

World Tribune

No. 3175

THE YEAR OF VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 23, 1998

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**'SEIZE THE DAY'
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The following are SGI President Ikeda's remarks at a meeting in Tokyo on Jan. 2, his 70th birthday.

As a famous adage goes, "A person who bravely and vigorously exerts himself is stronger than the greatest multitude." Strength is not a question of numbers. One person of all-out commitment is enough. All it takes is one lion. A person who bravely and vigorously exerts him- or herself is more powerful than a horde a million strong. I have lived my life based on this determination. I am living proof of this adage.

In my youth, I suffered from tuberculosis and was physically weak. But I fought battle after battle. President Toda once wept, saying, "Daisaku probably won't live to be more than 30." On another occasion, he said, "If Daisaku dies, the Gakkai will have no future." And he once even went so far as to say to me, "I will give you my life! Live, in my stead, live long!"

And I — for whom the hopes of living long were so dim — fought with all my might to stay alive. Today I celebrate my 70th birthday.

In my youth, I vowed: "I will stand alone. I will depend on no one. I am a lion. I am a disciple of President Toda, and my aims and aspirations are indivisible from his. I will personally work with total dedication to spread

IT TAKES JUST

ONE LION



the ideals and philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world without fail." All that I have done and achieved is the result of that

pledge.

I have triumphed over the legions of the three powerful enemies of Buddhism, who have singled me out for attack and re-

lentlessly tried to topple me. But their efforts have been in vain, and I have never been more energetic and in vigorous good health and spirits than today.

President Toda wrote in 1951 in his "Precepts for Youth":

We are not specialists in the field of debating political and educational issues. However... through the power of this supreme religion, we seek to achieve human revolution, extend a helping hand to the distressed, enable each individual to build a happy life, and so create a realm of peace and prosperity in Japan.

These are profound words. What did President Toda wish to convey? He wanted to drive home the importance of working for people's happiness on a far more fundamental level than could ever possibly be done by politicians, educators or scholars.

Greatness as a human being is not determined by social position or academic credentials. The most respectable people are those who work for kosen-rufu as Nichiren Daishonin's disciples.

It was President Toda's final will and testament that we cherish and value these individuals above all. Doing so also accords with the Daishonin's spirit. Those who fail to show respect and courtesy to those who strive

PLEASE SEE LION, 4

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

RENEWING OURSELVES EVERY DAY



In this new essay series, SGI President Ikeda uses his pen name Ho Goku — as he does in *The New Human Revolution* — to write the story-behind-the-story. We hope you will enjoy reading this new series, known as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution," in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the *Soka Gakkai's* daily newspaper.

By HO GOKU

A new year. The sun of a grand state of being rises high. On the second day of the new year, I celebrate the start of the Year of Victory of the People with my dear and most esteemed fellow members at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall.

Today is also my 70th birthday. I have received greetings and congratulations from fellow members all over the world. I am humbled, yet also very happy.

Jan. 2 is also the publication date for volume 1 of *The New Human Revolution* in Japanese [published in English by the SGI-USA in 1995]. I hope it will offer some small encouragement to all of you. I thank all

those who assisted with its publication and all my readers.



Just a month before my 30th birthday, I made the following entry in my beloved diary: "I have no life apart from working, advancing and living with all my might alongside President Toda. I have come to realize that I am who I am because of my mentor."

So sickly was I that the doctors told me I probably wouldn't live to 30. My mentor, Josei Toda, showed more concern for me than anyone. He continued to guide and encourage me with compassion and strictness. I spent my days and nights in an exacting, unceasing struggle to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's

PLEASE SEE THOUGHTS, 4



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.

Fairness — An End to Economic Corruption

EDITORIAL

In Japan, a gunman holds a Tokyo Stock Exchange official hostage for six hours. In Thailand, protests over the troubled economy drive the prime minister out of office. In South Korea, laid-off workers threaten to riot. People's life savings are being lost in the blink of an eye.

And the economic crisis is not limited to Asian countries. The past few months' turmoil in Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan and Malaysia shows just how interconnected the world is. Stock market fluctuations in the East have created great havoc in European and American stock exchanges. Currency devaluations in Asia have made it harder to sell American goods there, which in turn has affected company profits, jobs and consumer prices here in the States.

At the root of much of the crisis lies corruption, greed and unsound fiscal policies, according to reports. *Newsweek* says that South Korea's crisis "stems directly from the collusive and corrupt ties between politicians, bankers and top businessmen." Another report blames Japan's "reckless use of the world's capital, which it has accumulated in staggering amounts." Indonesia's woes, analysts say, stem in large part from President Suharto's unwillingness to impose needed reforms, afraid such measures would harm his six children's business interests.

It seems that the cause of the crisis is found in what Gandhi called one of society's seven major blunders — commerce without morality. Writer and scholar Eknath Easwaran defines Gandhi's point this way: "A way of life in which all our nobler goals and aspirations are subsumed in the desire to produce and consume more and more."

SGI President Ikeda says that the morality of fairness should be the "spiritual backbone of business people who aspire for peace." Speak-

ing to University of the Philippines College of Business Administration graduates in April 1991, Mr. Ikeda explained that

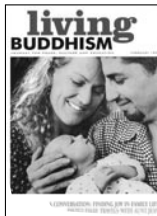
the universal spirit of fairness allows economic imperatives to be controlled by more humanistic principles:

In the world of business, such a universal spirit would not be exceedingly attached to parochial concerns for the good of only one's own venture or nation but would always consider the greater, holistic interest of the entire planet and of humankind; it would even enable one to make correct judgments based on the willingness to rise to the nobility of self-sacrifice that transcends personal gain and profit.

This pertains not only to multinational corporations and international investment brokers — it pertains to each of us. As Gandhi said, "We must be the change we want to see." As much as government bureaucracies and boardrooms must change, ultimately a change in ordinary people will effect the longest-lasting change. Basing our lives on Buddhist values, transcending our own desires for personal gain and profit, can set an example for others, and slowly values of universal fairness will seep into our society's psyche.

When we are not ruled by material, profit-driven motives alone — when we put our "nobler goals and aspirations" at the top of our priority list — we go farther than we think we can toward changing the world's habits.

Based on our inner reformation, our human revolution, we can create a world where economics ruled by fairness play a positive role in bringing happiness to the people — not the misery they so often do now.



Look for the February issue of 'Living Buddhism'

The February issue of 'Living Buddhism,' the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, includes features like:

- Shijo Kingo—A Great Model of Lifelong Practice
- Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra #26

Available soon in your mailbox or local community center bookstore!

World Tribune

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WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

A Fresh Perception

To end all needless adversity
We must warmly greet diversity
What pain we inflict upon ourselves
By relegating others to shelves
As if they were but dry statistics!
Wherefore the Saint, the Sage, the Mystics?
We will never know ultimate joy
If all of good we blindly destroy.

This is an ultimate wish of an 82-year-old man for the coming centuries. No longer to emulate the vain and the tyrannical. Oh, for the clarity of vision of the Buddha!

— JOSEPH KRENGEL, Santa Monica, Calif.

Speaking Out

Ms. Yvette Edmond must be commended for her excellent article, "Willing to Speak Out" (Dec. 26, 1997, *World Tribune*). I was very moved and inspired by it. The article not only emphasizes the tremendous courage of Mr. Sugihara to save so many people, but shows the far-reaching consequences of such an act, as represented by the fact that 3,000 people saved in World War II now have 50,000 descendants! As mentioned in *The Human Revolution*, it just takes one man (person) to change society.

— PATRICIA WOOLMAN, Alhambra, Calif.

The New Page 2

I wanted to send you a thank you for always doing such a great job with the *World Tribune* and to tell you how much I enjoy receiving and reading it. Also, in the Dec. 26, 1997, issue, I noticed you revised page 2 and removed the "Question of the Month" [and "Voices"] and replaced it with summaries about the SGI-USA. I think this is a great change and hope you keep it this way.

The "Question of the Month" was a nice idea, but I think the summaries make it easier to promote our organization and give clear definitions of what we are all about. I hope this section becomes a permanent fixture in the *World Tribune*.

Thanks again for providing everyone with a great way to enhance and encourage all of us in our human revolution and propagation!

— SUSAN OSUNA, Temecula, Calif.

Editor's Note: The new SGI-USA introduction box, a permanent feature, will make it easier for members to give the paper to friends who know little about the organization. Look for a new "Voices" column twice a month on page 3, beginning soon.

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*).

The Unsinkable Titanic

PERSPECTIVE

The new movie makes it clear that each moment in life is extremely important and has profound effects on our future.

By BARBARA FORD
KANSAS CITY, MO.

Since Hollywood and the country are abuzz about *Titanic*, I went to see the movie. Placing romance against a backdrop of disaster, *Titanic* is of mythical proportions, yet based on anything but myth.

The *Titanic* was a technological marvel of its era. Walter Lord, in his book *A Night To Remember*, catalogues the ship's truly titanic size: "Her weight — 46,328 gross tons...66,000 tons displacement. Her dimensions — 882.5 feet long...92.5 feet wide...60.5 feet from waterline to Boat Deck, or 175 feet from keel to the top of her four huge funnels. She was, in short, 11 stories high and four city blocks long...her most arresting feature was her watertight construction." The liner was considered unsinkable because of its double hull and watertight steel bulkheads. This may have been one reason why it had a mere 20 lifeboats, enough to save only half of the passengers.

On April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* set sail with a cargo of the rich and famous; 337 first-class passengers, many with entourages of servants, brought all the comforts for a trip abroad: dishes, silverware, brandies and finery. Names like Guggenheim and Astor dotted the first-class list. There were 271 second-class passengers and 712 in third class. The crew totaled 915. In all, 2,235 people.

The atmosphere was festive — until the fourth night of the voyage. As Mr. Lord wrote: "The wind whistled through the rigging as the *Titanic* raced across the calm, black sea at 22.5 knots. It was almost 11:40 p.m. on Sunday, the 14th of April, 1912. Sud-

denly Fleet [Frederick Fleet, one of six lookouts] saw something directly ahead, even darker than the darkness. At first it was small (about the size, he thought, of two tables put together), but every second it grew larger and closer.... For the next 37 seconds, Fleet and Law [another lookout] stood quietly side by side, watching the ice draw nearer. Iceberg right ahead."

The ship veered but not enough. Captain Edward J. Smith and the ship's architect, Thomas Andrews, calculated that the berg had cut a 300-foot gash in the ship, flooding the

Except for lifeboat number 14, the rest ignored those who were drowning in the icy waters. There was even a case in which somebody on a lifeboat hit a drowning person who was desperately trying to climb into their lifeboat. There were many other ugly sights. Indeed, it was a hell that unfolded in the ocean.

