*) about his experience attending the youth conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Only 14 years old, but a Buddhist experience that makes me envious! Thanks for the youth pages and experiences. They really help me have hope for the future. Excellent!
— S. TAYLOR, Bend, Ore.

Shrub Solution

This is in response to Shera Haynes's inquiry ("Mailbox," Oct. 24) on shrubs for the altar. I have been doing partial sun and shade gardening in the Annapolis, Md., area (Zone 7) for some 18 years now and have a good collection of the popular shrubs: mountain laurel, hollies, azaleas and rhododendrons, etc. After trying them all for altar greens since beginning my practice 10 years ago, I have settled on Japanese Andromeda (*Pieris japonica*), as it has all the qualities required. It comes in dwarf, compact and tall (faster) growing varieties as well. And it is hardy to Zone 5; I recommend it.
— ED ROTHE, Gambrills, Md.

Nothing's Impossible

I am writing to thank Tom Fisher for his incredible experience (Oct. 10 *World Tribune*). It is the kind of real-life story that makes me really understand that when SGI President Ikeda says, "Nothing is impossible when one sincerely chants to the Gohonzon," he means just that — that you can fulfill any and all of your desires from a great life for yourself to world peace. Based on Mr. Fisher's experience, I determine to create a great life of happiness for myself, my family and my new district.
— DAN MARTIN, New York

Virtual Museum?

In the interview with David Krieger (Oct. 17 *World Tribune*), he [proposes that the SGI create a nuclear weapons museum]. Thanks to the SGI, I had the opportunity to go to the museum in Hiroshima twice.... Ever since, I have wished there were some way for everyone to go there. (Especially all government leaders.) It must be dreadfully painful for the people of Hiroshima to live with that reminder, but they preserve the memories in hopes of preventing others from having to experience what they did.... Since Mr. Krieger has suggested this project for the SGI, how about starting with a website — a virtual museum? It would not have the impact of an actual museum, but it would reach out to people all over the world. And it would require a lot less resources than a real museum to get going. If someone could coordinate it, maybe members from all over could participate in creating it. There could be some kind of outreach program to schools so students could discuss topics on the site with other students all over the world.
— HEATHER CARVER, Portland, Ore.

Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.
In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.

A Hero In My Own Back Yard

PERSPECTIVE

By **DIXON HAMBY**
SEATTLE

It is easy to see that the world is obsessed with celebrity. A steady stream of entertainment media spews out every detail of the latest media darling's life. News shows choose to entertain us but ignore real problems.

I don't get it.

Are people so miserable they have to spend their time absorbing drivel on people they will most likely never come in contact with? As SGI President Ikeda said in "Discussions on Youth": "It is foolish to become a puppet of media manipulation. I hope you will resolutely follow your own path in life."

Several days ago, while waiting for my truck to be repaired, I picked up a gossip magazine. Of what real importance to me were the lives of anyone in these publications?

We need to look around us for people of outstanding ability — in our communities, even in our families.

I know of a person to look up to right in my own back yard. He is Shaklin, the maintenance man at our apartment complex. Shaklin is an African American in his 30s. Several days ago, I noticed I hadn't seen Shaklin for a few days and asked my wife, Yoshi, about him. She said that the new manager had probably fired him. She was right.

Yesterday morning, Shaklin showed up to collect his last

paycheck. I watched as people came out of their apartments. "Shaklin, it's so good to see you. How are you?" "Shaklin, I heard you're moving, do you need any help?" "Shaklin, we miss you."

Yoshi went out to talk with him. Without any bitterness, he told her that the new manager had let him go. She told Shaklin about a problem we had in the apartment that the manager



Dixon Hamby

had told us to fix ourselves. Shaklin insisted on looking at it, even though he didn't work here anymore. He seemed concerned because there was a frayed wire that wasn't safe and suggested we again tell the manager about it.

Yes, we do miss Shaklin. His set time to start work was 9:00 a.m., but he usually arrived around 7:00 a.m. He walked all around the complex and cleaned up. And not with one of those annoying, polluting, gas-powered air blowers — with his hands. After taking

care of his duties, Shaklin would leave for school, then come back in the afternoon to finish up.

I noticed that he approached each task with great care and patience. This complex was the cleanest and friendliest we have ever lived in because of him.

Shaklin moved slowly and steadily. He talked very softly, as if he didn't want to disturb any part of the universe. His presence seemed to have a calming effect, and I'm sure the elderly people in the complex felt secure knowing he was around.

We told Shaklin if he needed a job reference, we would be glad to give him one. He replied that he didn't really need one, because he had already gotten several job offers. You see, when someone is sincere and works hard, others notice. As Nichiren Daishonin teaches, what is important is our behavior as human beings.

President Ikeda has stated: "There are many people of upstanding character who don't practice. When we look at how these people live we see much that accords with the Buddhist way of life." He always talks of the wisdom of the common people.

There is much in Shaklin's behavior that I admire. His sincerity, honesty, concern for others, hard work and lack of bitterness are all traits that I, as a Buddhist, will strive to emulate.

So, you don't need to read gossip magazines or watch television to find heroes. Look around. Like me, you just may find one in your own back yard. **W**

Question of the Month:

'As a Buddhist, how do you celebrate the holiday season?'

Please be specific and limit your responses to 75 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401. Fax: 310-260-8910. Or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com. (Please do not fax photos.)

Deadline: Nov. 24

NEWS BRIEFS

INDIA

SGI President Receives First Tagore Peace Award

NEW DELHI, India, Oct. 23 — Honoring SGI President Ikeda's "creative contribution to the development of human understanding toward peace," India's Asiatic Society conferred its first Tagore Peace Award on the SGI leader this morning.

The Asiatic Society researches an array of subjects concerning the people, culture and environment of Asia. The society created this award to promote peace based on the ideals upheld by the Bengali poet and first Asian recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941).

Asiatic Society General Secretary Amalendu De said that the SGI leader's life and works reveal his sole purpose to be contributing to the peace and welfare of society by promoting culture and education and opposing all forms of violence.

INDIA

South Asia Reps Meeting Held for the First Time

NEW DELHI, India, Oct. 20 — Enthusiastic cheers from about 400 SGI members from throughout India, Nepal and Sri Lanka greeted President Ikeda tonight. This marked the start of the 1st SGI South Asia Representatives Meeting.

"Faith is a lifelong process," Mr. Ikeda said in his speech. "Like an ever-flowing stream of water, I hope that you will advance continuously and harmoniously together. It is my fervent wish that you will emerge victorious in every aspect of your lives. Please take care of your health. Do your best at work. Cherish your families. Respect and appreciate your partners."

Mr. Ikeda's closing words reflected his determination to encourage those assembled: "I say to you, my dear family, my brothers and sisters: Eternal friends in faith, maintain good health and lead magnificent lives!"

INDIA

New Delhi Friendship Centre Opens

NEW DELHI, India, Oct. 19 — The Soka Bodhi Tree Garden was the site of the opening of the Ikeda Friendship Centre, located in Gurgaon, just south of New Delhi. It will serve as both a meeting facility for the Bharat (India) Soka Gakkai (BSG) members and a "friendship house" to welcome SGI members and guests from all over the world.

The unveiling of a memorial plaque engraved with a 1956 poem by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was held in the new center's lobby following the opening. (The plaque's inscription appears below.) President Ikeda spoke warmly, recalling the deep desire of his mentor, Mr. Toda, to see Asia united in the cause of world peace.

"Nothing gives me greater pleasure than seeing how much you have grown and the wonderful fortune that fills your lives," he said. "My mentor, Josei Toda, always prayed with all his heart for the happiness of the people of India. Since life and death are one and inseparable, I am firmly convinced as his disciple that he is watching joyously over this gathering today."

The inscription on the memorial plaque reads:

*To the people of Asia
Who pray for a glimpse of the moon
Through the parting clouds,
Let us send them, instead,
The light of the sun.*

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

Asia's SGI Family

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



'Be victorious,' SGI President Ikeda urges members from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Oct. 20.

PRIME MINISTER, FROM PAGE 1

the U.N. General Assembly last month, particularly what he said about human rights. In that address, the premier asserted that the universality of human rights "stems from the search in different civilizations for ways of protecting the human dignity of every individual." The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights next year, Mr. Gujral went on, will be an occasion for us to seriously reflect on whether the ideals enshrined in the declaration have become a reality for all people.

The conversation also touched on Mr. Gujral's policy to foster neighborly ties under a set

of principles known collectively as the Gujral Doctrine. The first principle of this doctrine proclaims, "With its neighbors, India does not ask for reciprocity, but gives all that it can in good faith and trust." The core ethos of the Gujral Doctrine is understanding others' points of view.

The topic turned to poetry when Mr. Ikeda thanked the prime minister's wife, Shiela Gujral, for three anthologies she had sent him. President Ikeda said that her poems are "beautiful melodies of the heart" and expressions of her boundless love for humanity that cannot fail to touch those who read them. President Ikeda admitted to a special fondness for one of her poems, "Uphill Task," which

reads:

*The lofty flight of ambition
lifts me up
I am no longer aware
of my shrunken size.
A miracle happens —
wading through the
memories of
robust past
I recapture
the old Gandhian spirit
of right, against might.*

As he said his farewells, President Ikeda again expressed his respect for the 77-year-old Mr. Gujral's indomitable advancement as a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and urged him to take good care of his health for the sake of both India and the world. ☐

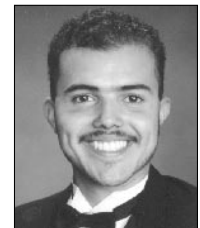
The Student Files

Name: Jason Williams

School: Prairie View A&M
University

Major: Premed

City: Hempstead, Texas



It is extremely difficult to stay focused on my studies because of the many distractions that stress me out and make me detour from my mission. Everyone has a mission, whether it be as a sanitary worker, cop, lawyer or teacher. However, many people are confused and don't know what to do with their lives. Every day I chant to be focused on my life and to acknowledge that I have a purpose — to lay the foundation for my career as a pediatrician.

My compassion and love for children have been the driving force for my determination to alleviate their suffering. Children are the leaders of the 21st century.

I am an example of someone who has struggled to gain his education. My mom and dad have encouraged me to fulfill my dreams and goals. Now I wake up every morning with the strong determination to become a capable leader for the future so as to heal the hurt in our society. ☐

Indian President Welcomes SGI Leader

Gandhi's spirit lives on in Mr. Narayanan, who is dedicated to the common people, SGI leader says.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
New Delhi, India, Oct. 22

A friendly, relaxed atmosphere characterized SGI President Ikeda's meeting with President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of the Republic of India in his presidential office. Mr. Ikeda congratulated Mr. Narayanan on his inauguration as India's president in July. Smiling broadly, the head of state said he was delighted to see Mr. Ikeda again.

In fact the friendship between the two men dates back 18 years, to 1979. Mr. Ikeda then visited New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, where President Narayanan was vice chancellor. When President Narayanan invited the SGI leader to be "professor for a day," Mr. Ikeda declined, saying he preferred the role of a visiting student. They reunited later in Japan after Mr. Narayanan became India's vice president.



President and Mrs. Narayanan of India welcome President Ikeda in New Delhi, India.

