



NEWS
Members in New Jersey celebrate the opening of their new community center.

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YOUTH
'Seize the Day' features youth views, experiences and encouragement.

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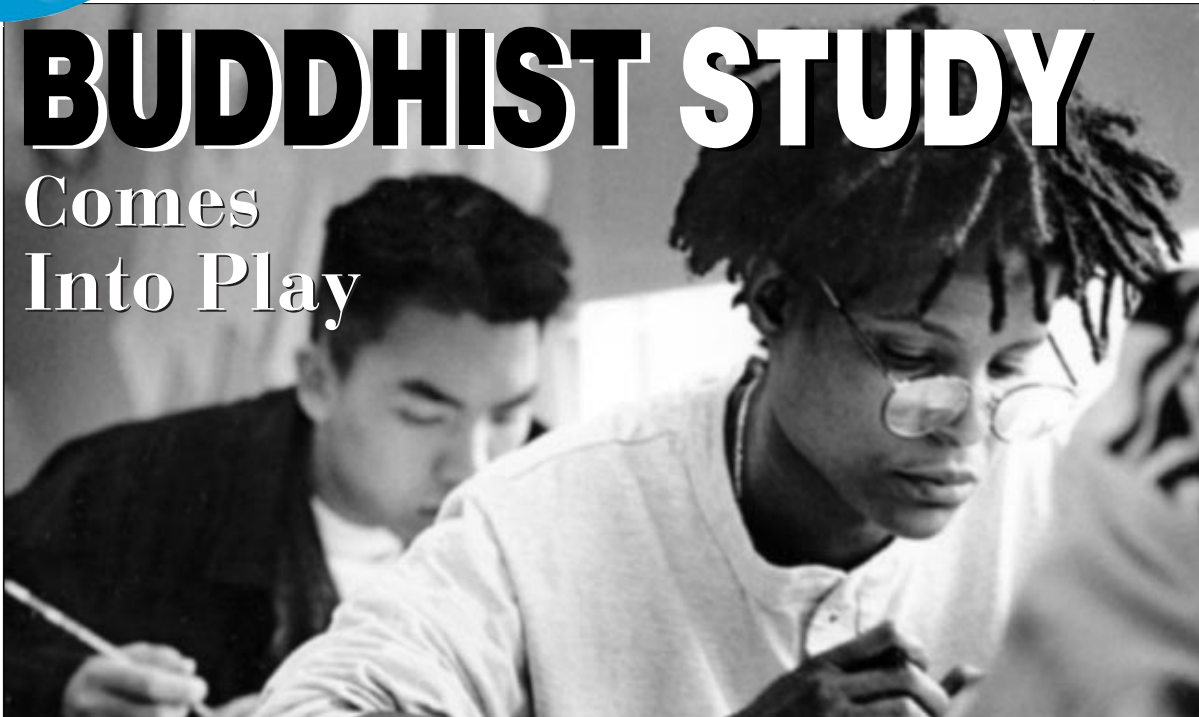
No. 3210

SEPTEMBER 25, 1998

Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD

Where **BUDDHIST STUDY** Comes Into Play

Why is the study of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings so important for young people? In this essay, the SGI president gives three important reasons. 'Unless the youth division members, our future leaders, gain a solid grounding in Buddhist philosophy,' he writes, 'there will be no bright future for the human race.'



By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

Inazo Nitobe, early purveyor of Western thought to Japan and under-secretary-general of the

League of Nations, once said, "Philosophy makes the world go round." He also said, "Ideals that arise in the purity and innocence of one's youth, when one is free of worldly ambition,

untainted by desires for fame or wealth, are truly noble."

Nitobe's friendship with our founding president, Mr. Makiguchi, is well known. And, if the above words are any guide,

the convictions of these two resonated.

Ideals forged in our youth sparkle like diamonds, lighting our hearts and our minds. On

PLEASE SEE ESSAY, 4

VANESSA KOSSI, HOUSTON

VOICES Do the **BUDDHA'S** Work

Vanessa Kossi used to be an introvert — until she joined the Sunset Chorus. Now, she and other chorus members travel throughout their community, singing, spreading joy and creating warm bonds of friendship.

When I was growing up, my mother was a member of a small church singing group. I used to go to rehearsals with her and enjoyed their singing. Since my mother's death, my involvement with the SGI-USA Sunset Chorus in Houston has given me a deep sense of satisfaction knowing that I'm doing something my mother and I both loved.

I have been a member of the chorus for about 15 years and have been practicing Buddhism for about 20. I enjoy being part of the chorus and have developed many lasting friendships. Singing is a way for me to contribute to kosen-rufu by touching peoples' lives.

