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Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions
525 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401-1403

The Palace of Your Life

This is the 20th 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).

KIMURA: One student admitted being uncertain about how to pray to the Gohonzon; he wanted to know whether he should just chant about one thing at a time — waiting for that prayer to be answered before going on to the next one — or whether it was all right to pray for many things at the same time.

IKEDA: You can chant for as many things as you like. A person with many wishes and dreams should pray earnestly to fulfill each one. Buddhism is reason.

Use the analogy of shopping. You can buy many things when you have enough money in your wallet. To buy some-



'The wonderful thing about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is that through daimoku, the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death can be transformed into four castle walls or ramparts that fortify the palace of your life.'

thing that costs \$300, you need to have \$300. If you only have \$10, you can only purchase \$10 worth of goods. If you want to buy something, you need to bring along enough

money to do so.

In faith, the same logic applies. You are the only one who can realize your desires; it's up to your own faith, not anyone else's.

IGETA: Some members say that they have trouble concentrating or focusing on the Gohonzon when they chant; they get dis-

PLEASE SEE PALACE, 9



SUA on the Lookout for the Class of 2005

Ninth-grade students who are interested in earning an undergraduate degree at Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, Calif., are invited to seek more information from the university's director of admissions. The first students at the Aliso Viejo campus will matriculate in 2001 and grad-

uate in 2005. SUA is seeking students who graduate from high school in the top 15 percent of their class. All accepted students must have strong English-language skills. Students will receive more information from SUA in their sophomore year of high school. SUA will be making early acceptances to selected

students late in their junior year.

Interested students should send their name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and the name and address of their high school to: Director of Admissions, Early Student Interest List, Soka University of America, 85 Argonaut, Suite 200, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656. ❧

Special Issue

The World Tribune is celebrating March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, with a special issue to introduce or reintroduce our newspaper to younger readers. Geared for young people, the four-page issue will be passed out free of charge at all March 16 commemorative meetings. Please look for it arriving soon at your local community center.



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-enge-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-enge-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-enge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, which is the foundation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This sutra, Shakyamuni 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-enge-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.

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Doing Something About the Weather

Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.

— Mark Twain

EDITORIAL

El Niño's not El No-show after all. From mudslides in California to twisters in Florida, this cyclical weather pattern is causing problems of historic proportions. And not just in the United States. It may be wetter than normal in our country, but in Asia, El Niño is causing massive drought.

The loss of life and property is tragic. We pray for those who have been affected by the disaster with the hope that, as Nichiren Daishonin teaches, great good will follow great evil.

Also, this is a good time to ask if our Buddhist faith can affect the weather. Isn't it a little unscientific to believe that chanting can keep the rain at bay or prevent hillsides from turning into mudslides?

Buddhism teaches a powerful concept: the oneness of life and its environment. This concept illustrates that a change in the inner life of a human being is mirrored in his or her environment; we and our environment are essentially two manifestations of the same ultimate reality. When we move in harmony with nature, nature moves in harmony with us. From another point of view, severe weather can be seen as a reflection of distress or disharmony in the inner lives of people.

Weather has played an important role in Buddhist history. Rampant famine and flooding in 13th-century Japan caused Nichiren Daishonin to question the Buddhist traditions of his day. He concluded that it was people's attachment to mistaken beliefs, as taught by the popular sects of the day, that allowed widespread tragedies to occur. "That is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that sages leave and do not return," he wrote. "And in their stead come devils and demons, disasters and calamities..." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 5).

Conversely, when the true spirit of Buddhism is practiced widely, the world will be a safer place. "In that time because all people chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo together, the wind will not be-leaguer the branches or boughs, nor will the rain

fall hard enough to break a clod..." the Daishonin writes. "Disasters will be driven from the land, and the people will be rid of misfortune" (MW-1, 101).

On the one hand, in these passages the Daishonin was striving to give his disciples confidence in the power of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo by painting a poetic picture of human-nature harmony.

On the other hand, our inner reformation can and will affect our natural environment. But Buddhism is not so simplistic as to say that all we have to do is chant and then inclement weather will altogether cease. Rain nurtures life. Earthquakes and hurricanes are seen by some scientists as the way the Earth releases seismic and atmospheric pressure. Even floods play an important role in the renewal of many ecosystems. Buddhism says that there is a reason for everything.

As we tap our Buddha nature — and become the "sages" the Daishonin talks about — we come to see how we are interconnected with the world around us and all its natural functions.

We no longer see ourselves in opposition to nature or arrogantly believe we can conquer or dominate it — attitudes that have led to unhappy lives and unsound practices, and have created untold environmental problems.

Rather, we come to view nature as our equal, something we must care for. People in the state of Bodhisattva "react in a moral and sympathetic way not merely with human beings but also with the whole natural ecology," SGI President Ikeda says.

"Controlling egoism and delusion for the sake of all living beings, they consider creating value for the lives of others and for the global biosphere their own reason for living and indeed the supreme way of life" (September 1992 *Seikyo Times*, p. 47).

Some aspects of nature — like El Niño — may seem beyond our control, and sometimes nature may seem humankind's enemy. But through our Buddhist practice, we can, as Mark Twain suggests, really do something about the weather by, in a sense, working together with it: changing the weather by changing our lives and environment.

Contact us via the Internet . . . SGI-USA Web Page: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>
E-mail to Editorial: SokaNews@aol.com or Subscriptions: SGI SUBS@aol.com

World Tribune

(ISSN-0049-8165)

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

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

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

Printed on 100% recycled paper

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Assistant Managing Editor	Lisa Carter Kirk
Associate Editor	Jeff Farr
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WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Read Whatever You Enjoy

SGI President Ikeda has recently given us guidance on the importance of reading literature and the classics, as he calls them (Feb. 6 "Discussions on Youth"). I must disagree with him. I agree that reading is important, but I have a different view of reading literature. I began being "force fed" the classics when I was 15 or 16 years old, and hated every word of them — this experience turned me off from reading for years! The classics are not for everybody.

One must find writers whom one enjoys reading. What a wonderful experience to connect with an author whose book we cannot put down! For some this may mean Elmore Leonard or John Grisham and others, Victor Hugo or Virginia Woolf. Not everything we read must instruct us on how to live. What a mundane, heavy and dry life that would be! Read for the love of it!

— LARRY TISH, Cambridge, Mass.

Death 'Perspective' Hits Home

Thank you for the latest issue of the *World Tribune* (Feb. 6)! It has so many great articles in it that have touched my life, especially the "Perspective" by Teri Clayton. We have just lost a very dear friend to cancer, and he had the same spirit as Teri's friend Beverly. He didn't give up, although the last year was a constant struggle for him. He was always there for the members and never missed a meeting until the last month of his life.

The impact of his life was evident at his memorial service at the East Bay Community Center [near San Francisco] when both of our Gohonzon rooms were filled to overflowing with SGI members and non-members alike. He had many friends who didn't even know that others whom they had known for years knew him! It was a great tribute to a great man. You will be greatly missed, Henry, and never forgotten.

— NANCI GAUTHIER, Antioch, Calif.

Sharing Buddhism Naturally

Just a note to thank Reiko Groshell for sharing her thoughts (Feb. 13 "Sign Posts") regarding her experience of sharing Buddhism with a friend. The morning of the day that issue arrived, I had just made a determination to start sharing this Buddhism with others regularly and did in fact do so that morning.

Since 1990, when SGI President Ikeda made his historic 17-day visit to the United States, many practice-related changes followed. I, like I'm sure many others, went into a phase of trying to figure out just how we were supposed to practice after always being directed what to do. As a result, some of the things we were "told" to do in the past, like propagating this Buddhism, we stopped doing.

I really am so happy for the period from 1990 until now, as rocky and rough as it has been. I'm especially happy because I sense that more people are finally starting to figure out how we should practice — joyfully, willingly, not because someone tells us what to do, but because we're discovering through our own realizations the correct way to practice.

Ms. Groshell verbalized so well the way I want to tell others about this practice — naturally. My determination is to chant every day to share this practice with others. It feels so different now when I think about sharing this religion with others. In the past, it was out of a sense of obligation, or that if I wanted to overcome a big problem, I should tell others about the practice. While I know that sharing this practice with others will greatly change my karma, now I want to tell people about this practice because it just feels like the natural thing to do. And that feels so-o-o-o good.

— TOBIE MARSH, Vacaville, Calif.

Sex, Lies and Audiotapes

PERSPECTIVE

As scandal unfolds in our nation's capital, Dianne Moody searches for the deeper meanings. She comes up with two: 'Don't judge' and 'Develop your compassion.'

By DIANNE MOODY
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

As the "sex and lies" allegations unfolded in Washington over the past few weeks, I was overseas conducting training courses in England and the Netherlands. Not usually a "news-hound," I found myself watching CNN and reading every English-language newspaper I could get my hands on each day to find out if we still had a president.

The media frenzy extended to Western Europe, and the story was covered extensively. The major concern of these countries, however, seemed to focus less on who was lying than on how these events would impact the effectiveness of America in the arena of world politics.

We have seen the scandal change in complexion daily, and no doubt it will do so for some time to come. My initial reaction was one of shock. I had many more questions than answers. Did President Clinton have sex with Monica Lewinsky? Did he encourage perjury? Who is telling the truth? If it's true, should he step down? Is a criminal investigation appropriate? Could he have used such poor judgment? If so, do I want someone like that as our president? What is the responsibility of the press in reporting so much unsubstantiated news? How do we balance the public's

desire to know with an individual's right to privacy? Have we gone too far in scrutinizing the lives of our politicians? Do we have the right to expect our politicians to tell the truth? What is appropriate moral conduct?

Initial news reporting was very damaging, and my first feelings were that if this is true, President Clinton should step down quickly and not allow an investigation to drag on endlessly. As the story unfolded, however, it became less and less clear to me what occurred. The majority of Americans reportedly believed that President Clinton lied, but polls showed his highest approval ratings. My confusion increased. I began searching for a Buddhist perspective that would help me make sense of this very messy and complex situation.