The human mind changes from moment to moment. It can become endlessly ugly and mean when it is confronted with a life-or-death situation. When I think of the hellish picture of the sinking *Titanic*, I wish there could have been someone who chanted daimoku on board. At any rate, I cannot help but pray for the peace and happiness of those who were killed in the accident.

Survivors were rescued by the British liner *Carpathia*, which arrived on the scene at 4:40 a.m. After the disaster, acts of heroism and cowardice were recounted by the press and at hearings. Many survivors were branded with shame and regret, while medals were pinned on the brave. The lives of those who had survived were profoundly altered by their actions during the calamity.

Looking at the

first five compartments. The ship was going down.

On April 14, 1912, at 2:20 a.m., the *Titanic* slipped into the depths of the icy Atlantic. The death toll was 1,522. Only 713 survived.

In 1987, SGI President Ikeda used the *Titanic* as an example in one of his speeches. He talked about the atmosphere aboard the lifeboats as the ship sank:

Confusion and misery prevailed on the lifeboats. These boats were poorly equipped and the direction given to each boat was so confusing that some hastily left without many passengers. Many people [who were not in the lifeboats] but succeeded in getting off the ship drowned.

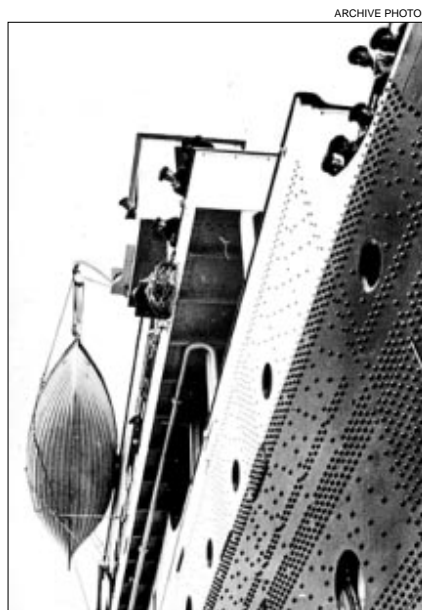
Titanic disaster from a Buddhist perspective makes one realize that each moment of life is extremely important, and what we do now will affect the future.

A friend of mine was talking about the movie *Titanic* to her 13-year-old son. She said, "And at the end, when the *Titanic* sinks...."

"Mom!" her son interrupted. "By telling me the end you've ruined the movie for me."

I don't think she ruined the movie — the sinking isn't the story; it's how people responded to the crisis.

The *Titanic* went down, yes, but the lessons we can learn from its sinking are unsinkable. ❧



The 'Titanic' is seen here docked at Southampton, England, shortly before its maiden voyage in 1912. It carried only enough lifeboats for half of its passengers.

Address: It Takes Just One Lion

LION, FROM PAGE 1

earnestly for kosen-rufu are perverting the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

The key to all development lies in wholeheartedly protecting and supporting the members who are working to realize kosen-rufu. As long as we continue to do so, kosen-rufu will advance.

In contrast, those who exploit the SGI and betray their fellow members will definitely receive strict retribution according to the Mystic Law — the law of cause and effect.

Though one may be able to fool people, one cannot fool the Mystic Law.

There is far too much posturing and deceit in this world. The SGI, however, has advanced its movement to bring happiness and peace to all humanity with a pure, sincere intent. We have acted with earnest concern and commitment.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

President and Mrs. Ikeda at the Jan. 2 meeting in Tokyo.

As a result, the SGI has developed into a global organization. It rises majestically as a king of the religious world.

Japan, a nest of jealousy and envy, is small and petty-minded. But the world is a friend and ally to the SGI — the world is the SGI's stage.

Every day, morning and evening, I am praying with all my heart for your health and long life and also for your prosperity, happiness and safety.

Let us make joyous, high-spirited progress again this year. ❧

THOUGHTS, FROM PAGE 1

Buddhism.

When my strength was sapped by ill health and exhaustion, Mr. Toda said to me: "You are waging a battle against the three obstacles and four devils. Take all your pain and suffering directly to the Gohonzon, and fight to overcome every obstacle."

He also told me, "Live your life and forge your faith in such a way that you can meet death with dignity and composure whenever it should come." His voice — the voice of a strict yet loving father — pierced the very depths of my being. On another occasion, Mr. Toda said to me: "I will give you my life! Live, in my stead, live long!"



My mentor breathed this life into me, and I triumphed over my fate, over being hounded by the demons of illness — and I reached the age of 30. Exalted, I recorded in my diary how I had spent each decade of my life and what my goals were for the decades ahead.

To the age of 10: Growing up the son of a humble seaweed harvester.

To the age of 20: Self-awakening and struggling against illness.

To the age of 30: Studying and practicing Buddhism, and making earnest efforts to defeat the demons of illness.

To the age of 40: Perfecting my study and practice of Nichiren

Daishonin's teachings.

To the age of 50: Making a clear statement in society.

To the age of 60: Completing the foundation for the kosen-rufu movement in Japan.

But my diary says nothing about what happens after 60. I never thought I would live beyond that age.

Incidentally, it was in the autumn of my 57th year — a few months before I turned 58, the age at which Mr. Toda died — that I fell ill and was hospitalized.



If Mr. Toda were alive today, he would shortly turn 98. I am convinced that I have lived to see this 70th year because Mr. Toda shared a portion of his life force with me.

Victor Hugo began to write his great novel *Ninety-three* when he was 70. At about the same age, Leo Tolstoy began to devote his energies to writing his masterpiece *Resurrection*. Soon after becoming 70, founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi began publishing the journal *Kachi Sozo* (Value Creation), opening the way for fresh discussion and debate toward spreading the greatness of the Daishonin's teachings.

Now, with Ho Goku as my pen name, I am applying myself earnestly to writing volume eight of *The New Human Revolution*. The serialization of installments in the *Seikyo Shim-*

bun will resume shortly.

If I were to set down what I have accomplished from age 60 to the present, along with what I envisage for the decade ahead, it would read as follows:

To the age of 70: Establishing the principles of a new humanism.

To the age of 80: Completing the foundation for worldwide kosen-rufu.

From that point on, in accord with the Mystic Law and the undying, unaging nature of life expounded in Buddhism, I am determined to take the lead in kosen-rufu throughout eternity.



In a poem he wrote when he was more than 70, Goethe said:

*"Tell me! How you keep on renewing yourself?"
You can do it, too, if you always rejoice at what is great.*

My life is one great journey for kosen-rufu. Before me I see the hope-filled mountain range of the 21st century.

The third stage of life is synonymous with the third youth. An ancient Chinese maxim urges, "Renew yourself each day."

I vow with the firmest determination to exert myself "bravely and vigorously" again this year (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 23). ❧

NEWS BRIEFS

SOUTH KOREA

SGI President Honored by South Korean County

The Legislative Assembly of Chin Chon County, Korea, conferred honorary citizenship and a certificate of commendation on SGI President Ikeda, Dec. 24, 1997. This was in recognition of his long-standing efforts to promote peace, culture and education globally, and was the first time a non-Korean citizen had been so honored. At the conferral, assembly members acknowledged the SGI's contributions to the welfare of society, singling out the endeavors of the SGI of South Korea (SGIK) to protect the environment.

SGIK sponsored a concert last September aimed at raising environmental awareness and donated books to a local youth center, the county education office and outlying schools. The SGIK also spearheaded a campaign to clean up of the shores of Lake Cho Pyung, located near the SGIK training center in Chin Chon County.

GERMANY

SGI of Germany Commended by City Mayor

SGI President Ikeda received a letter of appreciation on Dec. 22, 1997, from the German city Bingen am Rhein in recognition of the contributions made by the SGI of Germany (SGID) toward restoring Villa Sachsen, designated an important cultural asset.

Mayor Birgit Collin-Langen presented the letter to SGID General Chief Hideaki Takahashi in a ceremony at the city hall. A medal commemorating the 900th anniversary of the birth of the German saint Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) — a woman from the Bingen area renowned for her inquiry into a variety of subjects — including medicine, was also conferred.

Villa Sachsen currently serves as the SGID Culture Center and is a place where citizens can meet and foster friendships. Originally built in 1843 as a mountain retreat for a family of nobility, it is situated on vast wooded grounds and commands a fine view of the Rhine.

BRAZIL

SGI President Honored by Brazilian Art Academy

SGI President Ikeda was inaugurated as a nonresident member of the Brazilian cultural institute Ateneu Angrense of Literature and the Arts in a ceremony on Dec. 16, 1997, in Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro, where the academy is headquartered.

In her address, Academy President Regina Maura Rocha Pegorer expressed the academy's joy and honor in welcoming President Ikeda as a nonresident member, not only as the leader of a great organization, but as a poet whose work gives hope to the world's people. She also said that his work guides young people lost and searching for a way forward.

At the reception which followed, the best-selling Brazilian novelist Paulo Lins said that it was truly a privilege for the academy to have the SGI leader as a member, saying that he came to know of Mr. Ikeda's activities through his own work in the field of education. Beverly Maxwell Galloway, a British conductor and academy member who has lived and worked in Brazil for the past 30 years, asserted that President Ikeda deserves considerable recognition for inspiring youth. And Ednéa Paschoal, the academy's former president, hoped that the Brazilian institute would emulate Mr. Ikeda's example to work on the people's behalf.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

How To Be Encouraging

Most of us have a picture in our minds of the perfect Buddhist: a person who chants powerfully and abundantly, never misses an opportunity to recite the sutra, studies hard, shares Buddhism with others, shows actual proof, has a deep sense of responsibility toward others — and is always, always encouraging.

PRIME POINTS



By Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA
General Director

When we compare ourselves to this ideal, some of us may feel discouraged or exhausted, thinking that our efforts will never measure up. Ideals are important because they provide a target for us, something to challenge ourselves toward.

But more important than being a "textbook example" of a Buddhist is being a person who can live each day with hope and joy. A person with this spirit is a person who can encourage others.

I hope that the SGI-USA is and will be a place where members feel comfortable being themselves while at the same time developing themselves. Toward this goal, one of the three areas that we are focusing on this year is supporting members' quests for happiness.

Since encouragement is the key to doing this, I'd like to offer the following points and suggestions.