I am a wife and the mother of two sons, ages 20 and 9. My family keeps me very busy. Trying to keep up with my

family life, as well as attend Texas Southern University in pursuit of my master's degree, has given me the opportunity to chant more and to participate in chorus activities. I also volunteer at a children's shelter from time to time.

When I find myself becoming overwhelmed, I return to the Gohonzon and

PLEASE SEE EXPERIENCE, 4

Photo by HECTOR SOTO



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Fred M. Zaitzu and Greg Martin share leadership points based on recent guidance.

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In a recent speech, the SGI president talks about the workings of cause and effect.

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PERSPECTIVE

Shavawn Berry writes in remembrance of her friend Melissa Braff.

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Don't Thank Me

By LISA JONES

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

You should not presume to fathom [the blessings of the Gohonzon]. Whether or not your prayer is answered depends upon your faith; [if it is not,] the fault in no way lies with me, Nichiren. ("Reply to Nichigon-ama," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 305)

Most people know better than I do how I should live my life. And they don't hesitate to tell me. Sometimes what I hear, though, is faddish talk show blather masquerading as Truth. Or advice so infested with well-intentioned private agendas.... I need to be careful what I put stock in.



In My Life

NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS IN
ACTION


It's with relief, then, that I grab a random volume of Nichiren Daishonin's writings, flip to a random page, focus on a random line and find something worth taking to heart.

Of course, nothing is random in Buddhism. My game of Wisdom Roulette often brings me face to face with "Reply to Nichigon-ama." She (Nichigon-ama) sent a letter to the Daishonin asking him to offer prayers on her behalf. In his reply, the Daishonin urges her to trust in the efficacy of *her* prayers, not his.

He leads her back to herself — her own wisdom, effort and will.

This reminds me of Ted Fujioka, a leader whose perspective I cherish. I'll often say: "Thanks for the guidance. It worked!" He always replies: "Don't thank me. Thank the Gohonzon, and thank yourself." He won't let me hold him responsible for my life or make him into a guru.

This passage tells me, just as Ted does, that conventional wisdom can't fathom the blessings of the Gohonzon. And public opinion has nothing to do with whether or not my prayer is answered. At times when I think the answer is *no*, Ted urges me not to pass judgment, but to understand that my prayer always leads me with compassion.

I'm starting to see that my prayer to the Gohonzon is itself wonderful guidance for my life. 

STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM
THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood. But instead they attacked me time and again, and finally had me banished to this island. ("Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 24)

Who? This is one of the big questions that Nichiren Daishonin answers in this letter: Who can inherit the Law?

And who can attain enlightenment? Who can become happy? Who is the Daishonin teaching this Buddhism for? The answers are all in this letter.

Tendai Buddhism, like the Daishonin's Buddhism, originally had the theory that all people are Buddhas. But as it spread from China to Japan, Tendai was combined with esoteric teachings — its humanistic core idea of Buddhahood was gradually lost. Tendai followers like Sairen-bo, to whom the Daishonin writes this letter, were thus left in the lurch; they were confused about what Buddhahood really was, and that equaled being confused about Buddhism's general import.

The Daishonin emphasizes here to Sairen-bo, now converted to the Daisho-

To Not Obey

nin's Buddhism, how he is "trying to awaken all the people." So the answer is all people. Who can attain Buddhahood? All people can in the Daishonin's Buddhism. All people can inherit the Law themselves through correct faith and practice.

Nichiren Shoshu's current answer to this question is at odds with this. It's only those who obey who can experience such an awakening. The priests say in *100 Questions and Answers*: "Obey the lifeblood." "Obey the high priest." "You must obediently receive the present high priest's instruction."

And then they say that those who are not priests "must strictly refrain from arbitrarily commenting upon this matter [the heritage of the Law]."

The priests' message — obey, don't ask questions — is as clear as the Daishonin's, but the two are as far apart as they could be. When the Daishonin said that "if you are of the same mind of Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (MW-1, 93), he wasn't ordering his believers to obey him; he was asking them to share equally in his spirit to save all people, to make his conviction that all people can inherit the Law their own.

Ordering people to obey you and asking them to share your compassionate conviction are certainly two very different things.

An organization like the temple's, an organization that seeks everyone's obedience, can never embrace everyone. Indeed, there's no such thing as an organization that *everyone* can *always* obey. Someone is always going to disagree with something, with some part of what the organization is doing or how it's doing it. A beautiful thing about the SGI, especially in recent years, is how it em-

braces the members' diverse views — how within the context of striving together to practice this Buddhism right and to make this the greatest organization we possibly can, various opinions are sought.