It seemed that the lower worlds of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger were rampant. The major players involved — Bill and Hillary Clinton, Monica Lewinsky, William Ginsburg, Paula Jones, Kenneth Starr, Linda Tripp — all appeared to be adrift in a sea of suffering.

I reminded myself that each of these people, no matter how they have conducted themselves and for what reasons, has a Buddha nature.

When I saw the extent of misery and unhappiness apparent in each of their lives, it impressed on me the importance of our mission for kosen-rufu.

I understood more clearly how critical it is that we promote our Buddhist philosophy as a means of helping people both individually and collectively to tap their innate wisdom and overcome extreme suffering and unhappiness.

The second point that occurred to me is that I did not need to be a harsh critic of these people. SGI-USA General Director Zaitzu, in his article

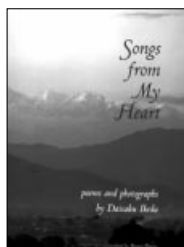
"How To Be Encouraging" (Jan. 23 *World Tribune*), listed two prime points: "Don't judge" and "Develop your compassion." He encourages us to realize that our assumptions are often incorrect. "People who present me with the toughest challenges," he says, "are often the ones who turn my judgments inside out and help me see humanity, often where I least expect it."

He also says that "One of the first steps in developing compassion is resisting the urge to criticize," and he encourages us to feel another person's sufferings as if they were our own. This led me to think about the oneness of self and environment and how these people and this situation are also a reflection of me and the society in which I live.

It struck me that the harshness of our collective views toward these people was an attempt to expect our environment to show us perfection while neglecting to polish or perfect our own lives. They are a reflection of ourselves and our society and show us how much human revolution we still need to do. To some degree, each of these people is showing some aspect of myself if I am willing to look deeply enough.

My last comment is about karma. What causes are being made here? How will these causes affect our future? What can we learn here, and how can we use our Buddhist practice to personalize this situation and turn "poison into medicine"?

In the fifth prayer of gongyo we pray for the peace of the world and the happiness of all humanity. One course of action is to chant abundant daimoku that something of value can emerge out of this very negative situation. If we reflect deeply, I believe these difficulties can become a steppingstone for creating a society that can act with wisdom and humanity. ❧



A Great Gift Idea!

First printed in 1978, *Songs from My Heart* by Daisaku Ikeda is a collection of poems celebrating youth, change and progress. Translated by Burton Watson with power and emotion true to the author, these genuinely are songs from the heart of Daisaku Ikeda.

Price: \$14.95 M/O#: 0346

NEWS BRIEFS

CALIFORNIA

Soka University Is Honored by Aliso Viejo Library

The new 21,500-square-foot public library opened in Aliso Viejo on Jan. 31. In the opening ceremony, Soka University of America and its founder SGI President Ikeda were recognized and thanked for SUA's gift of 1,000 new books to be acquired over the next five years. SUA's 3,400-acre campus, located in Aliso Viejo, is scheduled to open in 2001.

— WENDY HARDER

CHINA

SGI President's Interview Airs on Beijing Television

Marking the centennial this year of the birth of the late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), Beijing Television in China broadcast a 12-part documentary beginning on the evening of Feb. 4. The special series highlights the late premier's achievements, featuring recollections from the many people who shared close or meaningful ties with him. During his visit to Shanghai last year, SGI President Ikeda was interviewed for the program. Clips from that interview appear in the fourth and eighth installments of the series.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

CHINA

SGI President Talks With Writer Jin Yong

SGI President Ikeda met with famed Chinese author Jin Yong in Hong Kong on Feb. 20. They confirmed plans to publish in book form in May this year the Japanese version of their dialogue — which has been serialized in Japan's *Ushio* magazine and Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Monthly* under the title "Quest for a Bright New Century." In this dialogue, the two men discuss diverse topics, including friendship, literature, memories of their youth, and the Buddhist view of life and death.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

PHILIPPINES

SGI President Receives Honorary Citizenship

The City of Tagaytay conferred an honorary citizenship on SGI President Ikeda in a ceremony on Feb. 14. The SGI president's son, SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda, accepted the award on his father's behalf and read a short acceptance speech in which President Ikeda praised the city.

"In the final years of the 19th century, Tagaytay played an important role in the struggle for independence, serving as an important base for the heroes of the Philippine Revolution," President Ikeda said. "Now, under the wise leadership of Mayor Tolentino, Tagaytay is pioneer in the quest for harmony between humanity and the natural environment, demonstrating a new ideal of city planning and development."

He also praised the city for carrying on the spirit of José Rizal, the national hero: "He engaged in farming, opened a school, beautified a town, built a plaza, constructed a waterworks and a street lighting system. I feel that the noble spirit of Dr. Rizal, who gave everything for the happiness of the people, can be found here, as a living, vital reality, among the people of Tagaytay and in your mayor."

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

World Boys and Girls Art Exhibit Opens in Hong Kong

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

Some 400 guests gathered at the Hong Kong Exhibition Centre in Wanchai on Feb. 17 for the opening of the World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition. SGI President Ikeda attended the event together with distinguished guests. With the theme "Earth, Our Wonderland — Painting a World of Friendship," the exhibit features 425 brightly colored paintings and drawings, selected from 100,000 entries submitted by children in 161 countries.

The exhibition was organized by the SGI and the SGI of Hong Kong (HKSGI) in conjunction with the Hong Kong Education Department, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, the *Young Post* — *South China Morning Post* and the *City's Children's Weekly*. It is also being shown with the support of UNESCO and the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF.



(Above) Children from 161 countries submitted works for the art exhibition. (Right) Thirty-one Soka Kindergarten students perform at the opening ceremony at the Hong Kong Exhibition Centre.

The Student Files

Name: Masakazu Sueda
School: University of Michigan
Major: Mechanical Engineering
City: Ann Arbor, Mich.



I can say without a doubt that the main foundation of my faith in this Buddhism was created in high school through tenacious efforts in my studies and sincere chanting. I have learned that with faith in the Gohonzon, one can truly bring out the best in oneself. I currently have a junior class standing as a freshman engineering student, and I expect to receive my bachelor's degree after the fall term next year. My goal is to receive my doctorate and to

become a capable engineering professor. I also study Spanish, in addition to English and Japanese, and hope to become truly trilingual.

Although most of my friends now know that I am an SGI-USA member, I hope to invite more of them to the student division meetings. I will do my best to introduce others, together with my fellow members, through sincere chanting and dialogue.

W

At a Goshō lecture, Shin'ichi Yamamoto reprimands the students for their lack of preparation. One of the leaders has hatched a plan to make the students look more prepared than they are, and Shin'ichi sees right though it.

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 5

Young Eagles

Translation of parts 30–31 of the 'Young Eagles' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

For the student division participants, the lectures were like a furnace or forge where their lives merged and fused with the life of President Shin'ichi Yamamoto. They were always eager and happy at the prospect of seeing him, but they were also nervous. When they locked gazes with him, they felt he could see right through them, fully aware of what was in their hearts or what state of life they were in.

In fact, Shin'ichi was keenly attuned to their moment-to-moment feelings and thoughts. He had made himself familiar with the personality, thinking and circumstances of each participant. And above all, he had sent daimoku to them every day, praying for their growth and development.

The lecture series for the 2nd class was going well, but as it went on, the members became more relaxed. And in time, they started to grow lazy and complacent toward their preparation for the lectures. The usual pre-sessions were still held, organized by student division leaders under the direction of the division's senior vice chief, Takao Harayama, who was a graduate of the 1st class. But it was increasingly obvious the participants weren't studying enough. The student division leaders responsible for organizing and coordinating the lectures could see that if this continued, they would be reprimanded by President Yamamoto.

So it was that one of the leaders hatched a little plan: At the next lecture, all the members would raise their hands enthusiastically when President Yamamoto called on someone to explain a passage of the text — irrespective of whether or not they could describe its significance or meaning. Since this leader would serve as the moderator, he would select only those who had raised their hands the quickest and with the most confidence.

When it came to interpreting the more difficult passages, he would arrange in advance which students to call on. His

intention was actually to protect his position, fearing that the members' lack of study would be exposed, and that he would be held responsible in some way,



When the strategy was put into operation, at first everything seemed to go as planned. Everyone raised their hands, and the students selected by the moderator commented on the passages smoothly and confidently.

When Shin'ichi finished explaining one section, the moderator asked: "All right! Who wants to explain the next section?" Everyone raised their hands, volunteering enthusiastically.

Shin'ichi abruptly stilled their voices, calling out in a sharp tone: "Stop this game! Why on earth are you doing this?" Shin'ichi knew immediately what the plan was and who had dreamed it up.

Some of the members could not understand what Shin'ichi was getting at,

simply looking puzzled. But all of them knew that they hadn't studied enough.

The room went silent. Shin'ichi began to call on the members in the front row, one after another. None of them could read or interpret the passage satisfactorily. Some just sat there, shamefaced and at a loss for words.

Shin'ichi prepared for these lectures with an unequalled seriousness of purpose and commitment. "What a shame it is for student division representatives to stoop to this!" Shin'ichi's voice resounded with anger.

He didn't simply mean that it was a shame that they couldn't sufficiently explain the text — what disturbed and disappointed him so was



the mentality of the leader who had tried to manipulate the situation to make himself look good.

But Shin'ichi didn't say much else.

"That's all for today," he announced, closing his Goshō. When the students saw the expression of deep sorrow in his eyes, they were ashamed of the casual attitude they had developed toward the lectures, and that they had neglected to prepare seriously.

The next lecture was completely different, however. Everyone studied hard and prepared carefully. Shin'ichi acted as if nothing had happened. He smiled at everyone, and went on with his lecture in a pleasant tone.

Beginning with the first lecture, held in late August 1962, this lecture series on

"Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" allowed Shin'ichi to personally foster and educate the next generation of Soka Gakkai leaders.

