

# World Tribune

No. 3184

THE YEAR OF VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

MARCH 27, 1998

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

DATED MATERIAL: PLEASE DELIVER BY ISSUE DATE

## All in the Global Family



More than 6,500 people, including more than 2,000 guests, attended the Global Family Festival at the World Culture Center in Los Angeles on March 14 and 15. Youth division members from five regions presented four two-and-a-half-hour multimedia performances featuring a dramatic storyline, video clips, music, dance and some 600 young participants. See story on page 5.

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 19th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held concurrently with the 4th Kanagawa Prefecture General Meeting, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, Feb. 3.*

**T**hank you all for gathering here today in this cold weather. I commend each of you on your tremendous efforts in January. The joint effort of the youth division members in particular signals the start of colossal development in the year ahead. The 21st century belongs to the youth division. A new age led by the youth has already begun, and I rejoice in this with you with all my heart.

Also, to all my friends from Kanagawa, congratulations on holding your fourth general meeting! My warmest welcome to you all.

## BRIGHT IDEAS

Thomas Edison — the man who said 'Genius is 1 percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration' — is credited with some of the most important inventions of the 20th century. Edison's tenacity and hard work are noteworthy, SGI President Ikeda says.

## Don't Ever Give Up

Whatever the endeavor, it is important not to give up until you succeed. This is the theme I will discuss today.

February is the month of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth. Born in 1900, the last year of the 19th century, he went on to carry out a great struggle for human happiness on the stage of the 20th century.

Today I am engaged in building a bridge of victory from the 20th century into the 21st. This is a work in progress.

As we approach the turn of the century, many are looking back over this century and pondering its events and developments.

There is one notable figure who has been described as having "invented the 20th century," and that is Thomas Edison (1847-1931).

The American inventor and entrepreneur was involved in an extraordinary number of inventions: incandescent light, the phonograph, motion pic-

PLEASE SEE IDEAS, 8



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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# Desperately Seeking a Change of Karma

## EDITORIAL

Nichiren Daishonin promises that we can change our karma, our destiny, through Buddhist practice. For instance, in a 1275 letter to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo, he tells her that "the bad luck of your thirty-third year will turn into the happiness of your thirty-third year... You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 158).

At the time, 33 was thought in Japan to be an unlucky age for women, and Nichigen-nyo thought trouble was on the way. The Daishonin wanted to assure her that whatever karma she felt she was going to suffer from would definitely turn into her happiness. He makes similar promises to his followers throughout his letters and thus to all of us. We can reverse our bad luck, he says — whether it's in relationships, health or finances.

Unfortunately, though, changing our deepest karma takes time. The Daishonin wasn't telling Nichigen-nyo that she would change *all* her bad luck that one year; he was encouraging her to keep moving down the long road to happiness. His message was "Keep chanting, keep hoping, keep moving your life in a positive direction this year."

SGI President Ikeda recently explained that "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." One way of looking at our karmic sufferings, then, is this: Since they come from causes we made in the past — even in past lives — we have to reach deep into our lives to change them. The deeper those sufferings' causes are, the longer they take to reach.

It's human nature, though, to want to change our lives all at once. Today! Now!

And many times, we may approach our Bud-

dhist practice desperately seeking that change — the quick fix, some call it. We might chant more, go to more meetings, study Buddhism more. Which is all great, unless we then let impatience get in the way of the progress we're making, or we just burn out. It can be a big letdown, for example, when we "throw ourselves into activities," and everything doesn't immediately turn around.

We know how hard we've been working at faith — so where's the payoff?

*Buddhism teaches how important it is for us to enjoy changing our karmic sufferings. Since it may take a while, we might as well enjoy it.*

Again, Buddhism teaches that the fundamental change we're hoping for only comes about over time, only through the accumulation of daily efforts over a long period. There is no quick fix.

At the same time, Buddhism teaches how important it is for us to enjoy changing our karmic sufferings. Since it may take a while, we might as well enjoy it. The Daishonin essentially asked Nichigen-nyo, "Why don't you enjoy your 33rd year, making it a great year for changing karma?" The same principle applies to us all. If we feel that "This year I'll change karma" or even "Today I'm going to change karma," we're sure to enjoy ourselves more than if we're obsessing about why the payoff is slow in coming.

There may be few overnight successes in Buddhism, but the Daishonin teaches that every day and every night is another chance for us to change things — another *enjoyable* chance.

From the long-term perspective, we will change our karma. The Daishonin promised that, in the end, everything would turn out for the best if his followers continued to practice. "You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" — that's a guarantee from him to each of us.

Growing younger. Accumulating good fortune. When he puts it like that, the Daishonin sure makes changing karma sound like a lot of fun. WJ

## 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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## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### Chanting Is More Than Prayer

In the Feb. 27 issue, the editorial was titled "The Right Way To Chant?" I would suggest that a more correct title would have been "The Right Way To Pray?"

Your editorial implies that the only posture one can assume while chanting daimoku is one of petitionary prayer. While it is clear from the Goshō that Nichiren Daishonin sanctioned this kind of practice, it is not the only way to approach practicing with the Gohonzon. For example, in "On Attaining Buddhahood," Nichiren Daishonin states: "A mind which presently is clouded by illusions originating from the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but once it is polished it will become clear, reflecting the enlightenment of immutable truth. Arouse deep faith and polish your mirror night and day. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 5). Notice he does not direct us to pray to polish our minds. I would suggest that praying to polish your mind and polishing your mind are two completely different psychological postures.

In the Goshō "Reply to Gijo-bo," Nichiren Daishonin states: "'Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha' also means to see the Buddha in one's own mind, to concentrate one's mind on seeing the Buddha, and that to see one's own mind is to see the Buddha. I have attained the fruit of Buddhahood, the eternally inherent three bodies [by living this sentence]" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 205). This passage suggests to me that the practice of chanting daimoku encompasses traditional Buddhist meditational postures, such as concentration, mindfulness and insight. We do a disservice to the breadth of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and practice when we narrowly define the correct way to chant solely in terms of prayer.

— LEE K. WOLFSON, Pittsburgh

### Women Are Youth, Too

As a mother of two young children, I would like to offer my comments about the "Seize the Day" pullout.

It is disturbing to me to see a youth section dominated by one gender. This is not the first time the *World Tribune* has used the title *youth* to headline information or stories solely about males. (The Feb. 27 pullout had all male points of view, and there were six pictures of young men.) How am I to share this with my daughter and expect her to embrace and identify with it? Frankly, I wouldn't want to.

Society nationally and internationally is highly male-dominated at the expense of women. That means women are invisible and young girls don't get to see women to identify with, learn about and have as role models. It saddens me and makes me angry to see this same pattern in the SGI, particularly in the youth division, which will lead the future and hopefully embrace my young children. Please consider what I am saying.

— NANCY LATIMER, San Bruno, Calif.

*Editors note: Point well taken (except that we did include one experience from a young women's division in that issue). The imbalance was unintentional, but thank you for raising our awareness: We'll do our best to seek a better balance (please see this week's issue).*

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

## Step Up to the Plate

### PERSPECTIVE

While digging through the SGI-USA archives, Lisa

Jones came across a photograph of SGI President Ikeda that inspired this 'Perspective.'

By LISA JONES  
STAFF WRITER

Baseball cap on backward. Wearing one of those penguin-logo shirts. My dad had one just like it, I remember, in the late '60s or early '70s. Around the same time that this photo of SGI President Ikeda was taken.

In most of the pictures I've seen, President Ikeda is wearing a business suit and meeting with world leaders and intellectuals. I love this photo because it reminds me that he's just an ordinary person who strives to be the best he can be. With spectacular results.

I think it's sad that some people misunderstand why we admire President Ikeda. To me, he's a living example of how people can apply Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in daily life, pursue dreams and be happy. I see him as a teacher and a friend, despite never having met him.

In 1990 — just before Nichiren Shoshu excommuni-

cated President Ikeda and all SGI members — Nichiren Shoshu officials rebuked Mr. Ikeda for allowing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" to be performed at SGI meetings; the masterpiece is non-Buddhist, they asserted.

In 1991, I saw President Ikeda in person for the first time. I had been practicing Buddhism less than a year, and knew next to nothing about him. The orchestra and chorus performed "Ode to Joy" as Mr. Ikeda entered the auditorium.

It's more accurate to say that he exploded into the auditorium; although he's small in physical stature, he has a wonderfully immense presence. Walt Whitman once wrote: "I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes, / We convince by our presence." The moment I saw President Ikeda I knew that I could wholeheartedly support him. All I could think was, "Wow."

Later, as I read his books and speeches, I developed a left-brained appreciation for his

knowledge and ideas. Even so, while President Ikeda is a first-rate intellectual, it's his humanness — which I feel in his poem "Moonlight," among others — that thaws my cynicism.

*To me, this photo conveys an aspect of President Ikeda's spirit that I would like to develop in myself. The spirit to stand up and take my turn at bat.*

This photo also reminds me of the last time I went to a baseball game: a warm July night last year at Coors Field in Denver — the Colorado Rockies were playing... someone. I was there to see fireworks, not baseball. I don't remember who won the game.