Mr. Narayanan said today that Mr. Ikeda was not a student but a professor — a teacher of the entire world. In turn, the SGI leader said that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's "discovery" of Mr. Narayanan was surely one of his greatest legacies to

India.

The SGI leader added he was particularly impressed by the Indian leader's presidential inauguration speech, in which he said: "Gandhi used to say that 'true democracy is what promotes the welfare of the people.' We have,

therefore, an obligation to direct all our efforts to the task of abolishing poverty, ignorance and disease from among our people." Gandhi lives on in Mr. Narayanan, who has inherited the Mahatma's wish to "wipe every tear from every eye," President

Ikeda said.

On the subject of education, Mr. Ikeda stressed that young people remain the key to a country's future. He thus applauded President Narayanan's efforts to provide youth "new opportunities, new hopes and new challenges." Mr. Ikeda noted that despots see youth as a means, using them as pawns for their ambitions, but that true leaders devote their energies to raising youth.

Touching on Mr. Narayanan's illustrious diplomatic career, Mr. Ikeda said he had heard that Mr. Narayanan had enjoyed an amicable relationship with President Ho Chi Minh (1890-69) of North Vietnam during Mr. Narayanan's time in that country.

President Narayanan said that he had met with Ho Chi Minh many times and described him as a person of great integrity and strong will, with a wide range of intellectual and philosophical interests.

President Narayanan concluded that he is forever finding his encounters with the SGI president most enjoyable and enlightening, adding that there are many leading intellectuals he wants to introduce to the SGI leader. ❧

No More Hiroshimas: Peace Conference Marks Josei Toda's Anti-Nuclear Declaration

PACIFIC RIM, FROM PAGE 1

bomb exploded over Nagasaki, Japan," states Hitomi Venneri of Seattle. "My mother and her family were inside her home when the bomb dropped. A brilliant flash of light filled the sky. After a few seconds, only the floor remained.

"After the bomb, my mother witnessed hell: Piles of bodies. Dozens of people groaning and burned. She could find no words to say, so for years she has kept it all inside."

Hitomi shared this experience as she helped prepare for the Pacific Rim Peace Conference sponsored by the SGI-USA and held at the Seattle Culture Center today.

The conference's purpose being to raise public awareness and foster dialogue about nuclear disarmament, Hitomi's and others' experiences were great contributions.

Among those who contributed to "A Cry for Peace," a multimedia presentation on Mr. Toda's declaration against nu-

clear weapons, was Jeanette Wallis, whose father "worked for 20 years on a nuclear submarine and insists nuclear development should be stopped."

Ms. Wallis explained that her father believes that the achievement of world peace now relies on using global institutions such as the United Nations to impose sanctions where appropriate and maintain a system of checks and balances. Ms. Wallis' father praises organizations such as the SGI that encourage dialogue and exchange among all people, regardless of their country of origin.

David Quintero, the U.N. Association Seattle Chapter president, likewise praised the SGI in Seattle for "working with the local community on issues that are international in scope. These are the major issues of the 21st century. The SGI's goals are aligned with those of the United Nations — namely, education, peace, environmental stewardship and educating youth. As a representative of the United Nations, I am very impressed with

this level of interaction."

The members and guests, some of them first-time participants in an SGI activity, saw the importance of continuing this interaction through today's event.

"From practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I realize my enemies exist within my heart," Hitomi Venneri concluded. "I also realize there are tremendous negative forces in one's environment. For the sake of my mother and for the sake of the next generation, I will speak out for the value of peace. There must never be another Hiroshima or Nagasaki."

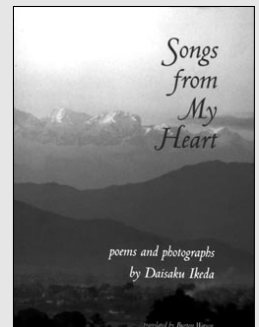
Jeanette Wallis added: "World War I was called a war to end all wars. After the well-documented horrors, people assumed it would never happen again, but on its heels came World War II...."

"Now that the Cold War is over and more countries than ever are working toward peaceful relations, is it necessary to further develop nuclear weapons?" ❧

What's

First printed in 1978, *Songs from My Heart* by Daisaku Ikeda is a collection of poems celebrating youth, change and progress. The new edition is combined with more recent photos taken by the SGI president that express his deepest feelings and hopes for the future of humankind. Translated by Burton Watson with power and emotion true to the author. These genuinely are songs from the heart of Daisaku Ikeda.

Price: \$14.95 M/0#: 0346



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

SIGN POSTS APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

Facing Fears

By VALERIE THOMAS
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Now more than ever, you must neither show nor feel any fear.... You must grit your teeth and never slacken in your faith. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 140)

I attended a meeting recently where a young woman spoke about participating in the September SGI World Youth Training Course in Japan. She shared some guidance she heard and her personal experience, both of which were very encouraging.

But the part that I found most moving was the way her hands shook as she spoke.

Although her voice was clear and confident, her face smiling and radiant, her body standing straight, she was terrified to be speaking in front of everyone at the meeting. But her shaking hands were the only evidence of this. I admired her for challenging a great obstacle within herself — her shyness — and speaking in public even though it was difficult for her.

I often see people who make everything they do look easy: speaking, being prepared for any situation. Although I am striving to develop that capacity in my life, I am not there yet. How do I get there? I think it is by challenging myself to face my fears as Nichiren Daishonin says here.

Because of our faith and practice within the SGI organization, we have many opportunities to take on new challenges that allow us to grow. I am convinced that it was this young woman's deep faith and compassion to want to share her experience that enabled her to overcome her fears about speaking.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote frequently of the importance of standing up to our fears and using our practice to do this. As I watched this young woman speaking, I thought of this. Despite her fear, she did not cut her experience short. As her hands shook, she simply held on tighter to her notes.

In her own way, she was gritting her teeth and not slackening in her faith.

What Can I Do for Temple Members?

Q What effect will the priests' errors have on those who follow them, and what can I do for those people?

A Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is clear when it comes to describing the strictness of the law of cause and effect. It expounds that great benefit and joy will accrue to those who uphold the Mystic Law, while great loss or punishment will be incurred by those who slander this Law or cause harm to its practitioners.

Even in the secular realm, those who disparage a person of true integrity and character ultimately do damage to their own integrity and character. This effect is even more profound in the realm of Buddhism, which deals with the deepest aspects of life. By disparaging those who uphold the Daishonin's spirit and work for the happiness of others, Nikken and his followers debase their own lives on a profound level, sowing the seeds for tragic loss and future misery. This has already become clear from the accounts of those who have come back to the SGI after practicing with the temple for a number of years.

According to the Daishonin's teachings, inconspicuous loss or punishment is the worst effect a person can receive from slandering the Law, though it is not immediately apparent. He describes this process as follows:

They are like men who have already been sentenced to execution and are awaiting their turn in prison. While they are in prison, regardless of what evil acts they may commit, they will receive no further punishment other than the death sentence already passed upon them. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 121)

In Buddhism, conspicuous gain or loss occurs quickly, making it easier for indi-

Key Points:

- Those who follow priests who commit slander will wind up committing the same slander and ultimately suffer negative effects as a result.
- Out of compassion for those whose happiness is at risk because of this, we can encourage them to leave the temple organization. To do so, we have to touch their hearts through our words and actions.

viduals to realize the correctness or error of their ways. Inconspicuous loss, on the other hand, is characterized by a gradual downward spiral. While the word *punishment* is used, it should not be viewed as retribution from an external force or function. It corresponds to a deterioration of one's inner state of life, which gradually comes to manifest itself externally.

Since the priesthood and its followers have committed or tacitly supported the great slander of trying to destroy the Daishonin's Buddhism, falsely accusing SGI members of all sorts of misdeeds and errors, they are surely accumulating inconspicuous punishment.

It is only natural that we feel compassion for those destined to suffer, even if they have denounced us. And it is only natural to want to help them escape such misery. Though the law of causality is strict, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is based on compassion. The Daishonin asserts, "It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander [the Mystic Law]" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1123).

Even Shakyamuni put more effort into saving Devadatta, his greatest betrayer, than anyone else, stating that parents are most concerned about their sick

children. When we speak with great conviction and compassion about the reality of the temple issue, we eventually can convince temple followers to disassociate from the temple and its slander or even rejoin the SGI.

People who have returned to the SGI from the temple have reported experiencing a substantial revitalization of their faith, a deepened understanding of Buddhism and increased joy. Many have also become vocal about the priesthood's behavior they have personally experienced, so others will not make the same mistake they did.

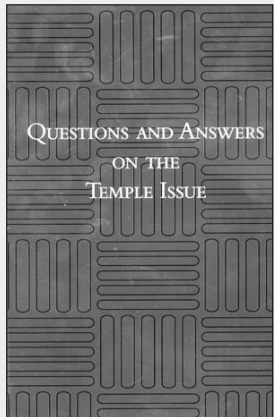
In speaking with temple members, as with anyone, we of course need to use common sense and approach them with warmth and respect. There is no set way to talk to anyone, no best place or time. Each person is unique.

Through our strong and consistent prayer to save people from misery and lead them to happiness, we can arrive at the best way to approach them. Through this and ongoing dialogue, the wisdom we summon forth in the process will create benefit both for ourselves and the other person.

Twelve in a series

Educate Yourself!

A free pamphlet on the temple issue is now available through the organization. Request a copy from your leaders and learn more about this important issue to our faith. In 14 easy-to-read questions and answers, this pamphlet gives you a complete overview of the issue that everyone's talking about. Study it with your friends! It can also be downloaded from the SGI-USA's website: www.sgi-usa.org.



The summer of youth had come. The golden sun rose in the sky, casting off the rainy season's gray. Bright, fluffy white clouds floated in the blue sky, and the fresh green of the trees glistened luxuriantly in the sunlight.

On July 16, some 20 young men and women — Student Division Chief Goro Watari and other student division representatives — gathered in a traditional Japanese-style room in the Seikyo Shimbun Building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. They waited with some excitement. After a moment, Shin'ichi Yamamoto entered the room.

"Hi there!" he said. "How are you all today?"

"Fine!" came their bright, energetic reply.

Shin'ichi sat on the *tatami* floor behind the low table placed there for him and began to speak, smiling cheerfully: "Maybe it's because the rainy season is over, but you all look especially refreshed and relaxed today. I hope you'll share your opinions or requests with me as freely and frankly as last time."

And so began Shin'ichi's second meeting that year with student division representatives. Immediately, several people raised their hands. The first he selected made a request: "President Yamamoto, we want to ask you to give lectures on the Goshō for student division representatives."

The speaker and the other students in the room looked earnestly at Shin'ichi, awaiting his response. The gleam in his eyes seemed to heighten. He had been waiting for just such a request.

"All right!" Shin'ichi said. "Let's do it! July 22 is the Student Division General Meeting, right? Let's start after that. Unless you study the Goshō thoroughly and come to know the profound depths of the Daishonin's Buddhism, there's really no reason for the student division to exist. Goshō study is of utmost importance. Let's study together." He recognized that the time had come to begin training the student division members in earnest.