Shin'ichi often told the members: "For 10 years, I thoroughly studied and learned the principles of kosen-rufu under Mr. Toda's tutelage. The mentor provides the principles, and the disciple puts them into practice.

"In the future, I want you to make enormous progress in kosen-rufu, building tens and hundreds of times on the foundation that I have established. I am a stepping stone for you. Our goal is the happiness of all people and world peace."

Shin'ichi always saw to it that there were snacks or a meal for the students after the lectures, and he never forgot to set aside time to warmly interact with them, offering words of personal encouragement. Sometimes he sternly rebuked them, but that, too, was an expression of his deep compassion. He would at times stand before the shoe rack at the entrance, and when he noticed a pair of shoes with worn-out soles would later purchase and present the owner with a new pair.

The lectures allowed the members to know their young Buddhist leader as a human being. They also became acquainted with the brilliance of humanity that emanates from the life of one who lives and breathes the principles of Buddhism.

Shin'ichi was a model to them, and a clear image of him as a mentor in life gradually formed within them. This relationship between mentor and disciples, who were working together for the highest, grandest goal of all, kosen-rufu, was founded on a spirit of warm sharing and mutual inspiration. The lectures became a rare forum of humanistic education for nurturing a new generation of talented leaders.

(To be continued)

Rick Nees

It was a fairly typical Monday evening. Chanting daimoku in the car while looking for the house where people were meeting for gongyo. "If I could just remember Donna's address, this would be much easier," I scolded myself as I drove past the same set of houses for the third time.

It had begun to rain heavily just as I remembered how I found Donna's once before: driving around slowly until I heard the sweet sounds of harmonious chanting. Unfortunately, the heavy rain drowned out any other sounds. I decided to head back home.

At the fringe of Donna's



Rick Nees with Riki and Jack.

neighborhood, the wheels of my van became submerged in a monstrous pool. I chanted daimoku all the way home with my face glued to the windshield. I parked in front of my home and stepped out of the van into a puddle that stretched 10 feet from the sidewalk.

About a half-hour later, the sun was back out. I left to pick up my son, Jack, from the other side of town. The clouds were still in control of the skies, treating viewers to beauty beyond words. My two daughters, Riki (then 9) and Nicole (then 17), stayed at their mom's while my son, Jack, and I took off for home.

The rains had started again. Jack and I conversed about the powers of nature and how, no matter how advanced humans may become, we will always be subservient toward nature. I told Jack that when I chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I no longer feel subservient to nature. Instead, I feel like I am moving hand in hand, parallel with the forces of nature, and how with our forces joined, we gain great strength. It's similar to the way that any team benefits as a whole when its members work for a common goal, I said.

By the time we arrived home, we were stepping into a foot of water, and the rain was falling so hard it actually hurt. Jack screeched: "Dad! You won't believe my room! Come quick!"

The window wells in his room

Still Standing After the
STORM

The weather has dominated the news lately: rainstorms in California, tornadoes in Florida, even an icestorm in New England. On July 28, 1997, it was flooding in Colorado. Here are three stories.

had become aquariums that leaked into the walls and floors of the room. There was a wave of water wandering across the floors.

The water continued to rise throughout our home. We hauled as many things as possible to the garage where it was dry. Jack's mother sent his two sisters to pick him up.

By the time they arrived, there was a river flashing across and down the road. Jack ran outside and jumped into the car. They drove about 30 feet before stalling out. To get out of the car, Nicole pulled little Riki through the door and began carrying her up-current toward the house. I was walking through the water toward them when Nicole suddenly lost her hold on Riki, who was too small to resist the rush of water. I was there just in time to grab Riki.

We got to the safety of the upstairs part of the house where another family lived. Once the kids were settled, I went back outside to see if the car could be saved. Although there was chaos in the air, I felt a sort of comforting feeling when I saw about six or seven people out on the street working together to rescue any automobile — and its occupants — that needed help. Instead of panicking, everyone outside was projecting an aura of satisfaction in helping others. We must have pushed five or six cars up to drier land. I almost felt lucky to be part of such an experience.

When I got back to the house, the kids had calmed down as much as could be expected. There we were: eight people in a two-bedroom duplex — three adults, five kids; some Buddhists, a Hindu, and another I wasn't sure about. Although it did not seem appropriate for me to suggest chanting in the home of a Hindu, the comforts of Buddhism can be practiced in an infinite number of situations and ways. We talked about how lucky we were to have been involved in such a situation without injury to any of us, and how we all had a great new memory to log

into our libraries of experiences.

The days that followed were loaded with great benefit to the social situation of our neighborhood and to the city of Fort Collins as a whole. I united and worked with many people whom I would never have otherwise. We will all share that experience for the rest of our lives.

I feel that if Buddhism wasn't a part of my life, I may have expressed a much darker picture of the whole flood experience. Changing poison into medicine is the greatest core concept that a person can carry inside and benefit from throughout life. This one great natural disaster medicated a large part of a city in ways that few may ever understand.

I love living Buddhism!

Tim Shaw

Last year's flood dramatically changed my outlook both on Buddhism and my life. I was working in Cheyenne, Wyo., which is about an hour from where I live. It had just started raining as I drove back to Fort Collins. I didn't think anything of it, since it often rains in June and July.

When I finally arrived in Fort Collins, the right side of the street was filled with water, which was actually fun driving through (what a great splash!). When I pulled into my parking lot, I had to slow down because of the large amount of water that had collected at the entrance. This was unusual, but I wasn't worried. I was home and had many things to take care of, like walking my dog.

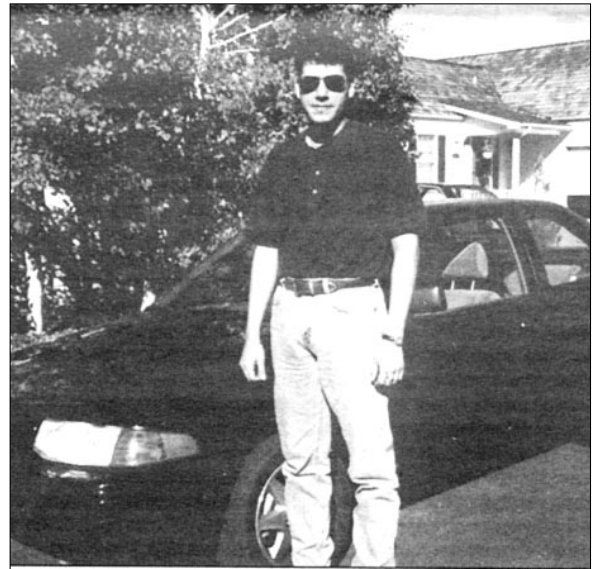
At 8:30 p.m., my mother called, and I was engaged in a long conversation with her about unresolved problems that I had finally found the courage to talk about with her.

Two hours into the conversation, I noticed my dog going into the kitchen a lot. That was unusual, so I checked on him (when he's quiet, he's usually getting into mischief). When I walked into the kitchen, there

was muddy water coming through the wall. "Someone's bathtub must have overflowed" — that was my first thought.

Then I heard what sounded like a river outside. I looked out a window and saw that my car was submerged up to the hood. I yelled to my mother on the phone: "What should I do? We're having a flood!"

I called the police, who told me they were aware of the flooding, but that unless I was in immediate danger, there was nothing they could do. I put my dog in his carrier. Then I opened the front door — and there it was,



Tim Shaw, and the car he rescued from the July 1997 flood.

water two-feet deep rushing past my door. I closed my door again.

An hour later, the water had subsided. A rescue crew arrived sometime after that and helped people who wanted to leave. There is something just not quite right about seeing a raft floating in your parking lot. My car was filled with water, but it started when I tried the key. I moved it to higher ground before it stalled.

Later we heard that some people had died in the flood. I couldn't believe it — this isn't

supposed to happen in Fort Collins. Not where I live! My next immediate concern was my insurance and what would be covered. I guess I was more worried about my own well-being and how the flood affected me rather than its devastating effect on the city.

A couple days later, some friends from my SGI-USA district came by to see if they could help. I was feeling sorry for myself and very angry at the whole situation, so I vented on them. They actually supported me and wanted to help. They organized a group of wonderful people to come over and help me clean up the mess. I was still feeling down and overwhelmed with the whole thing, and I began to wonder if this had happened to me because I was now practicing Buddhism.

I went the next day to my former church and spoke to the director. I began to talk about what had happened and asked about his view of Buddhism. He couldn't tell me a lot since he didn't know the practice. Instead, he told me the Christian view of life. As I began to tell him my beliefs, I gradually re-

alized I was talking about Buddhism. I left with more faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I began to chant with more interest and belief in the Gohonzon and invited district members over to chant with me. I gained a newfound faith in the practice.

And now, I can look at any situation, no matter how bad it may seem at first, and know that I can learn something from it — that I will survive and even

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Resolving Doubts

By REIKO GROSHELL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

If you do not question and resolve your doubts, you cannot dispel the dark clouds of illusion, any more than you could travel a thousand miles without legs. ("Letter to Niike," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 261)

Nichiren Daishonin in this letter talks about faith and how we should practice. He also explains how foolish it is to practice or claim to have faith but still slander.

When I came across the above sentence, I had to ponder it. It seems so simple: If you have questions or doubts about something, especially about the practice, then why not find the solution or the reasoning behind the part you don't understand? Especially regarding the temple issue: Many members are still confused by it, but it seems difficult for them to ask questions, let alone discuss it. I have found that through home visits, I can find out what concerns the members and where they are at. I have also realized that leaders are members, too. Though I may see them at activities, that doesn't mean they're fine.

I am finding out many things by visiting members — what they feel about the temple issue, if they subscribe to the *World Tribune* or *Living Buddhism*, their personal challenges, etc. By chanting together and having dialogue, we resolve or work through many issues. Each time I am surprised that the very issue the members have trouble with can be resolved immediately if it is simply brought up. However, as is often the case, even with me, it is difficult for people to bring up things at the right moment, and, after awhile, they just get swept aside or they build up. My determination is to inspire and empower the members I meet to resolve their doubts — to speak up and speak out, as SGI President Ikeda encourages us to do. It takes courage and much daimoku to speak out clearly, but it is important to do so.