After the game, the ballpark went dark and the crowd hushed. The first rocket went up. I followed the as-

cending trail of orange sparks...climbing...hovering...pow. A kaleidoscope of light. Then another, and another. Explosions choreographed to Sousa marches and Springsteen songs. Gunpowder-smelling clouds of smoke. Thundering reports that drummed through my ribcage.


Then the finale began.

At the first surging chords of "Ode to Joy," a spontaneous roar rose from the crowd. It's an anthem of human triumph, forever linked in my heart to President Ikeda.

I've never seen a more overwhelming barrage of fireworks. It was like being pummeled with brilliance. I glanced down the row at the faces of my family members, rapt in delighted amazement. All I could think was, "Wow."

An image — a moment, whether captured on film or engraved in one's memory — conveys more than any argument, simile or rhyme.

To me, this photo conveys an aspect of President Ikeda's spirit that I would like to develop in myself. The spirit to stand up and take my turn at bat. To calmly assess everything that's thrown at me, and to have the wisdom to know when to swing.

And when I do swing, to connect with the ball and slug it into the center-field seats. 

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



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

NEWS BRIEFS



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Children view the SGI-cosponsored World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition in Cape Town, South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA

### Children's Art Exhibition Opens in South Africa

The World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition made its way to Africa for the first time, opening at the Good Hope Gallery of the Castle in Cape Town, South Africa, on March 1 and running through to March 17. The showing was sponsored by the SGI and the University of the Western Cape, with the support of UNESCO and the South African Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. President Nelson Mandela served as honorary chairperson of the exhibition's steering committee.

RUSSIA

### SGI President To Be Acknowledged by Russian Government

In commemoration of the 850th anniversary of the establishment of the city of Moscow, the Russian government has decided to confer a medal and Certificate of Special Commendation upon SGI President Ikeda. The honor recognizes individuals who have contributed to the development of Russian society and the promotion of amicable exchange. Moscow Mayor Yuriy M. Luzhkov recommended Mr. Ikeda for the distinction, which was approved and signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

CHINA

### Chinese University To Honor SGI President

SGI President Ikeda has received a letter from President Lu Tiecheng of China's Sichuan Union University advising him of the institution's decision to confer an honorary professorship upon him. In the letter, President Lu acknowledges that Mr. Ikeda is a distinguished Buddhist thinker, philosopher and social activist, well-known for his endeavors to establish world peace and foster a spirit of nonviolence through culture and education.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

If you have a short report of a special event in your area that you'd like to see in "News Briefs," please contact your local bureau chief or call us at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail us at [SokaNews@aol.com](mailto:SokaNews@aol.com).



Participants dressed in colorful costumes enter the auditorium for the start of the performances.

## Black History Month Celebrated in San Francisco

By FRED FRIEDLAND  
CORRESPONDENT

San Francisco, Feb. 28

Rhythms of African drums like primal heartbeats. Brightly colored garb. Sweet-potato pie and hibiscus tea. Exhibit panels, books, art....

San Francisco members made history with their first meeting commemorating black history month — A Celebration of Culture and Heritage — held in the San Francisco Ikeda Auditorium. Some 200 members and guests were treated to a fascinating program of education, art, literature, music, dance and food, based on the rich humanity of African and African-American traditions.

Event organizer Akiko Lewis shared SGI President Ikeda's vision of Africa in the coming 21st century, the Century of Life, "where all living beings on this planet can live together in peace and harmony. The time has come when the entire world will learn from the energy, strength and wisdom of Africa, which never lost the happy pulse of life in

spite of all that was taken from it by others."

In her keynote address, Kola Akintola, executive director of

then education of the mind becomes of prime importance. Children must embrace the human library and wisdom of elders in society, and understand the tools of technological infrastructure as provided by computers and information systems to survive the future.

"I believe this is the key to understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and the removal of mutual negative cultural or economic arrogance."

Dapo Agoro, a stage director in Berkeley, said that he feels "proud to be involved because people of African-American heritage have been able to come together with the full support of the members, and everyone equally was impacted by feelings of hope, pride and determination."

As 12-year-old Thierry Eyoum-Deido of San Francisco expressed in his essay on "What It Means To Be an African American": "I hope someday we can bring all the races together in America as friends."

With determination like that, we cannot miss. ❏



Anthony Hernandez plays the Caribbean steel drum during the festivities in San Francisco.

the Center for African and African-American Art and Culture, said that "if children and youth are to survive the future,

**It's gonna be HOT!**

**YOUTH CONFERENCES AT THE FLORIDA NATURE AND CULTURE CENTER THIS SUMMER**

See the "Seize the Day" Youth Pullout Inside This Issue for More Details.



# FAMILY FEST

Los Angeles performance features a cast of hundreds — and a story of strength onstage and off.

By **DEBORAH GOODWIN**  
CORRESPONDENT  
Santa Monica, Calif.,  
March 14-15

A member from Los Angeles #3 Region performs a Korean fan dance as part of a multicultural dance medley (top right). Members from Los Angeles #5 Region dance to the song 'Constantinople' (top left). Five and Drum Corps members (above) representing all Los Angeles regions also perform. The festival depicts Los Angeles in all its diversity.

The Global Family Festival, commemorating March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, represented the artistic and spiritual accomplishments of each of the five Los Angeles regions. The cross-regional effort was both a moving and authentic testament to the vitality of the Los Angeles youth division.

Written by Shan Serafin, the three-act musical extravaganza was based on SGI President Ikeda's poem "Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land." It engaged young performers and behind-the-scenes participants by the hundreds and played to standing-room-only audiences for two days.

Featuring a multicultural, multi-ethnic ensemble cast, representing Los Angeles in all its diversity, the main

characters' personal dilemmas collided with a defining moment in the city's history, the Rodney King incident and ensuing civil unrest. Their journey through their community and inward into their lives resulted in each character awakening the spirit to challenge his or her weaknesses and pursue his or her strengths.

Pim Bomrungchati, originally of Thailand, said: "I know I'm not the only one going through a crisis or insecurity. Everyone is. I want the audience to feel the spirit that "'Sun of Jiyu' is me" and not just leave the auditorium and let that spirit fade away."

Yoshiko Nakamura expressed her hopes that "lots of youth division members will become active again in the organization, especially during the next three years leading up to the new century. I hope this March 16 is a real turning point." **WT**



Dancers from Los Angeles #2 Region evoke the anger and chaos of the 1992 civil unrest in Los Angeles (above). Musicians from Los Angeles #1 Region play a Beach Boys song during a depiction of the events and people in Los Angeles' pop culture history (left).

**Photos by Gregory Nakasuji, Byron Cohen, Don Hodgson and Toshi Fujimoto**

Photo by LISA HOLLIS

**M**y dream is to have a golden relationship with a fabulous husband and together raise beautiful, happy children. I realized last year that to actualize this dream, I had to get busy with my Buddhist practice.

My mother died when my sister was 3 and I was 2. My father soon remarried. When I was 3 or 4, my sister and I were molested by our primary baby sitter, my stepmother's grandfather.

And this abuse continued for the next seven years. I began overeating, smoking cigarettes at age 9, stealing from relatives and withdrawing from life. I never told my parents that I was being molested; I was certain I wouldn't be believed. When my older sister told them she was being molested, they brushed it off as drama.

I understood, even at that young age, that my parents were simply incapable of protecting me. It filled me with rage — a rage I couldn't act out on anyone. So I turned it on myself and later on others. I suffered from severe depression for years.

When I was 19, while working at a summer camp, a friend told me about chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo. I heard the words, and I knew I had to chant.

Chanting alleviated my depression, and I found the strength to keep living — for a while, anyway.

With no connection to the SGI-USA, I just drifted away from chanting. I eventually made the decision to follow my dream to move to Los Angeles. Slowly but surely my depression, rage and self-destructive tendencies returned. Fortunately, in 1988, I met a woman who told me all about Buddhist practice, the organization, the Gohonzon and kosen-rufu. I received the Gohonzon and became an SGI-USA member on Jan. 28, 1989.

Then, I began a long, intense struggle with the pain and rage that had been running my life. Sometimes I won and sometimes I lost, but I kept advancing to the best of my ability, from wherever I landed.

Over time, I came to see that the more I accepted responsibility for helping others, the harder I could fight to break through my suffering. The first measurable breakthrough happened on March 20, 1996. I realized that I had to end the pattern of abuse in my life, so, after 23 years of smoking, I quit on the spot. And I have not gotten hooked again.

In April 1997, I went to a conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I went to recharge my Buddhist battery. I went with the determination to make it the



**'I've learned that no matter where I am in life, I just have to continue. Attaining Buddhahood is a lifelong journey, and now I know how to clear a path toward it.'**

**PAM BUCHANAN, LOS ANGELES**

## The Demons Under My Bed

**To clear a path to her dream, Pam Buchanan had to face a difficult past — and do some intense karmic housekeeping.**

biggest turning point of my life...once and for all. I committed to mastering my personal demons from childhood and fulfilling my mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. I knew that unless I overcame my suffering, I could not help anyone else. I could not bring children into this world — I could not fulfill my dream — until I resolved my family relationships, which were based on hurt.