Encourage by example. Buddhism is active; attaining Buddhahood is the continuous action of striving to improve the quality of your life for the sake of yourself and others. Even though you may feel you're not showing actual proof in a tangible, material sense, if you can continuously and joyfully challenge your goals and dreams, you can inspire others to do the same. And it's better to motivate people with a spark of inspiration than the burden of obligation.

Don't judge. Judgments are usually based on assumptions — which are often incorrect — and can blind us to the unique qualities of each individual. Un-

less we see a person for who he or she is, rather than who we think he or she is or ought to be, how can we appreciate and encourage that person?

Also, I have found that the people who present me with the toughest challenges are often the ones who turn my judgments inside out and help me see humanity, often where I least expect it.

Develop your compassion. One of the first steps in developing compassion is resisting the urge to criticize. I can't think of anyone who is encouraged by judgmental criticism.

Sometimes it's easy to look at a problem that someone else is facing and say, "Your problem is because of your weakness." Calling attention to the shortcomings of others may sometimes be an expression of compassion, but we should never forget the heart of compassion: feeling another person's joys and sufferings as if they were our own. This kind of empathy doesn't just appear; it has to be developed. As we get to know people better, we can better understand and appreci-

ate their lives, thus developing our compassion.

Listen — even if it hurts. Sometimes people tell me that I'm too dry and businesslike, and that they can't feel my heart. This is very painful for me to hear, because I believe I have deep, warm feelings for the members. I'm sad that my feelings aren't always apparent. But I have to recognize that this is my challenge; I have to self-reflect and continuously chant to express my joy and appreciation.

When members give us feedback, it's usually for our benefit. If we can listen to negative-sounding feedback with a spirit of hope and self-improvement, we can keep moving forward without any grudges.

Jump-start your confidence. As we strive for self-improvement, sometimes we focus on our weaknesses more than our strengths, concentrating on fixing what we think is wrong rather than building on what's right. We all have at least one good point or strength.

And although we may lack confidence elsewhere, we tend to

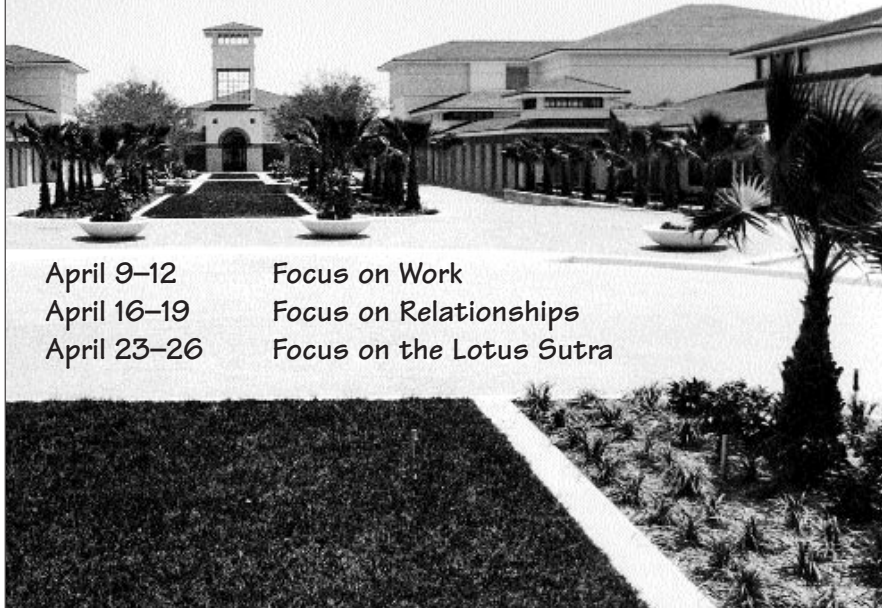
have confidence in our strengths. Recognizing our strengths is a good starting point for expanding our confidence in other areas. We don't have to be perfect in all areas — we just need to be the best we can be.

Encourage others as if you'll only get one chance. SGI President Ikeda has said that he pours every ounce of effort he can muster into encouraging a member. He talks with each person as if it will be his last opportunity to meet him or her. When we talk with members, if we can have the spirit that this will be our last or only meeting with them, we can convey a sense of immediacy and speak truly from the heart.

Remember the sun. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is known as the Buddhism of the sun. The sun shines equally on all things. It's all-inclusive, providing penetrating warmth. It lifts our spirits and nourishes life. We, too, can shine like the sun, brightening others' lives. When we chant about encouraging others, let's envision the great sun of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo rising in our hearts. ❏

Spring at the Florida Nature and Culture Center

In April, the Florida Nature and Culture Center is the place to be. Work, relationships and the Lotus Sutra will be the focuses of three weekend conferences at the beautiful SGI-USA facility in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Contact your region offices today to make reservations.



April 9-12	Focus on Work
April 16-19	Focus on Relationships
April 23-26	Focus on the Lotus Sutra

ARE YOU GETTING READY FOR THE APRIL 19 ENTRANCE EXAM?

Where Is the Study Material?



The Entrance Exam is just around the corner — April 19. So where can you find the study material for it? In *The SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook* and the December

1997 *Living Buddhism*. (The material published in *Living Buddhism* is taken from *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 233-47; *The Life of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 11-18, 56-78 and 83-115; and the pamphlet *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*, "Introduction" and questions 2 and 4.) Sample questions for the exam were published in the Dec. 19 *World Tribune*. The actual test questions will be drawn from the samples, so if you can answer the sample questions, you should do well on the exam.

Good luck and happy studies!

SIGN POSTS APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

Protection Even in Death

By REIKO GROSHALL
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

To be guarded by the Four Heavenly Kings and their retainers is a great honor... And furthermore, Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas of the ten directions will come of their own accord and watch over one through all the hours of the day and night, which is an honor beyond the power of words to express. ("Reply to the Mother of Lord Ueno," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, pp. 243-44)


During the holidays, I found out that a friend of mine had died a tragic death. I was overwhelmed with grief, and although I tried to be courageous, inside I was suffering. However, I faced the new year with tremendous hope and excitement toward challenging whatever I needed to for my life.

The new year had just started when I heard news of my girlfriend's mother's passing, and again I was faced with news of death. The deaths of these two people were under different circumstances, but the sorrow and suffering that their family and friends were going through were the same.

Growing up, I always feared dying. It was something unknown, and frankly I never really wanted to think about it.

But I learned that, as a Buddhist, in order to live fully, I needed to understand death. And through trying to understand death more, I first came across this Goshō.

It encourages me because Nichiren Daishonin is reassuring the recipient, Ueno-ama Gozen, that definitely her son, who has died, will attain enlightenment. He assures her that the Lotus Sutra is the highest teaching, and that only through faith in this sutra can people attain Buddhahood and be protected by all the Buddhas.

Although these recent deaths sadden me, through my faith I have hope. They are protected and will be reborn again — and this process is "an honor beyond the power of words to express." Through my prayers I can touch their lives somehow; this is the greatest offering of all that I can give them. 

No Other Way of Knowing

STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

If you propagate it, devils will arise without fail. Were it not for these, there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching. ("Letter to the Brothers," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 145)

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this in 1275 to encourage the two Ikegami brothers. Their father was pulling out all the stops to hinder their Buddhist practice — he hated them being Buddhist. First he disowned one, then told the other that he would do the same to him. It was a crazy situation.

But the Daishonin knew that Ryokan, the chief priest of the Ritsu sect, a close friend of the father, was pushing the father's buttons to make him do these things. Ryokan was using the father to get at Nichiren Daishonin.

This was happening at a time when the Daishonin had retired to Mount Minobu

and through many letters was encouraging his followers in a renewed wave of propagation. As disciples like the Ikegami brothers propagated the Law, they experienced similar persecutions to what the Daishonin had been through before them. He would essentially tell them: "I've been there. Don't worry," and share his experiences.

To these brothers, the Daishonin also pointed out that being persecuted proves that your teaching is true. In other words, whenever an idea has something great to offer the people, something liberating for them, there will always be those who try to suppress it. They don't want it to ruin their plans to keep people in check or make money off of people. Ryokan was one of those who tried to suppress people — an arrogant priest if ever there were one.

A few years previous, Ryokan and some priests from another sect, Nembutsu, fearing that the Daishonin's compelling remonstrations to regent Hei no Saemon would have some effect (and that they would then lose their priestly influence on the government) targeted the Daishonin for serious character assassination. And it was Ryokan and these Nembutsu priests who went so far as to hire thugs to set fires and even murder people in Sagami Province, then accuse the Daishonin's followers of committing all the crimes. This led directly to the Daishonin's exile to Sado Island. Ryokan

was more like a drug lord than a priest! Obviously, if Ryokan et al. didn't think the Daishonin's teachings were powerful, they would have left him alone. They would never have gone to such extremes.

The same paradigm is in effect today. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood isn't jealous of the SGI just because it's a large organization or because it has a lot of money — the truth is the priesthood knows the SGI has a compelling message for the world's people. The priests are riled by the increasing international influence that the SGI's philosophy of humanism is having. They have little, if any, such influence.

This brings up what I call the polluted river principle. When you walk alongside a polluted river — the kind with lots of trash floating in it, the kind that stinks — you appreciate more how great a clean river is.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is like a clean river, which all of us in the SGI are part of — we're the waves on the top, we're the currents inside it. The priesthood, then, with its jealousy toward the SGI, has become the polluted river that makes us grateful for our clean river. Were it not for this polluted river, perhaps we wouldn't understand as much as we do now how great our river is.

Two in a series

What Was the Daishonin's Intent?

ON THE GOHONZON

STUDYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S INSCRIPTIONS ON THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

As we face the Gohonzon each day, the largest and boldest characters, those of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo down the center, command our attention. We may not even recognize those "word for word," unless we know the Chinese characters. Our awareness of the other characters on the Gohonzon may be even vaguer — simply that they are the ten worlds in our lives, as well as the protective forces of the universe.

Is that enough? Nichiren Daishonin himself told his followers that the Gohonzon exists in faith alone. In other words, it is our faith that activates the power of the Buddha and the Law, not mere intellectual understanding. But there must have been profound thought and wisdom behind the Daishonin's inscription of the Gohonzon as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. The characters encompassed all his study, as well as the history of Buddhism begin-

ning in India and continuing on into China and Japan.

Our awareness of what the Daishonin wrote on the Gohonzon is important to our study of Buddhism. As he states in "The True Entity of Life," "Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 95). Since an awareness of the Daishonin's intent when he inscribed the Gohonzon is particularly important at this time, as we face charges from the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood that the Nichikan Gohonzon is counterfeit and slanderous, this series will study that intent as well as the meaning of each inscription on the Gohonzon.