In this age of technology where e-mail and voice mail prevail, it is, I feel, the one-to-one dialogue during a home visit that unlocks distrust and builds friendship. This one-to-one, face-to-face connection is, I feel, the SGI spirit and the SGI's strength. ☐

WHAT A CONCEPT

ON THE BASIC IDEAS
OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

By LISA JONES

STAFF WRITER

It's reasonable to trust that our actions, or causes, result in commensurate effects. Buddhism explains that we create our karma by making causes through thought, word and deed; that is, by what we intend, what we say and what we do.

First of all, the patter that runs through our minds — what we commonly call thought — is not necessarily an expression of intent. We need not meticulously censor the thoughts that go through our minds for fear of making bad causes; it's natural to think freely and entertain ideas without judging them. An intentional pattern of thought, however, such as nursing a grudge, is a "thought" cause.

From one point of view, thought causes are less powerful than speech causes, which are less powerful than deeds. From another view, the intent behind a cause is more significant than the

outward appearance of the cause. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Misfortune comes from one's mouth and ruins him, but fortune comes from one's mind and makes him worthy of respect" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 272). "From one's mouth" means one's speech; "from one's mind" means one's intent.

From yet another point of view, there is no separation between thought, intent and action; rather, our life encompasses all these things at each moment.

With regard to speech, it's OK for us to speak freely and express ideas and feelings. Once we utter our thoughts, though, that's different. If you mull over the idea of marrying someone, for example, it's one thing.

But once you say that you will marry him or her, that speech is a definitive act. For better or worse, what we say has the power to define us. Conversely, if we have good intentions about upholding justice, say, but fail to speak out against injustice, our intentions become a weak cause for good. Further, the Daishonin argues that failing to speak out against injustice is actually a bad cause. Silence is as powerful a cause as speech.

From one view, the significance of deeds can be evaluated in terms of their impact on others. If you give a panhandler money, regardless of why, the fact

remains that you gave someone money. From another view, a deed's significance is determined by its motivation rather than its outward appearance. For example, giving someone money may seem like a generous deed, but if it's done out of guilt or obligation it's arguably a self-centered act.

Recently, in *The New Human Revolution* (Feb. 20 *World Tribune*), SGI President Ikeda writes: "You can always fool others.... But we cannot fool the uncompromising law of cause and effect that governs all life. All pretense is vain, since our present attitude and actions will become clearly manifest as future results."

According to the Daishonin, the most profound cause we can make is wholeheartedly chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. This practice encompasses thought, word and deed — our intent to be in rhythm with the universe, speaking the Mystic Law and determinedly living our Buddhahood.

The Daishonin writes: "The sum of our worldly misdeeds and evil karma may be as great as Mount Sumeru, but once we take faith in this sutra, they will vanish like frost or dew under the sun of the Lotus Sutra" (MW-1, 253).

Five in a series

QUESTION AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

Why Do We Carry the 'Omamori' Gohonzon?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

Q I have recently received an omamori Gohonzon. Could you explain the meaning of the omamori Gohonzon and how I should take care of it when I'm traveling?

A The small Gohonzon, known in Japanese as the *omamori* Gohonzon — which has been made available to SGI-USA members, especially to those who must travel frequently — is offered in the spirit of supporting members' daily practice when they cannot chant at home.

Its size allows members to carry it along easily when traveling, which is why it is also sometimes called a pendant Gohonzon or portable Gohonzon. This small Gohonzon is not meant to replace the Gohonzon that members have enshrined in their homes.

O in the term *omamori* is an honorific title showing respect for *mamori*, which comes from the Japanese verb *mamoru*, meaning to protect. So *omamori* literally means a protective Gohonzon.

But an important point to bear in mind about this Gohonzon is that it is not anything like a good luck charm. (Actually,

there are no good luck charms in this Buddhism.) Always, it is the power of our faith in and practice to the Mystic Law, or the Gohonzon, that enable us to manifest the power of Buddhahood from within our lives — and protect ourselves.

In this regard, Nichiren Daishonin states: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 120).

Therefore, in carrying the *omamori* Gohonzon when we travel, the correct spirit is, as always, to have a strong faith in the Mystic Law. Then we can make protective functions innate in our lives and the environment manifest themselves. It is wrong to think that we gain protection simply because we have an *omamori* Gohonzon with us. It is our strong life-condition that plays the lead role in tapping the supreme, benevolent functions inherent in the Gohonzon.

In a message to those receiving this small Gohonzon, SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya once emphasized, "Nichiren Daishonin wrote that those who are wholehearted in faith and its

practice for attaining Buddhahood and promoting kosen-rufu will definitely tap the boundless, immeasurable power that is innate in the Gohonzon in accord with the powers of their faith and practice."

As Nichiren Daishonin says: "Faith alone is what really matters. No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder. Spur yourself to muster the power of faith" (MW-1, 246).

Concerning how to care for the *omamori* Gohonzon, there are no special rules. As with the larger Gohonzon, *prudence* and *respect* are the watchwords, especially while traveling. While it is meant to be carried on your person — on a chain around your neck or in your pocket — at times you can carefully place it in your handbag, briefcase or other appropriate place. You can use a small altar if you choose; candles, incense and other offerings may not be appropriate. (Note: the small Gohonzon case is not designed to open more than 90 degrees. Opening it wider than that can cause the hinges to break.)

When you're at home and going through your normal daily routine — work, school, errands, etc. — you may carry it with you or place it safely in your home altar. ☐

By HO GOKU

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES



In this 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. This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

Jan. 17 approaches. The Great Hanshin Earthquake's anniversary is near. In the three years that have passed, I have never forgotten, even for a day, our friends in the stricken Kobe, Osaka and Awaji regions. Day after day, I have prayed for the earliest possible reconstruction of the disaster areas, for the welfare and happiness of the victims, and for the peace of those who died.



When I heard the news that day, that a great earthquake had happened in Kansai, I immediately called on the top Soka Gakkai leaders to make an all-out effort in sending aid and assistance to the area. We set up crisis-management centers in both Kansai and Tokyo. We opened our community centers in the affected area as shelters for those left homeless. We rallied assistance nationwide and sent members of our doctors and nurses divisions to the scene.

I was scheduled to give a lecture at Hawaii's East-West Center, but I delayed my departure to the last moment, until I was certain that our aid efforts were on track. As I left Japan, I continued to send daimoku to all our friends in the stricken area. When I had finished my major commitments in Hawaii, I flew back directly to Kansai.



Once in Kansai, when I heard firsthand reports of the members' dedicated relief activities,

I was deeply moved and filled with humble appreciation for them. A motorbike brigade of some 3,000 youth division members, with 900 motorbikes at their disposal, had been working day and night to deliver — over streets and roads rendered impassable to cars and trucks — much-needed relief supplies to victims.

Some of our members had been injured themselves, yet they continued to assist others who were injured. Numberless members, their homes destroyed by the earthquake or the fires that broke out in its wake, put their loss aside to visit other victims, bringing comfort, help and encouragement.

The women's division members were indispensable in searching for victims in the rubble. Because they prayed for the welfare of their neighbors every day and were involved in activities to promote friendship in the local commu-

nity, they knew better than anyone just how many people lived in each destroyed building and apartment.

The media around the world reported on the Soka Gakkai's rescue and relief efforts and praised the organization unstintingly.

It is easy to pay lip service to the sanctity of life. It is a simple matter to talk about contributing to society and working for peace. But what really counts is how an individual, how a group, responds when people's lives are in danger — when disaster strikes.



Our first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, also took the lead in relief efforts during a natural disaster. When the Great Tokyo Earthquake occurred in 1923, he was principal of the Shirogane Elementary School. He organized his

sixth-grade students into a group, which he named the Little Good Deed Club, to collect aid for earthquake victims. No doubt he chose this name because he wanted to tell his students that, young as they were, they could do their part.

The children, pulling small handcars, visited the undamaged houses in the area, saying to each resident: "We're from the Shirogane Elementary School. If you have anything you can spare, please donate it to the earthquake victims." Though at first they felt shy, as they made their rounds their faces began to glow with pride.

Not to stand idly by when you see someone in trouble but to reach out a helping hand — this is the essence of true humanity and the spirit of Buddhism.

Five years later, in 1928, Mr. Makiguchi converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and began to walk the path of great good deeds.



In the final chapter of volume seven of *The New Human Revolution* [not yet translated into English], I related the story of a large group of our Niigata members who, on the way home from a pilgrimage to the head temple by chartered train, ran into a terrible snowstorm and were stranded for several days near Nagaoka. I wrote of this incident because I wanted to leave a record of the Soka Gakkai spirit demonstrated by the Nagaoka members, who made valiant efforts to the aid their stranded fellow members.

While that chapter was being serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, I received word that the stationmaster of Miyauchi Station, where the drama unfolded, was still alive and well. He had worked hard to assist the passengers that time. Today he is 89.

The considerate, selfless actions of the Soka Gakkai members he witnessed during the crisis left him with a positive impression of our organization, and four years ago he became a member himself. I asked his local leader to deliver a message of thanks from me with a Soka Gakkai gold pin.



In this age wracked with egoistic rivalries and a pervasive alienation of individuals from one another, we in the Soka Gakkai are bringing happiness to others, serving the people and society, and creating a network of caring and concern.

We have a name for our effort: We call it kosen-rufu. ☐

STORM, FROM PAGE 6

thrive. And that I can reach out and help others.