I had to clean up my family karma.

Last May I went home to New York City, for the first time in six years, to visit my older sister and her young daughter. Seeing my sister's pain and the fear in her eyes was like seeing myself without the Gohonzon in my life.

As we shared our lives, her pain was almost unbearable for me at times. But because I was connected to the people in this organization, I felt supported. I met SGI-USA members who lived right around the corner from my sister, and I introduced her to them. My desire was to give my sister hope that a happy life is possible and to be a role model for my niece, so that she would experience an alternative to living as a victim.

Over the course of my visit, I gained confidence in my prayer for my family's happiness. I felt that we were all at least taking a step in the right direction together.

When I returned to Los Angeles, I had to face my life again. I braced myself to face my bedroom, which I had not cleaned in five years. To say it was a mess is an understatement. No matter what I did — chant for hours, talk to other members with the same problem, get guidance, go to the FNCC, or dream about the day when my suffering would all end — I seemed to be almost paralyzed when it came to cleaning, especially when it came to my bedroom.

**Y**ou see, when I was growing up, my dad would wake us kids up in the middle of the night and do a white glove inspection — if something wasn't clean, we had to clean it right then. Cleaning our rooms was punishment. If we wanted to go somewhere and our parents didn't want us to go, they'd say: "Your room's not clean. You can't go." But my parents' bedroom was the messiest room in the house! Nothing could be clean enough for them, yet, ironically, nothing was ever clean.

Just to make sure that I couldn't escape cleaning my apartment, I scheduled a meeting at my house. I had a month to get the living room and bathroom in order, but I didn't start cleaning until the day before the meeting.

Cleaning those two rooms was the easy part. I still had to tackle my bedroom, though. As it turned

out, it took me three days just to collect the books off my bed. It was as if I had barricaded myself in bed by always having a book nearby to grab and read.

Then I had to move one of the beds out — you see, I had two beds in my room. I had bought a new bed and never gotten rid of the old bed.

One night, I put my old mattress and box spring on the curb and said good-bye to the old Pam Buchanan. I awoke the next morning full of energy. That's when the real work began — all of my demons were still under the bed.

I couldn't even see the floor through all the newspapers, magazines and empty boxes. And let me be completely honest with you: I had empty food cartons all over the floor, too — trophies from past eating binges that I meant to throw out but instead kept around to further chastise myself.

I needed a crane to lift everything out. I started to get sick from all the dust I was stirring up.

After I had filled six garbage bags, nothing in the room looked different. I still couldn't see the floor, and there was still a mess everywhere.

Every time a friend called to see about my progress and to lend encouragement, I found myself saying that I couldn't keep this up much longer; nothing seemed to make a dent in the room. About three days and 12 large garbage

bags later, I was still complaining to one friend about how hard it was to clean.

I hate it when I get like that, because that's not who I really am, and my friend knew that, too. She got strict and told me just to face my room with courage. So I got off the phone, stopped whining and said to myself that "everything I do is getting me closer to achieving my dream."

Finally, it happened — I filled another garbage bag and looked at the floor underneath. I only needed to fill one more garbage bag, and then I could sweep. Another friend came over that day to chant, and, for the first time in five years, I didn't bother closing my bedroom door. It was so liberating.

For years, if you were to look for me in my bedroom, you couldn't find me. No one could. He (my molester) couldn't find me. I had barricaded myself behind a ton of shame and hurt.

But I'm no longer a victim. And I'm not just a survivor.

Nichiren Daishonin says: "Neither the pure land nor hell exists outside ourselves; both lie within our own hearts. Awakened to this truth, one is called a Buddha; deluded about it, one is called a common mortal. The Lotus Sutra reveals this truth, and one who embraces the Lotus Sutra will realize that hell is itself the Land of Tranquil Light" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd. ed.], pp. 207–08).

Today, I can fully embrace my family. My older sister has started chanting and is learning gongyo. My relationships with my stepmother, my step-grandmother and my younger sister have been steadily improving. My relationship with my father has improved by leaps and bounds. I visited him on New Year's Eve, and we had a wonderful time.

About three weeks after I cleaned my bedroom, I started furnishing it in the way I've always wanted to. My house may not be spotless, but friends can now drop in anytime, and there's no shame, nothing to hide.

I've also started a daily exercise program, and I changed my eating habits — without resenting the need to do so or missing a beat. I am also changing my career. I don't have doubts that I'll ultimately fulfill my dream. Through this experience, I've learned that no matter where I am in life, I just have to continue. Attaining Buddhahood is a lifelong journey, and now I know how to clear a path toward it. ■

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

## SIGN POSTS

APPLYING  
NICHIREN  
DAISHONIN'S  
WRITINGS TO  
DAILY LIFE

### Friends of the Lotus Sutra

By SHIN YATOMI

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

**Now if you disobey the words of a parent, one who is easy to come by, and follow a friend of the Lotus Sutra, one who can rarely be encountered, you will not only be able to attain Buddhahood, but will also be able to lead to enlightenment the parent whom you disobeyed. ("The Three Obstacles and Four Devils," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 246)**

My father has become ill. His kidneys, prostate and bladder are not properly functioning, and the doctor's diagnosis is bleak.

When I recently went to Japan to see him, in a tiny, crowded apartment in a housing project built in the wake of the 1995 earthquake, he was bedridden, old and skinny. "He's been rarely eating," said my sister.

My father has always opposed my Buddhist practice — ever since I joined the SGI at 3. I remember in my childhood how my heart would start beating tremulously during gongyo when I heard him come home. In 1989, when I told him that I had joined the SGI-USA staff and would not return to Japan to take over his business, he told me that I was no longer part of his family.

This passage strikes a chord in my heart. Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Ikegami Munenaga, whose father threatened to disown him if he did not renounce his faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Here the Daishonin encourages Munenaga to carry out his practice with "a friend of the Lotus Sutra," for it will eventually lead both him and his father to happiness.

During my short stay in Japan, I did whatever I could to support my father — feeding him, talking with him, rubbing his hands and feet and bathing him. As I slept by his bed the last night of my stay, he muttered, "I didn't know I had such a wonderful son."

I appreciate all the SGI members I know — my friends of the Lotus Sutra. Only because they practiced alongside me through my difficult times have I become a better son. □

# Matching the Sutra

## STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM  
THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**As the Buddha taught in his will — to follow the Law, not the person — you should not trust those who do not preach in accord with the sutras, no matter how wonderful they may appear. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 9)**

Nichiren Daishonin lived at a time when the various Buddhist sects were vying for popularity — for more believers, for more influence with the government officials. There were many charismatic priests around supposedly preaching the Law but who were mostly in religion to gain power.

How many of them had a philosophy that could save the nation? The Daishonin knew that his was the best philosophy. But he also realized that it wouldn't be enough just to broadcast his belief to everyone and expect them to agree with him. He had to educate people, he felt. He had to teach them certain standards by which they could judge a correct religion from an incorrect one, a good religious leader from a corrupt one. He hoped that then people would realize the greatness of his teachings.

His point was simple in this 1260 letter to an unknown recipient: You shouldn't trust priests whose words don't match the sutras, especially the Lotus Sutra, Buddhism's highest teaching. Rather, you should judge these priests by whether they are walking and talking what Buddhism teaches. Were the priests of the day sharing the real deal or just making up things that sounded good?

The greatest divergence Nikken has made from the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin's letters is, as I mentioned last time, his new teaching that he alone knows the way to enlightenment. The temple says that only through association with Nikken can we become happy, and this clearly does not match the Buddhist teachings: Both the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin's writings emphatically state that we attain enlightenment through our own efforts.

The U.S. temples have of late been using the following analogy of a tree to explain Nikken's stance: The Dai-Gohonzon is the tree roots, Nikken is the trunk, the Gohonzon enshrined at the branch temples are the branches, and the Gohonzon at members' homes are the leaves. So if we don't follow Nikken, the temples say, our individual Gohonzon become like fallen, withering leaves, cut off from the trunk of benefit, Nikken. By contrast, the Daishonin teaches that "the Gohonzon is found in faith alone" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 213).

The Daishonin also mentions in the above quote to "follow the Law, not

the person." The idea that we shouldn't trust those whose words don't match the sutras ultimately suggests that we should trust ourselves. Near the end of his life, as the Daishonin shares here, Shakyamuni instructed his disciples to depend on themselves and the Law, on no one and nothing else. SGI President Ikeda has said that this is "the very heart of Shakyamuni's lifelong teachings."

Whenever I read one of Nikken's speeches or messages, like his New Year's message in the January *Nichiren Shoshu Monthly*, I get the impression he's the great pretender — pretending to know the heart of Buddhism but knowing little of it. When Nikken encourages the temple members to visit the new Grand Reception Hall, which opens this month, saying that it "should not be viewed as a mere architectural accomplishment," that "it contains countless, immeasurable significances as a symbolic representation of the refutation of all heretical beliefs and erroneous teachings," he reminds me of one of those guys outside a show tent at the county fair yelling at passersby to come inside, promising he's got the wonders of the world. I feel sorry for the tens of thousands of temple members hoping that what's inside Nikken's show tent will live up to his spiel, plopping their cash into his hands, not realizing they're about to be taken. Not realizing that there's nothing inside.