First and foremost in the Daishonin's mind in inscribing the Gohonzon was enabling all people to attain enlightenment, to realize that they were essentially the Buddha and the ones whose mission it was to spread the wisdom of the Law. So on the Gohonzon he distilled the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the format of the Ceremony in the Air, which is described in the sutra and in which Shakyamuni transfers the Law to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who would propagate it in the future.

In the 11th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, a Treasure Tower rose up from the earth and hung suspended in the air. Through the drama of the Ceremony in the Air, with its marvelous Treasure Tower and

awe-inspiring Buddhas who traveled from all across the universe, Shakyamuni drew his disciples' attention to the Law that all Buddhas practice.

Abutsubo, an elderly follower who met Nichiren Daishonin while he was in exile on Sado Island, once asked him what the Treasure Tower signified. In his reply, Nichiren Daishonin writes that "there is no Treasure Tower other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra" and that "there is no Treasure Tower other than Myoho-enge-kyo" (MW-1, 30). The first step in understanding the Daishonin's intent in inscribing the Gohonzon is to know that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo down the center illuminates all the ten worlds and represents the attainment of enlightenment. It is a condition like the Daishonin's, full of wisdom and compassion in the face of life's sufferings, including the suffering brought on by propagation of the Law.

In the next installment, we'll discuss the characters on either side of Nam at the very top of the Gohonzon — Shakyamuni (left, as we face the Gohonzon) and Taho (right). When it first appeared, the Treasure Tower was closed. But from inside came the voice of Taho Buddha, praising Shakyamuni for preaching the Lotus Sutra. Then Shakyamuni opened the door, sat down next to Taho, and the Ceremony in the Air began.

One in a series

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Nature Is Our Home

This is the 17th installment of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the high school division members.

KIMURA: The subject of many of your photographs, President Ikeda, is nature. When I look at them, I'm always surprised at how you've captured the beauty of even the most familiar scenes. What do you feel as you take those photos?

IKEDA: I always press the shutter with the desire to engage in a dialogue with nature. Through that dialogue, I see my true self — I see the true image of humanity and life.

Nature is like a mirror. It remains still, but I move. It seems unchanging, yet I am constantly changing. The mirror of nature reflects my inner world, the essence of humanity, and the great, all-embracing expanse of life itself.

IGETA: One high school student wrote: "I feel good on a beautiful day. I think it's because the wonderful sun, the wind, the grass and trees are completely natural, existing as they are without pretense or artificiality." I think this student is, in her own way, engaged in a dialogue with the blue heavens and the sun.

IKEDA: Yes, no doubt she is. Only when we are connected to nature, engaged with nature, are we truly alive and vigorous. To really be alive, one must be under the sun, the moon, the shining stars and surrounded by the beautiful greenery and pure waters of the natural world. A dirty, foul environment is not natural. When people live in such surroundings, their hearts become polluted, too. That is the oneness of life and environment.

People cannot exist divorced from nature. And the destruction of nature is nothing but a



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

'People cannot exist divorced from nature, and the destruction of nature is nothing but a sign of the arrogance and ignorance of humanity.'

sign of the arrogance and ignorance of humanity.

I have always loved the writings of Japanese author Doppo Kunikida (1871–1908), which are filled with magnificent descriptions of nature. I still remember many of them. One passage in *Musashino* (Musashi Plain) reads: "The absolutely clear blue sky seen through the tips of the trees and the sun's light dappled by the leaves as they swayed in the breeze were indescribably beautiful."

IGETA: When one experiences such natural beauty, one's heart is cleansed. That's what we mean by having a dialogue with nature, isn't it?

IKEDA: I take photographs because I want to record such a dialogue, so that together we may experience nature's beauty and wonder. Photographs are taken with the heart.

Robert Capa photographed the tragedy of war from the battlefield and left a record of it for us to learn from. I want to leave behind a record of nature's importance.

Robert Capa (1913–54) is regarded as the greatest photo-journalist of the 20th century. He was on the front lines as a photographer in five wars and took more than 70,000 photographs.

Today, there is little interest in pursuing the profound life inherent in nature. Much greater energy is devoted to the exploration of other subjects. While such study may be comprehensive, when it is removed from the essence of life, it has little value.

All of the greatest artistic and cultural achievements of the past were born of a love for nature and from intimate experience of it. As nature has been progressively destroyed, art has become more and more artificial.

KIMURA: The Kansai Soka Schools are well known for raising fireflies. Both teachers and students there are making efforts to breed and protect these luminous wonders of nature. I understand that you proposed this project, President Ikeda.

IGETA: I've heard that the students work hard taking care of

the firefly larvae, feeding them every day, no matter what the weather. Caring for living things is a strenuous effort.

I remember hearing that once the students used a photographic developing pan to house the larvae. They, of course, washed the pan carefully, but it seems some chemical residue remained, and all the larvae died.

IKEDA: Sad as it is, I'm sure the students learned the fragility and value of life from that experience. Fireflies live only two weeks in their adult form, during which they glow and shine beautifully. Their brief lives demonstrate the drama of nature.

When I was a boy, there was a pond next to the cherry tree that stood by our house in Tokyo's Ota Ward. In summer, clouds of fireflies would dance in the night skies over the little stream that ran from the pond.

Where there are fireflies, humans and nature are in harmony. Fireflies are symbols of peace.

Mr. Shigeyuki Matsuda, president of the Kansai Soka Schools, told me that students who were involved in the firefly project are

now growing into kind and considerate adults.

IGETA: Unfortunately, we rarely see fireflies in the cities anymore.

KIMURA: Fireflies can be found all over the world, can't they?

IKEDA: Yes. As a matter of fact, there are beautiful fireflies at the SGI Culture Center in Florence, Italy.

I heard that when the Brazilian poet Amedeu Thiago de Mello visited the Kansai schools, he shared with the students a childhood memory of fireflies. It was night in the Amazon and the sky was filled with stars that were reflected perfectly in the gleaming, jet-black surface of the river, clear as a polished mirror. Stars in the heavens and stars in the river, and in between a twinkling cloud of fireflies. He said it was an unforgettable scene.

IGETA: What a magical vision!

KIMURA: Mr. Mello is known as a protector of the Amazon. By

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the way, the SGI is carrying out a tree-planting program in the Amazon region.

IKEDA: Reforesting the Amazon is a tremendous art form in itself. It is backbreaking, dirty work — out of the limelight. Yet the volunteers stick with it, with great patience and determination, because they believe in it. They all deserve commendations.

Our world should be one in which people like that, those committed to preserving nature, are honored. It makes no sense giving medals and decorations to politicians just because they have been in government for a long time. I'd like to see any one of them speak in the legislature from a love for the environment and in favor of protecting it.

Government must be dedicated to the good of the people. It is a tragedy that the beautiful natural environment that people have cherished and protected for generations is being destroyed in the name of economic growth, political advantage and scientific progress. Because human beings have the capacity to be

aware of the balance of nature, it is our duty to work to preserve it.

I once suggested to someone that each railway station in Japan should cultivate a unique natural character. One could be planted with cherry trees, another with azaleas, another with wisteria and so on.

I think, too, that we should plant more trees along our streets. China has many beautiful tree-lined streets and avenues. At Soka University, I made sure that many azaleas were planted because I believe that humanistic education can only occur in a rich, beautiful, natural environment.

I also had many cherry trees planted at the head temple, Taiseki-ji. Later, as you know, they were cut down by those who lack respect for the environment.

The Nikken sect cut down 280 cherry trees that had been donated by the Soka Gakkai and planted on the grounds of Taiseki-ji.

KIMURA: When someone outside Japan heard that story, they said that this itself is proof of the



'Life is a chain. All things are related. When any link in the chain is harmed, other links will be affected. We should think of the environment as our mother — Mother Soil, Mother Sea, Mother Earth.'

evil nature of the Nikken sect. They couldn't believe that anyone would commit such a hate-filled act.

IKEDA: In countries with an advanced appreciation of the environment, there are many laws protecting it. In Brazil, for example, you can't cut down a tree

— even if it's on your property — without permission from a supervisory agency.

A saying goes that planting a tree is planting life. I think we should all consider the full significance of that.

KIMURA: We are facing an environmental crisis on a global level, and it is a fundamental problem that concerns all humanity.

IKEDA: Yes. Buddhism explains life in a system of 10 stages or states of being — the states of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhi-sattva and Buddhahood. The state of Humanity is right in the middle, with nobler states of life above and uglier states below. Those states below are unnatural states of being, states that oppose nature. The four stages above Humanity all value nature and strive to create a paradise where its beauty flourishes in abundance.

The question is, will we allow ourselves to be dragged down to the lower states, or will we advance to the higher states? Only intelligence, culture and religious faith can lead us out of the Animality that thoughtlessly consumes nature, leaving a barren wasteland. Because of the oneness of life and its environment, a barren, destructive mind produces a barren, devastated natural environment. The desertification of our planet is linked to the desertification of the human spirit.

War is the most extreme example of this destructive impulse. War destroys both nature and the human spirit. This century has been a century of war. We must make the coming century a century of life. We must make the

21st century one in which life is the top priority in all spheres of human activity — in commerce, in government, in science.

IGETA: Environmental destruction is going on in our immediate environment as well. Where I live, green hills and empty lots are all being "developed" into apartments and other buildings. There is no place you can even walk your dog without a leash. It feels extremely cramped and binding.

IKEDA: The destruction of nature is the destruction of humanity. Nature is our home.

All life on this planet, including of course human life, was born from the natural environment. We don't owe our existence to machines or science. We are the products of nature. Life on this planet was not artificially created.

There are many theories about the origins of humanity. Some say that the first humans appeared in Africa; others say that human beings appeared in various locations around the world at the same time. Whatever may be true, it is indisputable that the human species was born of nature.

Because of that, the further we alienate ourselves from nature, the more unbalanced we become. Our future as a species is grim unless we recognize this.

The 18th-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) called for a return to nature. Civilization even in his time had become too mechanical, too reliant on science, too much concentrated on profit, distorting human life into ugliness. It was this unfortunate development that Rousseau protested.

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The rewards of social responsibility

Percent of Americans surveyed who decide to do business with a company based on its concern for the environment, education, other social issues:

Support responsible companies
80%

Shun companies not acting in community's best interest
74%

SOURCE: Survey of 1,572 households conducted by The Center for Corporate Relations, Boston University; research by PAT CARR



KRT

Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

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Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda used to tell young people to walk barefoot and plant trees. He was trying to teach them to root their lives in the natural world.