Donna Schmid

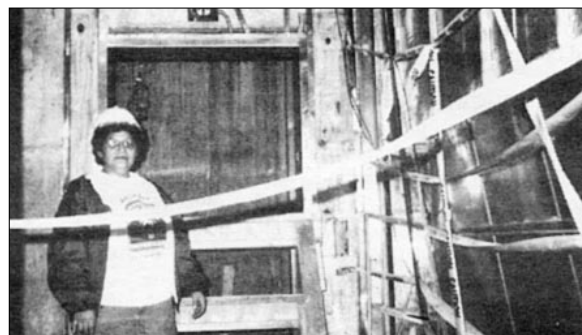
The rain started coming down in buckets by 8:00 p.m. My fiancée, Richard, and I left for work around 10:00 p.m. Our shift on the cleaning crew at Colorado State University starts at 10:30. We tried to drive out of the neighborhood, but a policeman standing knee-deep in water told us to turn back. We went home and called work to say we'd come in when the water in the streets drained off a bit.

About an hour later, Richard and I embarked on an unforget-

table adventure.

Our usual route was blocked off, so I tried alternatives, but wherever I drove, I encountered a raging river. As I maneuvered through the water, I chanted daimoku furiously, creating a rhythm of protection that counteracted the waves. Even though my car rides low, it never once stalled. I saw many four-wheel-drive trucks stalled and floating down the streets. I never once doubted the protection of the Gohonzon. I knew Richard and I would be safe.

When we arrived at CSU, I had to park on higher ground since my usual parking space was under water. Richard and I waded through waist-deep water and finally arrived at work. The power was out all over the campus, but we quickly found our work crew. Someone told us that the rushing water had broken through a wall in the basement



Donna Schmid amid flood damage in the basement of CSU's Morgan Library.

of the recently renovated library building.

Richard and I had the same thought: We would have been in the basement of the library when the wall broke had the policeman not stopped our first attempt to get to work.

In my mind I kept thanking the Buddhist deities for the pro-

tection that surrounded me, Richard and our co-workers.

During and after the experience, I found encouragement and comfort in these words of Nichiren Daishonin:

Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts

in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not have doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p.180)

The flood was a crucial event for me. The reports on the radio at work the next day were more and more devastating — a train derailment, gas explosions, many people homeless. Almost every building on the CSU campus sustained extensive damage.

What incredible protection Richard and I had. ☐

PALACE, FROM PAGE 1

tracted, and their minds wander. What can they do about this?

IKEDA: Being human, it's natural for our minds to wander, for all sorts of thoughts and memories to surface. You can share all those thoughts with the Gohonzon. There is no set form or pattern for how we should pray. Buddhism emphasizes being natural. Therefore, simply chant earnestly without pretense, just as you are. In time, as your faith develops, you'll find it easier to focus your mind when you chant.

KIMURA: Is it all right to chant mainly for ourselves?

IKEDA: Yes, it's fine. It's natural for prayers to center on your own desires and dreams. There's no need to pretend that you're praying for something lofty when you're not. You're only fooling yourself if you do. By chanting naturally, without affectation or reservation, for what you seek most of all, you'll gradually come to develop a higher and more expansive life-condition.

Of course, it's also fine to chant with the resolve to become bigger-hearted or for the welfare of your friends and for kosen-rufu — the happiness and prosperity of all humankind. You are free to chant for whatever you wish. It's all up to you.

Doing gongyo and chanting daimoku are not obligations. They are a wonderful right you possess.

IGETA: Toshiko Takeyama, young women's high school division chief of the Chugoku area, said that many students have asked her whether doing gongyo and chanting daimoku would really help solve their problems. One member in particular was very despondent. Apparently she had challenged a difficult problem by doing gongyo earnestly, but failed to make any headway. She began to worry that she might never solve her problem, and became lax in her practice of gongyo. She wanted to know where she was going wrong.

IKEDA: In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it is said that no prayer goes unanswered. But this is very different from having every wish instantly gratified, as if by magic. If you chant to win the lottery tomorrow, or to score 100 percent on a test tomorrow without hav-

ing studied, the odds are small that it will happen.

Nonetheless, viewed from a deeper, longer-term perspective, all your prayers serve to propel you in the direction of happiness.

Sometimes our immediate prayers are realized and sometimes they aren't. When we look back later, however, we can say with absolute conviction that everything turned out for the best.

Buddhism accords with reason. Our faith is reflected in our daily lives, in our actual circumstances. Our prayers cannot be answered if we fail to make efforts appropriate to our situation.

Furthermore, it takes a great deal of time and effort to overcome sufferings of a karmic nature, whose roots lie deep in causes we made in the past. There is a big difference, for example, in the time it takes for a scratch to heal and that required to recover from a serious internal disease. Some illnesses can be treated with medication, while others require surgery. The same applies to changing our karma through faith and practice.

In addition, each person's level of faith and individual karma differ. By chanting daimoku, however, we can bring forth from within a powerful sense of hope and move our lives in a positive, beneficial direction.

KIMURA: So even if we don't get immediate results, the important thing is to persevere in our Buddhist practice.

IKEDA: It is unrealistic to think that we can achieve everything overnight. If we were to have every prayer answered instantly, it would lead to our ruin. We'd grow lazy and complacent.

KIMURA: Yes, it certainly makes sense that if all our prayers were immediately answered, we'd probably stop making any real effort.

IKEDA: You may have a passing interest in drawing, for example. But if you think you can simply dash off some paintings, suddenly hold an exhibition and have all your work snapped up by art collectors, you are hardly being realistic.

Suppose, rather than working, you have spent all your money playing and are now destitute. Do you think someone giving you a large sum of money would contribute to your happiness in the long run?

IGETA: No, it is only likely to aggravate the problem.

IKEDA: It would be like making superficial repairs to a crumbling building without addressing the problem at its root. Only by first rebuilding the foundation can you begin to build something solid upon it.

Faith enables us to transform not only our day-to-day problems, but our lives at their very foundations. Through our Buddhist practice, we can develop a strong inner core and a solid and inexhaustible reservoir of good fortune.

There are two kinds of benefit that derive from faith in the Gohonzon: conspicuous and inconspicuous. Conspicuous benefit is the obvious, visible benefit of being protected or quickly able to surmount a problem when it arises — be it an illness or a conflict in personal relationships.

Inconspicuous benefit, on the other hand, is less tangible. It is good fortune accumulated slowly but steadily, like the growth of a tree or the rising of the tide, which results in the forging of a rich and expansive state of life. We might not discern any change from day to day, but as the years pass, it will be clear that we've become happy, that we've grown as individuals. This is inconspicuous benefit.

When you chant daimoku, you will definitely gain the best result, regardless of whether that benefit is conspicuous or inconspicuous.

KIMURA: That reminds me of the experience of the Kanagawa Joint Prefecture young men's high school division chief, Shuji Sasaki. It seems the turning point in his faith came when he was 17. He was working part-time for a butcher when he severed four fingers on his left hand while operating a meat saw. In the ambulance on the way to the hospital, his mother sat by his side, urging him: "You must chant. Daimoku is all we have now!" Surgeons worked on his hand for more than eight hours. Though they managed to reattach all four fingers, there was only a 50-50 chance that he would regain full use of his left hand.

For the first time in his life, he prayed to the Gohonzon with all his might. Upon his release from the hospital, all the members of his local Soka Gakkai district were waiting to greet him. Everyone had been chanting daimoku for him — all during the operation and throughout his

HIGHLIGHTS

FROM THIS SPEECH

◆

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◆

It's natural for prayers to center on your own desires and dreams. There's no need to pretend that you're praying for something lofty when you're not. You're only fooling yourself if you do. By chanting naturally, without affectation or reservation, for what you seek most of all, you'll gradually come to develop a higher and more expansive life-condition.

◆

It takes a great deal of time and effort to overcome sufferings of a karmic nature, whose roots lie deep in causes we made in the past. There is a big difference, for example, in the time it takes for a scratch to heal and that required to recover from a serious internal disease. Some illnesses can be treated with medication, while others require surgery. The same applies to changing our karma through faith and practice.

◆

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◆

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stay in the hospital. At that time, he says, a fierce resolve welled up inside him to never part with the Gohonzon or turn his back on the warm and caring world of the Soka Gakkai. Mr. Sasaki eventually regained full use of his fingers. I think we can call

his experience one of conspicuous benefit.

IKEDA: The support of our fellow members is a treasure.

No matter what happens, the

PLEASE SEE PALACE, NEXT PAGE

PALACE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

important thing is to continue chanting. If you do so, you'll definitely become happy. Even if things don't work out the way you hoped or imagined, when you look back later, you'll understand on a much more profound level that it was the best possible result. This is tremendous inconspicuous benefit.

The true benefits of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism are of a lasting and inconspicuous nature that accrue in the depths of your life. Conspicuous benefit, for instance, might allow you to eat your fill today but leave you worrying about your next meal. As an example of inconspicuous benefit, on the other hand, you may have only a meager meal today, but you are steadily developing a life where you will never have to worry about having enough to eat. The latter is a far more attractive prospect, I think.

IGETA: Absolutely nothing is wasted in faith.

IKEDA: The more we exert ourselves in faith, the greater the benefit we experience.

Of course, it's possible to get by in life without practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism. But sometimes we are confronted by karma over which we seem to have no control, or are buffeted about because of an inner weakness. What a tragic loss it would be if we could never change ourselves, if we could never exclaim confidently at the end of our days what a wonderful life we've led. That is precisely why a guiding philosophy in life is essential.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, said:

For what reason have we been born? As the Lotus Sutra passage "living beings enjoy themselves at ease" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 230) states, we have been born to enjoy ourselves. How dull it would be, then, if we did not do so! When we believe in the Gohonzon with all of our heart, we will savor a state of being in which life itself, and everything we do, is a source of joy.

President Toda used the term *absolute happiness* to describe the state of mind in which we can feel that life itself is a joy. If you persevere in faith, you will definitely come to experience this.

Our Buddhist practice boosts the power of our engine, strengthening our life force so that we can always declare,



'Though it might be difficult to appreciate at first, the mud of our suffering provides the building material from which we can erect a solid bulwark for our palace of happiness within.'