*Six in a series*

## Many Treasures, The Verifier — Part 1

### ON THE GOHONZON

STUDYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S  
INSCRIPTIONS ON THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

By TERRY ELLIS

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

When Shakyamuni Buddha began to preach the Lotus Sutra, he was setting a new precedent. Forty years of teaching were out the window. And a Buddha named Many Treasures Thus Come One appeared seated in the Treasure Tower as his verifier: a signifier of enlightenment who simply said, "He's right."

Who was this Buddha who appears suddenly, as if he knew exactly what was happening? According to the Lotus Sutra, Many Treasures had vowed, "If, after I have become a Buddha and entered extinction, in the lands in the ten directions there is any place where the Lotus Sutra is preached, then my funerary tower, in order that I may listen to the sutra, will come forth and appear in that spot to testify to the sutra and praise its excellence" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 171).

When the tower first appears in the Lotus Sutra it is closed, and Shakyamuni's followers are eager to see this Buddha whose voice they've heard. In the letter "On the Treasure Tower," Nichiren Daishonin explains that the closed Treasure Tower represents the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra — Shakyamuni's proclamation that all people have the potential to become Buddhas. The open tower, the Daishonin says, represents the essential teaching that all people are Buddhas.

Although Shakyamuni's followers are anxious to open the tower and see this Buddha, Shakyamuni explains that, according to Many Treasures' vow, first the many Buddhas who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha and are preaching the Law in the 10 directions must return and gather in that same spot. These Buddhas, countless in number, make their way to the *saha* world. When this wonderful scene is set, "Shakyamuni Buddha with the fingers of his right hand then opened the door of the tower of seven treasures. A loud sound issued from it, ... and at once all the members of the assembly caught sight of Many Treasures Thus Come One seated on a lion seat ..." (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 175).

Once again, Many Treasures praises

Shakyamuni for preaching the Lotus Sutra and then offers Shakyamuni half of his seat inside the Treasure Tower. In this position, the two Buddhas appear to be seated high up and far away from Shakyamuni's followers. So they request that the Buddhas use their powers to raise all to a level of equality. This is known as the Ceremony in the Air, at which Shakyamuni asks an important question: After his death, who will vow to protect and spread the Law?

That was the cue for the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

In the "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" No. 25, Soka Gakkai Study Department Vice Chief Haruo Suda says that on a visit to Eagle Peak, where the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra, someone went looking for a chasm from which the bodhisattvas emerged. Suda comments, "But these are all dramas taking place in Shakyamuni's life; they are not to be interpreted literally." And SGI President Ikeda responds, "While not historically factual, the events described in the sutra do express truths about life and the nature of existence."

*Three in a series  
(Many Treasures, part 2, will continue  
this explanation)*

## IDEAS, FROM PAGE 1

tures, film, the telephone and telegraph, the typewriter, batteries, electric railroads, cement manufacturing, X-ray machine apparatus and microphones, as well as components of power supply systems, including sockets, switches, fuses and meters.

*The above list includes some items that Edison did not invent, but is credited with having improved or made workable.*

Edison's inventions transformed the world. Were it not for him, our lives today would be completely different.

President Toda put it well when he said: "We are now seeing absolutely unprecedented development in communication and transportation systems. The arrival of such an age is a sign that the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism can now be accomplished." Today it is possible to contact and communicate with people immediately anywhere in your country and, indeed, anywhere in the world.

Scientific advances, too, in that they increasingly confirm and support Buddhist principles and perspectives of life and the universe, are making it easier for people to accept and relate to Buddhism. They also create a need for a spiritual foundation that is compatible with the technological age we live in.

Thomas Edison was one of the key players in creating an environment that has been conducive to the global spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism — to the ushering in of the age of kosen-rufu of which President Toda spoke.

Edison, incidentally, shares the same birthday as President Toda — Feb. 11. Born in 1847, he was exactly 53 years older than my mentor. As a matter of interest, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison — three of America's most venerated historical figures — were all born in February.

### Academic Background Has Nothing To Do With It

Edison has been called the Napoleon of invention. He was a giant in his field, standing head and shoulders above his contemporaries. Yet his formal schooling was next to nil. He attended elementary school for only three months — a fact that is significant in light of his later achievements. Edison triumphantly showed the world

that academic background has nothing to do with victory in life.

Academic background has even less relevance in the world of faith. Whether a person has received any higher education has absolutely no relation to faith. All that matters is whether one has strong faith.

Edison was almost deaf. But he regarded himself as fortunate in his affliction, once saying that because he did not hear most of what was going on around him, he could think without being distracted, and could always find a quiet place to take a nap. He was philosophical about it. This was a sign of his strength. He was confident and positive; there was nothing weak or fainthearted about him.

In his later years, President Toda often told his disciples: "Be courageous in faith!" "No matter what other people may say, advance boldly!" "Lead confident lives!" "Make courage the Gakkai's eternal emblem!" This was the spirit that he commended to us before he passed away.

Faith is the source of true strength and courage. Without courage and confidence, we cannot be said to have genuine faith.

### More Than 1,000 Inventions

Edison held a record-breaking 1,093 patents for his inventions over his lifetime. (Some sources indicate that he held even more.)

I, meanwhile, hold the record for leading the greatest propagation campaign in our movement's history, which resulted in a total of 11,111 households in the Kansai area joining the Soka Gakkai in a single month [May 1956].

Granted, technological innovations are important. But spreading the Daishonin's teaching is an achievement of a much higher order, one that brings people happiness and illuminates their lives. It is a noble activity,

## Where Edison's inventions led

Thomas Edison is well known as the inventor of the phonograph and electric light. His other important contributions and what they led to:

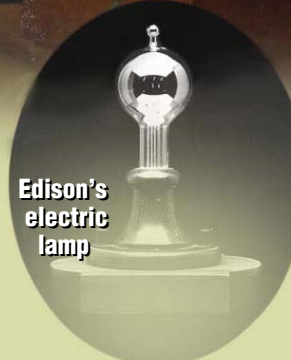


*"Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration"*  
— Thomas Edison

Edison with his phonograph in 1888



Radio's Fibber McGee and Molly



Edison's electric lamp



The Hiroshima atomic bomb

### The 'Edison effect'

- **1883:** Edison observes that if a wire is heated in a vacuum, electrons flow through the vacuum to another wire
- **1912:** Bell scientist H.D. Arnold makes the first vacuum tube for amplifying electric current — a useful application of the Edison effect
- **1912-48:** Radios, televisions and electronic devices of all kinds use vacuum tubes
- **1948:** Transistor invented, rapidly replaces vacuum tubes

### Research by 'perspiration'

**Inductive thinking:** Solving problems hands-on; trying repeated experiments looking for results or clues

- **1877-79:** Edison tests hundreds of materials as electric lamp filaments, finally finds one that works — scorched cotton thread
- **Today:** Supercomputers solve some problems by brute force, rapidly trying billions of possibilities

### The modern laboratory

- **1876:** Edison sets up world's first industrial laboratory at Menlo Park, N.J., uses teams of researchers
- **1925:** AT&T establishes Bell Laboratories, which becomes a world leader
- **1945:** Thousands of workers at secret government laboratories at Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Los Alamos, N.M., devise an atomic weapon

SOURCE: Grolier Encyclopedia, World Book, Patent and Trademark Office, The People's Chronology; KRT photos, Radio Broadcast Pioneer Archives

and I take pride in what I have accomplished in this area. I am sure each of you shares this feeling as well, as a result of your own efforts.

What was the secret to Edison's success? He explained that it was to never give up before he succeeded in what he was trying to do. Not giving up — that's the only way. Once you give up, you are defeated.

This is equally true in the realm of faith. Quitting is not faith. We have to keep chanting until our prayers are answered. That is the correct way of prayer.

Edison commented: "Most fellows try a few things and then quit. I never quit until I git [sic] what I'm after." It's shortsighted to throw in the towel the moment you encounter the slightest obstacle or block. People who are motivated by the spirit to contribute to the well-being of

others and to humanity never give up in their endeavors. In contrast, those who are motivated by vanity or by a shallow desire for fame or fortune are easily disheartened. Unlike Edison, they cannot be called true researchers; nor, in the world of faith, can they be called true Buddhists.

Edison observed that his fellow researchers tended to abandon their efforts as soon as they encountered difficulties. As a rule, he said, a single success could only be gained after 99 failed attempts. He declared:

A lot of people think that I have done things because of some "genius" that I've got. That too is not true. Any other bright-minded fellow can accomplish just as much if he will stick like hell and remember that nothing that's any good works by itself, just to please you; you got to

make the damn thing work. You may have heard people repeat what I have said, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration." Yes, sir, it's mostly hard work.

In faith, likewise, things don't just happen automatically. Our prayers are answered only if they are accompanied by tenacious and steadfast efforts. Without 99 percent effort, there can be no victory.

### 'I Work 18 Hours a Day'

In response to queries about the secret to his success, Edison would write:

I work 18 hours daily — have been doing this for 45 years. This is double the usual amount men do. This makes me 90 years old.

