

World Tribune

No. 3173

THE YEAR OF VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 9, 1998

INSIDE THIS WEEK

3 PERSPECTIVE

A reader sends a time capsule of hope to the future.

6 HISTORY

'The New Human Revolution,' vol. 6, chapter 5, parts 17-19.

7 STUDY

President Toda's birthday, Feb. 11 — a day to look ahead.

8 FEATURE

A member journeys to Iceland and tells of kosen-rufu efforts there.

9 EXPERIENCE

To break through her boundaries, a member first challenges her negativity.

DISCUSSION ON YOUTH

Part 2 of SGI President Ikeda's dialogue on art appreciation.

MY RECOLLECTIONS

Alexander Yakovlev, leading architect of perestroika.

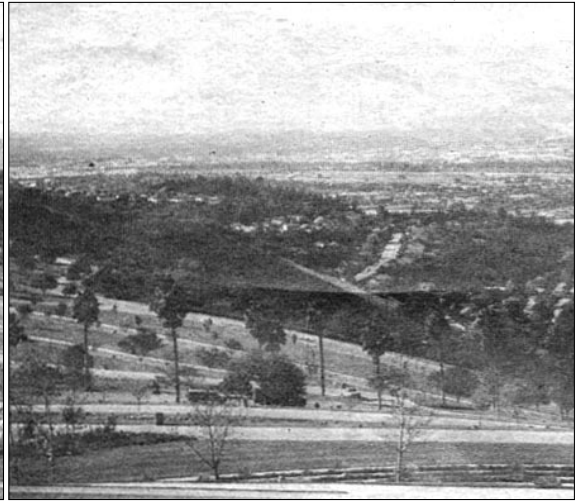
Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions
525 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401-1467

DATED MATERIAL: PLEASE DELIVER BY ISSUE DATE

SGI-USA Will Open Cemetery This Year

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



In response to many members' requests, the SGI-USA has negotiated with Rose Hills Gardens in Whittier, Calif., to secure an SGI-USA cemetery for the use of members nationwide. The area under consideration overlooks the San Gabriel Valley, east of Los Angeles. Plots should be available some time in February. More details will be carried in a future issue of the 'World Tribune.'

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

To Propagate JOY

SGI President Ikeda, the founder of Soka University, sent the following message to the 3rd graduating class of Soka University of America. The graduation ceremony was held Dec. 17 at SUA's Calabasas, Calif., campus.

To the members of the 3rd graduating class, whom I consider the treasures of my life and the dawning sun of hope: My heartfelt congratulations on your joyful departure!

I wish also to express my sincere thanks to our distinguished guests, among them Dr. David Krieger of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, who have made the time and traveled great distances expressly to participate in this graduation ceremony.

I also voice my profound gratitude to the faculty and staff who have so warmly encouraged and fostered the students' growth and development. And, finally, permit me to share in the great joy and happiness of the family and friends of the graduates.

As my heart fills with joy at the gallant image of our graduates, vibrant and active on the global stage of the 21st century, I am moved to share my thoughts on three specific points.

The first is: Be world citizens brilliant with the light of character!

One of the core objectives of

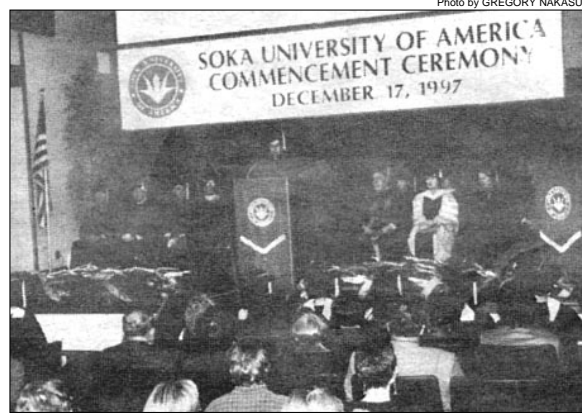


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Soka University of America President Daniel Habuki reads SGI President Ikeda's message to the 3rd graduating class.

soka education is to develop character. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, originator of this educational philosophy, was convinced that only education that fosters people of real capability can offer

a fundamental resolution to the confused impasse in which society is now enmeshed.

All endeavors to create value must be based on the individual and must serve to enhance and

bring to fullness the individual's character. For this is the only means by which humanity can advance beyond the present era of military, political and economic competition — marked by hatred and confrontation — and enter an age of humanitarian competition, an age of peaceful coexistence inspired by mutual respect for the unique qualities of each person.

There is no doubt in my mind that each of you will play a key role in ushering in such an era. In his later years, Albert Einstein devoted himself with passionate commitment to the anti-nuclear movement, leaving us these words: "The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the political state, but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and sublime."

I was indeed happy to learn that many of the 3rd graduating class have chosen careers in education. It is my fervent hope that you will learn to bring forth infinite possibilities from within both yourselves and others. And that you will joyfully forge a solidarity movement of value-creating world citizens toward the new century.

The second point I want to

PLEASE SEE GRADUATION, 5



The World Tribune is the weekly newspaper of the SGI-USA.

OUR ORGANIZATION

SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) is an American Buddhist organization based on the philosophy of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. The SGI exists in 128 countries and has its international center in Japan, where the organization was founded in 1930. In the *World Tribune*, you'll see news of our organization both in America and internationally.

OUR PURPOSE

The SGI-USA promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Our position is that peace in the community — whether it be in a neighborhood or the world — is inseparably linked with individuals' happiness. SGI-USA members, through their faith, are seeking to become happier and contribute positively to society. In the *World Tribune*, you'll see experiences from members about this process, which we call human revolution.

OUR PRACTICE

Our basic practice is chanting the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of devotion. According to Nichiren Daishonin, the workings of the universe are an expression of the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. So chanting it allows us to be in tune with our environment and create the most value. The *World Tribune* carries many study articles to explain the practice in detail.

OUR HERITAGE

Myoho-renge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, which is the foundation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This sutra, Shakaymuni Buddha's highest teaching, sets forth that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — all people have the potential to become Buddhas. Nichiren Daishonin, a Japanese priest who lived in the 13th century, championed the Lotus Sutra and introduced the concrete way of putting it into practice, the chanting and sharing of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In keeping with the sutra's teaching that people are Buddhas, the SGI teaches that the heritage of this Buddhism is passed from generation to generation of the people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you — there are more than 60 across the country. (You can look in the phone book or call our national headquarters at (310) 451-8811.) The community center can direct you to SGI-USA members in your town, so you can ask questions and find out more. Our website address is www.sgi-usa.org or you can e-mail the SGI-USA at sgiusa1@aol.com. You can e-mail the *World Tribune* editorial office at: SokaNews@aol.com.

TO SUBSCRIBE

To subscribe to the *World Tribune*, or our companion publication, *Living Buddhism*, a monthly magazine, please call us at (800) 835-4558 or e-mail us at SGI SUBS@aol.com.

Human Rights Are Your Rights

EDITORIAL

Fifty years ago, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with its oft-quoted opening lines that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

This declaration, now adopted by all 185 member states, was the first achievement of the United Nations. The president of that General Assembly session expressed his hope in the far-reaching potential of this declaration. "Millions of people, men, women and children, all over the world will turn for help, guidance and inspiration to this document," he said.

Indeed, in the past five decades much progress has been made to bring freedom and equality to the world's peoples. "But as we take stock in what has been accomplished, we cannot pretend that the gap has been bridged between aspirations and achievements," said the current president of the General Assembly at a special meeting to observe Human Rights Day, Dec. 10, 1997.

"We still live in a world where millions are uprooted from their homes and untold numbers arrested arbitrarily or imprisoned without trial," he said. "Sadly, it remains a world in which torture is still practiced, in which more than a billion people are living in poverty, where children are still exploited, the elderly neglected and women denied their fundamental equal rights. Obviously, such a world is not a place where human rights are being universally respected."

He then called on everyone to do something about it. "It is now our responsibility," he said, "to reach all people with this message in order to translate these remarkable principles and norms into tomorrow's reality."

Translating ideals into realities is also the work of the SGI, founded this month in 1975. Based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, SGI members around the world seek to bring about a better world through the happiness and fulfillment of the people. In one sense, SGI President Ikeda has said, our SGI movement is a movement for human rights.

What makes our efforts so important is that we are not limited to the external world of systems, bureaucracies and governments. Ours is primarily a movement to address the inner realm, to cultivate character and the human spirit.

In his 1997 peace proposal, released to mark SGI Day, Jan. 26, President Ikeda wrote that this attention to the internal workings of human life is crucial if we are to see any lasting change. "Legal and institutional guarantees of 'freedom' and 'democracy' as well as 'peace' and 'human rights' are indispensable, but they alone are not enough to preserve human dignity," he wrote.

In fact, if we neglect this inner development, he wrote, "the movement to defend human dignity will degenerate into one that casts down and harms humanity.... Freedom and indulgence, democracy and mobism, peace and complacency, human rights and self-righteousness are qualities that are as close to each other as two sides of a coin. To slacken even the slightest in this struggle [between good and evil] is to risk succumbing to the other side of the coin."

In one sense, our SGI movement is a movement for human rights.

Inner growth, he argued, will build a "bridge of hope" to a new century that will have solved the problems of the present one. "I believe that it is religion (or at least those [religions] that are worthy of the name) that will provide the strong supports and the propelling forces for the building of such bridges," he wrote.

Human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration are multifaceted. They include the rights to life, liberty, food, shelter, access to medical care, freedom from torture or arbitrary imprisonment, education, freedom of religious belief and thought, freedom of expression...and the list goes on.

The work — the struggle — to guarantee these rights for all must go on and must be waged by all of us. In fact, the goal of *soka*, or value creation, Mr. Ikeda has said, is to develop people of character who strive for peace and who are committed to protecting the dignity of human life.

Our religious practice gives us the perfect foundation from which to work for human rights. As we join in the celebration of the Universal Declaration's 50th anniversary and observe this year's SGI Day later in the month, we can take inspiration from the words of Kofi Annan, the U.N. secretary-general: "Human rights are your rights. Seize them. Defend them. Promote them. Understand them and insist on them. Nourish and enrich them. They are the true reflection of humanity's highest aspirations. They are the best in us. Give them life." ❧

World Tribune

(ISSN-0049-8165)

The World Tribune (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401; (310) 451-8811; FAX (310) 260-8910. E-mail: SokaNews@aol.com. Subscriptions Office: (800) 835-4558; FAX (310) 260-8970; E-mail: SGI SUBS@aol.com.

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices.

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$110 for Three Years.

Printed on 100% recycled paper

Copyright © 1997 by SGI-USA.

All rights reserved. Printed in the USA

Publisher Fred M. Zaitso
Executive Editor Ted Morino

Managing Editor Dave McNeill
Assistant Managing Editor Lisa Carter Kirk
Associate Editor Jeff Farr
Graphic Artist Don Sanders
Contributing Editors Nikki Amdur
Joel Drazner
Terry Ellis
Staff Translators Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi
Chief Photographer Gregory Nakasuji

Bureau Chiefs

Phil Simpson, Atlanta; Fletcher Dalton, Boston; Veronica Evans, Chicago; Terry Ellis, Florida; Joanne Tachibana, Hawaii; Dave McNeill, Los Angeles; Cheryl Utley, Midwest; Robert Taliaferro, New York; Dave Shadovitz, Philadelphia; Chuck Evans, Rocky Mountain; JL Henriques, San Diego; Ron Baird, San Francisco; Bill Lawrence, Seattle; Wendy DeOre, Texas; Jane Crystal Brown, Washington, D.C.