"I'm ready for anything!" When our engine is weak, even a small slope will leave us gasping and struggling painfully as we attempt to surmount it.

KIMURA: Obviously there are many fine, upstanding people in the world who don't practice this Buddhism.

IKEDA: That's very true. There are many people who demonstrate admirable integrity and character. It is a mistake to judge people merely on the basis of whether or not they practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. Since there are so many wonderful people who are non-members, it simply means that those of us who are members should strive to develop our humanity and character all the more.

I hope you will forge friend-

ships with people of character and integrity and humbly seek to learn from their example.

Nonetheless, no matter how capable or in control people might appear on the outside, it's difficult to see what's inside their hearts. Often people may look happy, but underneath they may be hiding some personal agony or grappling with a serious problem. Or though they may seem happy now, there is no guarantee that they will always remain that way.

When you get right down to it, does material wealth assure happiness? Does fame? Does living in a big house? The answer is an emphatic "No." All the time we see people embroiled in bitter battles over money; people plunged into misery when fame and popularity disappear; people ruining

their lives when they let fame and power go to their heads; and people living in large, luxurious homes where family members cannot stand one another and a cold and hostile atmosphere pervades.

Such things as money, fame and material possessions offer a fleeting satisfaction, something that can be called relative happiness. However, when we transform our lives internally, when we develop within ourselves a brilliant inner palace, then we can be said to have established absolute happiness. If we develop a state of mind as vast and resplendent as a magnificent palace, then nothing — no matter where we go or what we may encounter in life — can undermine or destroy our happiness.

The most fundamental issue

all of us have to grapple with is death. Not even the greatest or smartest person on earth can solve the suffering of death inherent in the human condition. Only a correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism enables us to surmount the fundamental suffering of death and apprehend the eternity of life.

IGETA: Does our daimoku reach the deceased?

IKEDA: It does, indeed. Life is eternal. Suppose a person dies in pain and suffering. Even after death, that person's life may remain in a state of suffering. It might be likened to someone moaning in his or her sleep due to a nightmare.

If you chant daimoku with that deceased person in mind, you can remove the suffering from his or her agonized life and impart ease and joy through the rejuvenating and illuminating power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And since chanting is that powerful, there is no way that your daimoku cannot help move in the direction of happiness the lives of your parents and friends who are still with you.

Only Buddhism solves the fundamental sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death inherent in the human condition. These sufferings have remained essentially unchanged throughout human history, plaguing the ancient Egyptians as much as they do us in our technologically advanced world today. One reason why people around the world are seeking Buddhism so earnestly is that it solves the question of life and death.

The wonderful thing about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is that, through daimoku, the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death can be transformed into four castle walls or ramparts that fortify the palace of your life. Though it might be difficult to appreciate at first, the mud of our suffering provides the building material from which we can erect a solid bulwark for our palace of happiness within. The deeper the mire of suffering, the more indomitable a palace we can establish.

Youth, above all, is a time for laying the foundation for a truly magnificent palace of life.

IGETA: Yes. There are many people who have made their days in the high school division the foundation for their future. The Hokkaido young women's high school division chief, Kiyoko Oyane, struggled with relation-

PLEASE SEE PALACE, NEXT PAGE

PALACE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ship problems in her second year of senior high school, something that forced her to chant daimoku very seriously. Before that, she had done gongyo only when she encountered some problem, but hadn't really appreciated its value. As she pushed herself to chant daimoku, she came to learn through personal experience that when you change, others change.

So I think it's important for young people to learn the great benefit of daimoku while they're still in high school.

IKEDA: Chanting daimoku establishes a foundation of good fortune in young people's lives. If you establish a solid foundation now, there is no limit to the structure you can build upon it later. Many things contribute to building that foundation. Diligent application to one's studies helps, as does exercising to develop physical fitness and stamina.

But our inner state of life lies at the core of our mental and physical well-being. Buddhist practice is the only means by which we can strengthen, purify and develop our inner life.

We have to exercise our minds through study. We have to exercise our bodies through physical activity and sports. We also have to exercise our life-condition through daimoku. When our inner condition of life changes, our minds and bodies also change. They will be refreshed and revitalized.

Daimoku charges our batteries. If we take care to regularly charge our batteries, then we'll always be full of energy and vitality. If we fail to keep our batteries charged, we won't have energy when we need it most and as a result may be defeated by our environment.

Those who saturate their lives with daimoku and learn to keep their batteries charged while they're young are building a foundation for lifelong happiness.

KIMURA: Satoru Sato, young men's high school division leader of the Shin'etsu area, said that he didn't do gongyo until his second year of high school. He was the captain of his school's boxing team. When he reached the national high school finals, he gained the conviction that anything could be achieved if one simply made the effort.

But in the winter of his second year in high school, he suffered a slipped disk and was told by the doctor that he could no longer box. He fell into a serious depression; the light had

gone out of his world and nothing seemed to matter to him anymore.

Then, a young men's division leader in his area started coming by to encourage him, telling him confidently: "Nothing is impossible with faith. Things will definitely turn around, you'll see." With this encouragement, Mr. Sato gradually applied himself to the practice of gongyo and daimoku. He recovered from his slipped disk and the following summer again qualified for the national finals.

IGETA: The encouragement of people close by can be a great source of strength for those who are suffering.

If I may change the subject slightly, a student was wondering whether it's necessary to kneel when we do gongyo and chant daimoku. She says that her legs grow sore and numb when she sits that way, and she can't concentrate on chanting.

IKEDA: It's perfectly all right to sit in a chair or, if you sit on the floor, to arrange your legs comfortably.

It's important to want to sit before the Gohonzon as though going to meet the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and that daimoku and gongyo be enjoyable. Bearing these points in mind, what's most important is that you continue in your Buddhist practice throughout life. There's no need to be overly concerned with formality.

KIMURA: A member asked about closing our eyes while chanting or doing gongyo.

IKEDA: It's best to keep your eyes open and to look at the Gohonzon. It's generally considered impolite not to look others in the eye when speaking to them. I think this is also true when we are facing and addressing the Gohonzon as we do gongyo or chant daimoku.

Of course, if you do close your eyes occasionally, there's no need to worry. We should just bear in mind that when we close our eyes, it can be more difficult to commune strongly with the Gohonzon.

This, of course, does not apply to people who are blind or sight impaired, who need simply chant or do gongyo to the Gohonzon within their hearts.

KIMURA: Where specifically should we direct our gaze when looking at the Gohonzon?

IKEDA: Wherever is most natural for you is fine. You can look

at the characters of *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* down the center, or you can gaze at the entire Gohonzon.

As long as we chant with strong faith, our prayers are fully communicated.

IGETA: Why is it that we face east for the first prayer of morning gongyo?

IKEDA: During morning gongyo, we face east to greet the sun, which represents all the universal functions that protect those who exert themselves in faith — functions that we normally refer to as Buddhist gods in the Daishonin's Buddhism. However, we do not pray to the sun itself.

These universal functions, if you like, are nourished by *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*. They are vitalized and energized by daimoku, strengthening their protective force and influence. In a figurative sense, during our first prayer of morning gongyo we offer these Buddhist gods or protective functions an opportunity to savor the flavor of the Law.

When we offer daimoku in reverence, the Buddhist gods respond to us in reverence. That is, the protective functions of the universe and the protective functions in our own lives mesh and begin to act in harmony.

When we turn to face the Gohonzon again for the second prayer, all the Buddhist gods throughout the universe join us in offering greetings to the Gohonzon. The Buddhist gods — protective functions — are thus set in motion toward the realization of our prayers.

KIMURA: The first prayer is important, isn't it? When we don't have time to do a full morning gongyo, is it OK just to face east and chant daimoku?

IKEDA: Yes, in that case, just chanting daimoku is fine.

IGETA: Would you please explain the significance of the prayer beads?

IKEDA: It is customary to place the prayer beads around the middle fingers of both hands — the three tufts on the right hand and the two tufts on the left — twisting the loop so that it crosses over between our two hands. The prayer beads are said to be fashioned after the human body: The three tufts on the right are our head and both arms; the crossing over of the loop indicates our navel; the two tufts on the left are our two legs.

Each set of prayer beads comprises 108 beads, represent-

ing the 108 earthly desires, the sources of suffering. The four smaller beads in the loop stand for the four bodhisattvas, who are the leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the Lotus Sutra.

KIMURA: That would be bodhisattvas Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices and Firmly Established Practices.

IKEDA: Yes. Profound meaning is attached to each of these four bodhisattvas, but I won't go into detail now. Suffice it to say that the true identity of Bodhisattva Superior Practices is Nichiren Daishonin. The four bodhisattvas represent the power to work eternally for the happiness of all humanity.

The prayer beads therefore symbolize that through chanting and doing gongyo before the Gohonzon, we can transform all problems and suffering into fuel to propel us toward happiness.

Moreover, our joined palms represent the fusion of reality and wisdom — the fusion of our lives with the Mystic Law — while the meeting of the five fingers of both hands represent the mutual possession of the ten worlds. The mutual possession of the ten worlds means that none of the ten worlds — that is, Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood — are separate from one another. This is precisely why the power of the world of Buddhahood is manifested in the other nine worlds of our daily lives.

We should remember, however, that such things as prayer beads, Buddhist altars, incense and the like form part of the ritual aspect of faith. Such formalities are subject to change depending on the era or place, and in most cases change is acceptable.

The substance of our faith is what matters most.

Also, the dual nature of our practice — for ourselves and for others — will never change. Practice for ourselves constitutes chanting daimoku and doing gongyo with faith in the Gohonzon, while practice for others constitutes teaching others about the Mystic Law.

KIMURA: What does the term *Gohonzon* mean?