Since the previous year, Shin'ichi had been devoting great thought and effort to fostering their growth. He regarded the landmark 10th Young Men's Division General Meeting of Nov. 5, 1961, which had seen an attendance of 100,000 — the fulfillment of a goal cherished by President Toda — as proof that a solid foundation for the future of that division had been laid. The 9th Young Women's Division General Meeting, meanwhile, had been held a week later at the Mitsuzawa Stadium and attended by 85,000, indicating that a firm foundation for that group's dynamic growth had been secured as well.

The sound development of kosen-rufu in the 21st century had to begin with a vast network of talented individuals being created. To consolidate them into

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 5

Young Eagles

Translation of parts 1–6 of the 'Young Eagles' 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.

a fresh force for the future, Shin'ichi felt it vital to put all of his energy into fostering the student division members. As a first step, he had titled his editorial for the April 1962 *Daibyakurengō* "To the Student Division." His aim had been to offer some guidelines that would help the youth advance toward the future with optimism and hope.

Revealing his high expectations and hopes for the student division members, Shin'ichi had written:

"The direction for all young people in the Soka Gakkai is clearly expressed in Josei Toda's 'Precepts for Youth' and 'Youth, Be Patriotic.' But among all our young people, it is the student division members in particular who must possess a sense of responsibility and awareness of their role as trailblazers." Right at the outset, Shin'ichi declared that it was their mission to lead the way in the kosen-rufu movement. From that time on, *trailblazing* became a byword and a proud tradition of the student division.

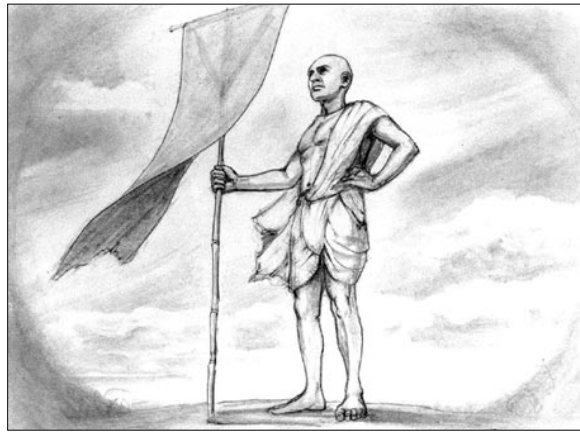
Shin'ichi went on to express his belief that the student division was the only hope for the future. He described the trend of the times, which saw the ideals of students in society at large degenerating into self-interest and pleasure-seeking. Students were losing their sense of mission to build a new world, their desire to work for the happiness of humanity, among the people. Only the growth of the student division, whose members based themselves on the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, could counteract this trend, he asserted.

In the editorial, Shin'ichi quoted a lecture by Josei Toda confirming that Buddhism is a supreme life philosophy that can give positive direction to all human

activities, including science, government and commerce. Shin'ichi then outlined where he felt the students should put their energies at this time.

He wrote: "Please be confident that all of your earnest daily efforts to build a solid basis for your future, based on a clear awareness of your mission, a strong Buddhist practice, and the recognition that your studies are your key priority right now, constitute an important contribution to kosen-rufu.

"Learning is the accumulation of knowledge and a crucial part of the



process of acquiring wisdom. Buddhism is wisdom, it's a philosophy that we can actually apply in our daily lives. It is important to realize that Buddhist wisdom makes it possible for us to put all the knowledge we accumulate to the best use for society."

Shin'ichi concluded by voicing his joy at the bright future he foresaw for the talented Soka Gakkai youth: "All of the youth division members are Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have a mission to shape a new age. But you, the student division members, who will have undergone academic training before setting out into society, have an especially important role to play as leaders of the intellectual world. I hope you will become the new backbone of the Soka Gakkai, great leaders in every field in Japan, men and women of outstanding ability who will contribute greatly to the

world."

Student division members who had read Shin'ichi's editorial were awestruck. They realized anew the limitless expectations he held for them and what an important mission each of them had to fulfill. Many of them gathered together to read the article aloud again and again. Their deepening awareness that they were the vanguard of kosen-rufu, that they would forge the way to the future, kindled a flame of joy in their hearts.

Awakening to your mission changes you, unlocking boundless inner strength.

At that time, the student division had been aiming for a membership of 10,000, and their youthful joy exploded in a renewed enthusiasm for their studies and introducing others to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

One day in mid-April, not long after the editorial had been published, a beaming Goro had come to report to Shin'ichi. "Sensei, according to last night's report, we have finally reached our goal of 10,000 members!" he told him happily.

"Is that so?" Shin'ichi responded. "Wonderful! You've done well. The future belongs to the student division. I intend to devote all my energies to its development. I hope to produce a whole galaxy of brilliant leaders for the future. Let's arrange an informal discussion meeting with student division representatives soon." "Certainly," replied Goro with delight.

Shin'ichi's first discussion meeting with student division representatives for that year had been arranged on May 23. Rather than simply give one-sided guidance, Shin'ichi made a point of listening to the opinions and wishes of the members. He didn't want to mold the students into a uniform type. He wanted to help them grow and mature — but each in his or her own way — respecting their autonomy and personal initiative.

At that first meeting, the representatives had expressed a variety of wishes. One student said: "Every Soka Gakkai chapter has a chapter flag. The young men's and young women's divisions also have flags. Would it be possible for the student division to have a flag, too?"

Shin'ichi had responded immediately: "That's a good idea. I think the student division should have its own flag. Let's design something stylish and new, something that really fits the student division."

"There is a story about the great Mahayana Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna in

EAGLES, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

volving a flag. In the southern part of ancient India, there was a king, a follower of non-Buddhist teachings, who ruled his kingdom in an unenlightened manner. That kingdom happened to be Nagarjuna's homeland.

"One day, Nagarjuna decided to convert the king to Buddhism. But no matter how earnestly he petitioned for an audience with the king, some obstacle intervened, and he was unsuccessful.

"He didn't give up. Nagarjuna made a scarlet flag, and day after day he carried it around the castle's front gate and perimeter. He continued this for seven years, until at last he was granted an audience. And he converted the king to Buddhism.

"I think that the scarlet flag Nagarjuna carried was a symbol of his passionate commitment to spread the Buddhist teaching. A flag is a distillation of the ideas, philosophy and ideals of those who carry it.

"In making this student division flag, we should bear in mind the 100,000 or 200,000 members who will gather under it in the future. It should be a distinctive flag really representing the student division. Let's design a flag that surpasses those of the young men's or young women's divisions — a flag with even more style and character. Why don't you discuss this and then bring me your proposals?"

The students' eyes sparkled.

Another student said: "Since the formation of the Komei Political Federation, we have seen increased criticism of the Soka Gakkai by Japanese scholars and commentators. I think that the more socially active we become, the stronger such criticism will be. How should we respond to this?"

"Haven't we faced plenty of criticism already?" Shin'ichi asked. "Just because those criticizing us now are intellectuals doesn't mean we need to be afraid. If the criticisms directed at us are mistaken, then the student division should point out the errors.

"Instead of asking, 'How should we respond to this?' you should simply take the lead yourself and speak out in support of your comrades. If you listen closely to what most of the so-called commentators or social critics say, you will find that they have no real opinions of their own. They haven't the slightest idea of what the Gakkai is really like. Simply speculating, they indiscriminately accept at face value whatever wild and completely baseless rumors they hear.

"In contrast, we of the Gakkai can think for ourselves! That is because we possess a great philosophy. Moreover, we have been putting this philosophy into practice, making great contributions to the welfare of many people. We are not irresponsible bystanders with plenty to say but nothing to show for it. We have translated our beliefs into action.

"That's what makes the Gakkai strong and enables us to rebut any groundless criticism. All you have to do is confi-

dently defend your beliefs with the strength of your convictions."

Another student said: "I think that the student division song is very old-fashioned and doesn't match our present pace of advancement. I think we should come up with a new, fresh song. Can we do that?"

"Now that you mention it, I don't think we hear the student division song very often, do we? I can't sing it. Who on earth wrote it?"

Goro replied, "We wrote it together."
"Well, then," said Shin'ichi lightly, "I guess that means that none of you have any musical taste!"

Everyone laughed.

"The whole point of a song is for people to sing it," Shin'ichi continued. "Either we force everyone to sing the song we have now, or we come up with a new song that everyone will enjoy singing. Since coercion won't win anyone's support, that means we'll have to write a new one, doesn't it?"

"If we start now, I bet we can introduce the new song at the July Student Division General Meeting. This time, let's write a song that everyone can sing. Can you do it?"

"Yes!" cried the representatives enthusiastically.

Goro waited for Shin'ichi to finish speaking before making another request: "Sensei, would you consider meeting with the leaders of the student division on a regular basis and lecturing to us on the Goshō?"

Shin'ichi had already considered holding such lectures, but he avoided committing himself either way then. "I am so busy right now," he said, "that I can't even attend the youth division executive leaders meetings. I am exerting myself in every possible way to build the foundation that will support kosen-rufu 10, 20, 30, even 50 years from now. But I promise to think about it, if it's something all of you really want..."

Shin'ichi had deliberately kept his answer vague. He didn't sense a real desire among the representatives to fully involve themselves in studying the Goshō. If they had such a desire, he felt, the request would not have come from the division chief [not himself a student, appointed from the youth division], but from the students themselves.

If he were going to lecture on the Goshō, Shin'ichi was determined to give his heart and soul to it. Just as Josei Toda before him had devoted himself to educating and training members of the young men's and young women's divisions through hand-picked groups such as the Suiko-kai (young men) and Kayo-kai (young women), Shin'ichi intended to use his Goshō lectures to nurture the student representatives into true heirs to kosen-rufu. [Both the Suiko-kai and Kayo-kai were formed in 1952, the Suiko-kai to discuss great works of world literature, the Kayo-kai to discuss politics, economics, philosophy and the humanities.]

Shin'ichi knew that no matter how passionately he might commit to doing so, his efforts would be wasted if his lis-

teners didn't fully appreciate the significance of these lectures and lacked the seeking spirit and real desire to diligently study the Goshō. He could not afford to waste even a moment. Each second was golden and precious — time to be used for developing the Gakkai's movement to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Hence he decided to wait until the student division members were truly ready to receive such training. And so it was that two months after Goro's original request — at the second meeting with student leaders on July 16 — the first question he fielded was a request for him to lecture student representatives on the Goshō.

This made Shin'ichi very happy. Sensing the time was ripe, he said yes.

At that second meeting, members expressed other opinions and requests, too. They suggested forming several new committees within the student division and establishing an editorial office for *Daisan Bummei* (The Third Civilization), which was then the student division journal.

Shin'ichi addressed every request.

"I will make every effort to respond to the suggestions you've made today," Shin'ichi told them. "But remember, it is important to experience hardship when you are young. The difficulties of your youth will later become wonderful memories and an invaluable asset for the future. You mustn't think that you can only start something if you have everything perfectly prepared and set in place for you."

Shin'ichi was determined to devote his utmost to fostering the growth of the student division members.

The following day, July 17, Shin'ichi visited Okinawa for the third time. On this date five years earlier, he had been released from jail following his unjust arrest by the Osaka Prosecutor's Office on trumped-up charges of election campaign violations. And on the same day two years ago, Shin'ichi had attended the inaugural meeting for the Gakkai's Okinawa Chapter.