PLEASE SEE IDEAS, NEXT PAGE

## IDEAS, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Add 20 years for youth and you have 110 years as my age. I am still working 18 hours and expect to keep it up for 20 years more. This makes me 150 years old.

In other words, he attributed his success to the fact that he worked harder. Not until he reached age 75 did he reduce the number of hours he put in each day — from 18 hours to 16.

President Toda said: "The defining qualities of youth are passion and a contemplative mind. As long as we possess these, we will never grow old." Throughout his life, Edison advanced with passion and vigorously exercised his mind. He kept striving for a better life, for better results, for a better society. Let us, too, advance in this manner.

I suspect that the second secret to Edison's success was that he was not inclined to brood or fret. Things that were pointless to worry about he put out of his mind.

When Edison was 67, his laboratory and factory complex were completely gutted by a fire. In the aftermath, he told a reporter, "Although I am 67 years old, I will start all over again tomorrow." He also said: "We'll build up bigger and better than ever. Why should I be downhearted?" What a positive and undefeatable attitude!

Standing outside the still-burning buildings, he called his family together and urged them to enjoy the spectacle, since it was rare to see such a large conflagration. His confidence that they could rebuild and continue their work was unassailable. That was how positive he was. Rather than being discouraged over what had been lost, he simply resolved to make the new facility even better than the one before. He possessed firm conviction and unflagging optimism.

Since we uphold the Mystic Law, we have no cause to fret and worry over others' trivial criticism. Being preoccupied by such things is a form of complaining. And complaining is what cowardly people do. Individuals who possess true conviction and a genuine philosophy are resolute and radiantly optimistic.

While Edison was full of confidence, he was not arrogant. A person of true greatness is certainly not haughty or high-handed. Rather than claiming credit for his inventions, Edison said he felt that

all he did was receive impressions from the supreme intelligence that was the universe itself and then record them in his own way. He viewed the universe as a living entity. This outlook has much in common with Buddhism.

Edison was not a materialist. The last research project he undertook, in fact, involved an attempt to build a device to communicate with the dead. And he applied himself to this project with his trademark earnestness and rigor.

Edison also asserted that the technological age would necessitate a spiritual evolution in humankind. Spiritual evolution — in other words, human revolution — is essential for humanity today.

### **America Grows Stronger With Each Crisis It Faces**

Edison gave his last public speech in 1931, when he was 84. The United States was still in the grips of the Great Depression. Edison urged people to have courage — for, as he had found through his own life, having courage was the key to all things. He said:

My message to you is to be courageous. I have lived a long time. I have seen history repeat itself again and again. I have seen many depressions in business. Always America has come out stronger and more prosperous. Be as brave as your fathers before you. Have faith. Go forward.

Such courage is admired and valued in American society. It is the basis for prosperity.

Such courage also exists in the SGI. For that reason, we have overcome storms of adversity and realized indisputable victory.

In the final analysis, those who abandoned their faith and betrayed the SGI were cowardly; they lacked courage.

Without courage, we cannot be compassionate. Courage and compassion are inseparable, like the two sides of a coin. And faith is the wellspring from which courage springs.

The Daishonin says, "Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 128). A cowardly person cannot realize victory in life. Unless we have the courage to really dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu, we cannot construct true happiness for ourselves and



'Edison urged people to have courage—for, as he had found through his own life, having courage was the key to all things.'

others.

Building a house or gaining status in society is all very well and good. But these kinds of achievements are of a material nature only, representing some tangible, readily discernible phenomena. They are essentially shallow.

There is something much more profound that underlies all things; it is the law that moves and governs the universe and is the source of all life. This is the Mystic Law.

We of the SGI embrace and live in accord with that universal Law. Our lives possess the most profound dimension.

Japan is today mired in a severe economic recession, but with courage we can break through it. In our efforts for kosen-rufu, too, let us advance with the spirit of "Courage First."

### **Do We Really**

### **Understand What We Think We Know?**

Edison firmly believed in the infinite power inherent in life. And he argued that people didn't understand even a "ten-millionth of one percent" of what they thought they knew.

President Toda, commenting on the launching of the first satellite, remarked:

Seen against the vastness of the universe, it is a minuscule event. People are always directing their gaze outward, and they forget to investigate the inner realm. Our lives, which are entities of the principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms, are untold billions of times more profound. That is what we need to make our focus.

People tend to pursue phenomena of the external world, including outer space, while

averting their gaze from life's inner realm. This is a fundamental flaw of modern civilization.

Edison worked to invent things that were of practical benefit to humanity. He was clear about his purpose. He wasn't simply interested in personal acclaim or riches. And he pursued his endeavors with a never-give-up spirit.

We, likewise, are living with conviction, determined never to give up in our efforts to help even a single person become happy. We are working for the noblest of all causes, kosen-rufu. With the electric light, Edison lit up the world. Today, we are illuminating the hearts of humankind with the brilliant teaching of hope that is the Daishonin's Buddhism.

(To be continued)

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

# THE MAGNIFICENT CEREMONY ON MARCH 16



*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.*



**'Finally, moved by his disciples' sincerity, [President Toda] agreed to ride in the litter, and from there he led the gathering with dignity. The young men who bore it shone with happiness, and golden sweat glittered on their foreheads.'**

I have fulfilled my vow to my mentor.  
I have fulfilled my vow to my fellow members.  
I have fulfilled all the objectives I pledged to achieve.

On that day, when we gathered at the foot of Mount Fuji, we entered a new stage in the progress of kosen-rufu.

It was a cold day. The grand peak of Fuji looked down on us from above, serenely witnessing the event.

The ceremony on March 16 was exhilarating. Mr. Toda announced that he was passing the baton of kosen-rufu to the youth division. The hearts of his young disciples burned with enthusiasm. Their proud sense of mission leapt up like dancing flames.

On that day in 1958, some 6,000 young disciples gathered with their mentor, Josei Toda, whose life was quietly ebbing away. Everyone celebrated that landmark day with joy and excitement. Brave young men and women dedicated to kosen-rufu had assembled from all over Japan. They shook hands, patted each other on the shoulder, and talked and laughed together. It was a joyful vision of future triumph.

Four decades of indestructible achievement have passed since that day.



Many events and activities were held at the head temple throughout March 1958, representing a culmination of Mr. Toda's life and efforts. Mr. Toda arrived at the head temple at the end of February. His health was dire, and a doctor had to be on constant call. But the voice of our leader in kosen-rufu remained as strong and as sharp as ever: "Daisaku, do not leave my side. Do you understand? Stay with me at all times." I recall how he used to say, "Where I am, that's where our Headquarters is." From the early dawn hours until late into the night, he was constantly asking for me.

Once he called for me at 3:00 a.m. When I came rushing to his side, he said, "Daisaku, you are as swift as a peregrine falcon." Sometimes after he called me in those pre-dawn hours, I would spend the entire day doing his urgent bidding, without a moment's sleep. I was determined to do all I could to support my mentor. When Mr. Toda collapsed the previous November, he also called out for me continuously: "Where's Daisaku? Where's Daisaku?"

My mentor overcame that bout of illness, and three months later, on Feb. 11, 1958, his 58th birthday, he threw a party to celebrate his return to good health. It was a miraculous recovery; the doctors were amazed. It was proof of the power of the Mystic Law. But his life was coming to its end. He was approaching death. The only ones who knew this were Mr. Toda and me, his closest disciple.



On March 1, Mr. Toda said to me: "The rest will be up to you, Daisaku. I'm counting on you." A few days later, he made a suggestion: "Let's conduct a ceremony that will serve as a trial run — a dress rehearsal — for kosen-rufu, in preparation for the future." Mr. Toda knew that he would never rise again, never again stand at the

head of the march for kosen-rufu, directing its advance.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after all, is the Buddha land" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 132).

March 16 was a ceremony to eternally honor and pay tribute to the selfless spirit of Mr. Toda, who had lived in complete accord with these words of the Daishonin, and to pass that legacy on to the next generation. At the same time, it was a private ceremony between just the two of us — a ceremony of the oneness of mentor and disciple — in which Mr. Toda transferred the seal of succession, the mission to achieve kosen-rufu, to me.

Profoundly aware of the deep significance of this occasion, I

took on full responsibility for carrying it out successfully.



Mr. Toda grew weaker day by day. He fought desperately against the hindrance of death so that he could live to March 16 and entrust the future of kosen-rufu to me and to the youth division members at that ceremony. I stayed with him constantly, serving his needs.

Time and again he called me to his side to speak to me about his important plans for the future of kosen-rufu. His every word was his last will and testament to me. Everything he said was a preface to the great ceremony of entrustment that was approaching.



A Japanese government leader

was to attend the March 16 ceremony and tour the head temple. At the time, there was still some integrity among the priests of Nichiren Shoshu; today, all is corruption.

The government leader and Mr. Toda were friends. But on the morning of the ceremony he called to say he could not attend after all. Other parties had intervened and caused trouble. Mr. Toda was enraged. Over the phone he shouted, "Are you going to break your promise to all of these young people?!" When he hung up, he said softly, as if to himself: "Politicians! They always compromise. Now this one has let me down. That is the nature of Japanese politicians."