IKEDA: The literal meaning of *honzon* is object of devotion. *Go* is an honorific. Even people who declare that they are not religious will surely have something that they value or esteem

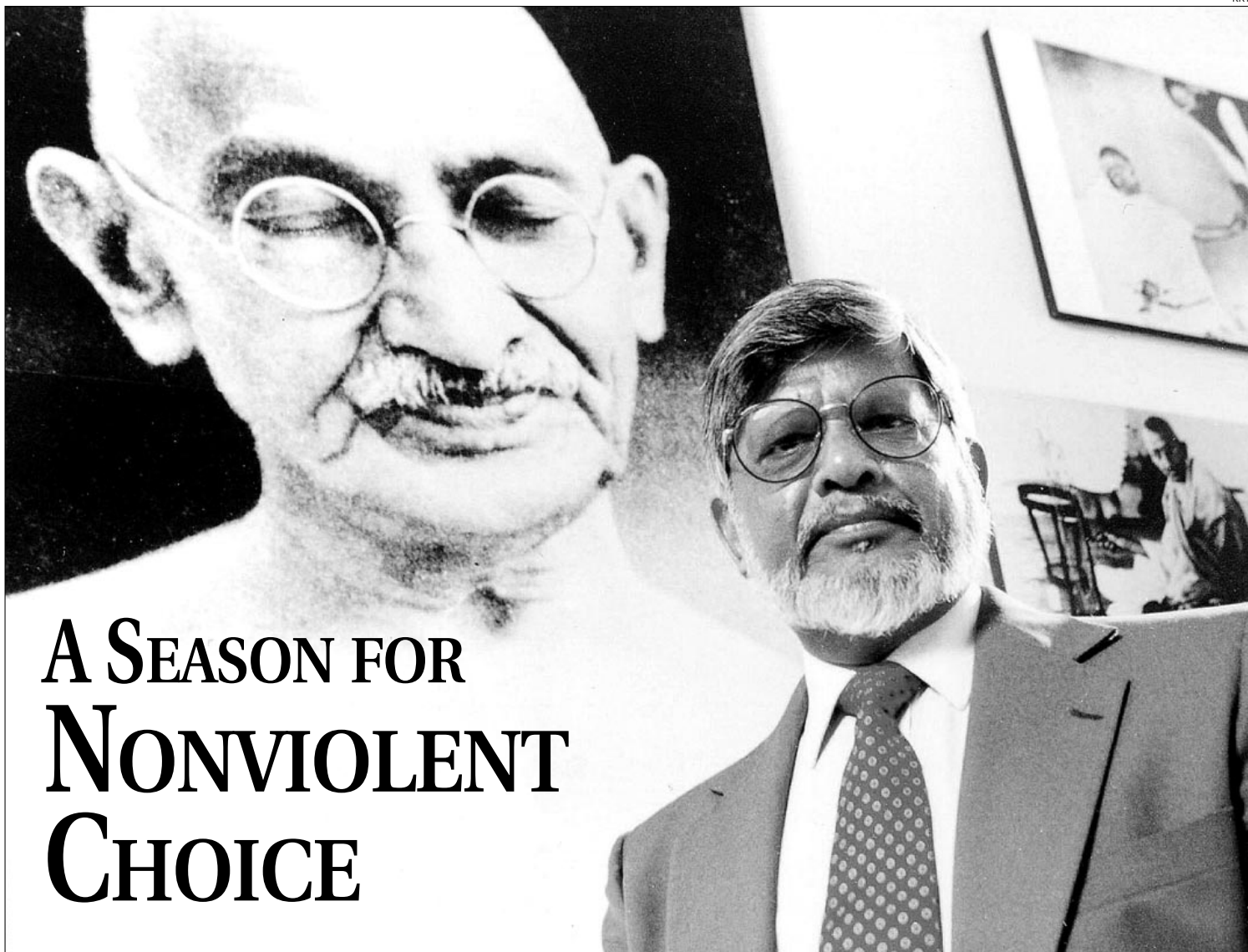
most highly. Whatever people cherish most dearly — that is their object of fundamental respect, or object of devotion. Though they might claim otherwise, there are those for whom money is an object of devotion. For others, it might be social status. Some people make their boyfriend or girlfriend, or their family, their object of devotion. For some, knowledge is the altar at which they worship. And certainly there are people who venerate some deity or some vague concept of heaven or truth.

What you make the object of your greatest veneration will have a profound influence on your life. The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin takes as its object of fundamental respect the life of the Buddha — the eternal essence of life at one with the universe. That object of veneration is not something abstract or out of reach, because it is life itself. Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 213).

The eternal life of the universe exists within each of us. The Gohonzon resides within each of us. The Daishonin's Buddhism is a philosophy of utmost respect for human beings and for life. Nichiren Daishonin embodied the essence of his own life in the form of the Gohonzon to make it possible for us to summon forth the Gohonzon within our lives.

In a sense, there is no simpler Buddhist practice than doing gongyo and chanting daimoku. We do not have to undertake strange austerities as in some esoteric Buddhist traditions. With machinery, too, the more sophisticated the technology, the greater the ease of operation and use. Similarly, the very superiority of the Daishonin's Buddhism enables us to tap the life state of Buddhahood through the very simplest form of practice.

However, since our Buddhist practice takes place in the midst of our daily lives, it is all too easy for us to grow lazy and neglect it. In that respect, there is perhaps no more difficult practice when it comes to continuing. Nonetheless, if we challenge ourselves to keep up a little each day, before we realize it we will have built a path to happiness in the depths of our lives; we will have established a solid embankment that will prevent our ever being swept away toward unhappiness. 卍



A SEASON FOR NONVIOLENT CHOICE

Arun Gandhi, founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Memphis, Tenn., says nonviolence must begin 'with us, with what we do every day.'

By AILEEN SMEDY

LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

To create an awareness of non-violent practices to heal, transform, and empower lives and communities

To honor those who are using nonviolence to build communities that honor the dignity and worth of every human being

To demonstrate that every person can move the world in the direction of peace through their daily nonviolent choice and action



This is the purpose statement for the Season for Nonviolence, the 64-day period between the 50th anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi on Jan. 30 and the 30th anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4.

At first, Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, thought it would be appropriate to honor these anniversaries with a local campaign in his hometown of Memphis, Tenn. However, word got around and soon grass-roots organizations from around the world caught wind of it and began participating. An incredible number of organizations that have been working toward peace objectives are coming together in unity for this event.

Supported by UNESCO, more than 300 non-profit organizations in more than 100 cities around the world,

as well as more than 25 U.S. governors and several other dignitaries and social leaders, the Season for Nonviolence encourages people to think about and practice conflict resolution through individual behavior, dialogue, workshops, educational events, online discussions and community action.

Youth are encouraged to participate online through I*EARN (The International Education and Resource Network), a global K-12 online network reaching 2,500 schools in 47 countries. The network is sponsoring an online conference to inspire and empower kids to learn about, practice and teach nonviolence in their schools and communities.

All this at a time when the United States faces a crisis with Iraq. Is this significant? Project coordinator Barbara Bernstein of the Association for Global New Thought thinks it is.

"I believe that a great force for good can be expected to encounter a great force

for evil. It is not just a coincidence," she says. "There are so many people working for peace, there is bound to be chaotic interplay."

Says Arun Gandhi: "We live crisis to crisis. We take care of the conflict only when it reaches a crisis. Violence doesn't resolve conflict, it only aggravates it. We need to learn to anticipate the conflict before it becomes a crisis and resolve it peacefully."

In addition to a presentation at the United Nations on Jan. 30 that commemorated Mahatma Gandhi, a closing memorial is planned for Dr. King on April 2 at the United Nations and in Atlanta on April 4. What's next?

"I hope the season never ends," says Arun Gandhi. "I hope we can come together and work together and forget hate and become more human. Relationships are built not on tolerance but on respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation. This is what Grandfather said." ❖

COMING NEXT WEEK:

SGI President Ikeda on how to be ageless

SPECIAL
PULLOUT
SECTION

FRIENDS for Peace

MARCH 6,
1998



Exhibit Focuses On CHILDREN

“Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights & Realities,” an interactive walk-through exhibit, contains photos, artwork and information about the rights and realities of children around the world. It will be displayed at Shepherd Mall in Oklahoma City through March 9. Originally displayed in New York City, the free exhibit is on a 15-city national tour.



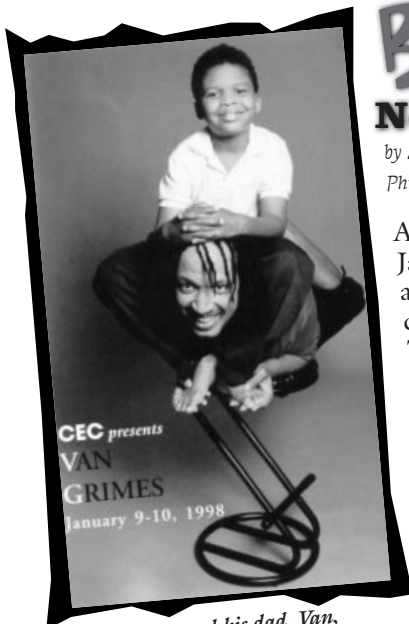
BOYS AND GIRLS CELEBRATE New Year in Philadelphia

by Anne Martin
Philadelphia, Penn.

At our first 1998 Boys and Girls meeting on Jan. 18, we had a special treat. Evan Grimes and his dad, Van, shared a video of their recent dance performance in Philadelphia. Then they lead us all in vigorous dance and movement fun.

Afterward, Evan said: “[The meeting] was good, and I want to come again. At first I was nervous but then the people started clapping and I really had a good time. I love to move, and I love dancing with my dad!

For Van, “To perform with my son and for my friends was truly a dream come true.”



Evan Grimes and his dad, Van, perform in Philadelphia.



Boys and girls in Philadelphia.

POETRY

I Am By Maiara Walsh, 9 *Calabasas, Calif.*

I am the red hot sun that beats upon us.
 I am the graceful arms of a beautiful swimmer.
 I am the seashell that will sit down and tell you a tale of the sea.
 I am the fetish wings of the fluttering butterfly.
 I am the footsteps that you hear behind a wondrous tree.
 I am faith. Faith that can only be found in your beating heart.
 I am a white fluffy cloud. ☼



EXPERIENCES

TAYLOR OSMONSON, 7

Anoka, Minn.