Indeed, we all want to be healthy. For that reason, we want to breathe clean air, to see beautiful flowers and greenery. We turn to nature for this, just as a sunflower turns to the sun. We must recognize that any action transgressing or negating this inclination is a terrible mistake. All the money in the world won't buy the blue sky. The sun and the breeze belong to everyone.

Human beings can either destroy nature or live in harmony with it. We must never forget that we are a part of nature.

KIMURA: It is true that our lives today are far more convenient than they once were. We can buy almost everything we need, and we can get something to eat anytime we like, day or night. We have access to such a variety of goods that our biggest problem is choosing what we want. But we seem to be destroying the environment and ourselves for the sake of convenience.

IGETA: When I was a student, I had a part-time job at a large fast-food hamburger chain. All of the food arrived frozen from the factory, and we warmed it so that we could serve it immediately. But whenever anything sat for 30 minutes, we would throw it out, wrapping and all, so that we could serve customers fresher food. I was shocked at how much food we threw away.

IKEDA: That's symbolic of our gluttonous society. In the old days, it was considered a crime

to leave even a single grain of rice in one's bowl uneaten.

Mass-producing fast-food hamburgers requires large quantities of cheap beef. And beef cattle need pasture land. To get pasture land, huge tracts of forest are cut down. According to one calculation, five square meters of pasture land in the tropics are required to produce the meat for a single hamburger.

But when the trees are cut down and the roots that once held the earth together are gone, rains wash away the topsoil. As a result, a large proportion of all such pasture land becomes a wasteland after only a few years.

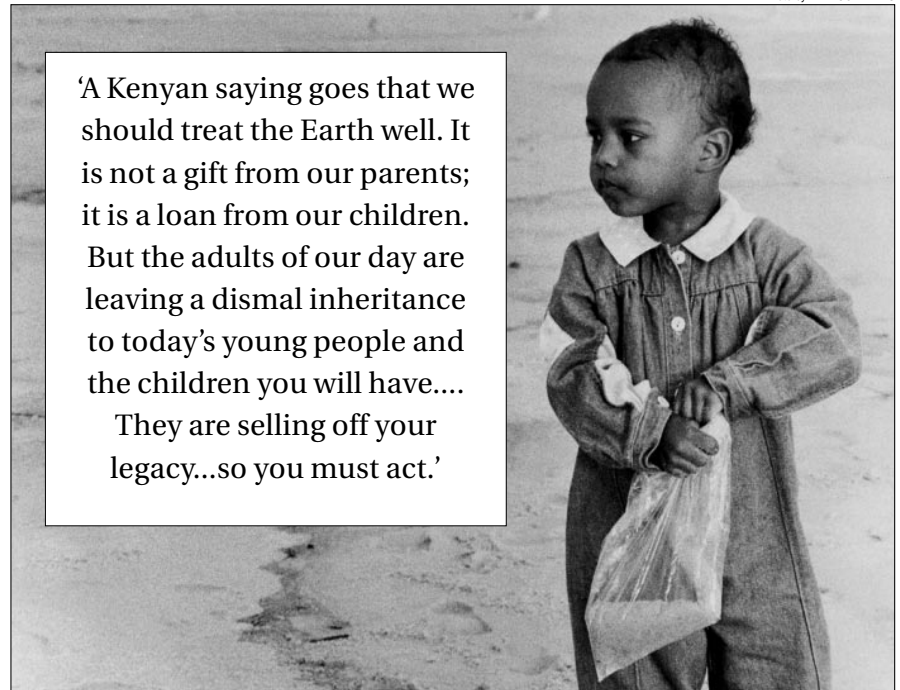
In fact, by 1985, two-thirds of all the accessible rain forests in Central America had been cut down, much of it for pasture. All of the plants and animals living there were killed. The indigenous peoples living in the forest lost their homes and their culture.

Any mass production that requires such a terrible sacrifice — and then that the product be thrown away casually — is base. Is this a sign of real wealth and a good life? How can we just toss food away while at the same time tens of thousands of our fellow human beings are dying of malnutrition and starvation every day?

IGETA: It seems to me that something is fundamentally wrong with the path the human race has taken.

IKEDA: No one is denying that science has improved our lives. Thanks to science we can use electricity instead of just oil lamps and candles. But we need to match the progress of science with progress in our commitment to preserve and protect our environment. We need a balance.

Let's talk some more about forests. Where does the oxygen



'A Kenyan saying goes that we should treat the Earth well. It is not a gift from our parents; it is a loan from our children. But the adults of our day are leaving a dismal inheritance to today's young people and the children you will have.... They are selling off your legacy...so you must act.'

that we breathe, that keeps us alive, come from? From forests, from sea plants. Plants have spent billions of years creating this oxygen.

What about water? Most of the water we use comes from river systems. Whether it rains or shines, water flows through rivers.

Why? The trees and the soil around them absorb the water, storing it underground, from where it flows constantly, bit by bit, into the rivers. If there were no forests and the mountains were hard as asphalt, all the rain that fell in a day would run immediately into the rivers and flow out to sea, just like a bathtub emptying when you pull the plug.

Soil is another gift of the forest. Small animals and microbes help transform the dead roots of trees and their leaves into rich

soil. Without that soil, we could not grow grains or vegetables. We would have no food, and humanity would perish.

Many other products come from forests. Without them, we would have no rubber bands, no paper, no wooden desks or furniture — no homes. All of these, too, are the forest's gifts.

KIMURA: The forest produces the air we breathe, the water we drink, the soil in which we grow our food — all of which we take for granted. Every aspect of our lives is made possible by trees.

IKEDA: And that's not all. Unless we take care of the forests, we won't be able to catch fish in the sea.

IGETA: Why is that?

IKEDA: As I said, without forests all the rain would flow away down the rivers to the sea. That rain would also carry large amounts of silt with it. The silt would cloud the sea waters, block the penetration of light, and lower the sea's temperature, making it too cold for many fish. The forests also produce nutrients that eventually make their way to the sea and become food for marine life. The forests protect the life of the sea.

IGETA: Everything is linked, isn't it?

IKEDA: Life is a chain. All things are related. When any link in the chain is harmed, other links will be affected. We should

think of the environment as our mother — Mother Soil, Mother Sea, Mother Earth. There is no crime worse than harming one's mother.

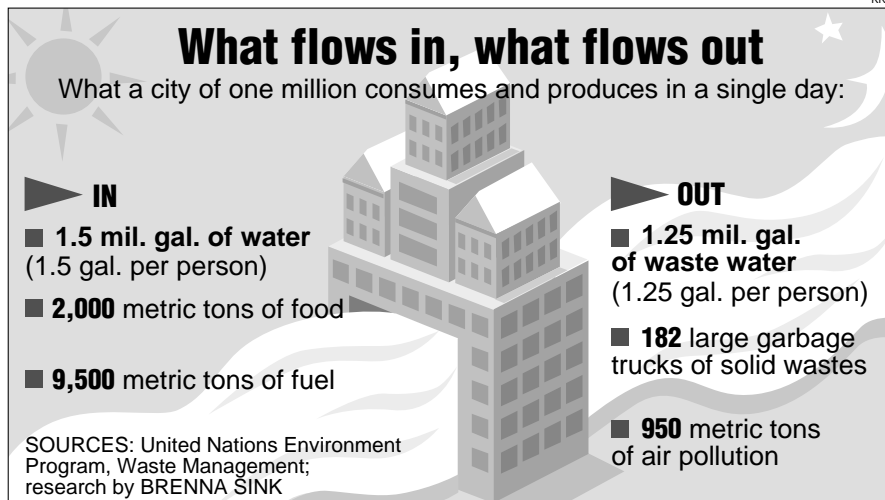
KIMURA: It's important to have a philosophy that recognizes everything in the universe as living and sacred.

IKEDA: We are dependent on the Earth, not the other way around. In our arrogance, we have flagrantly overlooked this. The Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (1934–68), the first person to see the Earth from space, declared it a blue planet. This is a great testimony. The blue of the oceans, the white of the clouds — they are proof that Earth is the water planet, a planet sparkling with life.

The essential teaching of Buddhism is that the life of the Buddha resides in every plant and tree, even in the smallest mote of dust. No philosophy has a more profound reverence for life.

Buddhism elucidates this both deductively and intuitively. I believe that science ought to be committed to the welfare of humanity based on induction, based on reasoning derived from the concrete facts of life. Everything must begin from such purpose.

The Gaia hypothesis, that the Earth is a living thing, is well known. Dr. James Lovelock, who first formulated this idea, wrote in *The Ages of Gaia*: "Strangely, the view [Gaia theory] is not inconsistent with the



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'The Buddha resides in every plant and tree, even in the smallest mote of dust.'



SGI members of all ages volunteered their time to restore a community garden in Hayward, Calif., last year.

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human values of kindness and compassion."

IGETA: If one were to possess such kindness, one would find it impossible to litter.

IKEDA: Only someone who lives in the selfish state of Animality could throw trash or aluminum cans by the road. This is an egoism that cares nothing for others. It is an unnatural way to live. A person who loves nature is simply unable to litter. Tossing one's trash away carelessly is to toss away one's humanity.

By the same token, one who loves nature can cherish other human beings, value peace and possess a richness of character unfettered by selfish calculations of personal gain and loss. Those who live in a calculating way will end up calculating their own worth in the same manner. Such a life is limited in the extreme.

Nature, however, is infinite. Though it may seem beneficial to keep track of personal gain and loss, from nature's broader viewpoint, this is actually a poor, miserable existence. Such people only hurt themselves.

KIMURA: People might think that there is no reward in picking up trash others have strewn about, but I think it's important to do things like that out of love for nature — without thinking about what one may or may not gain.

IKEDA: Only through such selfless actions can we live the best way as human beings.

IGETA: I think that because technology has advanced to the extent it has, it's more important than ever for each person to develop an awareness of environmental protection.

IKEDA: As science advances, it is only natural that we should become involved in many different endeavors to preserve the environment. Each of us, as individuals, must make an effort to not be selfish. To save energy, for example. We must take better care of our environment. Any apparent material improvements in our lives are illusory unless we enhance the fundamental quality of our lives.

KIMURA: Many of the members have begun pondering this subject. One wrote, "I think it's important to stop thinking that one person can't make a difference." And another said, "We mustn't believe that we can make an exception for ourselves, that it's OK for us to pollute our environment."

IKEDA: That's true. It is a lot easier to talk about environmental protection than to practice it. There are obstacles sometimes — and sometimes practicing it can even be life-threatening.

I wonder if you've ever heard of the American marine biologist Rachel Carson (1907-64).