The world is a harsh place, buffeted by praise and blame, but far too many allow themselves to be tossed this way and that by the fickle winds of public opinion and act only out of self-interest. They have no integrity, no greater purpose. And how conspicuous are the ones who utterly lack any thought of serving their fellow human beings! Mr. Toda clearly saw just what Japanese politicians were made of — backbiting, refusing to recognize merit and ability in others, thinking only they have the answer, locked away in their narrow island-nation mentality, ignorant of what's going on in the larger world and drunk on their own petty privileges and self-satisfaction. He knew how unimportant politicians really were, and he took the cancellation in stride.

"No matter who attends or doesn't, we're going to hold this ceremony for our young people!" he said. He knew, in his heart of hearts, that as long as the young people who would faithfully inherit his legacy were there, that was all that mattered.



Even before the date for the ceremony had been set, Mr. Toda thought of ways to encourage the youth. He had plenty of hot pork soup prepared for the young members who would arrive at the head temple first thing in the morning, hungry and cold. Three hogs were butchered for the soup, and Mr. Toda gave instructions to keep their hides. After he died, I had the hides tanned and made into pen cases, which I presented to 107 youth division representatives. I wanted to be certain they would not forget their mentor's spirit, and that they would study hard and

PLEASE SEE CEREMONY, NEXT PAGE

CEREMONY, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

keep up the struggle for kosen-rufu for the rest of their lives.



"I will lead the gathering," Mr. Toda declared. But by this time he was extremely weak and walking was very difficult for him. I instructed several trustworthy men to make a litter to carry Mr. Toda. When he saw it, he shouted: "It's too big! It's not practical!" To the very last, he poured every last drop of his being into instructing me. I wept in gratitude in my heart.

Finally, moved by his disciples' sincerity, he agreed to ride in the litter, and from there he led the gathering with dignity. The young men who bore it shone with happiness, and golden sweat glittered on their foreheads. I record their names here:

Yoshizo Abe, Naondo Izaki, Takeji Ishii, Yoshiaki Endo, Takaaki Okayasu, Shin'inchiro Ogawa, Akira Kuroyanagi, Saburo Gunji, Akira Kobayashi, Hiroshi Kobayashi, Shin'ichi Kondo, Kazuo Sawada, Yoshio Shintani, Shosuke Takahashi, Naoma Takahashi, Soichi Tateoka, Yasuo Tsuboi, Kazuyuki Nishikata, Hideyo Hachiya, Yoshihiko Yabunaka, Ichiro Watanabe.



At the proud ceremony, Mr. Toda declared: "The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world." This impassioned cry, this lion's roar, is engraved forever in my being. At that moment, I vowed in my heart to see to it that the Soka Gakkai would indeed be king. "King of the religious world" means king of the realms of thought and philosophy. The Chinese character for *king* is written with three horizontal strokes, one above the other, intersected by one vertical stroke. Here are the "three" of the third month, March, and the "one" of 16. Where is the six? It is represented by the 6,000 young men and women assembled for the ceremony, and the fellow members — Bodhisattvas of the Earth — as numerous as the sands of 60,000 Ganges rivers who would follow in their wake. For us, the great ceremony on March 16 showed clear proof that "the assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 757).



After the ceremony, I saw the members off. As they waited for their buses home, I had our brass

band play for them. Eventually, it was time for the band members to leave, too. They came to say their good-byes to me, and I made a request of the band leader. "I'm terribly sorry, but could you play one more song? Mr. Toda is on the second floor. I'd like you to play one farewell song."

The band members gladly opened their instrument cases and played with all their hearts. The song was "A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on the Wu-chang Plain," a song with so many memories for us all. [Lyrics by the Japanese poet Bansui Doi (1871-1952). A song about the death of the great Chinese minister Chuko K'ung-ming, the hero of the epic saga, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.]

*The autumn wind, with deepening sorrow,  
Blows from Mount Chi,  
Gloomy clouds gather over the battleground  
Of Wu-chang Plain.*

*Should the great tree crash to the ground,  
What, then, will be the fate of the Han dynasty?  
The regent lies gravely ill.*

Repeating the lyrics in my mind, I cried out with my heart. "Sensei, please listen. The youth division, your disciples, are strong and spirited. Do not worry!"



Just a few days after the ceremony, Mr. Toda, who had a strong premonition of the corruption of the priesthood, said to me gravely: "You must never let up in your struggle against evil." Mr. Toda clearly knew that the priesthood would degenerate. His words to me were a warning and an order.

The magnificent Grand Lecture Hall and all the other facilities that Mr. Toda had devoted enormous energy to building at the head temple could only become centers of Buddhist practice if they were used by the young people of the Soka Gakkai, the inheritors of the solemn spirit of Nichiren Daishonin. If they were instead appropriated by corrupt and degenerate priests of the kind the Daishonin described as "animals dressed in priestly robes" (MW-3, 215), they could only become a breeding ground for evil plots and schemes that would wreak destruction on both Buddhism and society.

That is why the Daishonin warned, "Rather than offer up 10,000 prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw

this one evil that is the source of all the troubles" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 20). He is telling us that if we care for people's happiness and security and for a society in which peace prevails, we must cut out at its very root the evil that poisons the world.



On April 2, 1958, 17 days after the ceremony on March 16, Mr. Toda's noble life came to an end. March 16 had been a farewell ceremony, the passing of the baton.

It was said by some that after his death the Soka Gakkai would "disintegrate in midair." But I was determined to make certain his words, his hopes and dreams, came true. I grasped that spiritual baton of the unity of mentor and disciple and I ran with it. I ran and ran.

Forty years have passed since then. In that time, the Soka Gakkai has soared to become the king of thought, the king of

human rights, the king of peace.

Forty years have tested us severely. Those who would stop practicing Buddhism have stopped and have sunk in the swamp of remorse. And those who betrayed their faith and fellow believers cannot avoid suffering serious consequences for their offenses, as the Daishonin indicates when he says, "People who despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seemed to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they were all doomed to fall" (MW-1, 241).

The comrades who have struggled by my side over the years are all living wonderful lives of triumph and good fortune. I will always honor these noble friends, through all time.

Disciples are those who carry out the mentor's teachings. Disciples are those who fulfill their vows. I have done these things, and that is my greatest pride.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If you want to understand what results will be manifested in the

future, look at the causes that exist in the present" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 172). A powerful determination and our actions in the present moment determine the future. March 16 is the eternal starting point of true cause, when all disciples stand up to be counted. For me, each day is a day of fresh commitment, each day is March 16.



Today, the rising sun tints the great mountain range of the 21st century. Following the model of March 16, I have passed the baton of the Soka Gakkai spirit completely to the youth. Soon, yes, soon, their time for glory will be here.

March is the time when trees and shrubs begin to parade their fresh greenery and their lovely new blossoms. Youth, whom I will always love and trust, the 21st century is yours. Your time has come. It has, inexorably, begun. ❖

## On a High Note



The Grammy-award-laden duo of Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter top off the Global Family Festival on March 14 with a soaring performance of their composition 'Aung San Suu Kyi,' written in honor of the Myanmar dissident and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. Earlier in the evening, Messrs. Hancock and Shorter, both SGI-USA members, were each presented with the Victor Hugo Award in recognition of their efforts within and on behalf of the Soka Gakkai. The awards were conferred by SGI President Ikeda and presented by SGI General Director Eiichi Wada.

# Giving Back to Others



Jerry Brow (center) launched himself into a life devoted to caring for others — establishing a charitable organization and going back to school to become a doctor.

**Horrified by the destitution he saw in Venezuela, Jerry Brow was determined to make a difference — ‘to turn my fortunate life around and give back to others.’ And he continues to do just that.**

**By JAMIE CUTLER**

FORT MYERS, FLA., CORRESPONDENT

**W**hen Jerry Brow first went to Venezuela, the country was a stop for him in the lucrative, worldwide marketing of stuffed animals from Disney World and Busch Gardens. That’s also when he met Edwin Garcia, a young doctor two years out of medical school, who was running a small emergency medical clinic with practically no equipment or supplies.

Seeing the compassion of this man — who was only one year younger than he — was the catalyst for a change in the direction of Mr. Brow’s life.

“I was horrified by the conditions and thought to myself, ‘What am I doing selling stuffed animals to people who can’t even afford to have their teeth taken care of?’” he said. “These people have gone their whole lives without a toothbrush. They showed me how they took twigs to try and clean their teeth.... He made me wake up and see what true poverty is and how fortunate we are here in the United States. I was determined to turn my fortunate life around and give back to others.”

At first he bought equipment for Mr. Garcia out of his own pocket — \$60,000 worth. Then four years ago, he created a charitable organization, Humanitarian Medical Relief. For him it’s now a full-time job, and he’s back in college as a pre-med student. Besides Venezuela, the HMR has helped people in Haiti, Honduras, the People’s Republic of China, Guyana, the Dominican Republic and the city of St. Petersburg, Russia.

Mr. Brow enlisted the help of Wal-Mart nationwide to pick up equipment that’s donated by medical establishments. In the United States, this equipment may not be the latest model MRI or defibrillator, so it’s been retired. But it still works — and in a developing country this could mean saving a person’s life.