The members were delighted to greet President Yamamoto in Okinawa again on such an auspicious day. Their joy was heightened by the fact that the opening of the long-awaited Okinawa Headquarters Building would take place the following day with Shin'ichi in attendance.

Shin'ichi was happy beyond measure to see the birth of the first Soka Gakkai community center in Okinawa. During World War II, Japan had used these islands as a first line of defense against the Allied forces, deeming them expendable in preventing an assault on Japan's main islands, and as a result countless Okinawan lives had been cruelly sacrificed. After the war, under American rule, Okinawa had become home to several U.S. military bases. The new community center, therefore, would be a first outpost, a citadel of peace, in these islands that had seen far too much of the violence of war.

When the opening ceremony began at 10:30 a.m., July 18, a large number

of members had gathered, filling not only the building but the area outside. The new Headquarters Building was a modern two-story, steel and concrete structure.

The sky was clear and the Okinawan sun beat down relentlessly. Despite the hot weather, the members standing outside listened intently to the speeches of leaders inside broadcast by loudspeaker. All of them smiled with happy pride, so oblivious to the burning sun that they didn't even wipe away the sweat streaming down their brows.

The kosen-rufu movement had made phenomenal progress in Okinawa. Only two years had passed since a chapter had been formed there and a year since a general chapter had been established. Now a new palace of peace and kosen-rufu was being dedicated. Joy and pure-hearted faith shone on the faces of all those gathered and filled them with hope for the future.

After the opening, Shin'ichi stood by while new leadership appointments were announced. Among the new leaders were chapter vice chiefs and chapter women's division vice chiefs as well as chapter chiefs for the young men's and young women's divisions. Each new leader emanated a strong sense of commitment to work for kosen-rufu that was both pleasant and inspiring to behold.

Once the announcements were made, Shin'ichi hastened to the roof. He was concerned about the members waiting outside. When he looked down, he saw that many of them were still standing there. They seemed reluctant to return home.

A speaking platform and microphone had been set up on the roof. Event staff had anticipated the possibility that President Yamamoto might go up there and had made the necessary preparations so that he could address the members outside.

Spontaneously, Shin'ichi stepped onto the platform. Waving to the members below, he began to speak: "Thank you all for coming in this heat!"

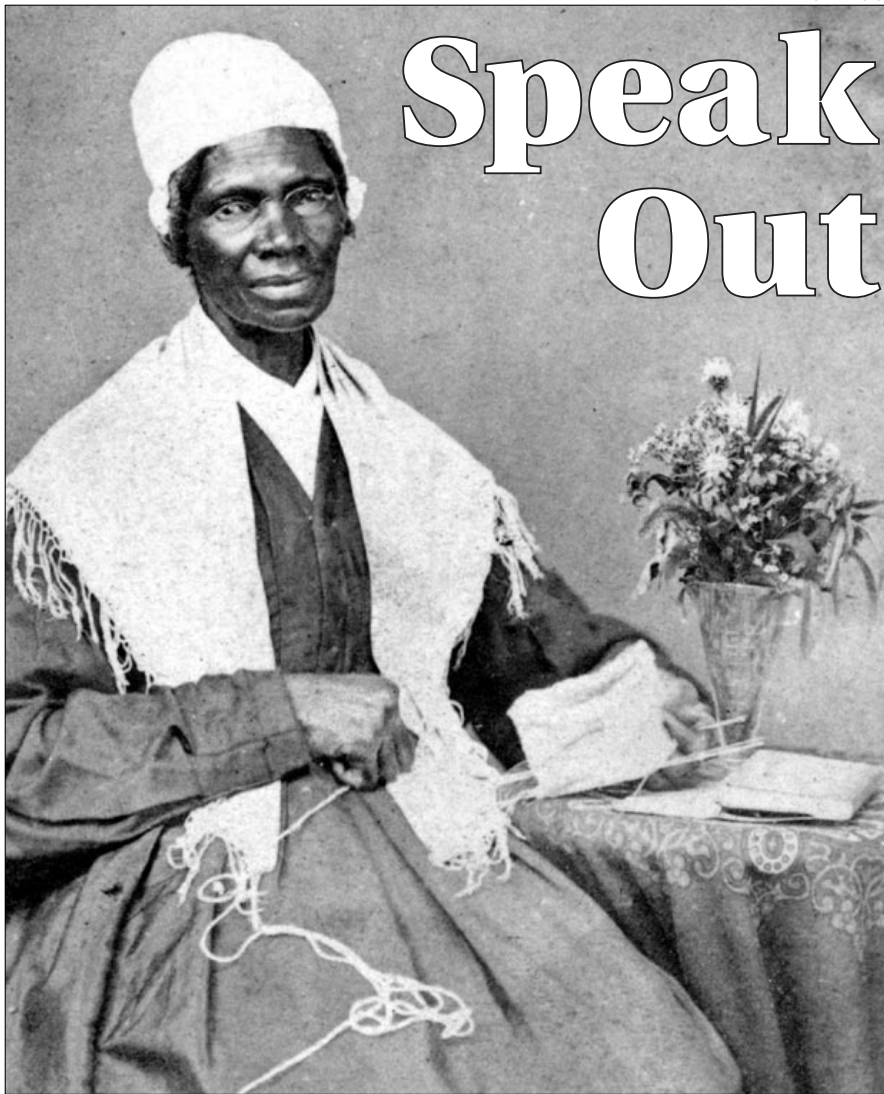
The crowd roared with joy.

(To be continued)

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ARCHIVE PHOTOS



Speak Out

Sojourner Truth spoke eloquently and fearlessly for equality and justice.

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at a leaders conference in Japan, Sept. 5.

At this time of year in Japan, in the early evening hours when members, glowing with high spirits, set out on their way to activities, we can see a star shining in the southwestern sky. This star is the Earth's nearest neighbor, Mars. In a quest to discover whether life exists on that planet, NASA launched an exploratory rover, fully equipped with hazard-avoidance capabilities, on Mars' surface.

NASA asked boys and girls around the world to come up with a name for the vehicle. The name that was finally selected — Sojourner — was not that of a renowned scientist or statesman but of a person who boasted no particular title or status.

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was born 200 years ago in the state of New York. She rose from

slavery to campaign for the equal rights of African Americans and for women.

At the time, a child born to slaves automatically became the property of the master who owned them. During her teens, Sojourner was sold from one household to another. Her children were also heartlessly sold to different households. But instead of giving in to despair, Sojourner spoke out forcefully against such social injustice.

Sojourner means traveler. She was a traveler seeking truth. Fulfilling the mission embodied in this name, she journeyed from city to city fighting to abolish slavery and demanding equal rights for women. Though illiterate, Sojourner's weapon was her dauntless and powerful voice.

"I cannot read a book, but I can read the people," she asserted (*Narrative of Sojourner Truth*). She had no formal education. Always down to earth, she possessed a burning and relentless indignation toward dis-

crimination. And no matter how she was criticized or attacked, she stood firm with uncompromising conviction that what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. Her strong faith and her anger at injustice were the wellspring from which her courage and wisdom flowed.

Sojourner Truth could not be silent. She had to speak out. Her earnest and wholehearted conviction is what won people's hearts and moved them.

I am reminded of the women's division members in the pioneering days of our organization. Never vain or pretentious, they devoted themselves completely to their activities. They were sincere. I remember how happy second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was when he heard of a women's division member who, though lacking formal education herself, had introduced a college professor to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Sojourner Truth carried her-

self with great dignity and confidence, wherever she went and with whomever she met. On a number of occasions, she was invited to the White House, where she spoke frankly and unreservedly with the nation's leaders, including President Abraham Lincoln. Whatever needed saying, she said. And she boldly refuted the arguments of arrogant church ministers who looked down upon women and opposed equal rights. She was afraid of nothing.

In those days, African Americans were barred from riding in public conveyances such as horse-drawn carriages. Here, too, Sojourner Truth took an active role in combating such discrimination. She wished to create a truly egalitarian society — the kind in which, among other things, anyone could ride in a carriage freely without indignity.

The name of this courageous champion of human rights, whom many people dared to mock, ridicule and malign during her lifetime, now adorns the rover that is journeying across the surface of the distant planet Mars. For her pioneering efforts, Sojourner Truth is now renowned and admired throughout the world.

We Will Be Remembered

Those who have let power or popularity go to their heads lead empty, vacuous lives. Fancy titles and accolades are ephemeral. But the names of those who strive earnestly for the people's happiness and welfare, undeterred by criticism and personal attacks, shine more brightly as the years go by. This is all the more true of the SGI members who are working wholeheartedly to spread the timeless Mystic Law. Our names will be remembered eternally.

Upon receiving the sincere offerings of Shijo Kingo, Nichiren Daishonin writes:

I have received one *kan* [an ancient monetary unit] of coins and respectfully reported in the presence of the Lotus Sutra [the Gohonzon] that this is an offering from Yorimoto [Shijo Kingo]. I believe that from afar, Lord Shakyamuni, Taho [Many Treasures] Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions, and close at hand, the gods of the sun and moon in their heavenly palaces, will certainly watch over you. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 285)

The gods of the sun and moon, Shakyamuni and all of

the Buddhas throughout the ten directions are watching over us. Our names as proud champions of kosen-ruffu will shine forth with a brilliance visible from all Buddha lands throughout the universe.

In today's sterile urban society, it is all too easy for the individual to be swallowed up in the crowd and lose sight of his or her identity. But in the realm of the SGI, each and every person is valued and seen as someone who has a precious and unique mission to fulfill.

I will do everything in my power to ensure that the names of those SGI members who are distinguishing themselves on the front lines of our movement are widely recognized and known for all time. This is my sincere wish and solemn determination.

Those who have betrayed their fellow members' trust or have turned against our organization, however, will not leave their names behind in the harmonious realm of Buddhism. In a sense, they are individuals whose names have been struck out by the original Buddha.

A Selfless Strength

Nichiren Daishonin proclaims that he is the son of a low-caste *chandala* family [*chandala*: a class of people in ancient India despised as untouchable because their work involved the death of living creatures; the Daishonin was the son of a fisherman]. He declares without hesitation that he is an ordinary person with no wealth or possessions other than himself. This fact is extremely important.

On being exiled to Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin writes:

I, Nichiren, am the son of a *chandala* family who lived near the seashore in Tojo in Awa Province, in the remote countryside of the eastern part of Japan. To discard my body, which would otherwise decay in vain, for the sake of the Lotus Sutra will be like exchanging rocks for gold. (MW-5, 124-25)

The Daishonin says that being a rather lowly creature in the first place, he does not begrudge his life. He adds that should he be called upon to give his life for the Mystic Law, he will attain Buddhahood. Surely, he asserts, there is no more wonderful way to die than that.

If you are not arrogant, do not put on airs, and are not obsessed with status, fame or wealth, you can bring forth a strength that is

PLEASE SEE SPEAK OUT, NEXT PAGE

ALBERT G. HOGAN, WAUKEGAN, ILL.