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Behavior Is Key

I would like to comment on the Dec. 26 *World Tribune*. Besides being outstanding as usual, and the "Editorial" very informative (we're being excommunicated AGAIN??), the page 6 article by Jeff Farr on "The How-To of *Jiyu*" was particularly interesting. In the *jiyu* poem, SGI President Ikeda teaches us how to act like a Buddha. Jeff very succinctly weaves this in with a quote from the Goshō and his own examples. We need to read more of this type of writing. It's fine and dandy to "do the practice" — gongyo, daimoku and attending meetings — but there is no excuse for bad behavior. There is no point to saying we are Buddhist if we don't behave as a Buddha.

— GERI KAUFMAN, Cayucos, Calif.

More Experiences, Please

I've been a member since 1974; I have had lots of benefits but lots of obstacles which I didn't like. But I know that without these obstacles I would have given up. I am still fighting, and I am going to win. I win every day because I have one more on this Earth. I would like you to print more experiences in your paper, as I get encouraged by them.

— BEA GALLEGOS, Los Angeles

EDITOR'S NOTE: In 1998, we plan to have at least one experience in every issue. But we need help from our readers. If you've experienced powerful proof of faith, we'd like to hear about it. We're looking for stories that share your struggles, your realizations and your triumphs. If you need help writing, we can find someone to help. If you're interested, please contact the editorial office at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail us at SokaNews@aol.com. Thanks for your support.

Speak Out Against Evil

In the Dec. 5 *World Tribune*, Jeff Farr wrote a piece for the "Sign Posts" column. I'd like to add to this. We are all aware of the evil in our own life, and many of us every day chant to purify our own life, study the Goshō and President Ikeda's guidance. Along with the evil in our own lives, one may find evil existing in our local organization. We may not want to admit this and try to brush it aside, but it will resurface. So what do we do about this? President Ikeda discusses evil in the June 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism* in the "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra."

Identifying it is the easy part and acting upon the evil is more difficult; however, the most difficult will be confronting the obstacles that will naturally occur. Then remaining resolute is even more difficult.

If we do not speak up, then we are evil.

— BERNIE SPIEGEL, Boston

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

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

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

A Letter to the Future

PERSPECTIVE

By SAM HARRIS
ATLANTA

Dear children and grandchildren and great grandchildren and on and on:

I wonder in what year this letter will find you. Perhaps 2047 or 2097 or, well, who knows? I have just left 1997 behind, entering 1998. Although Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is being practiced in 128 countries today, the world is still in bad shape. Terrorist activity is widespread, both here and abroad. Nuclear holocaust is a real possibility that could destroy civilization at any time. The fact that you are reading this letter means that our civilization has survived.

Today, there are no cures for cancer, AIDS or other viruses. Ethnic and racial conflicts exist throughout the world. There are many islands of poverty existing in the oceans of wealth.

It seems to me that our technology has outpaced our spiritual development. Society has dubbed this period the Information Age. Pentium and P-6 chips are state of the art in computers. These must seem like antiques to you.

We have unmanned crafts exploring space, and we've even reached the surface of Mars. These are marvels to me. Perhaps you marvel at colonies of people living in space or on some other planet. Or maybe you've made contact with intelligent life

forms from other parts of the universe. I can only imagine.

Last year, 1997, marked the 50th year since SGI President Ikeda began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. His constant day-to-day efforts for kosen-rufu over the past 50

years are also a marvel to me. He has met with dignitaries and government officials the world over, as well as common people, always igniting an exchange of people, culture and education. He has offered several peace proposals to the United Nations. He has also received countless awards and honorary degrees from around the world, always accepting them on behalf of the SGI members.

But, then, you probably know all this, unlike the majority of people on this planet today who do not. Even those of us who do know of him today often do not realize his profound significance. It may take until your time before his efforts manifest into what society can call the greatest transformation in human history. I am confident that this is becoming a reality in your time period.

So I thought you might like to know just a little about what it's like to practice Buddhism with President Ikeda. I'd have to say

that what I feel most is appreciation. Of all the centuries that this Buddhism has been around, I feel fortunate to be practicing now, just before the turn of the millennium, at the same time with President Ikeda.

Although I am seldom even in the same room with him, he's with me every day. He is, after all, my mentor, the one who's taken responsibility to show me how to construct a mighty foundation of peace and happiness for my sake and yours.

The fact that this is a turning point in our organization — the time when, with President Ikeda's leadership, we

have freed ourselves from the limitations and corruption of the priesthood — proves the significance of practicing at this time.

What a marvel.

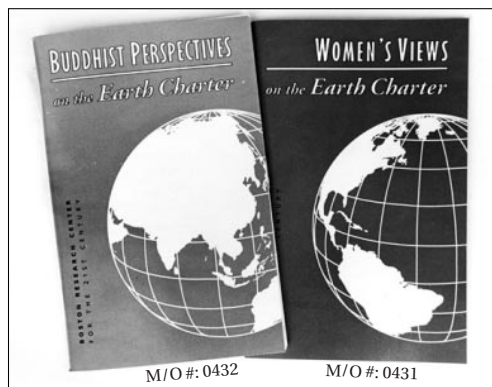
As you know, the Mystic Law transcends the boundaries of space and time. In a way, I can sense the prayers you offer for your deceased relatives. Thank you very much. I am sending daimoku to you every day as well.

Happy New Year. Happy new life. Happy new world. ☸

If you're interested in contributing to this section, please call us at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail us at SokaNews@aol.com.

He is, after all, the one who's taken responsibility to show me how to construct a foundation of peace.

— NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE —



With a foreword by SGI President Ikeda and an essay from the Nichiren tradition.

Emerging Earth Ethics

Religionists apply Buddhist philosophy to ecological challenges. Women leaders explore women's roles in a "living" earth charter.

Religion and Ecology
Publications from the
Boston Research
Center for the
21st Century.

Price: \$1.50 each.

SGI Leader Greet Ghana President, First Lady

Photos courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Dec. 1

What kind of education and leadership does Africa, which SGI President Ikeda calls the continent of the new century, need to propel itself forward? President Ikeda and the president and first lady of Ghana discussed this today.

Earlier in the day, President Jerry John Rawlings and first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings attended the opening of an exhibit commemorating the 40th anniversary of Ghana's independence at the Min-On Culture Center and received honors from Soka University and Soka Women's College, respectively.

Noting that President Rawlings had received the overwhelming support of the people of Ghana and been re-elected to office for a second term in December 1996, Mr. Ikeda related a powerful part of his inaugural speech. "Today, not only do we face the challenge of moving our nation forward, we also carry the responsibility of contributing to move the continent of Africa forward," said President Rawlings then. "It is a challenge that appears awesome to contemplate, humbling to our senses, and yet it is a challenge that we are obliged to face with courage, with fortitude and with confidence."

The SGI leader also shared the words of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-72), who said that only when the people are organized can they display their true ability. When people are divided and isolated, Mr. Ikeda emphasized, they are weak.

For precisely this reason, he said, organizations are necessary and leaders are important. President Nkrumah also maintained that the most important duty of leaders is to spend time with and listen to the people to whom they owe their positions, Mr. Ikeda added. The SGI president declared that President Rawlings is a leader of the people who has truly carried on Dr. Nkrumah's spirit.

Dr. Nkrumah, the SGI leader continued, envisioned that, after achieving political autonomy, Ghana would gain economic independence — but that some kind of "jet propulsion" would be necessary to realize this.

Mr. Ikeda credited President Rawlings, who holds the Ghanaian Air Force rank of flight-lieutenant, with being the great pilot who has provided this propulsion and guided the country's brilliant



Ghana President Jerry John Rawlings speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for 'Ghana at 40,' an exhibition featuring photographs, charts and arts and crafts, giving an overview of Ghana's history and depicting the country's bright prospects for the 21st century. There are also displays on the way of life of the Ghanaian people, the country's natural environment, Ghana's relations with Japan, and the history of Min-On's efforts to promote cultural exchange with the West African country.

economic development. Ghana's minister of foreign affairs, J.V. Gbeho, who was also present today, explained that the Ghanaian people have been working to reconstruct their country since the coup of 1981, and that the achievements of the country's first president had provided the groundwork for this reconstruction.

Mr. Ikeda observed that, in addition to his efforts on behalf of young people, President Rawlings is well known for the emphasis that he has placed on education. Noting that Ghana allocates 40 percent of its national budget to that field, he applauded President Rawlings for not compromising when it comes to education.

Mr. Rawlings said that education is the foundation for building a stable nation. The government, he offered, should not take power away from the citizens and enslave them but rather empower them. To that end, education is vital, he said.

Addressing Mrs. Rawlings, the SGI leader praised her, as president of the 31st December Women's Movement, for energetically dedicating herself to such concerns as improving the standing of women in society, working to alleviate the problem of poverty and educating people about democracy.

He noted that she is also known for visiting rural areas, on which the country's prosperity greatly depends.



Ghana President and first lady Rawlings receive honors from Soka University and Soka Women's College, respectively, at the Seikyo Shimbun Building. Mrs. Rawlings, who has been active in improving the status of women through Ghana's 31st December Women's Movement, said that she accepted the award on behalf of the women and children of Ghana. The 31st December Women's Movement offers women throughout Ghana income-generating projects, establishes day-care facilities for working mothers and focuses on adult education to increase Ghana's literacy rate.

In one interview, Mr. Ikeda recalled, Mrs. Rawlings said that at the time of independence, the women of Ghana had been key participants in political activities and an active force in driving the foreign colonialists out. And in December 1981, feeling that they had remained in the shadows far too long, the women of Ghana organized themselves with the desire to support the country's reconstruction.

President Rawlings shared the thoughts of the Ghanaian educator Kwegyir-Aggrey who said that when you educate a man, you educate one person; when you educate a woman, you educate the entire country.

Rawlings added that the same educator said of racial discrimination, "When you play a piano, isn't it true that when the white and black keys are played in harmony, beautiful music is created?" Mr. Ikeda agreed, adding that he feels the same principle applies to the battle of the sexes.

Mrs. Rawlings said that to improve the situation of women, it is necessary to place importance on education from childhood. If a child is brought up with the traditional notion that a women's place is in the home, it will be very difficult to change that attitude after he or she becomes an adult. There is a need to institute education that will establish new ways of thinking from an early age, she stressed. WJ

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

International U.N. Group Extends Membership to the SGI

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Calcutta, India, Dec. 7

The Executive Committee of the World Federation of U.N. Associations voted unanimously today to inaugurate the SGI as a member association. The federation's rare decision to grant membership to a non-U.N.-sponsored organization is in recognition of the SGI's wide support of the United Nations and its continuous endeavors to promote peace, culture and education.

Commending the SGI's activities, WFUNA President Hashim Abdul Halim recalled his meeting with SGI President Ikeda in September 1997 in Tokyo, saying that he firmly believes that WFUNA and the SGI share common goals. Executive Committee Vice Chairperson and WFUNA U.S. representative Ved Prakash Nanda asserted that working with an or-

ganization such as the SGI, which possesses a large membership of optimistic, spirited young men and women, would be a great asset for WFUNA.

Vice Chairperson Xie Qimei, president of the U.N. Associations of China, also

SGI has contributed significantly to international refugee aid and cultural and educational exchange. The Executive Committee's Israeli representative, Rena Shashua-Hasson, affirmed that the SGI has done much to educate people about human rights, citing the "Courage To Remember — Anne Frank and the Holocaust" exhibition realized by the SGI in cooperation with the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Founded in August 1946, just nine months after the establishment of the United Nations, WFUNA has grown to include 77 member associations all

over the world. As a pioneering non-governmental organization, it is devoted to upholding the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter and to promoting public awareness and understanding of the activities of the United Nations and its agencies.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

At the World Federation of U.N. Associations meeting in Calcutta, India, the SGI's many contributions are noted.

voiced his support, explaining that the SGI has developed strong ties with many cultural organizations in China. Recounting his meeting with Mr. Ikeda in Japan during the 1970s, WFUNA Vice President Yadav Prasad Pant, former Nepalese ambassador to Japan, acknowledged that the



Dr. David Krieger, of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, urges Soka University of America graduates to make a personal pledge to the Earth.