She wrote a ground-breaking book called *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, which attacked the problem of pollution.

At that time, very powerful insecticides such as DDT [dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro-ethane] were being used all across the United States. They seemed to be effective at first, but gradually beneficial insects, fish and birds were disappearing from the landscape.

With no birds to sing, Ms. Carson wrote, a silent spring awaited us. People were beginning to show signs of being poisoned and getting sick from the chemicals as well.

Her book announced these facts to the public and urged that dangerous pesticides be banned. Immediately after publication, she was attacked vehemently.

IGETA: She was criticized, even though what she wrote was true?

IKEDA: She was attacked because what she said was true — by the giant corporations that made huge fortunes from manufacturing pesticides, by officials and politicians who were in the pockets of those companies. This happens all the time, whenever someone tells an unpleasant truth. We must learn to see through such a charade.

All those linked to the pesticide industry joined in a campaign to discredit her. Agricultural magazines attacked her. One wrote, "Her book is more poisonous than the pesticides she condemns." Even state research organizations joined the campaign — research organizations that, needless to say, received large amounts of funding from the chemical companies.

It was a campaign to silence *Silent Spring*. At one time, attacks on Carson were appearing on radio and television as frequently as once every 50 minutes. Even the American Medical Association came out with a statement that the effects of pesticides on human beings were precisely as described by the manufacturers.

But she would not give up. And she went even further, declaring that pesticides were only part of the story of the poisons that were threatening our world. Eventually, she won the support of the people, and environmentalism began to spread across the United States and throughout the world. That torch of faith kept burning after she died in 1964 and has grown

to dramatically transform public awareness.

Carson left these words in *The Sense of Wonder* for the younger generation: "Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."

A Kenyan saying goes that we should treat the Earth well; it is not a gift from our parents but a loan from our children. But the adults of our day are leaving a dismal inheritance to today's

young people and the children you will have. With their philosophy that making money is most important of all, they are selling off your legacy — the health, culture, environment and even life that nature has protected and nurtured for so many eons.

It is your legacy, so you must act. You who have not yet forgotten the beauty and wonder of the Earth must speak out. Your struggle to protect the 21st century, your century, the century of life, has already begun. ❏

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS DIALOGUE

Only when we are connected to nature, engaged with nature, are we truly alive and vigorous. To really be alive, one must be under the sun, the moon, the shining stars and surrounded by the beautiful greenery and pure waters of the natural world. A dirty, foul environment is not natural. When people live in such surroundings, their hearts become polluted, too. That is the oneness of life and environment.



Only intelligence, culture and religious faith can lead us out of the Animality that thoughtlessly consumes nature, leaving a barren wasteland. Because of the oneness of life and its environment, a barren, destructive mind produces a barren, devastated natural environment. The desertification of our planet is linked to the desertification of the human spirit.



Indeed, we all want to be healthy. For that reason, we want to breathe clean air, to see beautiful flowers and greenery. We turn to nature for this, just as a sunflower turns to the sun. We must recognize that any action transgressing or negating this inclination is a terrible mistake. All the money in the world won't buy the blue sky. The sun and the breeze belong to everyone.



No one is denying that science has improved our lives. Thanks to science we can use electricity instead of just oil lamps and candles. But we need to match the progress of science with progress in our commitment to preserve and protect our environment. We need a balance.



By ALONZO DAVIS
& ANDREW BRUCK

JACKSONVILLE, FLA., CORRESPONDENTS

As a Chinese boy growing up in India, Tao Li dreamed of moving overseas to make a better life. Unable to become an Indian citizen, he had little hope of securing a government job, which meant — in a land of high unemployment and no minimum wage — struggling just to make ends meet.

His grandfather, who left China after World War I, was a shoemaker, one of the two traditional livelihoods for first-generation Chinese immigrants in India. Tao worked for his grandfather. When he married Chun Fang (“Vinnie”) Liu, Tao’s grandfather allowed part of his home to be converted into a hair salon to give Vinnie an occupation. All was well — except for the times when Tao talked with friends who had found jobs in other countries, and his dream to move overseas was rekindled.

After the birth of their second daughter, Vinnie also caught “overseas fever.” In China, her parents had worked on a farm but often lacked even rice to eat. So, just as Tao’s parents had, they moved to India, where they sustained themselves and sent money back to their struggling relatives. But life continued to be difficult.

Vinnie began to wonder, much as her parents had — how could she build a more promising future for her daughters? In India, even if Diane and Dorothy were to be better educated than her and Tao (neither stayed in school past the U.S. equivalent of 9th grade), they, too, would have few career choices. According to Dorothy, many youth in India seek to marry foreigners so they can move away from a dead-end situation.

In 1989, after securing a U.S. tourist visa, Tao traveled alone to Florida, moved in with a distant relative and began to lay the foundation for his family to join him.

He worked as a dishwasher in Jacksonville, but after a while, the owner could no longer pay him. Vinnie feared that if Tao returned to India, their dream would be lost forever. She encouraged him to keep trying. It was a stressful time: They knew what they wanted but not how it would be achieved.

Tao found work at a Chinese restaurant. A co-worker there named Yoshi Kushibiki introduced him to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Although it interested him, he didn’t fully embrace chanting.

In 1990, Vinnie left her



To offer their children a life of opportunity,
the Li family travels from India to America —
confronting many hardships along the way, and finally discovering that

Dreams Do Come True

(Left to right) Tao, Dorothy, Diane and Vinnie Li — a family’s story of perseverance and success.

daughters in the care of Tao’s brother and joined Tao in Florida. Yoshi introduced her to Buddhism as well. The practice seemed natural to her. She remembered her mother, who practiced a different sect of Buddhism, always carrying a prayer book with her despite not knowing how to read it.

Vinnie and Tao received the Gohonzon and chanted quietly in their relative’s house. After a short time, they rented an apartment, which they considered their first benefit.

But chanting and their pursuit of financial fortune were not the magic formula for a quick reunion with their daughters. They strengthened their determination to persevere.

With a business partner, they invested in a Chinese restaurant. As co-owner of the restaurant and with Vinnie’s support, Tao endured long hours and an increasingly uncooperative business partner. The situation became so bad that the partner withheld Tao’s salary.

For the sake of their daughters, they knew they couldn’t give up. They dreamt of one day having their own business.

In 1993, they began seeking permanent U.S. citizenship, which required a trip to India. Indian officials promised an immigration interview within six months. The months passed, however, and they were told that it would take three additional months. Tao and Vinnie chanted with a renewed determination to fulfill their dreams. In less than two weeks, permission for an interview was granted.

All this time — three years — they had never discussed their

dream or their problems with fellow SGI members. Until now. With so much at stake, they decided to tell their SGI-USA friends before leaving for India.

After their interview in Calcutta, they seemed to be in line for U.S. citizenship. But during what they thought was their final emigration meeting in Bombay, the consulate discovered a procedural problem and withheld approval. Their long-sought dream, almost within reach, now slumped in the shadow of the consulate’s notoriously stubborn and rigid reputation. To make matters worse, their possessions and their business were back in the United States.

Turning again to their faith, they attended a meeting of SGI-Bharat members at the New Delhi Community Center. Vinnie introduced her brother and sister to the practice, and all three chanted together.

One member’s experience in particular greatly encouraged them: While chanting to afford a trip to Japan, the woman realized that she had always encouraged fellow Buddhists to focus their prayers on specific problems — but she hadn’t followed her own guidance. So she focused her prayer on solving her problem and, unexpectedly, a friend repaid a forgotten loan. The woman was able to travel to Japan.

When they heard this story, Vinnie and Tao made up their minds to succeed.

They called Jacksonville member Namita Sarkar to update her and ask for the prayers of the members. Namita didn’t admit to them her worries. Her own niece had been denied consulate permission to pursue a doctorate in

economics despite her previous overseas pre-doctoral studies. Namita managed to say: “Chant hard. I don’t know what will happen in these circumstances. Something will come up.”

Jacksonville member John Copeland wrote to reassure them that members were chanting for them. Namita called again to say: “Don’t worry. You’ll see.”

Another source of encouragement to them at this crucial moment was a Goshō passage:

Never let life’s hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages. Just continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience the boundless joy from the Law. Strengthen your faith more than ever. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161)

Typically, once a visa is granted, it takes three to 12 months before it’s issued. Tao and Vinnie chanted passionately. Ten days later, to their amazement, they received four visas and were soon back in the United States. With this saga at last behind them, Tao and Vinnie happily gave their daughters American names.

Business, however, did not go so smoothly. While Tao had been away, his business partner had not paid all the bills. To earn desperately needed funds, Tao took a job at a local Japanese restaurant, learning a new style of cooking.

Yoshi Kushibiki’s husband,

whom they barely knew, had already been scoping out a good site for Tao and Vinnie to start their own restaurant. On Christmas Eve, the two couples drove around looking at possible locations. After finding nothing inviting in Jacksonville, they followed Tao’s intuition to go “a little bit farther.”

They stopped at a strip mall to get sandwiches. Next door to the sandwich shop was an empty restaurant site with a “For Lease” sign in the window. As it turns out, the site was perfectly equipped for the style of cooking that Tao had learned. Also, there were few other fast-food restaurants nearby. Before long, Tao and Vinnie were in business.

Lee’s Garden restaurant has thrived since the day it opened. Last August, when one of Tao’s brothers moved to the United States, they opened a second restaurant, Chung-wa, in nearby Green Cove Springs.

Also, their desire for better opportunities for their daughters has clearly blossomed through prayer and effort. This was accentuated when both daughters were invited to participate in a relatively new academic program: Provided they maintain good grades through high school, they are eligible for special college scholarships and assistance in identifying their career interests. Dorothy is considering a career in marine biology. Both girls are active in their Buddhist practice. They sing in the local SGI-USA chorus and enjoy taking music lessons.

Tao and Vinnie are a long way from a vague dream of a better life. With faith and perseverance, dreams can and do come true. ❧



This 1947 file photo from Lucent Technologies shows Dr. John Bardeen (L), Dr. William Shockley (seated) and Dr. Walter Brattain (R) conducting research that led them to invent the transistor at Bell Laboratory in 1947. The trio went on to earn the Nobel Prize in physics.

Opening the Door to the Information Age

By **TERRY ELLIS**
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

It's been 50 years since John Bardeen set out to build a better phone system. He and his partners at Bell Telephone Laboratories accomplished that goal and much more in 1947 when they created the first transistor, a device that replaced the vacuum tube and brought the world innovative, portable, reliable and inexpensive communication systems. For that, Bardeen earned, in 1956, the first of two Nobel prizes in physics — and opened the door to the information age.