Living Victoriously — Finally

My experience in faith begins 22 years ago in January 1975. After attending my first meeting, I became very active in the organization. I thoroughly enjoyed all phases of activities, and I have many beautiful memories and lasting friendships with SGI members throughout the world. I feel extremely fortunate to have encountered the Gohonzon and received so many opportunities to improve my life by contributing to world peace. My debt of gratitude is immense.

While attending a headquarters men's division meeting in 1982, I attempted to open up a discussion about my growing use of drugs and my negative lifestyle. I had read SGI President Ikeda's guidance that detailed three symptoms of men who weaken in faith:

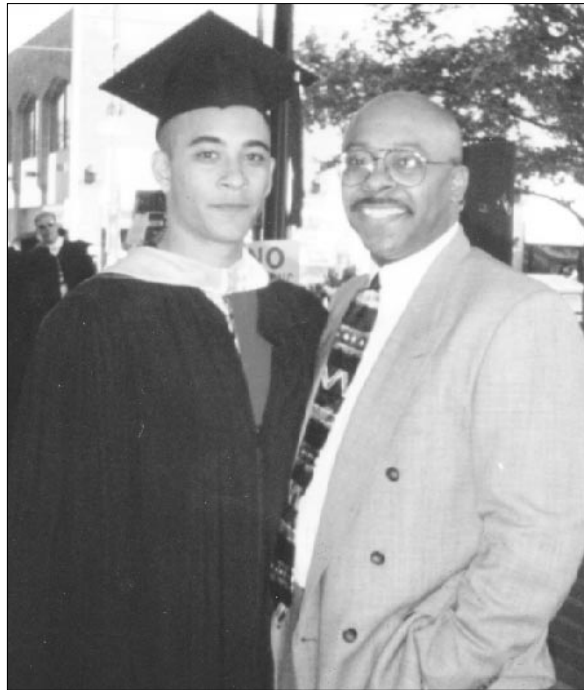
1. Overindulgence in alcohol or use of illegal drugs.
2. Mismanagement of personal finances.
3. Irresponsible relationships with women.

I was creating a powerful dossier on all three. My practice had become inconsistent. I was turning into an arrogant, ego-driven, cocaine-smoking maniac.

By 1988, I had successfully turned my life into a living hell. My wife could no longer depend on me for anything. I became such an abusive monster that we could no longer live together. I became homeless; living in abandoned buildings, sleeping in cardboard boxes and living among the shelter people — going to one center for breakfast, another for lunch and dinner and, finally, another shelter for overnight rest.

On one occasion, I was rushed to the hospital, so full of cocaine that I had suffered a mild heart attack. On another occasion, I was arrested for writing bad checks and spent two nights in jail. On numerous occasions, SGI members extended themselves to help me, but I abused their trust and friendship and that of friends and relatives.

Finally, in 1988, I sought professional help to fight my addic-



Albert Hogan (right) with his son, Albert Jr., at his 1996 graduation.

tion. In January 1989, I entered my third treatment program. This time, I decided that I must first rebuild my practice. While in rehab, I received many SGI publications and a copy of volume 2 of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. I searched the pages of the Goshu, desperately looking for passages to affirm that I could again receive benefit by practicing correctly. The following passages from the Goshu "Curing Karmic Disease" (2nd ed., pp.

215-17) answered that question:

[The Nirvana Sutra states:] "Even the offense of slandering this correct teaching [will be eradicated] if one repents and professes faith in the correct teaching.... No teaching other than this correct teaching can save or protect one. For this reason one should take faith in the correct teaching."...

[The Great Teacher Chinghsi says.] "It is like the case of a person who falls to the ground,

but who then pushes himself up from the ground to rise to his feet again. Therefore, even though one may slander the correct teaching, one will eventually be saved from the evil paths."...

[Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha says.] "I have been my own worst enemy, leading myself to hell." But Punyayashas admonished him, saying, "Do not beat yourself! Instead, use your brains and your mouth to praise Mahayana teachings."

I rededicated myself to faith, practice and study. During my free time, I chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo for many hours. I also became active in supporting and attending SGI activities in Waukegan District. I made sincere efforts to help other addicts, especially SGI members who were suffering the same miserable hell that I had. I also sought out my seniors for guidance and encouragement at every step of the process.

I have reestablished many of the relationships that suffered during my years of addiction. Most significant to me was having my son accept me back in his life. While I was in rehab, he sent one letter, which reads in part:

Dad, what is the matter with you? How do you expect me to feel about you all these years that you have ignored me? I sure hope you don't expect me to accept you with open arms.... I love it when I hear kids talk about their dads: "My dad bought me a new car." "My dad is great." "My dad visits with me on the weekend." "My dad treats me like crap." One of these doesn't sound right. Can you pick out the one I say, Sherlock?

I wonder if you get the message that I have a lot of bad feelings toward you.... Thanks for calling me on those special occasions like my birthday and Christmas. Don't give me some bull like, "I wasn't near the phone all day." I kind of excuse you from not wishing me a Merry Christmas because of your religion. And, yeah, I'm excusing you, my father.

This letter was not written to

push us further away. It was to let you know how I feel about you. You're my dad. I hope you have a chance to act like one.

Love, Al

After several failed attempts to repair this relationship, I sought guidance. Finally, in January 1996, I made a breakthrough. My son and I had our first series of conversations openly sharing our thoughts about each other. Finally, he invited me to attend his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania. On May 21, I escorted my son to the commencement ceremonies. Proud and full of appreciation that poison had turned to medicine, I was finally rebounding from a miserable chapter in my family life.

For the last nine years, I have remained completely drug free. I have advanced steadily at my work. All of my past SGI experiences have contributed to my current employment. As the assistant manager of scholarship and grants for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, a state agency that administers financial aid programs for Illinois residents seeking education beyond high school, I have been on television and radio numerous times, explaining the financial process and available programs. I produced two agency videos, several satellite and cable broadcasts and one infomercial.

My responsibilities offer me excellent opportunities to assist many families in making their financial decisions for attending college. In addition to my job, I also have kept a part-time job for seven years as a waiter at a local restaurant. For the first time in my adult life, I have maintained not one but two jobs for a seven-year period. To practice this Buddhism correctly is amazing and wonderful.

I recently made three pledges to myself: to remain drug free and attack all unresolved personal issues; to be a model manager; and to raise capable men in Waukegan District. To these ends, I pray that I will somehow repay my debt of gratitude for this wonderful life I now lead. ❧

SPEAK OUT, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

selfless; you will not begrudge giving of yourself to others. On the other hand, if you hunger even a little for such fleeting vanities, your faith will slide downhill.

Some people are filled with conceit and think snobbishly: "I'm a university graduate." "I come from a good family." "I'm famous." "I have status." Attached to such superficial, illus-

ory values, they seek to protect themselves and their positions at all costs. Their hearts are vain and shallow.

It is especially deplorable if individuals who have been appointed to leadership positions in the SGI or who have gained power and influence in society thanks to the support of the SGI members become filled with self-importance and think that what they have achieved has been through their own efforts.

Limitless Advancement

A true leader feels deep emotion and humble appreciation at being given the opportunity to fulfill a leadership responsibility so that he or she can help support and encourage many others. Such a spirit, I believe, accords with that of the Daishonin, who declares, "I am the son of a *chandala* family."

I myself will never forget that I am a son of a poor seaweed

farmer. I am proud of my humble beginnings.

A person of genuine humanity is forged only among the people; it is only from among the people that such a person can emerge. This is because that person knows that standing on the side of the people is right and good.

Those who live with a commitment to faith, to *kosen-rufu* and to their self-realization are true champions in life. This is

precisely what I have striven to show through my life these past 50 years.

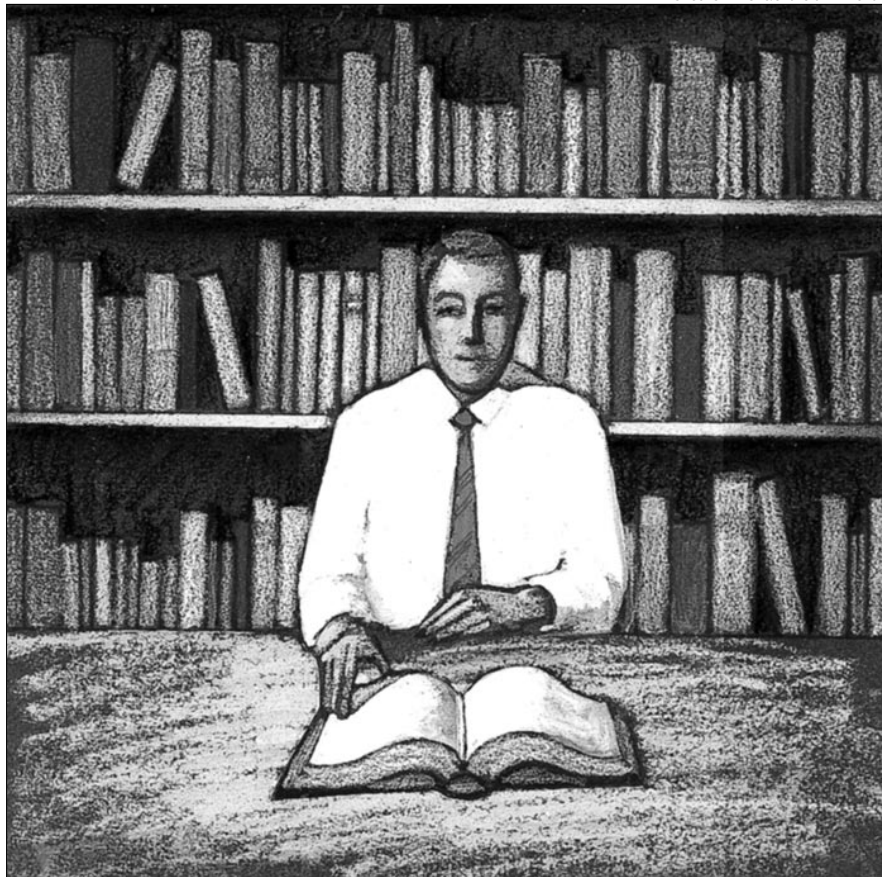
Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after all, is the Buddha land" (MW-5, 132). The motto of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI is "Limitless advancement."

I am praying for each of you to advance boundlessly and to achieve great success and happiness in your life. ❧

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Reading

PAUL SCHULENBURG/SPOTS ON THE SPOT!



Makes You Strong

This is the 13th installment of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the high school division members.

Kimura: This time we'll discuss the joys of reading.

Ikeda: OK, but I think many people nowadays find reading a chore rather than a pleasure!

Kimura: Yes, that's true. Perhaps it's because computers have become so popular that many young people have an aversion to books.

Igeta: And if they do read anything, it seems to be mostly lightweight, entertaining reading matter, stuff without much substance. But I guess that's better than not reading at all.

Ikeda: I'm sure there are all kinds of young people — some like reading and some don't. Even so, one thing is clear: Those who know the great joy of reading have richer lives, broader perspectives, than those who don't.

Encountering a great book is like encountering a great teacher. Reading is a privilege only human beings have. No other living creature on this planet has the same ability. Through reading, we come into contact with hundreds and thousands of lives, and commune with sages and philosophers who lived as long as two millennia ago.