We don't always agree on everything, and we aren't expecting to, as the *World Tribune's* "Mailbox" sometimes evidences. "Everyone has the right to speak out, to take action — this is democracy," SGI President Ikeda says. "This applies across our membership, whether you hold a top leadership position or none at all."

If you've ever seen the U.S. temples' magazine, *Nichiren Shoshu Monthly* (there is no U.S. temples' newspaper), you know that there's nothing remotely resembling the "Mailbox" in there. Different opinions are just not fit for temple print. There is only one way of looking at things, and that's the priests' way.

Soon enough, these strange days of Nikken and his priests are bound to end. Maybe not so long from now, it will even be a little hard for people to believe that there was such a person as Nikken — such a high priest who demanded obedience, who taught that the Daishonin's Buddhism was all about obedience. Such a strange time as ours may soon seem something slightly unreal to those who will only learn of it from us. Then it will be our responsibility to remember for them; we'll share our memories not only of how Nikken tried to distort the Daishonin's Buddhism but the stand we took in opposition; the words we spoke, the actions we took, to counter his demands.

All that we did to *not obey* his message.

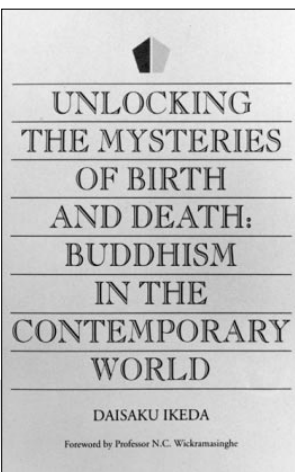
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Mayor Robert L. Bowser of East Orange speaks after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Mayor Bowser read a proclamation naming Sept. 9 SGI Friendship Day in honor of the new community center. (Right) Members are happy to have their state's first center in 38 years.



(Left) Representing Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, Dawn DuVerney Wilkins, director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, presents General Director Zaitu with t-shirts inscribed 'One Mind, One Family.' In her remarks, she said, 'I came prepared to speak about the governor's motto, but I see from the group that you've already accomplished this.' (Right) Dr. Loretta Osakwe (center of photo), social studies chairperson for the East Orange Board of Education found the meeting exciting and very stimulating. 'I'd like to explore ways to introduce your spiritual movement for peace into our world history program,' she said.

A Dream Come True

By JANIS NICOLOSI-ENDO
NEW JERSEY BUREAU CHIEF

A firm foothold for the advancement of kosen-rufu in New Jersey became reality on Sept. 9 with the official opening of the first SGI-USA community center in the state. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a message by State Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg praised the members for making a valuable contribution to the diversity of New Jersey and expressed his desire to work towards protecting the rights and dignity of humankind.

Renovations on the historic, two-story brick building located in the city of East Orange in central Jersey include the construction of a main Gohonzon room that seats 200, a bookstore and several activity rooms to be shared by all members. For the nearly 1,600 members living in the state, it is the realization of a dream that they had kept in

their hearts for many years.

Since the founding of the first district in New Jersey by SGI President Ikeda 38 years ago, people traveled to the community center in New York (in the early days Philadelphia) for most activities. Although the drive is not too long (many members could reach their destination in an hour or so barring traffic), the congested roads were always an obstacle, and tolls and parking were costly.

Marie Monteguedo, who joined the SGI-USA in 1971, reflected on the early days of her practice: "I feel like I'm living a dream. During gongyo, feelings of deep appreciation kept welling up inside me."

Throughout the week, five additional opening celebrations were held to accommodate the entire membership. ❧

Photos by
Danny Sze



(Left) Tazuko Thomas, a representative of New Jersey pioneer members, shows the flowers given her in appreciation for all her efforts to promote kosen-rufu in the state. For 25 years,



she lived just two blocks from the site of the new center. (Above) Excited New Jersey members gather around the ribbon in front of the two-story brick building that is their new center.

EXPERIENCE, FROM PAGE 1

pray to realize all of my goals. Most importantly, I want to focus on developing my career as a social worker.

I am somewhat of an introvert, or at least I used to be. Singing in the chorus has opened up my life. Before participating in the chorus, I always kept to myself and did not want to interact with people. I now realize that we need interaction with one another so that we can truly grow. Interaction is a good thing, and conflict can be resolved when we dialogue openly and sincerely. This was something I had to learn.

I am from a family of six children, but I have felt like an only child because of the gaps in our ages. As the oldest daughter, I was always the one who was taking care of and cleaning up after everyone. I was always called mean because I didn't smile much and was considered to be too serious. This was my way of protecting my feelings. I didn't want too many interactions with others for fear that it would create problems.