Right now, Mr. Brow has some \$3 million worth of equipment stored in a warehouse in Fort Myers, Fla., where he lives. From there, it will be crated and sent out. He’s raising money to get that accomplished.

Mr. Brow also focuses on collecting unused medical supplies, which are thrown out in the United States because the expiration date has

passed. These include materials such as latex gloves, antiseptics and antibiotics. Similar items also come from home health agencies, which are required to throw out unused products after a patient dies.

In 1995, with the help of Dr. Garcia, Mr. Brow began raising funds for a new hospital in Santa Cruz, Venezuela. With the help of volunteers, HMR is building it from the ground up. So far, about \$1.7 million worth of donated equipment and supplies have gone to the hospital, which is operating although only 65 percent complete. During the Christmas holidays, Mr. Brow took a team of volunteer medical workers there. In seven days, they treated 1,000 patients and inoculated 540 children against a variety of diseases such as mumps, rubella and polio.

“It’s amazing,” he says, “how many lives we’ve already saved.”

WT

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

**COMING NEXT WEEK:**

**The Boys and Girls Group’s ‘Friends for Peace’**

*Explaining Buddhism to Our Friends*



Sara Curley (left) doing Byakuren activities at the San Francisco Culture Center with her good friend Jun Munakata.

**the Buddhist View of Good Friends**

By SARA CURLEY  
Carmichael, Calif.

*The best way to attain Buddhahood is to encounter a...good friend.... But encountering a good friend is the hardest possible thing to do. ("Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain," The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 6, p. 109)*

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin stresses the importance of good friends in our development. One could say that the purpose of the SGI organization is to provide us with good friends — friends who will encourage our growth. All of us in the SGI have some friends, then. But shouldn't we also consider our friends at school or in our community as important to our search for Buddhahood? It may be easy to find friends there,

but finding truly good friends, who will help us toward Buddhahood, can be, as the Daishonin says, the hardest thing to do. The challenge is always to find a friend — in the organization or not — who can be instrumental to our growth, someone who can understand and be more than just a person to hang out with.

People seek friends for many reasons. And many naturally seek out companions to avoid loneliness.

In SGI President Ikeda's novel *The Human Revolution*, volume 1, President Toda, too, longs for a good friend who will understand his true feelings.

Finally, Toda realizes that "the sharp loneliness that had troubled him so often lately stemmed from a vague hunger for companionship. Was he really so weak-

willed? The lion leans on no one, he told himself."

If we seek out friends when we are in a state of hunger, we will attract friends just as desperate as ourselves. Any relationship that a person may have reflects that person's state of life.

So how we find a true friend (and leaders, too, can be our friends) is only by developing ourselves and standing alone. To have the stand-alone spirit may seem to contradict the idea of finding friends. But, in reality, a person who stands alone, developing confidence and a strong life-condition, will naturally attract the best possible friends. Of course, this does not mean that a person should keep to himself until a perfect companion appears. Rather, it means that relationships depend on our efforts for self-improvement.

"If he were indeed the lion, thought Toda, he would never lack followers," President Ikeda continues. "Comrades would seek him out on their own and follow him gladly." Only after Toda reaches this conviction does he encounter his true disciple and closest friend, Daisaku Ikeda.

Whether we are hoping to make friends with a leader or searching for a good friend at school, let's advance with the awareness that our relationships depend on us — on our life-condition and our chanting. Then we can be true friends to our friends.

*How about contributing to this new series? Send us an article about how you explain a Buddhist idea to other teens and a picture of yourself! (See our address, p. 2.)*

One in a series



By MELANIE REISER  
Farmington, Michigan

The young women of the Michigan high school division had a sleep-over on Jan. 3-4 to kick off the new year. Some members drove up to an hour to spend the night at my house. We played games, made pizzas, watched the movie *187* and talked, some of us till the wee hours of the morning.

We found that while playing Pictionary, we broke down language and cultural barriers. We even helped one friend from Japan increase her vocabulary!

This year the number of high school girls who participated doubled from last year.

In addition, several of the student division and young women's division members also came out to support.

In the morning one of the young women's division members prepared a breakfast of bacon and eggs, and the sleep-over ended with morning gongyo.

We're planning another sleep-over this month, which will also be a farewell party for one of the high school girls who's moving back to Japan.

With the future of Michigan kosen-rufu in our hands, we feel we definitely have a bright future! ♪



Young women in the Michigan high school division start the year off with a sleep-over. Student division and young women's division members support the activity.

# SEIZE the DAY

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

— SGI President Ikeda, Aug. 17, 1997.

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

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

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

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

## Student News GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE IN THE D.C. REGION



By KATYSHA WARE and WILL KALLANDER

Inspirational, encouraging and supportive. Just a few words describing the Washington, D.C. Region student division kickoff, held Feb. 15 at the D.C. Community Center. Seventy-eight youth studying at the region's many colleges and universities came together to celebrate the formation of the new division.

Students and their guests brought with them their diverse backgrounds, interests, and professional goals, all hoping to connect with other students to share encouraging stories and provide one another support for their challenging student lifestyle. "It was obvious today that SGI students represent diverse talents, backgrounds, goals and

dreams but are united in a vision of the future that has opportunity and creative value for everyone," said Eunice Gill of Coppin State College in Baltimore.



Seventy-eight college students attend a kickoff in D.C.

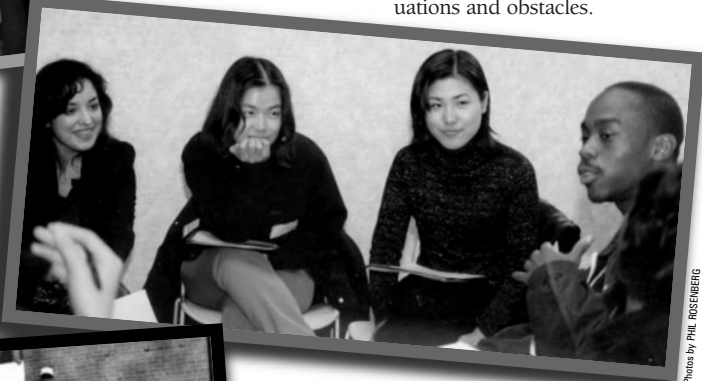
The day began with breakfast hosted by the women's division — but this was no ordinary breakfast. It was the type a parent would make for a hungry-looking college student returning home after a long duration.

The master of ceremonies, Judie Macalino, introduced the theme of the meeting as "Cultivating the Minds of a

New Era and Trailblazing Into the Future." She then introduced the Washington, D.C. Region student division leaders, Kelli Clayton, Chelsea Honderich and Will Kallander.

Participants were encouraged to follow their dreams in an experience by Connie Huntsman, a law student at American University. They were also treated to a guitar solo by Tara Kabir from the University of Virginia in Char-

lottesville. And everyone performed the song "Friends" together. Perhaps the highlight of the meeting was the group sessions. Those in attendance were divided into seven groups based on their academic and professional interests. The group Pressed Shirts contained members interested in joining the corporate business world. Those that were interested in the arts gathered in the Showtunes group. The Hackers were comprised of those in the world of computers and engineering. There were also the Mad Sci-



Photos by PHIL ROSENBERG

entists, which included members involved in the health and physical sciences. Legal Eagles were those interested in law, international relations and political science. Those inclined toward the humanities collected in the Scribes group. And of course there were the Kindergarten Kops — those pursuing education as a career. In these sessions, students could interact with others experiencing similar situations and obstacles.

"I think this was a great beginning," says Tioni Westly, a part-time graduate student at Johns Hopkins University. Region women's division leader Jean Rosenberg expressed her hopes for the future of the Washington, D.C. Region student division as well.

The support of all of the divisions was incredible — right down to the men's and women's divisions taking over Gajokai and Byakuren duties so that student division members could participate in this historic meeting. Said one women's division member: "We're making the causes now so that our children can benefit. It truly feels like a family." Exclaimed Chris Bryant of Hampton University: "This is like a homecoming for me!" ✎

### TEMPLE TRENDS

## WHAT COMES AFTER RE-EXCOMMUNICATION?

By JEFF FARR SGI-USA Student Division Leader

In my January column, I wondered how the temple would approach SGI-USA members now that the re-excommunication of us is complete. The answer seems to be: the same way as before. The temple has, since January, been contacting SGI-USA members per the usual, still trying to get them into the temple. Only now the temple is calling this "outreach program" *shakubuku* as opposed to re-*shakubuku*.