Reading is a journey. You can travel east, west, north and south, and become acquainted with new people and places.

Reading transcends time. You can go on an expedition with Alexander the Great or become friends with people like Socrates and Victor Hugo and hold dialogues with them.

In his *Essays in Idleness*, Yoshida Kenko (1283–1352) writes, "The pleasantest of all diversions is to sit alone under the lamp, a book spread out before you, and to make friends with people of a distant past you have never known." How sad to not know this joy! It's like standing before a mountain of precious jewels, all there for your taking, and returning home empty-handed.

Almost without exception the great people had a book that they held dear during their youth — a book that served as their guide and source of encouragement, as a close friend and mentor.

Books introduce you to the fragrant flowers of life, to rivers, roads and adventures. You can find stars and light, feel delight or indignation. You are set adrift on a vast sea of emotion in a ship of reason, moved by the infinite breeze of poetry. Dreams and dramas evolve. The whole world comes alive.

To gain true satisfaction and pleasure from anything requires some kind of practice, training and effort. You can't fully enjoy skiing without working at it. The same goes for playing the piano or using a computer. It also takes effort, perseverance and patience to appreciate reading. Those who have tasted this joy, who have looked on books as friends, are strong.

Reading gives you free access to the treasures of the human

spirit — from all ages, from all parts of the world. One who knows this possesses unsurpassed wealth. It's like owning countless banks from which you can make unlimited withdrawals.

Kimura: That sounds great! How exactly can you cultivate such an appreciation for books?

Ikeda: The first step is getting in the habit of reading. Those who have, you'll find, will utilize every spare moment to read, whether while commuting by train or before going to bed.

As a youth, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda had a job in which he had to transport goods on a large cart. Reminiscing about that time, he once said, "I would finish my work as quickly as possible and hurry to

an open field nearby where I would toss the cart aside, lie down on the grass and read."

According to the French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–62), people are "thinking reeds" (*Pensées: Notes on Religion and Other Subjects*). Basically, reading is essential to thinking. Perhaps we can even say that reading is a sign of our humanity.

Igeta: President Ikeda, many students are wondering how on earth you have found the time to read as much as you have despite your busy schedule.

Ikeda: The foundation for everything in my life was forged during my youth. I devoted every spare minute to reading.

One summer I even went

down to the Zoshigaya Cemetery [in Tokyo's Toshima Ward] occasionally to read. Sitting outside on a straw mat under the moonlight, with a flashlight I would read books such as Hugo's *Les Misérables*. It was cool and quiet there. We had no air-conditioning in those days, you see. The mosquitoes were quite a nuisance, though!

Kimura: You really got into the habit of reading!

Ikeda: I was a voracious reader. I devoured every book I could get my hands on.

From a young age, probably because I was sickly, books were my greatest treasure. During World War II, there were times when I would take them into the air-raid shelter to shield them from the bombings.

When the war eventually ended, I was 17. As far as the eye could see, Tokyo was in ruins. The only serenity to be found among the destruction, on the rubble-filled streets of a defeated land, was the sprawling clear blue sky overhead. I still remember vividly the color of that sky.

Though we had nothing, lacking even basic necessities such as food and clothing, I had boundless hope — peace had finally been restored! Now I could study as much as I wanted. I could read at last, and books were a wonderful feast.

Around this time, 20 or so of us youth living in the same neighborhood formed a reading group. We would meet to discuss books like Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and topics such as the German economy.

Japan's defeat had completely shattered everything we had believed in. Young people were desperately searching for the truth, the real meaning of life, an understanding of the world. Books were our only reliable guide.

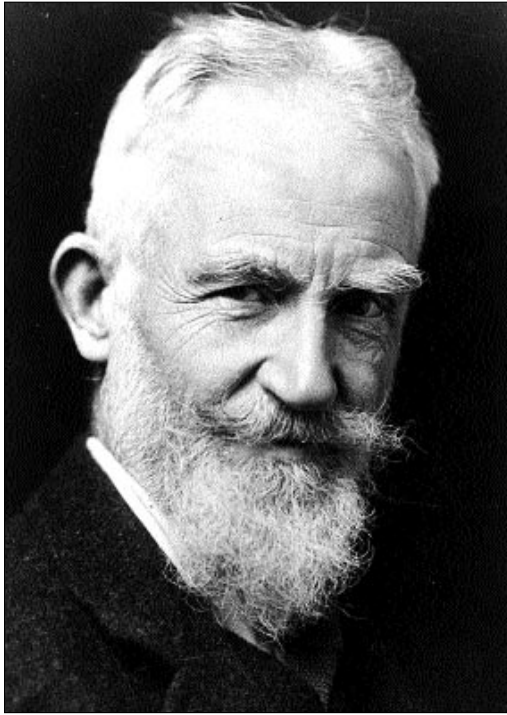
Whenever I had spare time, as though I were in my own personal library, I would browse through the secondhand bookshops in Tokyo's Kanda area, asking myself, "I wonder if there are any good books today?" or thinking, "I hope they still have that one I had my eye on."

Often I rushed down there with money I saved from my meager wages. I can still clearly remember the exhilaration I felt when I finally purchased a book I long hankered for, which the store still had when I got there.

PLEASE SEE READING, NEXT PAGE

A Classic Never Grows Old

ARCHIVE PHOTOS



‘Reading good books cultivates and nourishes one’s life. A classic never grows old; it is always refreshing and new. And its message will be just as valid in the 21st century as today. Encountering such a work is a lifelong treasure.

There is an episode involving the British playwright George

Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) that I’ll share. Upon discovering that he was unfamiliar with a certain popular novel of the time, an acquaintance said to him: “Mr. Shaw, this book has been a bestseller for five years! How can you not know it?” He calmly replied: “Madame, Dante’s ‘The Divine Comedy’ has been a bestseller throughout the world for more than 500 years. Have you read it?”

READING, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Igeta: Nowadays there is an overabundance of books, but many people just aren’t reading. How spoiled we’ve become!

Ikeda: You can’t imagine how strict Mr. Toda was when it came to reading. Seeing youth engrossed in sensationalist materials, he would become furious, sternly rebuking them: “How can you enjoy that garbage? Do you want to be nothing more than a third- or fourth-rate person? You must read epic novels, you must read the classics! You can never hope to forge your character if you don’t read them while you are young! You will never become a leader in the future!”

Mr. Toda was also always checking on me, asking, “What

are you reading now?” If I were to answer, “Rousseau’s *Emile*,” for example, he would ask me about it — there was no way I could pretend to have read something I hadn’t!

Even a month before he died, Mr. Toda was still inquiring about my reading. He said: “A leader must never forget the importance of reading, no matter what may happen. I’m up to the third volume of the ancient Chinese work *Compendium of Eighteen Histories*.” Even in his weakened physical state, Mr. Toda devoted every spare moment to reading and contemplation.

At our young men’s division Suiko-kai meetings [a training group which met twice a month to discuss great works of world literature], Mr. Toda would lec-

ture on leadership and human character through such classics as *The Water Margin*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Nikolai Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*. He would stress: “Study while you are young. Otherwise, as you get older, you will be ridiculed not only by your peers but by children. What you read while you are young will remain with you throughout your life.”

I feel the same way. I want each of you to savor the great joy that reading brings. I hope you will work at reading until it becomes something you can’t live without. You are the only one who will lose out if you don’t try your hardest.

Kimura: People often complain that they just don’t have time to read.

Ikeda: Mr. Toda said, “Youth, make time to read and think seriously about things!”

It’s a matter of setting your mind to it. Those who claim they have no time haven’t really tried. If the desire to read is there, there is no way you can’t find 10 or 20 minutes.

You don’t have to be sitting at a desk to read. An old saying goes that there are three places suitable for writers to mull over their ideas: in bed, on horseback and in the bathroom. The same can be said about reading if we substitute transportation today for horseback.

When you’re head over heels for someone, for instance, you want to see him or her whenever and wherever you can — even if it’s only a brief glance or just for five minutes, right? That should be our attitude toward reading.

If you make the time — for example, 10 minutes in the morning, 10 in the afternoon and 10 at night — you’ll be reading a total of 30 minutes each day. And you’ll often find that you read with much greater concentration in those precious moments set aside in a busy schedule. It usually leaves a deeper impression than reading done at a more leisurely pace.

I’m sure there are some of you who at the moment think you haven’t the time to do anything other than study for exams, but reading actually serves as the foundation for all your studies. Your results in school will surely reflect your reading in the long run. Naturally, you have to use your wisdom to decide when your time is best spent reading a book.

Kimura: Do you have any advice for people who want to read, but don’t know where to begin?

Ikeda: Rather than worry about what to read, it’s probably best just to read even one page of something. Indecision will get you nowhere. At least if you read one page, you’ll have made progress.

Igeta: Many students find epic novels and the classics rather daunting.

Ikeda: Just as there are good and bad people, there are good and bad books.

All of us live in an intricate web of interrelationships. If we associate with good people, our lives will be positively affected. If we hang out with bad people, our lives will be negatively affected. Even a person who is essentially good stands

a 20 to 30 percent chance of being corrupted if he or she spends enough time in a dishonest environment.

Reading good books cultivates and nourishes one’s life. A classic never grows old; it is always refreshing and new. And its message will be just as valid in the 21st century as today. Encountering such a work is a lifelong treasure.

There is an episode involving the British playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) that I’ll share. Upon discovering that he was unfamiliar with a certain popular novel of the time, an acquaintance said to him: “Mr. Shaw, this book has been a bestseller for five years! How can you not know it?” He calmly replied: “Madame, Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* has been a bestseller throughout the world for more than 500 years. Have you read it?”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) said that a book that’s been in print for less than a year isn’t even worth reading. Basically, a book that is still read decades or centuries after it was published is a masterpiece. As such, it can be considered a good book.

Life is short. So we should make a point of reading good books. The only way to find the time to do so is simply to stop reading bad books. In terms of Buddhism, bad books are those that bring forth the lower of the ten worlds — the life-conditions of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger. They are like poison or drugs that produce misery.

On the other hand, good books point your life toward happiness, wisdom and creativity. They possess a sound substance that enables you to think and grow.

Igeta: Some people have said that they’ve read some of Goethe’s or Tolstoy’s works, but couldn’t make heads or tails of them. Or they were left feeling unimpressed.

Ikeda: At least they’re honest! But it’s not Goethe’s or Tolstoy’s fault if their works don’t impress you. Reading classic literature is like striking a large bell. A weak stroke will produce a weak sound, but if you pound that bell with all your might, you will get a resounding response. It all depends on the reader’s capacity.

If when reading the classics you reach a part that seems over your head, it’s perfectly fine to skip 20 or 30 pages until you get to a section that’s easier. Once you’ve figured out the story, you can always go back and reread

PLEASE SEE READING, NEXT PAGE

READING, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

those pages you jumped. I stress that if you have the desire and the will to learn, you will definitely find some gem in whatever you read.

Reading is like mountain climbing. There are high and low mountains. Ascending a steep summit is quite difficult, but how great is your exhilaration when you've successfully conquered it. Vast vistas stretch before you. From your vantage point, you can see how low the other hills and mountains are.