Graduation: To Propagate Joy

GRADUATION, FROM PAGE 1

emphasize is this: Be people of wisdom and courage, always on the side of the ordinary citizen!

To live among the people, to share their joys and sorrows, to struggle on their behalf — this is the grand, proud path of *soka* education. A life shared with the people is filled with strength and vitality. A way of living firmly rooted in the lives of the people will never know stagnation or deadlock.

For it is in ordinary people that we can find an unrestrained, timeless wisdom that transcends all limitations. Here also we find a deep, passionate yearning for peace. And it is in the lives of the people that we discover vitality welling forth ceaselessly, with ever-undiminished freshness.

Pearl S. Buck was an extraordinary woman, a writer of enormous gifts, who worked to link East and West. In her acceptance speech on receiving the Nobel Prize in literature, she expressed her profound appreciation for literature born and nurtured in the "good earth" of the people. The people, she declared, are "sounder judges than anyone." And she movingly described how she had learned to write for them.

It is my hope that each of you will value your bonds with the people, that you will live in the rhythm of their lives. Develop your capacities and talents so that you may serve as stalwart guardians of their happiness.

It was Mr. Makiguchi's credo that those who lack the courage to be an enemy to evil cannot be a friend to good. I hope that, bearing this in mind, you will advance with pride and dignity along the grand path of humanity.

Third, I urge you to continue to scale, with courage and determination, many peaks of victory in life.

Over the course of a lifetime, we are certain to encounter the storms of trial, to fall prey to a sense of failure or disappointment. I hope, however, that, as champions of value creation, you will never abandon the challenge of your choosing, that you will continue your ascent of those lofty peaks with unflagging courage, energy and perseverance.

As Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, so trenchantly stated: "The higher one goes the more laborious becomes the journey, and the summit recedes into the clouds. Yet the climbing is worth the effort and has its own joy and satisfaction. Perhaps it is the struggle that gives value to life, not so much the ultimate result."

So long as you struggle to advance, you will develop your strengths and abilities, even if you do not reach the peak immediately. It is exactly this training that releases your vitality and strength to take on the challenge of further ascent.

Therefore, I urge you: Continue to advance, step by step! Never, ever, give up hope!

The patience to wait wisely, steadily bringing the time and conditions to ripeness — this capacity holds the key to a life finally victorious.

I will close by quoting a few lines from the great Chilean poet of the people, Pablo Neruda, whose works I know are also loved by Dr. Krieger. In this way, I voice my prayers for the limitless growth and health of the members of the 3rd graduating class as you set off to be great leaders of the next century.

*I wish to give to the people,
the gift of the earth,
for I have learned, in battle,
that it is my mission
to propagate joy.*



Florida Impressions

I am a simple person who is easily moved by another person's sincerity, or another person's pain. I am also someone who has such hard places in my heart, that to face these walls I need friends, comrades, *zenchishiki*.

For three days now I have looked across a room, or walked alongside others whose faces and lives are so much a part of my own.

We speak of bonds, human bonds and I see these bonds can reach beyond each of our lives, and these bonds can embrace so many others. And because we choose *kosen-rufu*, trust and caring, as our greatest goal and President Ikeda as our Sensei



Isabel (right) with her friend Susan McDonough.

what can we not accomplish together?

In my heart I celebrate and welcome the eternity of life that has brought each of us here together.

— Isabel Almeida, Buffalo, N.Y.

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 5

Young Eagles

Translation of parts 17–19 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 solemn atmosphere pervaded the room. With serious expressions, everyone sat up straight and listened to Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

“The Goshō is scripture, a compilation of the Buddha’s words,” he continued. “Every word and phrase are important. And especially when it comes to ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,’ if we seek to understand it deeply, we should first read it aloud again and again in a clear, strong voice — to the point where we have practically memorized it.

“Also, we should read the Goshō in action, word and thought. This means resolving to live according to the Goshō, sharing its philosophy with others and practicing its teachings ourselves. Our actions must match our convictions. That is the attitude with which to approach the study of Buddhism, and it is also a basic premise of Eastern philosophy.”

The participants felt as if they had been jolted awake. They couldn’t help feeling ashamed that until that moment they had simply assumed it was enough to just sit back and listen to the lectures.

Shin’ichi returned to “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” to examine each passage in detail. He started again from the beginning:

The Orally Transmitted Teachings state:
Namu derives from Sanskrit and here [in Japan] it is called *kimyo*, which means devoting one’s life. There is devotion to the Person and devotion to the Law. Devotion to the Person means devoting one’s life to Shakyamuni, and devotion to the Law means devoting one’s life to the Lotus Sutra. (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 708)

“The reason that ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ begins with a discussion of Nam-myōho-enge-kyō,” Shin’ichi explained, “is that Nam-myōho-enge-kyō is the basis of all sutras and the heart of the Lotus Sutra. Concerning Nam-myōho-enge-kyō, the Daishonin tells us that *namu* derives from Sanskrit [*namas*], the literary language of ancient India, and that it translates as *kimyo* in Japanese. *Kimyo* means totally dedicating one’s life.

“There are two objects of that dedication: the Person and the Law. The Person is Shakyamuni as interpreted from the perspective of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In other words, Nichiren Daishonin, the original Buddha, who is the object of fundamental respect in terms of the Person. The Law is Nam-myōho-enge-kyō, which is the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law and the object of fundamental respect in terms of the Law. Therefore, true devotion is devotion to the object of fundamental respect — the Gohonzon — of the oneness of the Person and the Law as revealed by Nichiren Daishonin.

“All people are devoted to something. The samurai retainers of old were devoted to their lords, and during World War II, the Japanese people were called

on to give themselves utterly to their nation. Today, we see people who are devoted to their work or to their company, as well as those who give up everything for the ones they love.

“The crucial thing to remember is that what you decide to devote yourself to or give your life to is what determines whether your life will be happy or unhappy. The Daishonin teaches us that the highest, most fundamental kind of devotion is to the Gohonzon of the oneness of the Person and the Law — that is, to Nam-myōho-enge-kyō.”

Shin’ichi spoke with increasing force: “More specifically, we might say that this devotion is dedicating ourselves to the realization of kosen-rufu with the resolve to widely propagate Nam-myōho-enge-kyō and the Gohonzon of the oneness of the Person and the Law as our life’s purpose and lifelong goal. This is the path that leads to absolute happiness.

“I’m sure some of you regard expressions such as *not begrudging one’s life and dedicating one’s life to Buddhism* as encouraging a sort of self-sacrifice, some kind of tragic self-immolation. But the state of mind underlying the devotion I am talking about is entirely different. It is a state of complete, self-assured calm and peace, a state utterly without fear. It is a feeling as expansive and serene as the clear blue sky, a fullness of hope, joy and total satisfaction — a state of being ultimately free and true to yourself.

“Devotion to the Mystic Law means breaking through your lesser self, the small you that has been driven and hounded by all kinds of petty, selfish wants and desires. It means returning to your greater self, the self that is one with the universe, that is as vast as the cosmos itself.

“When you accomplish that, you will shine with your highest human potential. The process by which this comes about is called human revolution.”

Shin’ichi moved on to the next passage:

Ki [of *kimyo*] means returning to the unchanging entity of truth revealed in the theoretical teaching. *Myo* [of *kimyo*] means conforming to the responsive wisdom of truth revealed in the essential teaching. Devotion is Nam-myōho-enge-kyō itself. A commentary says, “Both the

unchanging and the responsive are encompassed in a life-moment; one tranquil and the other illuminating.” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 708)

This passage had given virtually every member of the group trouble. No matter how hard they tried to study it in preparation for the lecture, they had all eventually thrown in the towel. At the time, there were no good commentaries to assist anyone who wanted to study the Orally Transmitted Teachings.

The only reference book available was an edition of *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* — compiled by the head temple [and published by the Soka Gakkai] just the year before, 1961 — which contained the Chinese text of the Lotus Sutra and its opening and closing sutras with a parallel Japanese translation. This scarcity of reference material only made the students more eager to hear what Shin’ichi would say.

“Here,” Shin’ichi continued, “the Daishonin discusses the meaning of *kimyo*, devoting one’s life, in terms of its two elements, *ki* and *myo*. I’m sure you must have struggled with this passage.

“The Daishonin starts by saying that *ki* means returning to the unchanging entity of truth revealed in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. He then goes on to say that *myo* means conforming to the responsive wisdom of truth revealed in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

“The unchanging entity of truth is the ultimate truth that remains eternal throughout time and space. Nam-myōho-enge-kyō is the absolute, fundamental truth of the universe. By chanting Nam-myōho-enge-kyō, we align ourselves with this basic universal law. This is what it means to return to the unchanging entity of truth.”

Shin’ichi lectured with all his concentration and energy. Sweat gathered on his brow, but he didn’t stop to wipe it.

He continued: “The responsive wisdom of truth, meanwhile, is the true Buddha wisdom, which responds to circumstances that are constantly changing in accord with various causes and conditions. It describes the function of Buddhahood, the highest state of life manifested through faith.

“The unchanging entity of truth is the ultimate truth of the Mystic Law. Manifesting the power and function of the Mystic Law in our daily lives is the key to achieving happiness. Faith in the Mystic Law enables us to tap infinite life force and Buddha wisdom from within to surmount our problems and sufferings, to achieve our human revolution and to transform our lives. All activities directed toward value creation correspond to conforming to the responsive wisdom of truth.

“To use another allegory, the Goshō, which teaches the eternal, unchanging, absolute truth, might be described as an

expression of the unchanging entity of truth. Our earnest study of the Goshō right now corresponds to returning to the unchanging entity of truth. Later, when we understand the teachings of the Goshō through faith and wisdom, make them the basis of our philosophy toward life and society, and proceed to apply that philosophy to our activities in society and the world, we are conforming to the responsive wisdom of truth.

“This formula can be applied to anything. For example, a microphone picks up voices and sounds, transforms them into electronic signals and communicates those voices and sounds to many other people. Understanding the operation of the microphone corresponds to returning to the unchanging entity of truth. Now imagine turning on the switch of the microphone, allowing electricity to run through the system and actually using the microphone for some purpose. You can think of this as conforming to the responsive wisdom of truth.

“Why does the Daishonin use this phrase from the theoretical teaching in connection with the unchanging entity of truth? Because it is in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra that for the first time the true aspect of all phenomena is revealed, and all things in the universe are identified as entities of Myōho-enge-kyō, of the principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms. The theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra also expounds for the first time that practitioners of the two vehicles [Learning and Realization] as well as women and evil people have the potential to attain enlightenment.

“In other words, the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra reveals the absolute and unchanging truth that all living beings and the universe itself are entities of the Mystic Law. That is why this phrase from the theoretical teaching appears in this passage. But though the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra teaches us that all living beings are Buddhas, that each of us is an entity of the Mystic Law, that we possess the Buddha nature in theory, this abstract knowledge alone will not enable us to transcend our real problems and sufferings.

“It remains only a concept. The difference between the theoretical and the actual is as marked as night and day.”

(To be continued)

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Be Your Own Priest

By SHIN YATOMI

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death..., you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life. ("On Attaining Buddhahood," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3)

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, there is no place for a priest as an intermediary between a practitioner and his or her enlightenment. In this letter, the Daishonin explains that the goal of our Buddhist practice lies in revealing our inner truth, that is, our innate Buddhahood. Since the solution to overcoming all our suffering lies within, we do not have to go elsewhere to find happiness. Nor do we have to seek something or someone outside through which to attain enlightenment. This is a self-reliant practice.