I used to fight at school. Then I got a white slip. This was really serious. If you get two white slips, you have to go to detention. My mom and dad and I talked. We decided that if the fighting continued, my parents would pull me out of hockey.

I really love hockey! So I decided to start chanting daimoku for five minutes before school each day.

The next day, a boy at school broke my pencil on purpose. I was really angry, but I talked to him instead of hitting him. Then I talked to my teacher about it. She was proud of me for using my words. ☼



NICOLE HICKS

Philadelphia, PA

On Jan. 18, the Boys and Girls Group in Philadelphia had a fantastic kick-off meeting for 1998!

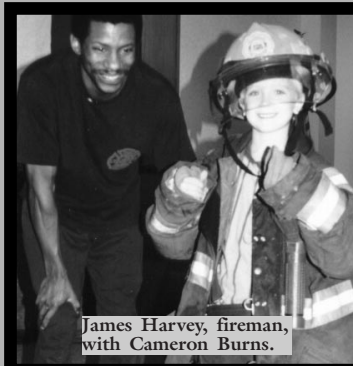
I was really nervous about leading gongyo. The night before the meeting, I chanted to be really good and not mess up. I usually go fast, but Ms. Vickie asked me to go slow so that the other children could keep up. I had to concentrate on going slow. But I was able to do it. I was excited and felt really good.

My grandmother helps me practice at home each day. My determination is to study hard and to lead gongyo at the Boys and Girls Group meeting again. At the end of the meeting we all put our determinations in a lion. ☼



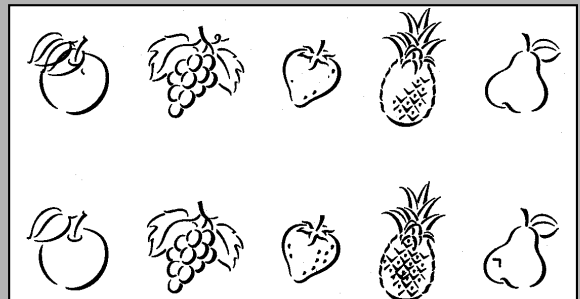
Philadelphia Kids Learn Fire Safety

On Dec. 21, 1997, a Philadelphia fireman came to our Boys and Girls Group meeting and told us all about fire prevention and what it was like to save people's lives. What was really cool is that the fireman, James Harvey, is James Jr.'s dad. Cameron Burns said: "I learned that being a firefighter is a dangerous job, and they have to go to lots of fires. It was fun! My brother Forrest was the MC for our meeting. He did a great job!" ☼



James Harvey, fireman, with Cameron Burns.

HOW IS THE TOP ROW DIFFERENT FROM THE BOTTOM?



AND HOW ARE THEY ALIKE?

"FRIENDS for Peace" thanks everyone who contributed to this issue. Please send your experience (around 150 words), comments, questions or news article to: "Friends for Peace," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

We are all DIFFERENT

By Theresa Bosch
Midwest Region

Every January, our nation celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Dr. King believed that all people should be treated with kindness and respect regardless of the color of their skin, their family background or their religion. In 1963, he made a famous speech called the "I Have a Dream" speech. In this speech, he said, "I have a dream that one day...children will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Nichiren Daishonin said in the Goshō that even though they are each different, cherry, plum, pear and damson blossoms are all very beautiful just as they are. He also taught that every person, no matter what he or she looks like, is a "Treasure Tower" that is unbelievably great. What do you think he meant by this?

In the United States, many people practice many different kinds of religions. This is because our country has religious freedom. People might be Christians, such as Catholics or Baptists. Some may be Jewish, or perhaps some are Moslems. In the SGI, we practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Have you ever seen anyone laughed at because of their religion? How do you feel about that? How do you feel about the following:

1. Suppose someone tells you about his or her church and then asks you what church you go to. Does this embarrass you? Why? What do you say if someone asks if you believe in God?
2. What do you say to a friend if he or she is playing at your house and sees your altar or hears someone in your family chanting?
3. Has anyone ever teased you about being a Buddhist? What can a person do about that?

Studying Diversity

From Carol Weiss Midwest Region

The Goshō tells us that "all persons who hear of the sutra will, without a single exception, attain Buddhahood."

"All the various beings in the nine worlds and the six paths differ from one another in their minds. It is like the case of two people, three people, or a hundred or a thousand people: Although all have faces about a foot in length, no two look exactly alike. Their minds differ, and therefore their faces differ, too. How much greater still is the difference between the minds of two people, of ten people, and of all the living beings in the six paths and the nine worlds! So it is that some love the blossoming cherry trees, and some love the moon, some prefer sour things and some prefer bitter ones, some like little things and some like big. People have various tastes. Some prefer good and some prefer evil. People are of many kinds."

But though they differ in such ways as these,... there is not one who shall not attain Buddhahood."

— from "The Treasure of a Filial Child"

ACTIVITIES:

1. The Human Mirrors

Have two people face each other and try to exactly mirror the movements of the other. This can teach us to pay close attention to others.

2. Puzzle People

In a group of two to five children, draw a picture of an imaginary person. Choose one feature from each child in the group to make this imaginary person. This teaches us to appreciate and look at others in a new way.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A CORRESPONDENT FOR

If you want to report on activities and people in your area, please fill out the form below and mail to us:

Name: _____

Area and Region: _____

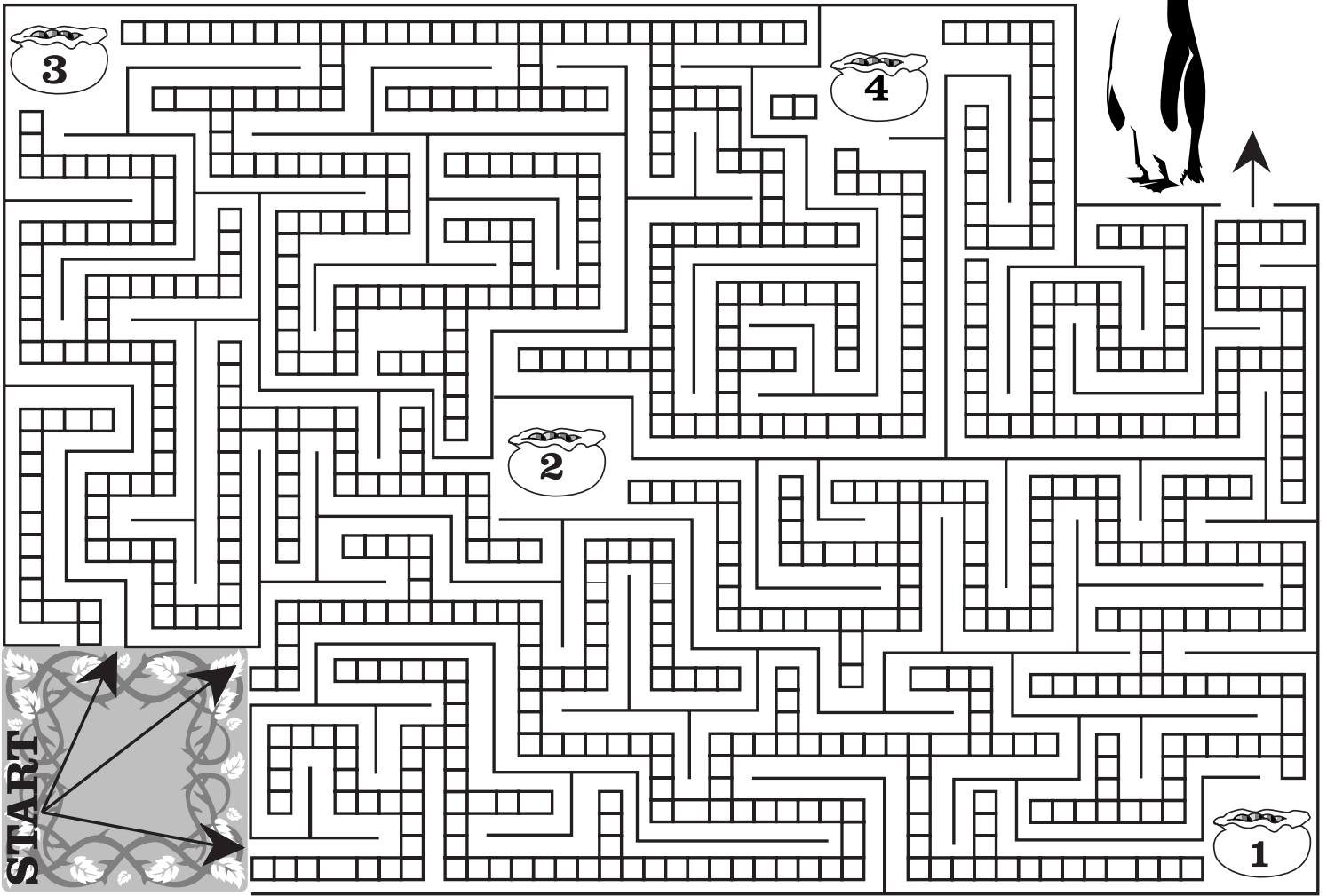
Address: _____

Phone: _____



Pot of Gold MAZE

Every time you chant one minute of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, fill in another box (□). Chant five minutes to fill in a Pot of Gold. By the time you reach the first pot, you will have chanted for one hour!



Gather the 4 POTS OF GOLD. They represent:

1. True Self
2. Eternity
3. Purity
4. Happiness

- First, draw a light pencil line along the path you want to take to each Pot of Gold.
- Fill in each box with your favorite color — one box every time you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for one minute (or every five minutes, if you choose), and five minutes (or ten minutes) for each Pot of Gold.
- By the time you get to the first Pot of Gold, you'll have chanted for one hour!
- Continue on and fill in all the boxes, if you like. How much daimoku do you think you'll have chanted?