But what does that mean? The priests' logic is that because SGI-USA members were, in their eyes, still their believers until last Dec. 31, they were trying to re-*shakubuku* us into the fold until then. And since we have refused to join them by the deadline and lost our believer status, they now are to *shakubuku* us as

they would believers of any other religion. Make sense? If it doesn't, don't worry: This is just word play. *Re-shakubuku* or *shakubuku*, the terms are merely justifications for their continued pursuit of SGI-USA members — despite having excommunicated us twice. Excommunication is supposed to be serious. It means that your religion wants nothing to do with you — your religious leaders have given up on you and taken this extreme measure. But the temple's re-excommunication was something different. "Today you're excommunicated again! Tomorrow we'll be back at your door to *shakubuku* you!" the temple seems to say. This continued annoyance is evidence that the re-excommunication was not serious — it was just a ploy to scare us into the temple. ✎

NEW SGI-USA

# Fife and Drum and Music Corps Leaders

At one point in 1997, I thought to myself how proud and happy I was to have been in the Fife and Drum Corps for 15 years! Yes, more than half of my life has been spent in the Fife and Drum Corps. I thought how wonderful it would be to graduate after 15 years. But this isn't to be, as I embark upon my 16th year, continuing to fulfill my mission in this group.



Emy Mukumoto  
SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps Leader

Because I have been in the Fife and Drum Corps so long, I have many experiences of conventions, general meetings and, of course, the restructuring after 1990. I recall the strenuous and long practices we had pre-1990, but I must say that as painful as they could be, I re-

member them as wonderful experiences — they are etched in my mind forever. I have seen drastic changes in the Fife and Drum Corps locally and nationwide, some good and some not, throughout the last several

years. One of the reasons I am not graduating from the Fife and Drum Corps yet is because I feel I have not given enough of myself to the group.

For the last five years, I attended California State University at Long Beach, working full time at the same time. I finally graduated last year with my bachelor's! Now that I have completed my undergraduate studies, I'm taking a break from my education to

concentrate on helping the members locally and across the nation. It is my sincere dream for all the Fife and Drum Corps members to feel they are working side by side with SGI President Ikeda and become beautiful Angels of Peace, as he calls us.

Many of you probably don't know me because, although I'm from Fayetteville, N.C., I've been in Japan for the past six years. After graduating from the University of North Carolina, I went to Japan to study at Soka University. I graduated from Soka in March 1997 with a master's in sociology. Now I live in Los Angeles.



Daisaku Leslie  
SGI-USA Music Corps Leader

One of the reasons I went to Japan was to seek out SGI President Ikeda and gain a deeper understanding of the mentor-disciple relationship. Thanks to my friends in Japan, the United States and throughout the world — as well as the wonderful, fortunate struggles I experienced while studying over there — I learned that it is up to the disciples to roar, to take action with the same heart and spirit as the mentor.

The Music Corps was the first youth group established by President Ikeda. My 10 years of experience with fellow Music Corps members were invaluable in bringing me to where I am today. And now, together with all of you, I am determined to carry on the

pride of the Music Corps. Let's fulfill our mission to instill hope and courage in the hearts of our audience through music. It is my heartfelt hope that, through the Music Corps activities, each of us will deepen our faith, gain the training to accomplish our goals, become absolute victors in life and develop our compassion to care for others in our daily lives.

Erica Gebhardt, SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps leader since January 1996, has been appointed SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps advisor until December 1998. Tony Gregg, SGI-USA Music Corps leader since January 1995, has been appointed SGI-USA Music Corps advisor until the end of the year. Malina Moore, who served as the SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps secretariat from January 1996, graduated last December. ♪

## NEXT SUMMER?

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

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

The land package price for each conference is \$375 (airfare not included). This covers your sleeping accommodations for three nights (with assigned roommate); all meals from Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch; ground transportation to and from the Fort Lauderdale and Miami International airports (within a specified time frame);

bus tour (admission fees not included); and conference instructional and study materials. Payment must be made two weeks prior to the conference start date.

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

**JULY 9-12**

Young men's division

**JULY 16-19**

Young women's division

**JULY 23-26**

Junior high and high school divisions

**AUG. 6-9**

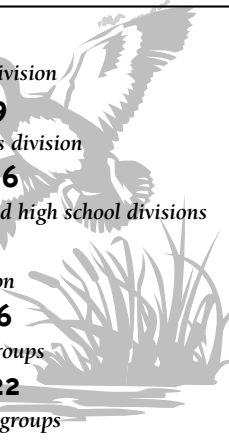
Student division

**AUG. 13-16**

Youth music groups

**NOV. 19-22**

Youth support groups



# Who Can You Trust?

## Thoughts on a Religious Revolution

By LISA JONES  
Los Angeles

Scandal, corruption, cover-ups. Sometimes when I read the news or watch television, I feel lied to, alienated, sold short and roundly dissed by the institutions and powers that be.

So where, if anywhere, can I place my trust? In a scene from *The Human Revolution*, volume 2, a bitter young soldier attends one of Josei Toda's discussion meetings. The soldier, stung with rage at having been brainwashed by militaristic propaganda, shouts at Toda: "Don't try

and trick me with your smooth talk. You can keep your phony religion!"

Toda replies: "You weren't wrong for having believed. What you believed was wrong — but you didn't know that.... Nichiren Daishonin stated that all unhappiness stems from false religions, or false ideas.... Knowing a religion — a philosophy that was valid in the ultimate sense — he braved countless persecutions to teach it, even at the risk of his life. Why should Nichiren Daishonin lie to you?"

I've also come to trust that the Daishonin does not lie. No priest or religious authority convinced me of that. Rather, the Daishonin's fiery, poetic writings radiate truth

that I can see for myself. I feel that he trusts his readers to draw their own conclusions about him and his teachings. That's where our religious revolution starts for me: in believing his words. I agree with SGI President Ikeda when he says that "the Mystic Law and Nichiren Daishonin are absolutely free of any falsehood."

One in a series



WHAT ARE YOU DOING

# TELLING GOOD PRIESTS FROM BAD ONES

By GREG MARTIN  
SGI-USA Study Department Vice Leader

I talked last month about how Nichiren Daishonin explained so clearly that the enemies of the Lotus Sutra appear as priests, not as ordinary people. But then I pointed out that not all priests are bad. It's important today to know the standard the Daishonin set for judging which ones are good and which ones are bad.

*If they [priests] have eyes, they should examine the sutra texts and compare their own behavior with them.* (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 166)

The Daishonin suggests here exactly how to judge good priests from bad priests — by examining the sutra texts and comparing the priests' behavior with the Buddhist teachings. "Sutra texts" refer specifically to those of Shakyamuni but also to the letters of the Daishonin. For instance, those Nichiren Shoshu priests, like Nikken, whose words and behavior contradict the Daishonin's teachings, which are clearly set forth in his letters, must be considered enemies of Buddhism and parasites attempting to destroy the body of the Law. And then those priests whose words and behavior are in accord

with the teachings are votaries of the Lotus Sutra, children of the Buddha.

*There are two kinds of understanding, true and perverted. No matter how learned a person may appear, if his ideas are warped you should not listen to him. Nor should you follow priests merely because they are venerable or of high rank. But if a person has the wisdom to know the spirit of the Lotus Sutra, no matter how lowly he may appear, worship him and serve him as though he were a living Buddha.* (MW-1, 257)

*A "good teacher" is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who*

*never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it.* (MW-6, 193)

The Daishonin states in these two quotes that we should not be swayed by appearances. He shows that although a person may appear to be great, it is his or her understanding of Buddhism and behavior based on that understanding which count. Is a given priest's understanding true or perverted? Does it match Buddhism or is it the priest's invention? Misinter-



pretation? If we follow someone who looks like the real thing but actually holds perverted views, we cannot help being led down the path of unhappiness and sorrow. The key is our ability to distinguish whether this person, be it a priest or ordinary person, knows the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and behaves as a "good teacher" of it. Nikken and his cohorts do not qualify for any of the requirements the Daishonin here lists that "good teachers" must have.

*Three in a series*

## A SENSE OF MISSION

# Are We Bodhisattvas?

By CRAIG GREEN SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee

*If Nichiren should be a Bodhisattva of the Earth, then so must his disciples.* ("The True Entity of Life," The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 92)

What is a Bodhisattva of the Earth? Why do we often hear that we're Bodhisattvas of the Earth? A bodhisattva is anyone who wants him- or herself and others to become Buddhas. It's anyone who practices and shares Buddhism, anyone who wants people to become truly happy.

So, why "of the earth"? In the Lotus Sutra, the bodhisattvas are described as emerging from the earth, coming out of the ground. Nichiren Daishonin interpreted this "earth" as being Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Put it all together, and you've

got this: Bodhisattvas of the Earth are people who, based on chanting, strive to lead themselves and others to happiness.

That's why we can say we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth: Our simple yet difficult mission is indeed to chant and teach others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. What's difficult is believing. When the Daishonin says that if he "should be a Bodhisattva of the Earth, then so must his disciples," it's like he's saying: "Do not worry. You are a bodhisattva! You will become happy. And you will help others to become happy, too." When our problems are too much, despair can set in, but the Daishonin says: "Don't despair. Remember who you are. Happiness is assured."

*Three in a series*

# What a WONDERFUL WORLD!

Read the *World Tribune* weekly to find out the latest goings-on in the SGI and learn more about this Buddhism. Our regular features include:

- SGI President Ikeda's newest speeches and most recent activities.
- 'Discussions on Youth,' a dialogue among the SGI president and young leaders on topics of interest to youth.
- *The New Human Revolution*, the SGI president's serialized history of the SGI.
- National and international SGI news, members' views, study articles, experiences and more.

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