This point, however, is easier to understand than to act on. Having a priest as an intermediary is an attractive option. We simply do whatever we are told by the priest, and we are virtually guaranteed enlightenment. We do not have to make decisions. We assume no responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Even when something goes wrong, we can paint ourselves as victims.

To deny the role of an intermediary in our practice, however, strikes at our deepest fears and insecurities. We must tackle the tough questions ourselves. We must make a choice, and with that comes responsibility for the consequences of our choice. There is no one to blame or depend on but ourselves. Self-reliance is a more difficult path. In this letter, however, the Daishonin admonishes us against choosing the easier one.

Recognizing the divinity within all people, Walt Whitman states: "There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done.... Every man shall be his own priest." Having been excommunicated twice — in 1991 and 1997 — by the priesthood, we SGI members have proven that there is no need for a priest as an intermediary in the Daishonin's Buddhism. As Whitman says, we have become our own priests. ❧

From the Day We Take Faith

STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM
THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

From the very day you take faith in this teaching, you should be fully prepared to face the three kinds of persecutions, which are certain to be more terrible now after the Buddha's passing.... Did I not warn you in advance? ("On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 99-100)

When Nichiren Daishonin told his followers to expect the three kinds of persecution, he was convincing. His followers could easily see that he was experiencing serious persecution himself, so it clearly wasn't just lip service. This Goshō was in fact written when the

Daishonin was right in the middle of a major persecution — his exile to Sado Island.

The Daishonin had by the time of this Goshō's writing been shuffled around by the government for some months. And the situation with his believers was a mess — an outbreak of arson and murder in Sagami province, where the Daishonin was held just before his Sado exile, had wrongly been pinned on them. The Daishonin had no public forum on Sado, or anywhere for that matter, to clarify the situation and their innocence. All he could do was encourage them in faith through letters like this one.

Sometimes I think we should make this letter the SGI-USA introductory pamphlet, because the Daishonin so honestly says here what to expect — if you practice this Buddhism, you will experience persecution. Wherever and whenever people correctly practice this Buddhism, the three powerful enemies have to appear.

In this Goshō, the Daishonin also expresses his disappointment that despite instructing his disciples to expect persecution, some were scared off when it finally came. They suddenly gave up their

faith. How frustrating it must have been for him. I imagine he felt something like a high school teacher when a favorite student drops out despite all the teacher's encouragement to continue.

It's thus important for us to understand about Buddhist persecutions, especially the current temple issue, so we can continue faith. The second of the three powerful enemies, as set forth in Miao-lo's *Annotations on "Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* is arrogant priests; the third is people who pretend to be saints but are secretly jealous of the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra. So when the Daishonin says to be "fully prepared to face the three kinds of persecution..." it's a message to us today, too.

We may still feel baffled or even frightened by that tremendous change of the weather that took place seven years ago — this storm called the temple issue that still rages on. But the Daishonin said from the very beginning that persecution would happen to us. And that going through this persecution would not only be unavoidable but would fuel our road trip to enlightenment.

One in a series

FEB. 11, 1900 — PRESIDENT TODA'S BIRTHDAY

Blueprints to Realities

SIGNIFICANT DATE

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

President Toda was a world citizen. Which might be a strange thing to say given that he never left Japan.

What made him a world citizen? Rather than his travels, it was his prayer — how he prayed with his whole life for humanity, how his heart reached out to people in all countries. SGI President Ikeda explained in his dialogue "What Is a World Citizen?" that SGI members are likewise world citizens because "they are praying earnestly for the happiness of all humanity and working selflessly for the sake of others.... Even if they never leave their countries, such people are respected around the globe" (May 9, 1997, *World Tribune*).

One of my favorite scenes from *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, illustrates this spirit of Mr. Toda. It's the summer of 1954, and President Toda and Shin'ichi Yamamoto (Mr. Ikeda's character) are visiting Toda's childhood home, the seaside village of Atsuta, Hokkaido. Watching the sun set over the sea, Toda tells Shin'ichi: "I will build a solid foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan, but you will pave the way for kosen-rufu throughout the world. I will create the blueprint; you will make it a reality."

That was only 40-some years ago. I say *only*, because it's amazing how the kosen-rufu movement, starting with this determination of Toda, has crossed that sea and many others so quickly since then.

Nichiren Daishonin set forth in Goshō like "The Selection of the Time" that once the Pure Law of Shakyamuni had become lost, the Great Pure Law of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō would have to be propagated throughout the world. Presidents Toda and Makiguchi picked up on this intent, and Toda started making plans for achieving it.

It was Toda's genius that he saw this propagation as something that common people like himself should accomplish, not something they should leave to priests or just wait for. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, though, had waited and waited — for 700 years — and showed no signs of wanting to make kosen-rufu happen. Not until President Toda began to train the young Daisaku Ikeda did the worldwide spread of this Buddhism become conceivable.

When we celebrate President Toda's birthday, Feb. 11 — his 98th, this year —

it's a reminder of the long-lasting impact we can each have on the world. Toda's blueprint, against all odds, became a reality. And our blueprints for a better world can become realities, too. Toda had confidence. He turned out to be right. He set an example for us all.

In two years, we'll celebrate the centennial of his birth. SGI President Ikeda has recently pointed out that the Aliso Viejo, Calif., campus of Soka University of America will be completed in the year 2000, Toda's centennial. The Soka University campus in Japan was likewise finished in 1971, the 100th anniversary of President Makiguchi's birth. The year 2000 will also be the 40th anniversary of President Ikeda's first overseas trip — his first stop of which was in the United States — in Toda's stead. So for us, this is a significant time to become true world citizens like Toda before us.

To Toda, the sea at Atsuta was not just a big body of water. It was a bridge to other countries, other cultures, other people. We all have such bridges to cross as world citizens — for the sake of people far away, the people we have never seen, yet who are close to our hearts. ❧

Toda's blueprint, against all odds, became a reality. And our blueprints for a better world can become realities, too. Toda had confidence.

By PEGGY NAHAS FOSTER
BELLINGHAM, WASH.

REPORT FROM ICELAND

A Passion for Vikings and Dried Fish

From the day I first chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo in 1983, I had one impossible goal that could not be forgotten or ignored. With each campaign, each Byakuren movement, each daimoku chart I filled, I renewed my goal — to return to Iceland.

In 1979, fresh out of high school and eager for adventure, I set off on a monthlong trek through Iceland. I had worked several jobs during high school and saved for my trip. I took private lessons in the Icelandic language and studied every book I could on Iceland's history, the Viking Age and Norse mythology.

English poet W.H. Auden once wrote, "Few people take an interest in Iceland, but in those few, the interest is passionate." I am passionate about Iceland.

My Icelandic pen pal since 1978, Sigurdur Thordarsson, and his wife, Anna Lisa Sigurdjonsdottir, for whom I named my daughter, encouraged me year after year to return. A burning desire to do kosen-rufu in Iceland consumed me. I received guidance and was advised to accomplish kosen-rufu in my own community first. This gave me direction and courage to achieve my goals.

In 1994, teachers at a local elementary school here were discussing how to introduce Vikings to their students. My husband, Dennis, a school custodian, suggested they ask me. He was thrilled that I would have someone to talk to about Vikings besides him! I am now known as the Viking Lady and have been invited back every year since to educate fifth graders about the voyages of the Norsemen, culminating with a Viking feast and Norse myths. I prepare for months, starting of course with daimoku, so that I can touch the hearts of the students. I want my passion to be theirs.

I was so certain that 1997 was my year to return to Iceland that I haunted travel agencies for months looking for the best ticket prices. I contacted SGI-Iceland members and told them I was coming, even before I had the money to buy an airline ticket! The wonderful members in Iceland said they would chant for our safe arrival.

Two days after our March 1997 women's division meeting, I received a settlement check as a result of carpal tunnel surgery. Without hesitation or even a call to my husband, I purchased three non-refundable round-trip tickets. We were going to Iceland!



Peggy (center, at far end of table) and Dennis (across from Peggy, next to balcony) Foster with SGI-Iceland members at a Viking pub during a Viking festival in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, July 10, 1997.

Iceland is a fascinating destination. The landscape can change in minutes from twisted lava columns to lush green mountains and plains filled with frolicking lambs. There are hot springs everywhere. Reykjavik, the capital city, is incredibly clean. There are no pollutants to destroy the pure air and water of Iceland. Heat and electricity are all geothermally generated, and because of the island's position in the North Atlantic, the pollution from North America and Europe passes it by. Iceland has almost no crime, and young children are safe wherever they want to play.

Iceland is also one of Europe's most expensive countries to visit. I was fortunate to have good friends in Iceland with whom we could stay, but for my presentations as the Viking Lady, I needed to buy enough dried fish to feed an army of children and find authentic accessories for my husband's and my costumes. I wanted to have great photos (my camera was broken) and video (I had no video camera), and I had no money saved. The disability check paid only for our tickets and passports.

I chanted money virtually out of the woodwork. I called out fortune from 10,000 miles afar in every form. My wonderful boss even gave me a bonus for my trip when he heard me trying to pick up some extra secretarial work. And my parents gave us cash gifts

as well. Then, two days before our departure, my husband received a large inheritance check for the sale of a house and property that we had been chanting about for five years. Twelve hours before our flight, Dennis and I paid off some bills and bought a video camera. We would have no financial worries during our holiday, and no hardships later because of the trip.

On July 9, 1997, I returned home to Iceland.

SGI-Iceland member Fjola Jonsdottir arranged for us to attend two gongyo meetings. Doing gongyo with these intrepid members of the far north was like riding the Norse god Odin's eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, across the sky.

Kosen-rufu isn't just an expression to SGI-Iceland. The members there are working to make Iceland the Buddha's land. A month before our arrival, SGI-Iceland members were invited by the Asatru Movement (those who worship the old Norse gods) to a celebration at Thingvellir, the parliament of the Vikings. Thingvellir is a great rift in the earth and is actually part of the North Atlantic trench stretching up from the waters like two giant hands trying to separate the island. It was here in the year 1000 C.E. that Iceland became the first and only country ever to accept Christianity through a democratic process as opposed to force and bloodshed. Iceland is 98 per-

cent Lutheran. The remaining 2 percent consists of members of other Christian faiths, Soka Gakkai Buddhists (74 of them), Thai Buddhists, and Baha'i, Islam and Asatru practitioners.

At the Asatru gathering, a plan was developed to petition the Icelandic government for a dialogue on several topics of interest to Iceland's non-Christians. This small group of mixed faiths, spearheaded by SGI-Iceland, is planning a gathering at Thingvellir in the year 2000 to meet with the Icelandic government.

Their goals for this momentous dialogue are: 1) To change the government-controlled curriculum to allow comparative religions to be taught. Currently only the history of Christianity is being taught until university level. And 2) For the government of Iceland to per-

mit more freedom of choice to the non-Christian faiths by allowing them to build places of worship.

Over all, our trip was filled with magic. My 5-year-old daughter was a jewel the entire trip (serious proof that daimoku works), the National Museum of Iceland admitted us an hour before opening so that I would have unobstructed views of the exhibits for photos and video, and my friend Siggi arranged for a local to show us the Viking ruins near Olafsvik, where my favorite character from the sagas, Thorgunna, once lived.

Two days after we arrived, it rained a hard, heavy rain for 15 hours. I told Siggi and his wife, Anna Lisa, that I would chant for the sun to shine. At 2:00 a.m. I did a resounding gongyo to bring out the sun. The next five days, as we traveled through western Iceland and the Snaefellsjokull peninsula, were bright, sunny and clear. We saw two glaciers that looked like diamonds shining in the sun. The weather reports indicated rain, yet we had golden light cast upon us well into the late hours of the night. The midnight sun is an awesome sight.