"It was clear back then that inventing the transistor was a breakthrough," says William Bardeen, who was only 6 when his father taught him to say the word *transistor*. "But the pervasive effects today go beyond what anybody could have imagined." Bardeen speaks with dry humor about "the massive invasion of computer

chips," chips that evolved from the transistor and are now found in everything from cars and dishwashers to radios, televisions and, of course, computers.

John Bardeen died Jan. 30, 1991, so he saw the popularity of computers among his children and grandchildren. He continued to immerse himself in research, advancing the frontiers of knowledge in his field. During his 60-year career, he made significant contributions to almost every aspect of condensed-matter physics. And in his 83rd year, he continued to publish original scientific papers. He was named by *Life* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of the century.

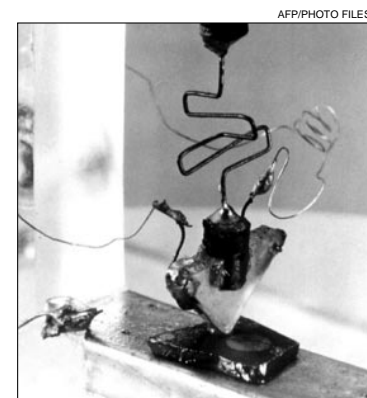
He also understood it takes more than one's own skill to make a scientific breakthrough. "My father was noted as a person who thinks very deeply about things and works closely with the experimental people in the lab," says his son, who is a physicist at the Fermilab in Batavia, Ill. "At home, he didn't do repairs. He lacked

the patience for practical things. But he was very persistent in solving theoretical problems."

And so he worked closely with Walter Brattain, whose strong point was experimenting in the lab. "The close relationship led to the discovery," says Bardeen. His father would come up with an idea, Brattain would test it in the lab, and then the two would try to figure out why it didn't work. "It was not just someone thinking it out in an ivory tower."

As a result, Bardeen shared the Nobel prize for the transistor with Brattain and William Shockley, another theoretical scientist who headed up the research team at Bell Labs. Shockley took the initial idea for the transistor and developed and expanded it to the form in which most transistors are used today.

Bardeen left Bell Labs in 1951 to become a professor of electrical engineering and physics at the University of Illinois. There Bardeen once again teamed



This 1948 Bell Laboratory file photo shows the original experimental transistor.

up with other scientists, this time with L.N. Cooper and J.R. Schrieffer. The microscopic theory of superconductivity they developed has had profound implications on our studies of everything from elementary particles to the nuclear level, from helium liquids to neutron stars.

The trio won the Nobel prize in 1972. That honor placed Bardeen in the ranks of only three other scientists who have earned the Nobel prize twice: Linus Pauling, Frederick Sanger and Marie Curie. WVI



Photo by Lisa Hobbs

(Left to right) Jeannie Olander, Vanness Harris, Colleen Bachman and Jimmy King.

A NEW YEAR FOR TEENS

Hello and happy new year!

The SGI-USA junior high and high school division leaders wish all of you and your families great victory this year. Let's advance again, always keeping in mind SGI President Ikeda's three points for the junior high and high school division members:

- 1) Take care of your health
- 2) Do your best in school
- 3) Take care of your parents

These three points correspond directly to the SGI-USA's three focus areas for 1998:

- 1) Support members' quests for happiness
- 2) Nurture youth
- 3) Strengthen families

So our goal this year in the junior high and high school divisions is to support the SGI-USA's determination by centering on President Ikeda's three points.

Taking care of your health can be taken to mean not just your physical health but also your spiritual, mental and emotional well-being. For this purpose, you have the great practice of chanting to the Gohonzon. By deepening your faith and encouraging friends, you are contributing to the goal of supporting members' quests for happiness.

Next, because you yourselves are the youth, it is important to develop and nurture yourselves. One of the best ways to do this is to try your hardest in school. President Ikeda has re-

peatedly stressed that the purpose of education is to develop happy individuals. Please keep this in mind in the midst of your school-related struggles.

Finally, taking care of your parents, whether they are living or dead, separated from you or living with you, is a great contribution you can make toward strengthening your family.

Once again, we wish you a year of victory in 1998.

With our prayers and best wishes,

Jeannie Olander,
junior high school division leader
Vanness Harris,
junior high school division leader
Colleen Bachman,
high school division leader
Jimmy King,
high school division leader

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

At the December 1997 Central Executive Committee meeting, it was announced that Mike Bynum graduated from the position of SGI-USA high school division leader. Mike is moving on to take responsibility in the young men's division in Los Angeles in his local region. He is being replaced by Jimmy King, the former junior high school division vice leader, whom many of you already know.

The junior high and high school divisions welcome Jimmy to his new role and thank Mike for his years of dedication for the teens of SGI-USA. Good luck to you both! ♪

Let's Seize Every Day in 1998

Happy new year! We are beginning this year with a new youth pullout in the *World Tribune*. The "Teen Times," "Youth Pages" and other sections that featured youth groups will all be combined into one monthly pullout called "Seize the Day." We received this name from SGI President Ikeda on Jan. 2, his 70th birthday. When I heard that President Ikeda had given us this name, I could sense the expectations he has for all of us.

As I thought more about the significance of the name, I was reminded of an experience I had with Dr. Linus Pauling. I drove Dr. Pauling on two occasions when he had dialogues with President Ikeda. On one trip, the person with me asked Dr. Pauling if he had any regrets in life. Dr. Pauling thought for a moment and then said that his regret involved a chemistry problem that he couldn't solve. He decided to put the problem aside, and about 10 years later, something he read from another scientist inspired

him to finally solve the problem. His regret? That he didn't solve the problem 10 years earlier. He said, "I just didn't think hard enough." To me, this story epitomizes the spirit to seize the day.

This year the youth have many great plans and objectives to accomplish. To begin the year, the regional youth leaders from throughout the nation have made a determination to gather 10,000 youth at our commemorative meetings for March 16, the 40th anniversary of Kosen-rufu Day. I hope you can each make a personal determination of what you want to accomplish through this campaign.

Given the current temple issue and the reorganization that is happening in many parts of our organization, it also is important that we continue to stay in contact with every member, doing our best to encourage everyone and clarify the gross errors of the priesthood.

Let's seize each and every day of 1998! ♪



Photo by Gregory Nakasugi

Ed Feasel, youth division chief.

THE SADDEST THING WAS LEAVING

EXPERIENCE

By JUSTIN RUFF Washington, D.C.

I attended the Music Corps conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center last August. I'm 15 years old, and I play the drums.

This was a great experience for me. I got to meet a lot of people from different states. And the facilities there are great. They make you feel like you're staying in one of the finest hotels.

My favorite things were playing basketball in the gym, swimming and at night riding around on the bikes, which were all over. We also went on a trip to the Everglades, which is something I will never forget. We even took an air boat to an island, where I tasted alligator tail — and watched a man wrestle an alligator!

We learned many different things about music and got to know the instruments other people played. The saddest thing was leaving the FNCC, because it was so beautiful, and all the people were great — I had a great roommate from North Carolina.

Being there made me realize that lots of different kinds of people are Buddhists, and it's not such a strange thing to be (which is what I used to think). I also want to say that the food there was outstanding, and that the people who cooked the food can come cook for me anytime, because my mom is not a great cook, and I recommend that she chant about that....

Last, I tip my hat to SGI President Ikeda for making such a great place. I can't wait to go back again! ♪

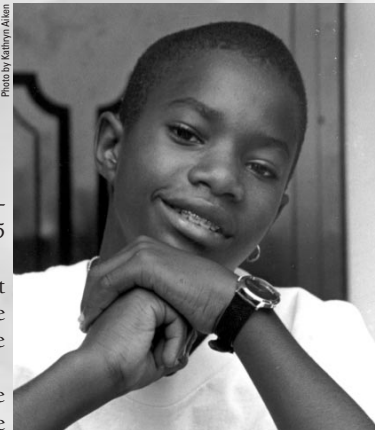


Photo by Kathryn Aiken

SEIZE the DAY

Their hearts aflame with a sense of justice, youth should never fail to seize the moment, to stand up....

— SGI President Ikeda, Aug. 17, 1997.

Seize the Day," the SGI-USA youth division pullout, is published as a service for *World Tribune* readers, appearing in the third issue of the *World Tribune* each month. To subscribe to the *World Tribune*, please call us at (800) 835-4558 or e-mail us at SGI Subs@aol.com.

The SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) has a strong commitment to youth — hence the SGI-USA youth division. This division supports young people in practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, in developing their lives and in contributing to society. Within the division are concentrated groups like the junior high and high school divisions, the student division (college students), musical performing groups, the young men's and women's divisions and service groups. To find out about youth activities in your area, please contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you or call our national headquarters at (310) 451-8811.

We want to know what you think of "Seize the Day" and need your ideas. Send your letters to the *World Tribune*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica CA, 90401. By fax to (310) 260-8910. Or by e-mail to SokaNews@aol.com.

Special thanks for this issue to Ed Feasel (youth division chief), Ellen Brown (design & layout), and Amir Kaspi and Bobbie Stemple (communicators). ♪

Student News

MICHIGAN STUDENTS HOLD FIRST GATHERING

By MASAKAZU SUEDA *Detroit Correspondent*



Michigan students gather for the first time in East Lansing, Mich.

Michigan student division members held their first inter-collegiate meeting last Nov. 21 in East Lansing, near Michigan State University. Although the meeting had originally been scheduled as a get-together for students of just the University of Michigan and Michigan State, instead 17 student division members from six colleges and a guest showed up.

Messages were read from national student division leaders and Michigan Headquarters men's and women's division leaders. The students then learned about the mission of the student division from the July 25, 1997, *World Tribune* article on the student division guidelines.

The students also studied the first installments of the

"Young Eagles" chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, which is about the student division and began appearing in the Nov. 14, 1997, *World Tribune*. People were impressed when SGI President Ikeda said in this chapter that the student division is the only hope for the future.

At the end of the meeting, the students talked briefly and indecisively about the temple issue. Topics that came up included the correct attitude to have toward Nikken, the correct way to perceive Nikken in our daily lives, and the role of the Dai-Gohonzon in our lives. The students decided to get together again soon and invite more student division members to have a Q-and-A session with a leader about the temple issue. ♪

TEMPLE NEWS

RE-EXCOMMUNICATION FLOPS

By JEFF FARR
SGI-USA Student Division Chief

Nichiren Shoshu's campaign to get SGI-USA members into the temple organization through threat of re-excommunication had little effect. The campaign ended Dec. 31, the deadline U.S. priests agreed on for SGI-USA members to "return" to the temple. But attendance at SGI-USA community and culture centers on New Year's Day was again at capacity levels, evidence that if any members left the SGI-USA they did so in very small numbers. One chief priest reportedly admitted that his mailing campaign to inform local SGI-USA members of the deadline failed. The only response he received was from a few members angered by his letter.