The greater the struggle, the more enriching the experience is for your life. That said, if you immediately set out to climb a high peak without any preparation, the challenge could be beyond you. You may be forced to abandon your ascent, losing your way or suffering altitude sickness! It might be better to first attempt a goal suited to your level.

You could start with a book about something that interests you. Once you've mastered the basics of reading and developed some degree of confidence in your ability, then you can go on to bigger challenges, heftier books.

If some books are beyond you right now, try reading them in college or later in life. Learning is a lifelong process. Crucial is the determination to make the wisdom passed down through the ages your own. "I'm going to read thousands of books" — that's the kind of enthusiasm I want you to have.


You all have a mission in the 21st century. No matter how talented you may be, without culture, wisdom and rich character, you will never be respected in the world arena. In fact, like many Japanese today, you might be dismissed as a money-driven automaton.

Reading makes us human. We mustn't limit our lives to one field of narrow specialty to the exclusion of all else. No matter how high people's positions are, if they haven't read great novels by the world's renowned authors, they can never hope to become outstanding leaders. To build a humanistic society where people live with dignity, we must have leaders acquainted with honest-to-goodness great literature. This is extremely important.

People in other countries tend to read far more than the Japanese, who for the most part just pretend to be well-read.

Kimura: Are there any other pointers you could give us?

ARCHIVE PHOTOS



'When on expedition to Egypt or Spain, Napoleon always took along books covering a wide variety of subjects. It's been said that he even had a bookshelf built into his horse carriage. Reading was Napoleon's driving force, giving him the energy to press onward.'

Ikeda: "Read thoughtfully, not mindlessly!" I jotted these words down in the reading notebook I kept in my youth.

I diligently wrote my thoughts and impressions about books I had read in a notebook made of cheap, coarse paper over the period of about a year, between 1946 and 1947. In those days, paper was an extremely precious commodity. How I treasured that humble notebook! When I read something that touched me, I would write it down immediately.

Unfortunately, because the paper was so cheap, the ink would run easily, rendering parts of my notes illegible. I constantly told myself, "Read thoughtfully, not mindlessly!"

We must read in a way that nourishes and cultivates us. Food will not nourish us or contribute to healthy bone and muscle growth if it is not digested and absorbed properly. In the same way, digesting what we read requires serious reflection and contemplation.

President Makiguchi said: "Don't read carelessly. You must ponder everything you read. It seems that many young people read but fail to think about the content. Thinking about what you read makes it part of you."

And President Toda offered more specific advice, saying: "There are many ways to read a book. One is to read only for pleasure, simply following the plot — this is a very shallow way to read. Another is to think about the author's motivation

for writing the book, its historical backdrop, the societal elements of the time, the characters in the story, and the ideas and intention that the author is trying to express. And yet another way is to try to understand through the work what kind of person the author is or was, his or her true character, his or her views on life, the world and the universe, and his or her ideals and beliefs. If you don't take it this far, it can't be called reading."

In any case, it's important to have a good book always at your side. A friend once suggested that I read *A Teacher Called Takezawa* by Yoshiro Nagayo (1888–1961). That book taught me many things. My friends and I chose good books and then recommended them to one another.

Igeta: In order to internalize what we've read, do you suggest that we, too, keep a reading notebook like you did?

Ikeda: For those so inclined, I highly recommend it. It will serve as a record of your spiritual development. If you don't wish to keep a full-length journal, perhaps you could just jot down your impressions in three or four lines on the inside back cover of the book.

If you thought it was interesting, what made it so? If it was boring, why? You could also underline the parts that struck you and write down your thoughts or counter arguments in the

margins.

Of course, this wouldn't go over too well if it's a borrowed book! Anyway, taking notes on what you read sets the wheels of your mind in motion.

I understand that Napoleon (1769–1821) also kept a reading journal. A saying goes that genius derives from study. Napoleon was certainly an avid reader. As a child, one of his favorite books was Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and he dreamt of growing up and becoming just like those heroes whose lives were depicted. A biography of some famous person would be a good place for you to start, too.

In later years, when on expedition to Egypt or Spain, Napoleon always took along books covering a wide variety of subjects. It's been said that he even had a bookshelf built into his horse carriage. Reading was Napoleon's driving force, giving him the energy to press onward.

Incidentally, Stendhal (1783–1842), a French writer who held Napoleon in high esteem, said something to the effect that just as a locomotive could not run without fuel, he could not get into the right frame of mind without reading at least a few hundred pages first thing in the morning.

For both of them, reading was fuel for the mind and soul. It gave them the inspiration to generate new ideas, challenge their obstacles and continue forward.

In the same way that having a healthy body requires nourishing food, having a healthy mind requires reading. You will become ill if all you eat are sweets and soft foods that don't require much chewing. And it is unhealthy to turn one's nose up at nutritious food or just eat the same foods all the time. Likewise, we shouldn't avoid good books that enrich our minds.

Someone once described bad books as "messengers of degeneracy, guides to delinquency, traps to misery and an insidious poison." Good books, on the other hand, are as wonderful as an amazing teacher, a trusted confidant or a parent. They contain a wellspring of wisdom, a fountain of life, bright illumination and human goodness.

Igeta: By the way, some students were wondering if they should steer clear of comic books.

Ikeda: If you read nothing but comics, of course it would hardly be beneficial! The most important thing is to develop yourself. Some comic books do have positive messages that

could change your life, open your eyes or move you.

Sometimes a comic book has a more profound message than a dull, monotonous book. One I've mentioned before is the Japanese comic book *Tomorrow's Joe*. This was the inspiring story of a young boxer who gave his absolute best, pushing himself to the limits of his being in order to achieve his dream.

There is also the argument that comic books, along with television, stifle one's imagination. Both media provide the viewer with a prepackaged image. The strong point of literature, however, is that it lets you develop your imagination and ability to think.

There is a fundamental difference between the way you receive information from television and from books. Reading something in a book engraves it in your mind, in your life. It provides you with sustenance to grow. Just looking at something leaves you with only a surface impression — it's easy to do, and it gives you the illusion that by merely seeing something you know all about it. This is only superficial understanding, though; it hasn't become a living, breathing part of you.

Taking shortcuts has become the undercurrent of Japanese culture, as indicated by the many convenient instant foods on the market. Getting swept up in this kind of social trend — and turning your back on the challenge of really reading literature — leads you to a shallow and empty existence. That is a terrible tragedy!

I was once asked if I had any regrets. I replied, "Only that I didn't read more books during my youth."

Kimura: If you feel that way, President Ikeda, there's not much hope for the rest of us!

Ikeda: No matter how much we study, it can never be enough.

I hope all of you will develop into great individuals in the 21st century. Now it's time for you to cultivate your mind through reading. That will decide everything.

There is no limit to your potential if the earth of your mind is cultivated and well-nourished. Within each of you lies a vast field of infinite possibility. And reading is the hoe with which to till that boundless frontier.

I hope you will all become people who can wholeheartedly, honestly say of your youth that you read as much as you could and gave your all to your studies!



Photo by JOYCE LEE

JIMMIE INABA, SAN FRANCISCO

Until the Last Moment



Mr. Jimmie Inaba and wife, Midori, with their grandchildren — Tiffany, 13, Kristine, 14, and Melissa, 9.

After 35 years of practice in the United States and helping lay the foundation for today's SGI-USA, Jimmie Inaba is not about to stop now. The universal sufferings of disease and old age can't slow him down.

Now I am standing at the most important time of my life. The reason is that I feel I need to finish up my life. Until today, no matter how much hardship I faced fighting for kosen-rufu, I tried to persevere. If I weaken now, all the fortune I have gained, all the efforts that I have continued until today will be lost, and I will not achieve my final goal of faith and practice.

Right now, I am looking back at my 72 years of life and also 35 years of my practice. It's been at times difficult and severe and at other times enjoyable. I am really excited to feel that I have climbed the steep hills as well as the lower hills.

I was born in 1925 in Pacific Grove, Calif., near San Francisco, not far from where I live now. After 72 years and living many places, now I have come back to the place of my birth. This is no coincidence.

Although I was born in the United States, in 1926 my family moved to Japan. My parents' plan was to give me a Japanese education and then send me back to the United States. But this plan failed because of the start of World War

II. At that time, I was a high school student. In 1944, I was drafted into the Japanese army until the end of the war and, because of this, I lost my U.S. citizenship. I applied to get my citizenship back, but it took 12 years. In June 1958, I returned to the United States.

In the United States, life was not easy because of the difference in language, custom and culture. But I had to face a much bigger problem in my weak life-condition. I started to feel that I was surrounded by thousands of enemies. Because of this, my relationships with other people and how I related at my job were negative. I couldn't sleep many nights. During this time, I discovered a good way to find momentary peace of mind: drinking alcohol. My heavy drinking continued every night, to the point of alcoholism.

In 1960, my wife and daughter joined me in Los Angeles. I was so happy to be with my family, and I made a determination to change my life. But that was short-lived. My wife's chore every night was to carry me from the floor, where I was drunk, into bed. While I was working during the day, I kept asking myself

what would be the future of my family if I continued this kind of life. Each day I made a resolution to stop drinking, but it didn't last. Sometimes I felt I was going step by step to hell and taking my family with me.

At the lowest point of my life, I was introduced to this practice by Gregory Nakasuji [now the *World Tribune* chief photographer], who like me in those days was a gardener. Every Friday, we would see each other when we worked on houses side by side. He introduced himself as a Soka Gakkai member, and he started to tell me about Buddhism. I had no interest in being part of any religion, and I knew the name of the Soka Gakkai. My knowledge of the organization was not the truth — all misunderstandings and rumors, I later found out. He talked to me seriously, but I could not listen.

Sometimes I felt I gave Gregory a bad time. But he was persistent. He came to me every week without fail. Sometimes we argued. Sometimes I yelled at him to never talk to me again, but he talked to me anyway. This continued for one year. Then I started seeing him differently

and started wondering where his confidence and strength came from. Was it because he was stubborn, or was it because of the Gohonzon? The more time I spent thinking about this, the more I suffered, afraid that I was sacrificing my family because of my weak life-condition.

Then I made a big decision. "OK, I'll do it! I'll try." I was ready to practice Nichiren Daisshonin's Buddhism. That was Feb. 1, 1962.

My daily practice was not easy, but from the beginning I felt a strong response of joy in my life. Many things have happened in these 30 years, but I never stopped my practice. The fact that I have continued is the reason for my joy today. When I compare my life of 30 years ago, I can see my human revolution and how much my circumstances have changed. My financial condition, my family relationships as well as other relationships — everything has changed. The only thing I face now is what Buddhism calls the sufferings of old age and sickness. More than ever, I recognize the Gohonzon's power and feel great appreciation for the organization.

In June 1995, my doctor found bleeding, and after several tests I was diagnosed with colon cancer. Surgery was scheduled for Aug. 15. I remembered that this important day would be the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. It was the ending of destruction and the beginning of construction. Also, exactly 30 years before on this date in 1965, I was appointed Los Angeles Chapter chief and received the chapter flag from then-Soka Gakkai President Ikeda.

He encouraged me with the words, "Try your best!" I felt the significance of the date of my surgery and these other occurrences. I was confident that my surgery would be a success. When I realized this, I had no fears or worries.