I challenged my Rubenesque physique and successfully rode an Icelandic pony for two hours through moss-covered and flower-strewn lava fields. And I climbed the holy mountain of Thor, Helgafell. Without the push/pull of abundant daimoku, I doubt I would have had the courage to face either trial.

I am determined to stand in support of SGI-Iceland at Thingvellir in the year 2000. At the same time, because I know that kosen-rufu starts at home, I am single-mindedly yearning to fulfill my mission, whether it be in my family, my district, my community — or on a sub-Arctic island in the North Atlantic.

P.S. I telephoned Fjola Jonsdottir on Dec. 29: She told me that SGI-Iceland now has a community center!

WJ
KRT



The area around Myvatn, Iceland, features some of the bluest water, cleanest air and best freshwater fishing in the world, according to guides.

LADRENA McDOWELL, DALLAS

To Open My Treasure Tower

LaDrena McDowell was fighting for all the right things. But when she realized she'd been limiting her perspective, she used her practice to open it up — and proceeded to open a whole new approach to life.

When I first heard of the restructuring of our organization, fear, anger and determination immediately surfaced. I am really not sure which emotion was more dominant, probably determination. You see, I felt victimized in the past of so-called reorganizing and

about to do. I don't think anyone there doubted that I did not have a very good feeling about this change. You see, in "my world," our district was doing great. Although we were small, we were experiencing tremendous unity and growth. We were always coming up with community activities and doing

formed to tackle the objectives. I had such a need to be on top of all the decision-making factors that I was in a dilemma as to which committee to join. I joined two, the Data Base and the Survey, which I felt were most important to the task. In the committee activities, particularly the Survey Committee, we decided to chant 30 minutes before each meeting. Needless to say, lots of good ideas came out of that meeting. What was appealing to me about that first meeting was that gongyo was led by a woman and coffee was prepared by the men. Already, we had started "restructuring," and I started getting excited about the possibility of OOOH, CHANGE.

In February I attended a conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I talked with members from throughout the United States regarding the reorganization. Many had gone through the reorganization, some were in the beginning stages, some were greatly affected and others barely affected. In every case, the end product was a much better local organization.

The lecture presented at the FNCC was on the Treasure Tower, and we were encouraged to open up our Treasure Tower. I realized that while I had been so protective of the members in my district, I had created such a small world for myself. My perspective had been so limited. I made a determination to open my Treasure Tower, embrace the restructuring activities, and sincerely chant for the happiness of all the members in the Texas Region.

The first Saturday, March 1, after my return from the FNCC and with the support of my family and the members of my district, I began classes to obtain my adjuster's license for Workers Compensation. This position had opened several times and each time I had held it on an interim basis, doing the work but never getting the job

because I lacked my license.

With my determination to open up my life, my Treasure Tower, I viewed this situation as a challenge. It would take 12 Saturdays to complete this course. All of our district activities were on Saturdays, and since I worked all week, there was very little time to spend with my children, do housework, activities or study. Now I had this added responsibility as a reorganization committee member. My solution was to "pump up the daimoku!" I did, and at the end of the 12 weeks, I completed the course with a grade of 97 out of a 100. The final exam was on a Saturday. My supervisor and director wished me well the Friday before.

The following Monday, the whole environment in my office changed. There was a staff meeting at which I thought my graduation and impending license and promotion would be announced. To my surprise, it was instead announced that the adjuster's position would not be filled. Efficiency consultants had been going into each department, we were told, and reducing staff. Our budget had been cut considerably, and one of the sacrifices was the open position, the one I had prepared for.

For some reason, I accepted the news with comfort, thinking, "Oh, well, at least I gained more knowledge and met some really great people over the past few months. When the time comes, I'm sure I will be able to use my license in some other capacity."

The next day, Tuesday, things got more serious. My supervisor called me into her office for counseling. She said that I had made several errors, that the quality of my work was slipping, and that I was leaving early too many times (I had left twice to pick up my son from school in one year). All this was totally out of left field, unfounded, untrue, a complete fabrication. My first reaction was to be furious, but instead of giving into that, I signed the bogus report and in-

dedicated to my supervisor that I would continue to strive for excellence.

This time, when I sat in front of the Gohonzon, it was with a feeling of great appreciation, an opportunity to turn all this poison into elixir. I must continue to fight this ugliness in my life. I must not begrudge this opportunity to change my karma.

I reported to work the next morning as cheerful as ever. My co-workers were watching me closely. When I dropped a file, everyone jumped and my supervisor came rushing out of her office to ask me what was the matter. "I just dropped a file," I replied and looked at her with a big smile. She looked at me, surprised to see me not angry or upset. I realized then that this was some sort of test to see how I can stand the pressure. Well, it was no contest, because I was not angry or upset, I had accepted my negative karma and was working diligently to change it.

Meanwhile, the restructuring activities took on an even deeper meaning for me. I was filled with confidence that I would win over my challenges at work, and I used the restructuring activities as my springboard to eradicate negativity in my life.

Within two weeks of my counseling session, I would overhear my supervisor praising my work and my attitude. She even told me that I was the brightest thing in her life. She looked forward to coming to work because I was there.

Oh, and by the way, effective June 18, I was promoted to Workers Compensation adjuster. Mine was the only promotion within the human resources division, and they even hired a part-time clerk to assist me.

I know this was all the benefit of my practice, without a doubt, and I can tell you now that I am truly excited about the reorganization of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. I am confident that all the members are being taken into consideration, and I feel so very fortunate to be a part of an organization that continually strives for improvement.

As stated in the June 13, 1997, *World Tribune* editorial: "From our standpoint as SGI members," writes SGI President Ikeda, "the community in which we live, our area of specialty, our occupation and our families all are our "garden" of kosen-rufu. We must cultivate and develop this garden."

Thank you for letting me share a part of my life with you. ☸

Photo by MARK MANNING



LaDrena McDowell challenged herself during the geographic reorganization.

was always hurt or disappointed with the lack of consideration for the members. This time, I was not going to let that happen again. I was determined to speak out about the injustices I felt had been done in the past, and as a district leader, I was going to protect the members.

I chanted tearful, fearful daimoku: I would NOT let it happen without a fight. My strategy was of nothing but the Lotus Sutra, and then to take action. So without much thought, I attended a restructuring meeting and found out just what "these people" were

tremendous propagation. As a result, we increased our membership by 30 percent.

I found out through these restructuring meetings that not all districts were progressing, not all district meetings were joyful. In fact, many members were suffering. I also found that this "restructuring" was a movement to alleviate that suffering and to make us visible within our communities. I was beginning to see a bigger picture, but I still held ground on my opposition.

At the second restructuring meeting, committees were

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Art Vs. Arrogance — Part 2

This is the 16th 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).

IGETA: I realize that being a person who appreciates art and culture will be very important in the upcoming century, but how does one go about it? I'm sure there are many who think: "I'm not a good singer," "I can't draw or paint," and feel insecure about their artistic abilities.

IKEDA: I was never any good at drawing myself, nor at calligraphy, but I made an effort to seek out and look at good paintings and fine calligraphy. That effort has paid off very well in my life. We must live our lives wisely and thoughtfully. Many people tend to give up on the way to reaching their goal, thinking they've hit a dead end. Though it may be long and difficult, however, there is always another route to follow.

KIMURA: I think people do the same with their studies. Some people give up on the subject they're studying, convinced that they'll never get it.

IKEDA: When in fact that's simply not the case. Such people find themselves at a dead end only because they decide they are. The greatest enemy of learning is fear. This is true of language, of art, of every area of study. When we're afraid of being laughed at, of being embarrassed, of being looked down upon by others for our mistakes, shortcomings or limitations, progress becomes very difficult. The important thing is to be brave. So what if someone laughs? The person who makes fun of others trying their best is the one who should be ashamed.

There's no need to compare ourselves with others. What's important is our own growth, even if it is just a little at a time. The better the teacher, the more at ease the students are made to feel. That's because the teacher understands that fear is the



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

The greatest enemy of learning is fear. This is true of language, of art, of every area of study. When we're afraid of being laughed at, of being embarrassed, of being looked down upon by others for our mistakes, shortcomings or limitations, progress becomes very difficult.

greatest hindrance to the development of a student's full potential.

IGETA: Intimidation certainly kills culture. The atmosphere in some museums and concert halls makes people feel tense and uncomfortable, when such places should actually make us feel relaxed and energized.

IKEDA: Culture and art should be shared and enjoyed by all. They do not discriminate. When we encounter beauty, we return to the essence of our humanity, where all people are equal. From that standpoint, there is no distinction between company president and employee. There are no teachers or students, no specialists or amateurs. Such distinctions exist in

society, but we need a place where we can restore our humanity. That place is constructed by art, by culture. Creating that place is also one of the fundamental roles of religion.

The problem is how to foster a truly cultured mind in those who come into contact with art and culture. For example, a Japanese person who boasts that he or she is an expert on non-Japanese culture is really only using culture to gain personal prestige.

KIMURA: It is often said that the Japanese people are well-schooled but not cultured. This must be related to the problem of developing truly cultured minds.

IKEDA: Some people say Japan is a third-rate cultural power;

others say it is fifth-rate. Japanese leaders, teachers and students are not yet cultured individuals. They don't appreciate the importance of culture. They don't even try. They don't make any real effort. Since all they care about are appearances — culture as a formality — they have no real experience of culture.

Up to now, Japan emphasized economic achievement. Culture was always just an "extra." We Japanese have also tended to judge culture's worth by its price, its monetary value, and this has become a national trait. Japan's future is dark unless we change this.

KIMURA: Isn't the idea that culture is somehow an extra still rather firmly rooted in Japan?

We seem to think that now that we've achieved a strong economy, it's time to turn our attention to culture, but that view treats culture as a mere decoration, something only for show.

IGETA: Most Japanese don't seem to realize that culture is not an extra; it is a vital necessity for human beings.

IKEDA: The Meiji-period writer Natsume Soseki (1867–1916) wrote in *The Three-Cornered World*:

Approach everything rationally, and you become harsh. Pole along in the stream of emotions, and you will be swept away by the current. Give free rein to your desires, and you become uncomfortably confined. It is not a very agreeable place to live, this world of ours.

When the unpleasantness increases, you want to draw yourself up to some place where life is easier. It is just at the point when you first realize that life will be no more agreeable no matter what heights you may attain, that a poem may be given birth, or a picture created.

We have to live. We work, we eat our daily bread, and we grow old. Our lives are a constant repetition of little deeds. Against that backdrop, we progress, we seek a more fully human existence, we desire to make a flower bloom. From that feeling culture and art are born.

Life is painful. It has thorns, like the stem of a rose. Culture and art are the roses that bloom on that stem.

IGETA: A life without art is like nature without any flowers.

IKEDA: The flower is yourself, your humanity. Art is the liberation of the humanity inside yourself.

The institutions of human society treat us as parts in a machine. They assign us ranks and place considerable pressure upon us to fulfill our defined roles. We need something to help us restore our lost and distorted humanity. Each of us has feelings that have been sup-

ART, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

pressed and have built up inside. We have a voiceless cry resting in the depths of our souls, waiting for expression. Art gives those feelings voice and form.

We can also vent those feelings through pleasures and play, which may suffice for a while, but in the long run such distractions bring no true satisfaction or sense of fulfillment. Our lives will grow dull and lusterless, we will feel empty inside, because our true selves, our true heart's desires, have not been set free at the deepest core. Art is the cry of the soul from the core of one's being.

Creating and appreciating art set free the soul trapped deep within us. That is why art causes such joy. Art, quite aside from any questions of skill or its lack, is the emotion, the pleasure of expressing one's life exactly as it is. Those who see such art are moved by its passion, its strength, its intensity and its beauty. That is why it is impossible to separate a fully human life from art.