The re-excommunication campaign began in Japan at the end of September, toward a Nov. 30 deadline there, and in America in mid-October, toward a deadline communi-

cated variously as Dec. 30 and Dec. 31. While in Japan this was an effort toward Nikken's goal of having 100,000 members participate in the March pilgrimage, which will see the opening of the new Grand Reception Hall, it became apparent that the temple's main focus in America now is an overseas believers pilgrimage next August.

Since every SGI-USA member is now fully excommunicated — after having been excommunicated twice, in 1991 and 1997 — it will be interesting to see how the temple organization approaches SGI-USA members from now on. The New Year's numbers show that rather than scaring members away from the SGI, the re-excommunication campaign only made them more leery of the temple. ♪



Photo by Gregor Nakasugi

NEXT SUMMER?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THE youth division invites you to attend one of our conferences next summer at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Refresh your faith over a long weekend at the beautiful FNCC campus in the Everglades.

Last summer, 685 youth from across the country attended four conferences. And this year there'll be six conferences to choose from.

The land package price for each conference is \$375 (airfare not included). This covers your sleeping accommodations for three nights (with assigned roommate); all meals from Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch; ground transportation to and from the Fort Lauderdale and Miami International airports (within a specified time frame); bus tour (admission fees not included); and conference instructional and study materials. Payment must be made two weeks prior to the conference start date.

JULY 9-12	<i>Young men's division</i>
JULY 16-19	<i>Young women's division</i>
JULY 23-26	<i>Junior high and high school divisions</i>
AUG. 6-9	<i>Student division</i>
AUG. 13-16	<i>Youth music groups</i>
NOV. 19-22	<i>Youth support groups</i>

Because participation requirements vary from conference to conference, it's important to contact your appropriate region leaders as soon as possible to find out more. See you in Florida! ♪

EXPERIENCE

A PHARMACIST FOR THE PEOPLE

By PAK HIM LAI Corvallis, Ore.

I took faith in this Buddhism when I was 12. I decided to chant not because I had problems, but because I saw my mom chanting. I just followed her. It has been more than eight years since then. I have encountered many problems and also gained tremendous benefits along the way — many of those benefits were inconspicuous ones.

I gained my first benefit by having the top result the school term I started practicing. This made me believe even more in the Gohonzon and chant even more vigorously. However, my faith was like fire. It didn't last long. As the Goshō says: "The belief of some is like fire while that of others is like water. When the former listen to the teachings, their passion flares up like fire, but as time goes on, they tend to discard their faith" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 250). I eventually neglected my gongyo and daimoku and would chant only when there was an upcoming exam.

My reckless behavior in faith persisted for almost two years until my junior year of high school. During the senior year in Malaysia, anyone who fails the exam has to take the whole year over. My biggest worry was not about passing the exam but about really understanding math. No matter how much I chanted, I failed to do well in math.

I was so afraid of my senior year, in fact, that I spent most of the time during the long vacation reviewing the materials ahead of time. So when my senior year started, I was relaxed and could understand all the material easily. For the next one


year, I prayed hard and studied hard night and day. I never failed to get the highest score in all my science-related subjects.

I came to the United States more than three years ago. I am sure all of you can imagine how difficult it is to adapt to a totally different environment and different culture. Back home, almost everything was prepared and done for me by my parents. Here I had to depend on myself!

In 1996, I was accepted into the School of Pharmacy at Oregon State University in Corvallis. I was really happy, because out of 450 applicants the school accepted only 90 students, and I was one of them. Frankly speaking, my grades were not excellent, and the School of Pharmacy prefers older students who have work experience in the field. I did not fit very well into what they were looking for — but I got accepted.

A few months ago, I started sending out resumes to different companies for internships. I went on a couple of interviews and was rejected. Although extremely depressed, I never gave up. I chanted even more, reminding myself how important it was for me to get an internship — to become a licensed pharmacist you need to work 2,000 hours first. But still I couldn't believe someone would actually hire me with my strong accent.

I wanted to encourage my friends by getting a job before a June 27, 1997, district discussion meeting — and I did it! I called one of the largest pharmacies in Oregon; the person on the other end told me to come up to Portland for an interview, that they were looking for people. It wasn't long before I received a call back that I was hired as an intern.

All this I attribute to the power of faith like flowing water. 



Pak Him Lai is on his way to becoming a pharmacist.

LIBERATE YOURSELF through ART

It'll Make a World of Difference

Creating and appreciating art set free the soul trapped deep within us. That is why art causes such joy.

— SGI President Ikeda

The 12th Soka Student Art Exhibition and the 8th Soka Student Photo Exhibition are soon to be held in Tokyo. For the second year in a row, SGI-USA student division members have been invited to participate in this annual international event. The world is waiting for your art!

For application information, or if you have any questions, please contact your region office or Valerie Thomas or Jeff Farr at the World Culture Center, (310) 451-8811.

WHEN:
March 15–April 5, 1998

WHERE:
Soka Gakkai Josei Toda International Center

WHO:
Open to all youth division college-level students

WHAT:
Oil and water paintings
Prints
Graphic design
Free-style design
Black and white photographs

DEADLINE:
In Japan before March 1

TEENS AND PARENTS COME TOGETHER in the Great Northwest

By AARON FRANKLIN
Everett, Wash., Correspondent

The 1st annual Inland Northwest Area Junior High and High School Division Leadership Confer-

ence was held last fall at the Wapiti resort, located in Seeley, Mont. It was a spectacular location nestled in western Montana's Rocky Mountain range and just 100 miles south of Glacier National Park.




Staying out of the heat — making bracelets in the shade.

The new Inland Northwest Area comprises eastern Washington, Idaho and Montana and is part of the Seattle Re-

gion. Because of the vast distance it covers, it is difficult for the members to get together for activities — especially junior high and high school division events. This time, junior high and high school division members and their parents attended.

A memorable panel discussion was held with four youth division members who grew up in the SGI-USA organization — Atsushi Ouchi, Jamie Liptan, Caroline Depiro and Michelle Higgins. They were especially encouraging to those in the au-

dience now raising children.

They asked parents to chant a lot and raise their life-conditions to show actual proof in daily life while not worrying so much about whether their children do gongyo yet or participate regularly in activities. Another suggestion from the panel was that parents connect their children with youth leaders who can do a wide variety of appealing activities with them. Whether going shopping with them or taking them to Brass Band rehearsal, this exposure to youth leaders who show proof of the practice in their daily lives is key. 



Weston Pratt braves the glacial waters of Seeley Lake, Mont.

Photo by Aaron Franklin

WHO ARE THE THREE POWERFUL ENEMIES?

By GREG MARTIN
SGI-USA Study Department Vice Chief

The essential issues at the heart of the problems within the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood all arise from the priesthood's misconception and distortion of the high priest's role and function and that of priests in general. This in turn stems from their distortion of the meaning and significance of the Three Treasures.

In the Goshō, Nichiren Daishonin gives us clear guidance about this matter. The purpose of this series is to examine this guidance in an effort to clarify right from wrong.

It is my intention to make the following points: 1) that the appearance of the three powerful enemies, evil priests and parasites in the bowels of the lion (of Buddhism) was

predicted by both the sutras and the Goshō and are inevitable in the present age; 2) that judging who are the enemies and who are the votaries of the Daishonin's Buddhism can only be done based on examining the Goshō carefully; 3) that an analysis of the opposing ways in which the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai explain the Three Treasures reveals which has become the enemy of this Buddhism; 4) that knowing who the enemy is reveals that all of the enemy's words and actions contradict the teachings of this Buddhism and that this was predicted to happen by the Daishonin; and 5) that the votaries of this Buddhism should confidently point out and refute these enemies.

Even if it were possible to point straight at the earth and miss it, if the flowers were to cease blooming in spring, still I am certain that these three powerful enemies exist in the land of Japan. If so, then who is to be numbered among the three enemies? And who is to be accounted a votary of the Lotus Sutra? It is a troubling question. Are we — I and my disciples — to be numbered among the three powerful enemies? Or are we to be numbered among the votaries of the Lotus Sutra? (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 158–59)

In this Goshō passage, Nichiren Daishonin makes two important points. First, the

three powerful enemies are certain to appear in the Latter Day of the Law, i.e., the present day. The three powerful enemies means the three categories of people who appear to persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra and obstruct kosen-rufu: 1) lay people ignorant of Buddhism who denounce the votaries of the Lotus Sutra; 2) arrogant and cunning priests who think they have attained what they have not yet attained and slander the votaries; and 3) priests revered as saints and respected by the general public who, in fear of losing fame and profit, induce persecution of the votaries.

Second, he raises the important question of how we can correctly judge who are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and who are the votaries of

the Lotus Sutra. This is an especially pertinent issue since each one of us is faced with the same urgent question today. Both the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and the SGI claim to be practicing correctly. And both claim the other is destroying the correct teaching. Who's telling the truth? It is important for us to make this decision in as careful and thoughtful a manner as possible, in accord with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

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Photo by Gregory Nakagai

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A SENSE OF MISSION No Time Like the Present

By CRAIG GREEN
SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee

Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. ("Aspiration for the Buddha Land," The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 5, p. 132)

One of the main messages of this Buddhism is that we each have a mission. But what does that really mean? Each person has things to accomplish that only he or she can. While mission is often thought to be a calling from God in our society, in this Buddhism it's a calling from yourself, your Buddhahood.

In this letter — the first he wrote from his exile to Sado Island — Nichiren Daishonin tells his follower Toki Jonin that no one lives forever; that we shouldn't waste our lives; that "what we should aspire

to, after all, in the Buddha land" (MW-5, 132). In other words, we should discover our mission for world peace and waste no time in trying to achieve it.

One complaint you often hear about young people is that we think we'll live forever. We think that we'll never get old, that there'll always be time later on to accomplish something significant, etc. But a year goes by in a flash. Two years, three years, five years, 10 years. You're 20 years old and the next thing you know you're 30. As the Daishonin says, life is limited. So it's important that we find out who we are and what we want to do. Of course, these things can take time. The Daishonin is just saying here: "Start today. Don't put off your life."

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