I strongly feel that all human beings have joy and strength in their lives, as well as confidence. Because of my sickness, I have understood more deeply the power of the Gohonzon and made a determination to enjoy the remainder of my life. President Ikeda has said, "By improving the quality of your life, you will at last approach true happiness." I feel I am one of the members who has proven his words.

In December 1996, my doctor found some troubling signs from blood tests. At the end of January, he told me that the cancer in my colon had metastasized to my liver. My wife, Midori, and I

had plans after my retirement to live with my daughter's family. But because of the recurrence of my cancer, we accelerated our plans and moved at the end of February 1997. Fortunately, I have a good doctor and had surgery at the end of April. I recovered very well.

Now I have time to contemplate. My concern is for my fellow pioneer members who have practiced hard since the beginning. These people built the SGI-USA foundation. I feel we are very important people. When we pioneer members show a joyful daily practice, it tremendously encourages other members. Everyone should understand the Gohonzon's power.

I wrote at the beginning of my experience that we need to have pure faith and burning passion for kosen-rufu in order to protect ourselves. I have been compiling SGI President Ikeda's *The New Human Revolution* from the *Seikyo Shimbun*. This has been an encouraging and joyful job. After I read it, I mark the passages that impress me and I excerpt these for my records. Because of my illness and hospitalization, my work has been delayed, but I will catch up for sure.

At the time I started this project, I did it for my own sake — to understand his words more clearly myself. Now I like to share this with many members. I don't know nor do I understand many things, but I feel strong joy in performing this work. I feel that I am coming closer, step by step, to President Ikeda's heart. He is writing *The New Human Revolution*, and I am following him and searching his guidance. This brings me tremendous joy. When I perform this task, even if for a little while, I forget that I have cancer.

I am now a very happy person. In 1972, I was appointed caretaker of the Malibu Training Center. I was fortunate to receive guidance and encouragement personally from President Ikeda. My family and I will cherish the poems he gave me. At the time of my first surgery, he chanted daimoku for me. And again recently, I received his encouragement even though I am only one out of millions of members. In my heart, I have appreciation for everything President Ikeda and the SGI have shown me. Now I have a strong determination to keep searching President Ikeda's guidance and also to reply to his expectations, I will keep fighting until the last moment. ❖

Photo by LINDA ST. HILAIRE

TSUYAKO FEASEL, SAN DIEGO

I Still Have a Lot of People To Help

Creating a happy family has been one of Tsuyako Feasel's biggest challenges in her 38 years of practice.

By SHIRLEY WHITE
WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.

After more than 31 years as a mother, Tsuyako Feasel says the most important thing she has contributed to her children's success in life is good communication. "We can talk about anything," she says. And the secret to that, she adds, "is being a good listener."

It's the same quality she brings to her role as a district leader. "I still have a lot of people to help," says Mrs. Feasel, 72. "My life hasn't been easy, but I know I chose the right direction."

That is exactly what she chanted for when she began her practice in Japan more than 38 years ago: She wanted answers about her life and the best way to live it. Even the beginning of her practice was not easy. For seven years before she started practicing Buddhism, she resisted. When she finally decided to give

it a try, she felt "very happy." It was a happiness that didn't originate from any particular circumstance in her life, but it made her confident enough in the practice to offer prayers for her future.

Seven years later when she was 41, Mrs. Feasel's first son was born. With Ed on her back, she attended many meetings, feeling joyful that she could practice for kosen-rufu. When Ed was 10 months old, her husband, Paul, a Navy hospital corpsman, was transferred back to the United States. Her second son, David, was born in San Diego in 1968.

When she first learned of her second pregnancy, Mrs. Feasel was in shock. Being 44 years old, she worried that her baby might suffer abnormalities. At that time, genetic testing was not available, so she sought guidance and decided that this baby was a gift of life. David was born with Down's Syndrome.

"At first, I felt as if I was being punished; I didn't understand how I could have two sons who were so different," says Mrs. Feasel.

Looking back, she understands how David has enriched her family's life. An example of this is the love that her two sons share. Ed always has been a devoted older brother, protective in nature and helpful. When she and Paul attended meetings, Ed would take care of David.

A turning point came in their family life 10 years ago when she was working full-time, and Ed had won a scholarship to Yale University. "I didn't want him to feel the burden of not being able to help with David, so I suggested to him that we put David in a home," she said. "Ed wouldn't hear of it — he was so upset. He told me he would give up his scholarship and take care of David himself. He felt that we were a family, and families shouldn't give up on one another."



Tsuyako Feasel at the FNCC earlier this year.

They took this new challenge to the Gohonzon, chanting together for a solution. "We decided not to put David in a home," she said. "My husband's practice became stronger, and we stood up as a family."

Ed did go to Yale for four years, then on to the University of California, Berkeley, for his doctorate. He is now the SGI-USA youth division chief and a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. He's also a husband and the father, in grandma's

words, "of a beautiful baby girl."

David also has a job and can understand the world around him much better than anyone expected. He cannot speak, but he tries to chant. When he laughs, which is often, Mrs. Feasel says, he laughs from his heart.

Mrs. Feasel doesn't have any more questions about why her sons are so different. She understands that although differences may seem apparent from the outside, much similarity exists within their hearts. ❏

Photo by AL MANCUSO



Yukiko Loucks (in the center with pearl necklace).

YUKIKO LOUCKS, NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

Hope Takes Charge

By SUSAN DIVINCENZO
BUFFALO, N.Y.

There were very few members in all of upstate New York when Yukiko Loucks and her young twin daughters arrived in 1970. Yukiko had married an American serviceman. By deciding to follow him to the United States, she had drawn an ultimatum from her mother: "If you

leave me for this man, you will leave my heart forever."

Perhaps her mother was trying to protect her from a future doomed to loneliness and despair. But Yukiko decided to leave anyway.

When she began to settle her life in Niagara Falls, a city close to Buffalo, her husband left her. She was abandoned with few English skills, no job, very little fi-

nancial security and, worst of all, a complete lack of experience in life. She came from a privileged background that filled her youth with temporary fortune. Imagine not even knowing how to wash your hair because a servant was always there to do it for you.

At first, Yukiko decided to run back to Japan and beg forgiveness. And if this wasn't possible, suicide seemed the only alternative.

The only connections to hope she had at this time were the Gohonzon, which she brought with her from Japan, and her faith in it. As she chanted to the Gohonzon, her way of looking at what seemed like overwhelming problems began to change. Instead of asking how can I die or give up, she began to ask how can I live for kosen-rufu. One of the things Yukiko had learned from her practice in Japan was to seek guidance, so she sought out her leaders in Boston. Rather than offering pity or encouragement to go back to Japan, one leader, in particular, challenged her to help herself by helping others learn the power of the Law.

This guidance was Yukiko's lifesaver. To this day she re-

members the support of this leader during those difficult times. "His life and his compassion will remain in my heart forever," Yukiko says. He would drive nine hours on weekends, sometimes in the fiercest weather, to support the few members who were practicing around Buffalo, she remembers. As unlikely as it may seem, that leader actually was a new member of one year himself. Rob Eppsteiner was simply following the same guidance he gave Yukiko.

"When I think back on that time, I remember how my life was touched by seeing her sense of mission overpower her suffering," says Mr. Eppsteiner, who now is an SGI-USA vice general director. "She had been left by her husband to care for two small children. She was a stranger in a strange land. Yet her mission coupled with her passion to help others become happy with this practice was so strong. So, for myself as a new member, her passion overflowed into me. I was encouraged. She was like a bright light, always brighter than any suffering she may have been going through. I realized that our

connection or tie was to propagate the Law together."

As more and more American members appeared around her, Yukiko became more hopeful and encouraged. She could see proof of the Gohonzon's power in each of them. With her two daughters by her side, she began to trust more and chant more daimoku. When her schedule at a local Japanese restaurant kept her from evening meetings, her members would pick her up even at midnight, so they could study together the Japanese books on Buddhism that only she could translate. The cause was being made in the living room of one Japanese pioneer to establish a stronghold for peace.

Today, more than 20 years later, Yukiko continues on her path of human revolution along with her daughters, Kimberly and Grace. And in the city they pioneered, many members now practice in a community center.

"For myself, as well as my daughters," says Yukiko, "we believe that we owe our lives to this organization. Because of the support of others, we are continuing our practice today and on into the 21st century." ❏



Photos by VICTOR GOLDEN

Fran Schmidt, who has been designing peace education curricula for more than 30 years, reads stories from her new PeaceMaker Series to her grandchildren.



Stop the 'Fozzles'!

Through cartoons and storybooks, Fran Schmidt helps kids work out their differences peacefully, without resorting to the 'fozzles' — blaming, bossing, hitting, etc.

By MIRIAM LAWSON
MIAMI

Meet Fran Schmidt — grandmother, educator, author and peacemaker. Fran and her late sister, Grace Contrino Abrams, also an educator, were pioneers in the fields of violence prevention, peace education and conflict resolution. Concerned with the Vietnam War, the nuclear threat, the struggle for civil rights, and the ever-growing menace of domestic violence, both believed that the peaceful and just resolution of conflict was the crucial challenge of our time and perhaps of all time.

Fran and Grace began writing their conflict resolution materials at the dining room table in their Miami Beach home. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of nonviolence provided the philosophical background to their writings. It was a tedious task as they had no computers and had to cut and paste their drafts. These early materials served as models for many of the peace education and conflict resolution programs that have become critical components of schools today.

After Grace died, Fran founded the Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation in 1980 to continue their work. With her new co-author, Alice Friedman, she authored the PeaceWorks curricula, based on the Rules for Fighting Fair (for example, attack problems not people), which are used in more than 25,000 schools today. The foundation was the first to address the curriculum needs of educators in the area of peace education.

Around 1994, Fran found herself facing philosophical differences with the board of directors and the president of the foundation. She had turned over to the foundation all rights to her peace curricula, so when she left, she also left behind "everything I had worked so hard for — my hopes, my dreams."

After years of effort, in 1994 she faced starting all over. "I had two choices: Do peace education work or do nothing — walk away and retire," says Fran. "But

peace education is such a part of my life that the choice really was no choice. I had to continue my work."

So, she reached down into her creative center and gave birth to what she calls her new messengers for peace.

Fran now believes that using the word *fighting* psychologically sets people up to think that solving conflicts is a battle, albeit a fair one. In the new PeaceMaker Series of storybooks and teaching materials, she now uses We Can Work It Out! Steps. These begin with stopping "fozzles" — blaming, bossing, hitting, teasing, whining, making threats, name-calling. And they proceed to thinking, talking and acting.

These are lessons children learn not just in school, but at home, says Fran.



Fran Schmidt creates stories around cartoon characters such as Gopher Peace and the Peace Rangers, Detective Makepeace and the Peace Sleuths, and Kids Peace Action Network and the Peace Reporters to help kids learn how to resolve conflicts by working together.

"We have the responsibility to create a caring and loving home and to be role models for our children," she says. "When we model respect, our children learn it. Our children listen and watch, and they learn. We need to be careful about what lessons we are teaching. We should remember that our children are our most precious resources."