The Buddhist concept of cherry, plum, peach and damson — that each person should live earnestly, true to his or her unique individuality — has much in common with culture and art. Culture is the flowering of each individual's true humanity, which is why it transcends national boundaries, time periods and all other distinctions. Likewise, correct Buddhist practice means cultivating oneself and serving as an inspiration for leading a truly cultured life.

IGETA: I can see now what a profound role culture plays in human existence. A society that regards culture as a mere extra is not a fully humanistic society.

IKEDA: A society that values culture is a society that values human happiness. The first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, said that happiness lies in the pursuit of beauty, benefit and virtue. Benefit is the pursuit of all that is rewarding, in the broadest sense. Virtue is the pursuit of justice and opposition to injustice. Beauty is the pursuit of art and culture. All three of these contribute to our happiness. When any one is lacking, there is imbalance. When people become unbalanced, society becomes unbalanced, and people cannot attain happiness.

Today's Japan is unbalanced in favor of political and economic interests and technology,



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

A society that values culture is a society that values human happiness. Happiness lies in the pursuit of beauty, benefit and virtue. When any one is lacking, there is imbalance. When people become unbalanced, society becomes unbalanced, and people cannot attain happiness.

The power of culture may be hard to detect at times, but it is a fundamental force, since it transforms the human heart. Political and economic developments may be flashier but culture and education are the forces that shape any age.



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

which makes it all the more important to restore balance by emphasizing the importance of art and culture and supporting their development. Such efforts will make Japan a more humanistic nation, a nation that other nations of the world can safely trust, and consequently we will be able to contribute to world peace.

KIMURA: You have long been fighting to achieve just that. Despite your endeavors, unethical people with no understanding of the importance of art and culture have attacked you and tried to undermine your efforts. This makes us very angry.

IKEDA: From the time I met Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, when I was 19, I realized that the only route for Japan was to become a cultured nation. Only through culture and the arts would Japan rise spiritually from the ashes of war. This is true of any country.

I have stuck to this belief over the years, and that is why I, though an ordinary private citizen, could meet with so many people around the world and have earned their trust and support. It has all been due to the power of culture.

I held a dialogue with Dr. Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), the great British historian, some 25 years ago [in 1972 and 1973]. We spoke about many topics, including the importance of culture. In the midst of our discussions, there was some exciting political news of a meeting between two world leaders. At that time, Dr. Toynbee said to me that though our discussions might not be attracting much attention at the moment, in 10 or 20 years people all around the world would agree with and laud what we had said. His prediction came true.

Today the dialogue between President Ikeda and Dr. Toynbee has been published in 21 languages.

The power of culture may be hard to detect at times, but it is a fundamental force, since it transforms the human heart. Political and economic developments may be flashier and make the news more often, but culture and education are the forces that actually shape any age. We must not make the mistake of looking only at the shallow waters that bubble noisily over the rocks; the deep currents are even more important in knowing the true nature of the river.

PLEASE SEE ART, NEXT PAGE

ART, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

IGETA: To return to an earlier point, you said that whether one has skill makes no difference. Could you elaborate on that?

IKEDA: Yes. Whether or not one is skilled, the important thing is to come into contact with great art. The feeling of wonder and excitement one gets from experiencing great works is the heart of art. The essence of art is seeing, hearing, feeling and then discovering.

KIMURA: Though we know we should experience great art, many of us may not feel confident that we know what art is great and what isn't. We may not appreciate what others agree is a great work. How can we recognize great art?

IKEDA: A great work of art is one that truly moves and inspires you. You yourself must be moved. Don't look at art with others' eyes. Don't listen to music with others' ears. You must react to art with your own feelings, your own heart and mind. If you allow yourself to be swayed by the opinions of others — "It must be good, because everyone else likes it," "It must be bad, because no one else likes it" — your feelings, your sensibility, which should be the very core of the artistic experience, will wither and die.

To enjoy art to the fullest, you must abandon all preconceived notions, leaving a blank slate. Then confront the work directly, with your entire being. If you are deeply moved, then that work is, for you, a great work of art.

KIMURA: Then what is considered a great work of art is different from person to person?

IKEDA: Though one's subjective responses are very important, we mustn't lose sight of objectivity, either. It is necessary to nurture, through effort, the ability to appreciate truly great art. As you progress in your degree of understanding, art that you thought was good in the past may no longer seem so satisfying, and works that once left you cold suddenly have a tremendous power to move you.

For example, works of art that are recognized around the world and have moved many, many people over the centuries do possess qualities that merit their being identified as great, universal works of art. Art that lacks those qualities, though it may be popular for a time, tends

A great work of art is one that truly moves and inspires you. You yourself must be moved. Don't look at art with others' eyes. You must react to art with your own feelings, your own heart and mind. If you are deeply moved, then that work is, for you, a great work of art.

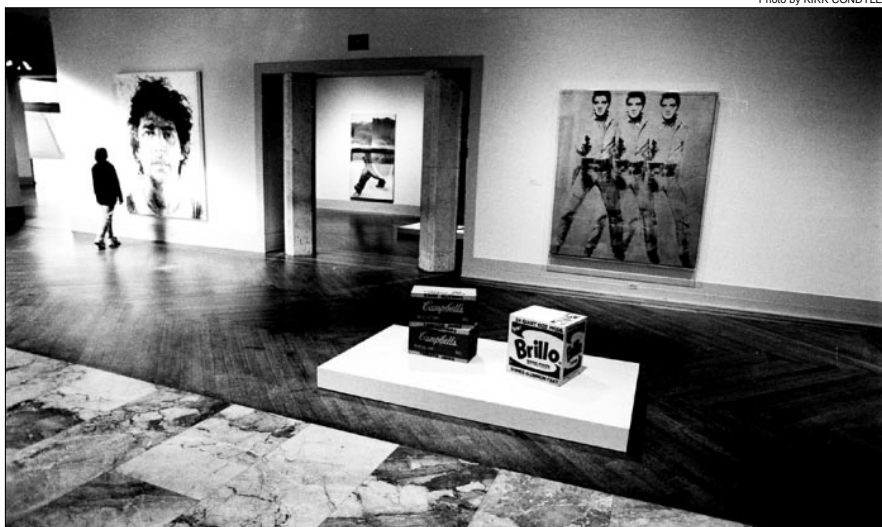


Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

not to last. There are certain experiences that almost all human beings are inclined to agree upon: When we look up at the clear blue sky, we all think it is marvelous; when we gaze at cherry blossoms, we all find them beautiful.

The great works of art also possess a universal quality. They possess a life force similar to that of nature itself. To instill that life in their work, the great artists suffer immensely, pouring their whole life energy into their art.

IGETA: How can we nurture the ability to recognize great art?

IKEDA: Probably the best way is to see and hear as many of the generally agreed-upon masterpieces of world art as you can, which will cultivate and refine your sensibilities. You will naturally learn to distinguish good from bad.

Looking at second- and third-rate art will not help you understand first-rate art, but once you know first-rate art, you will immediately apprehend what is second and third rate. Your critical eye will emerge. That is why you should make an effort to come into contact with the best

from the very start.

You can see great art in books, of course, but seeing the real thing, when you have a chance, is an entirely different experience. I still remember how tremendously moved I was when I first saw the great paintings in the Louvre. It's the difference between seeing a photograph of a person and the person himself.

View good paintings. Listen to good music. Experiencing fine art will develop and nurture your mind.

IGETA: We are not all meant to be professional artists, so I guess the important thing is to foster a love of art and culture.

IKEDA: To enjoy painting or singing as a hobby can also be a way of participating in the movement to spread culture. Recently, we have even seen Japanese companies seeking to recruit employees who have some kind of talent. There are many reasons for this, but one is that they look for such people because they value the kind of personality that pursues art and culture. We should all develop the mind to rejoice in, praise and share in the gift of those who

have artistic talents and a richness of heart, whether they achieve wide recognition or not. Cultivating such a beautiful mind is a very worthy effort.

Culture and art are not just decorations. They are not accessories. What matters is whether culture enriches the essential substance of our lives.

IGETA: I understand that the important thing is to enrich our inner selves. The leader of the high school girl's division in Kyoto, Reiko Fujita, is working in a uniquely Japanese field of textile dyeing, in which complicated patterns are hand-painted or stenciled on silk. Ms. Fujita says: "My feelings find expression in the colors I use. For example, if I am thinking of the happiness of others, that will appear in the designs and the colors. That's why I need to continue developing myself."

She also said: "I hope to look out to the larger world and breathe the fresh air of change, infuse my craft with that inspiration, and then share it with the world as an example of Japanese culture. My aim is to create beautiful art for the world, for others."

IKEDA: That's wonderful. I

hope we can inspire many others who also respect culture and love art. When many such individuals come together, and when nations are linked in that spirit, our world will be ideal, and the century of true humanity will dawn.

KIMURA: That will surely be the century of peace.

IKEDA: Peace and culture are one. A genuinely cultured nation is a peaceful nation, and vice versa. When conflicts multiply, culture wanes and nations fall into a hellish existence. The history of the human race is a contest between culture and barbarity. As we leave the tensions of the Cold War behind, the pressing question becomes "What will the coming century be like?" Only culture is a force strong enough to put an end to conflict and lead humanity in the direction of peace.

KIMURA: You had enormous foresight in establishing so many cultural institutions, such as the Min-On Concert Association, the Fuji Art Museum [in both Tokyo and Shizuoka], Soka University and many others. You have contributed greatly to that cultural force you speak of.

IKEDA: At the time, everyone opposed those projects! No one understood what I was doing.

IGETA: To pursue such a vision on your own, against the opposition of others, and to actually carry it out reflects a great artistry in its own right.

In culture and other fields as well, people often say that the Japanese are good imitators but poor innovators. How do we learn to innovate?

IKEDA: The pursuit of beauty, like most other human activities, often starts with imitation. All learning begins as imitating; one can't innovate without first learning the basics. Someone plunking around on the piano without having first mastered the keyboard is not what we call an innovator. Imitation is the first step toward the creation of new art.

But one can't remain an imitator forever. In Japan, most artists never get beyond imitation, never reach the stage in which they are creating something of their own. We are a nation of imitators; in technology and many other fields, we have used our ability to imitate to make money and created the Japan we see today. But though

PLEASE SEE ART, NEXT PAGE

ART, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

we are clever imitators, we don't seem to have the ability to take the next step, to break through the wall. The only way to surmount this restrictive tradition is human revolution.

KIMURA: What is essential for advancing from imitation to innovation?

IKEDA: If we only repeat what we have seen and heard, we will never advance beyond imitation. The mind is crucial. We have to experience with the mind and express with the mind in order to innovate. That requires blood, sweat and tears, it requires relentless searching and continual effort. Only then do we gradually acquire the ability to express ourselves fully and naturally.

Effort is key. Leonardo Da Vinci (1452–1519) wrote in his manuscript notes: "Poor Leonardo! Look how much you suffer!" [Translated from Japanese *Reonarudo da Binchi no Shuki* (The Notebook of Leonardo da Vinci), trans. Mimpei Sugiura (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977), vol. 1, p. 31]. And Beethoven, on his deathbed, while eagerly continuing to study the music of George Frederic Handel (1685–1759), is said to have declared that he still had much to learn.

KIMURA: Beethoven said that? I always thought Beethoven was a very proud man who regarded himself as a genius who could learn from no one.

IKEDA: He was a proud man, but all great people are also humble, in the truest sense. They know what it is to respect and look up to others. The pettier the individual, the more prone he is to envy.

Beethoven once wrote to a young girl:

The true artist has no pride; unhappily he sees that Art has no bounds. Obscurely he feels how far away he is from his aim, and even while others may be admiring him, he mourns his failure to attain that end which his better genius illumines like a distant sun. [Michael Hamburger, *Beethoven — Letters, Journals and Conversations* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1951), p. 115]

IGETA: This profound humility must be what allowed Beethoven to create the great works he did.

IKEDA: In the same letter, I believe, Beethoven wrote: "I know of no other advantages of human beings than those which place

them in the ranks of the good and the superior; wherever I find these, there is my home" [Ibid.].

KIMURA: It's who we are as people that is important. There have been, certainly, famous artists who were not especially good human beings.

IKEDA: Yes. Appreciating an artist's music or painting is quite different from respecting the artist as a human being. We must be careful not to confuse the issues of artistic skill and talent with respect for the artist as a person. It is not at all rare to find "cultured" people who have lived degenerate lives or have committed atrocities. It may be an extreme case, but Hitler regarded himself as an

artist. Many of his paintings survive, and though opinions vary, it is probably fair to say that they are not inferior from the standpoint of technique. Yet Hitler can never be regarded as a civilized, cultured person. He was a barbarian, an incarnation of the evil nature of corrupt power.

An example of an artist who was very good-natured was the French painter Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796–1875), a precursor of the Impressionists. After achieving some success as a painter, he was always kind to those around him. When one of his models married a poor man, he gave her a dowry. When a painter friend was about to be driven from the house he was renting, Corot bought the house and gave it to him.

A woman who knew Corot is said to have remarked, "I don't know if his paintings are masterpieces, but he himself is a masterpiece created by God."

KIMURA: Even artists must examine themselves as human beings. They can't allow themselves to become self-centered.

IKEDA: Being creative is very different from being self-centered, just as genuine individuality and an invented, eccentric persona are different. In fact, it may well be that truly unique individuals express their uniqueness without even trying. They seek and accept nature, life and truth and try to convey them exactly as they are. In the process, their individuality naturally

shines through. That is true creativity, true innovation.

I think the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) meant the same thing when he said that life is more important than individuality in the creation of art.


IGETA: Real creativity is important for all of us, not just for artists. In the future, Japan cannot get by with mere imitation.

IKEDA: That's probably true. We will face a "creativity competition." But it's far easier to talk about creativity than to actually be creative. Being creative is a fierce struggle. Creative people always face opposition from conservatives, and they must endure the loneliness and isolation of the misunderstood. They need courage. They need tenacity. They need to have faith in their endeavor that isn't swayed by petty considerations of gain and loss.

KIMURA: When people say the Japanese are not creative, they may be pointing to the fact that many Japanese lack such faith and courage.

IKEDA: I would like you, our young people, to make Japan and the world into a creative, culturally rich society. The 20th century killed far too many, beginning with its two world wars. Though it is spoken of as the century in which civilization made its greatest advances, it has also been the century of the most barbaric massacres. Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the Nanking massacre, and the Stalinist purges are all symbols of that barbarism. They are lessons to us all: Even an apparently civilized society will never have peace without truly cultured individuals who love humanity. Without that, the products of modern civilization become the tools of demons.

Mr. Makiguchi taught that education is the highest of all arts, the art of creating the values of fine character. His words are golden. Art does not belong to a select few. Nurturing people, cultivating the self is also art. Art is displayed in a beautiful life, beautiful actions, beautiful prayer.

The wonderful art of peace is devoting ourselves entirely to linking one beautiful human heart to another. When such cultivated lives and culture itself are joined, the truly humane culture of the 21st century will be born. When fully realized humanity and art come together, a truly humane art will be born. It is your mission to forge that spectacular and creative future. 

The 20th century killed far too many, beginning with its two world wars. Though it is spoken of as the century in which civilization made its greatest advances, it has also been the century of the most barbaric massacres.

Even an apparently civilized society will never have peace without truly cultured individuals who love humanity.



My Recollections



Dr. Alexander Yakovlev, Leading Architect of Perestroika

By SGI President Ikeda

The view of the grove of blossoming cherries from a window of the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall was as splendid as a painting from the days of the ancient Japanese court. As he gazed out, Dr. Alexander Yakovlev quoted Dostoevsky's remark that beauty redeems the world. "Perhaps, President Ikeda," he continued, "the beauty that Dostoevsky refers to is humanism."

It is humanism that will redeem the world — this is the conclusion of one of the architects of the Soviet reform movement of perestroika, from a man who changed our world.

Soon after I greeted Dr. Yakovlev at the memorial hall, he said: "There are many palaces in the world. Most of them were built in honor of people who slaughtered many of their fellow human beings. Military leaders, for instance. Or for religious leaders who condoned war.

"But this building is different. It is a building that honors an individual who dedicated his life to defending good and who in the end gave his life for that cause."

The Makiguchi Memorial Hall is an expression of our gratitude toward first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who opposed Japanese militarism and died in prison. Dr. Yakovlev remarked that culture exists in such a grateful spirit.

"Many political leaders throughout history are bereft of gratitude," he said. "This is evident in that their actions are not civilized. Once they attain power, they devote all their energies to denouncing their precursors, seeking to achieve recognition for their deeds by disparaging the authority and achievements of those from whom they wrested power."

Listening to these words, I caught a glimpse of the bitter struggles that Dr. Yakovlev underwent in the Kremlin. He knew from personal experience just how corrupting power can be.

Most of the Soviet Union's leaders had no interest in achieving any political ideal. Their ef-



Dr. Yakovlev discusses perestroika with SGI President Ikeda at Makiguchi Memorial Hall, April 19, 1996.

forts were devoted solely to their own interests, to creating and preserving comfortable positions for themselves. They cared more for their nation's good than the world's good, more for their party's good than their nation's good, and more for their personal good than anything else.

This corrupt attitude had to be overcome! To Dr. Yakovlev, reform meant developing citizens with a new mind-set. His idea was to build a bridge between government and ethics. The challenge he set for himself was thus a fundamental reform of the Soviet people, a kind of human perestroika.

When he published a 1973 article denouncing an upsurge in Russian nationalism in the Soviet Union, Dr. Yakovlev was "exiled" to the post of ambassador to Canada. Ten years later in 1983, Mikhail Gorbachev (then a member of the Politburo and secretary of the Central Committee) visited Canada, where one day they found themselves alone in a wheat field in southern Ontario, speaking frankly and openly. They discovered that they thought alike, and a close rapport developed between them.

The wheat field was beautiful that May day. All around, wildflowers were in bloom. That wheat field, pulsing with life, is where the challenge of the humanization of Russia and the world began.

Neither felt he could permit a society to continue to hold its own people in contempt. With the Soviet Union's rich natural resources and advanced science and technology, why were the people so poor? Why were we continuing to build nuclear weapons when we had enough to destroy all humanity many times over? Were we too stupid to make it possible for citizens to live honest, happy lives?

According to Dr. Yakovlev, the basic principles of perestroika were the restoration of human values and the revival of spirituality. Perestroika was not conceived simply as a means to fill the grocers' empty shelves but to fill the emptiness in people's hearts.

Many people only look at the economic side of perestroika. That view, however, is symptomatic of a tendency to put economic values above all others. Some view the end of the Cold War as nothing more than the triumph of capitalism. But that view, the tendency to judge things in material terms, along with a highly confrontational rivalry, perhaps lies at the root of the Cold War, now a relic.

Dr. Yakovlev is warm, down to earth. He speaks frankly, without affectation. Under thick, bushy eyebrows, his eyes shine with the indomitable light of a mighty lion. He is admired by many for being truly one of the people — and the people

laud him as warmhearted, intelligent, industrious.

Heroes are born where the mountains are beautiful, and the rivers run clear. Dr. Yakovlev was born in the tiny northern Russian village of Korolevo, near the city of Yaroslavl on the Volga River, in 1923. There were only 30 homes there, all belonging to farmers. He grew up milking cows, planting potatoes and eating meat only once a week. The family had one cow and one horse. The children spent the entire day from morning to night in the forest, gathering mushrooms, nuts and berries.

None of the houses in the village had locks on the doors, because the villagers were all honest people. "Of course," Dr. Yakovlev added jokingly, "it may also have been that we were all too poor to have anything to steal!" When he laughed, the deep creases on his face danced.

His mother was a pious woman of deep religious faith. But they were so poor and their circumstances so harsh that, when Dr. Yakovlev became gravely ill as a child, his family could not afford medical treatment. He was so ill and in such pain that all his mother could do was pray that he might be taken to heaven quickly and see an end to his suffering.

At 17, Dr. Yakovlev was drafted into the Soviet Army to fight in World War II. He fought

bravely and was seriously wounded. "Even today I have pieces of shrapnel in my left leg and my lung," he explained.

He was shocked to witness the harsh treatment of soldiers by their officers during the war. But an even greater shock awaited him — when Soviet soldiers who had been held as prisoners of war in Nazi prison camps were returned to their country, they were placed in yet another prison camp, this time a Soviet one. It was beyond comprehension.

"When I was decommissioned from the army, I swore to myself that I would not touch a weapon again for the next 40 years," he recalled. "I don't know why I decided on 40 years. I suppose I thought I wouldn't be around any longer than that." But 40 years later, in 1985, Dr. Yakovlev set in motion perestroika — an effort to lay down all Soviet weapons.

Of course, a reformer's path is never easy. The spider webs of antiquated notions and beliefs that have shrouded the human spirit for many long years have to be swept away again and again. And still they reappear. The Soviet military-industrial complex resisted change and sought to protect its mighty interests. Not even Dr. Yakovlev, a Politburo member, knew how many nuclear warheads the Soviet Union possessed.

Those addicted to power had no intention of reforming themselves. In fact, they did everything in their power to make people hostile to anyone who advocated reform. Their weapons of choice were slanderous rumors and demagoguery.

Dr. Yakovlev was threatened with assassination and terrorist attacks. He was accused of accepting bribes from the West. Such underhanded attacks proved the persistence of Stalin's legacy.

Dr. Yakovlev was the chairman of the Presidential Committee on Rehabilitation of Political Prisoners, the rehabilitation program for the victims of Stalin's reign of terror. As he pored over many documents late into the night, he was filled with a great disillu-

PLEASE SEE YAKOVLEV, NEXT PAGE

YAKOVLEV, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

sionment toward government. Tens of millions of innocent people had been murdered. It was as if the victims' blood was dripping off the papers that documented their execution.

Suddenly, for no reason, a member of one's family would be arrested, loved ones taken without explanation. People were executed though they had committed no crime. Government investigators in each region were given a set quota of "enemies of the people" to fill. And they then set out to find people to fill that quota.

Investigators once called on Dr. Yakovlev's father, and the only reason he escaped was that he wasn't at home when they came. When he heard about their visit, he went into hiding.

There is a forest — Kuropathy in Byelorussia — where many victims are buried. Every day for four-and-a-half years, more than a dozen trucks packed with innocent people made their way here. Only when the people were unloaded and their hands untied did they realize they were to be killed. While their cries for help filled the air, they were shot in the back of their heads and thrown into mass graves. Some 250,000 were executed there.

Today, beyond the forest, the countless mass graves lie exposed to the sky as far as the eye can see. At one grave, someone left a handwritten note that had faded in the rain:

Mother and Father,

I have searched for you since your disappearance in 1937.

At last, after 52 years, I have found you.

Galya

(from Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians*)

People say that even the trees of this forest weep. And there were other Kuropathy Forests all across the nation.

The killing was a nightmare for the perpetrators as well. They were forced to become terrorists, to completely abandon all conscience. They returned to their homes each night with the smell of human blood on their hands. How many did you kill today, Daddy? It was a living hell. They drank themselves into oblivion, so that they could feel nothing.

This was a nationally conducted terrorist campaign, a witch hunt on a grand scale. Secret accusations, arrests, tortures, executions. And there were no explanations. Family members were simply told: "Your father disappeared." "Your daughter is dead."

All ethical principles degenerated. Humanity was destroyed. People could no longer trust one another. They were nothing but livestock, nothing but cogs in the machine of the state.

Dr. Yakovlev sighed and said, "This century is the century of bankrupt governments and politicians." They have created a sea of tears and blood and produced indescribable human suffering, he stated. Dr. Yakovlev's cry was the anguished cry of tens of millions when he asked that those in power act not as politicians but as human beings.

And he insisted: "Only by overturning the authoritarian pyramid that places the government on the top and the people below can we create democracy. The people have to be at the top of the pyramid. In democracy, the people are at the top, and

they employ the nation and the government."

Stalinism survived the death of Stalin. Though physical oppression lessened, spiritual and intellectual oppression became insidiously institutionalized. Though the threat of death at the hands of the regime waned, fear still ruled. A single government order could ruin a family's life. And the authorities did not hesitate to exploit that fear.

Only those who displayed loyalty to their superiors or had no opinions of their own and were easily used by the system were given advancement. Those to whom lies were an anathema, those who made efforts to improve things, were stripped of their positions.

Apathy, subservience and powerlessness permeated. People followed the rules and didn't make waves. The aim was to be like everyone else.

This concerns us, too. To have the attitude that it has nothing to do with us would be chauvinism. If we say that this was only a Soviet problem, unrelated to Japan, if we say that this is precisely why Japan and the Soviet Union were enemies — and as long as we remain indifferent to the fate of our fellow human beings — we are infected with the belief that nations are more important than people.

When one individual is oppressed, all humanity is oppressed. Whenever someone anywhere in the world is deprived of his or her human rights, it's Stalinism. Whenever some official inflicts suffering on his or her underlings and orders others about, meanwhile living a life of ease and comfort, it's Stalinism. Whenever someone writes lies to make money, whenever someone places business before truth and conscience, Stalin is

there. "Whenever someone holds power," lamented Dr. Yakovlev, "he thinks that he is different from ordinary people, that he is better than them."

At an 1880 ceremony to commemorate the Russian poet Pushkin, Dostoevsky, citing Pushkin's poem "The Gypsy," denounced those who think themselves above the people:

Here we already find a suggestion to the Russian solution to the question...in accordance with people's faith and truth: "Humble thyself, O haughty man; first curb thy pride. Humble thyself, O idle man; first labor on thy native soil." (*A Writer's Diary*)

In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the elder monk Zosima says that those who reject religion end up covering the earth with blood. How accurately the great writer predicted the results of Stalinism and the tragedy of our century!

Dr. Yakovlev, once the head of the Ideology and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee, said that "Marxism was actually a new religion under the name of Atheism, a national religion." A society that kills religion begins to kill its citizens. A society that burns books begins to burn people. Under the Soviet Union, as many as 200,000 clerics were killed. Until recently, anyone with religious faith was regarded as a deviant and discriminated against.

Tolstoy declared that churches were the enemy of religion. The Soviet regime, however, was hostile to religion. A society without religion makes the nation and its leaders gods.

That is why Dr. Yakovlev's words are so significant: "Even today, we have not given up war,

we have not stopped committing crimes, we have not stopped destroying the environment. Anyone who is really sincere knows that the biggest problem we face is the redemption of the human spirit. The most important thing now is spiritual leadership to accomplish that."

In August 1991, after the failure of the coup d'état of conservative forces in the Soviet Union, Dr. Yakovlev concluded a speech at a crowded Moscow square with the words "I wish you all personal happiness." These words, I felt, were symbolic of a last farewell to the policy that for 70 years had always placed the nation before the individual. When he finished speaking, an astonishing thing happened. The enthusiastic audience surrounded Dr. Yakovlev and lifted him on their shoulders.

The happiness of each individual — the true spirit of perestroika.

Dr. Yakovlev and his wife, Nina, have two children and seven grandchildren, but he says, "Now I feel that all the children of the world are my children, and I try to bring that spirit to my endeavors." The children who greeted Dr. Yakovlev on one of his visits to Tokyo handed him a portrait they had done of him. Later, recalling their warm gesture of friendship, he said with fond delight: "They have made me Japanese! I have the picture posted in my office."

In a lecture at Soka University in Tokyo, he said: "I believe in humanism! I believe in humanity! And I believe in human beings!"

The curtain has risen on a drama that will unfold on the world stage, the grand drama of the shift from the nation to the people. ❏

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

down the center of the Gohonzon.

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life Span of the Thus Come One" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

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

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

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the past have shaped one's reality at pre-

sent, and actions in the present determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

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

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

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The fundamental component of Buddhist practice, which expresses the ultimate truth of life and allows each individual to tap his or her innate enlightened nature directly. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only

through the practice of chanting it, there is a literal definition for each of the component words: *nam* (devotion) means to fuse one's life with the universal law; *myoho* (Mystic Law) is the fundamental principle of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus flower) refers to the lotus, which blooms and seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect; and *kyo* (sutra, or teaching of a Buddha) broadly indicates all phenomena or the activities of all living beings.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82): The Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. *Daishonin* literally means "great sage" and is used as an honorific title for Nichiren. He inscribed the Gohonzon and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice to attain Buddhahood.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS



Roberto Clemente

A HOME-RUN HUMANIST

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

By FRED MAYER

PHILADELPHIA CORRESPONDENT

Jibaros, the mountain people of Puerto Rico, are said to be compassionate by nature, always focused on caring for those less fortunate than themselves. Indeed, this was the theme of one *jibaro's* life, Roberto Clemente, who died 25 years ago.

During his 18-year career in professional baseball, Clemente earned a place as one of the greatest players in the game's history. He made it into the top 10 in all the offensive and defensive statistics for the Pittsburgh Pirates franchise, collecting more than 3,000 hits and maintaining a remarkable .317 lifetime batting average. But he was also a humanitarian who regularly went out of his way to reach out and help others.

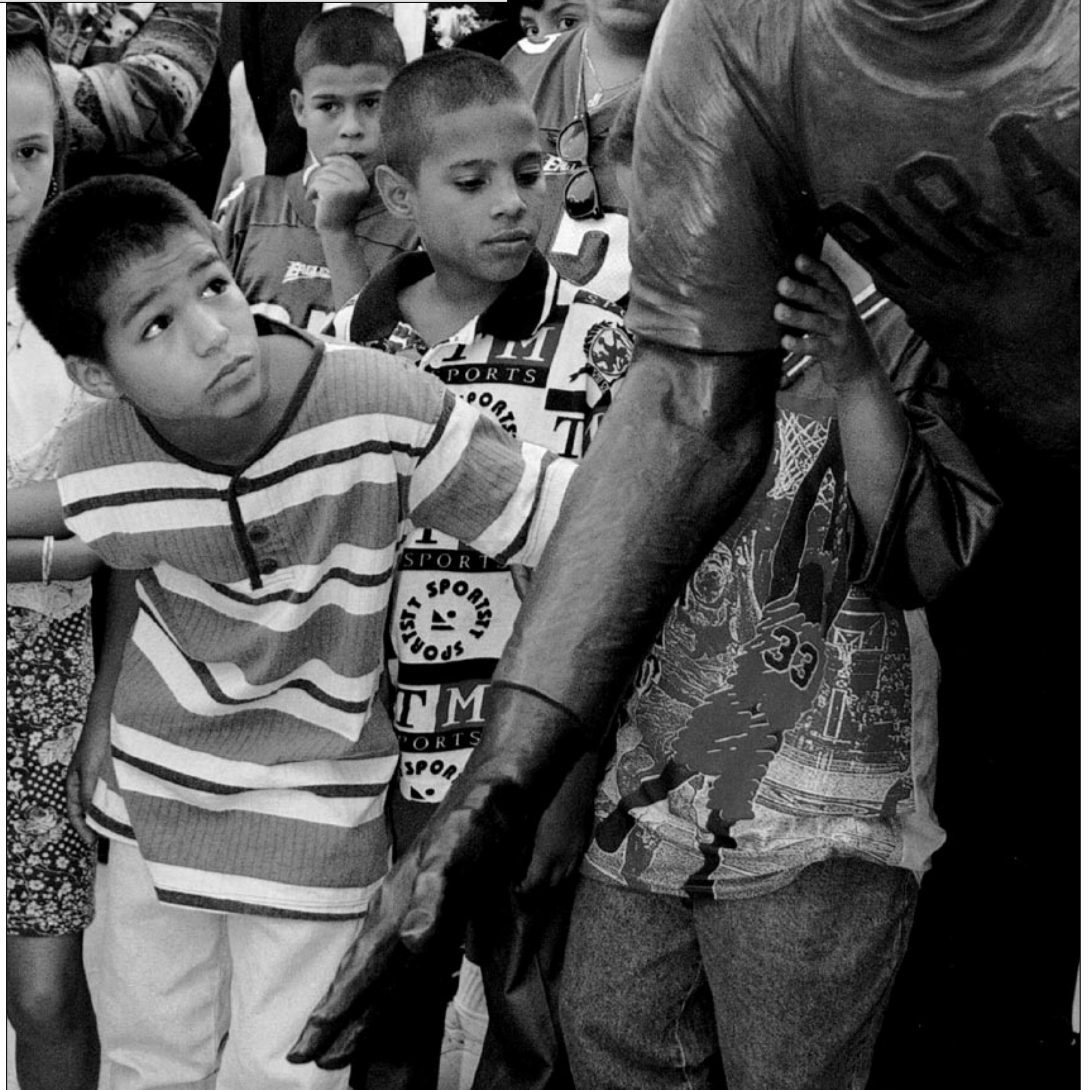
"Babies are dying over there. They need these supplies." With these words, Clemente, at the time 38, boarded a chartered plane to Nicaragua on Dec. 31, 1972. But on the way, the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. There were no survivors.

On Sept. 15, 1997, a statue of Clemente was unveiled outside the Roberto Clemente Middle School in Philadelphia. Standing larger than life at 7 feet 6 inches, the statue pays tribute to the ballplayer, who continues to be an inspiration to the Puerto Rican community.

Johnny Irizarry, a neighborhood leader, can still recall the thrill of watching Clemente propel himself into history as the first Latin American player in the Baseball Hall of Fame. "He wasn't Robert, he was Roberto! — very proud of his heritage," Irizarry says. "There were so many things about him. His skin was black. He was a ceramic artist. He played exciting baseball. He was a humanitarian, a good father. And there was the way he died."

Some felt Roberto was too headstrong. His competitiveness and pride often were mistaken for arrogance. But to the children who can now touch the outstretched hand of the statue bearing his likeness and to the community that united to help raise money to erect this memorial, his humanity outlives the criticism.

There is now even a humanitarian award bearing his name that is given to the major league baseball



Roberto Clemente died 25 years ago on Dec. 31, 1972, in a plane crash off the coast of his native Puerto Rico. He had been en route with emergency supplies for victims of an earthquake in Nicaragua. On Sept. 25, 1997, this statue of Clemente was unveiled outside the Roberto Clemente Middle School in Philadelphia. The statue pays tribute to a man who continues to be an inspiration.

player who has contributed the most to the community at large. Perhaps Jim O'Connor sums it up best in his book *The Story of Roberto Clemente, All-Star Hero*: "The plaque [at the baseball Hall of Fame] does not say that Roberto lost his life helping people he hardly knew. It does not say that Roberto showed the people of his country, his friends and his fans how to be proud to be black or Puerto Rican.

All of these things may not be the reasons that he is in the Hall of Fame. But they are the reasons why we remember him."

If you're interested in contributing an article to this section, please contact the editors at (310)451-8811 or via e-mail: SokaNews@aol.com.