Participating in the chorus has given me the opportunity to



Vanessa Kossi (second from right), singing with the Sunset Chorus.

come out of my shell. I have developed courage and trust in the Gohonzon and myself. I have developed enough faith that I was able to leave my job of 15 years to return to college and pursue my career as a social worker.

Late last year the chorus members decided we needed to share this Buddhism with the community. What better way to do it than to go out into the community and sing for people. In December we visited the Shriner's Hospital Burn Unit in Galveston. It was a very eye-

opening experience. As we walked through the different areas singing, it made a lasting impression on all of us. Our problems seemed minor in comparison to what these patients had to endure.

In February we visited the Silver Threads nursing home, and in April we sang at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center's Children's Ward. This June we visited Windsor Place Health Care Center, and in July we performed at Shriner's Hospital Burn Unit in Galveston.

After each performance, we stay and talk with as many people as possible. We have met some very interesting people. One lady at the Silver Thread's Nursing Home was 101 years old. Essie Brooks, enjoying her birthday, commented by saying, "I really hope you can come more often. I loved every moment of it."

We never fail to leave people with smiles on their faces. Jannita Brown, 86 years young, said, "I loved the singing and I really enjoyed my morning. I loved every bit of it." The pa-

tients sing, rock back and forth, and clap their hands.

Participating in the chorus has been a very growing and satisfying experience for me. It has given me the courage to do things that I used to just dream about. I have developed new friendships within the organization, and in the community as well. We are always asked back to the places we visit, and we all leave smiling. I'm determined to continue spreading peace and hope for the future. As Nichiren Daishonin states, "The voice does the Buddha's work." ❏

ESSAY, FROM PAGE 1

Sept. 6, the second-level study exam for the youth division was held throughout Japan. Many youth spent the summer studying hard for this exam.

The highest philosophy, that which fosters people of the highest humanity, is Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The power and passion of youth who possess this priceless philosophy will shape the new century.



Why is study of the Daishonin's teachings so important for young people? There are many arguments, but I think the answer can be summed up in the following three points:

First, Buddhist study deepens faith. I will never forget Mr. Toda once saying, with deep regret, that the reason the majority of his fellow members abandoned their faith when pressured by the military authorities during World War II was that they hadn't gained a solid grounding in the Daishonin's teachings.

"Without study," he declared, "the members didn't really understand faith. They became frightened and were defeated by persecution. It was very unfortunate. I'm determined that mistake will not be repeated."

Study is a torch that illuminates

the path of faith. Even the most subtle, complex onslaughts of negative forces become clear when illuminated in the bright light of Buddhism. Study builds a solid framework for our faith and spurs our human revolution. That is why Mr. Toda made study of the Daishonin's teachings the focus of his efforts to rebuild the Soka Gakkai after the war, as is evidenced in his in-depth lecture series on the Lotus Sutra.

Second, study gives impetus to the advance of kosen-rufu. The Daishonin's writings set forth the validity of the Daishonin's Buddhism and the method of refuting the erroneous and revealing the true in propagation. They teach us in comprehensive detail the commitment required by those who seek to widely spread the Mystic Law, the qualities necessary of Buddhist leaders and the key to fostering capable successors.

To study the Daishonin's writings is to come into contact with his spirit. It is to receive supreme encouragement and guidance directly from the original Buddha on faith and the propagation of Buddhism. Only when we take action in accord with the Daishonin's writings can we say that we have grasped the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Study without practice is meaningless. A thorough knowledge of Buddhist principles provides us with a source

of infinite courage and aids us in realizing our highest human potential.

Third, study is the key to establishing a new humanistic philosophy. Today, we face many extremely serious problems: the threat of nuclear war, ethnic conflict, environmental problems and the collapse of educational systems. People are searching for peace and happiness, but the situation grows ever darker and more confused with each passing day. This is coming from the lack of a philosophy that expounds the true nature of life and its functions.

And this is where Buddhism comes in. Only by returning to such principles as the ultimate dignity of life, compassion, the oneness of body and mind, and the indivisibility of life and its environment can we begin to open the way toward a new humanism.

Mr. Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was an expression of these compassionate principles of Buddhism that seek to protect humanity from harm. Unless the youth division members, our future leaders, gain a solid grounding in Buddhist philosophy, there will be no bright future for the human race.



Ours is a supreme philosophy dedicated to bringing happiness to all the world's people. It was Mr. Toda's firm belief that youth who

championed the Daishonin's Buddhism would become world leaders in various realms of human activity.

The earnest devotion that Mr. Toda brought to his lectures on Buddhism always reminded me of the diligence and intensity of a master swordsman.

Once, Mr. Toda went to Osaka to deliver a lecture to the members there, but he was in such poor physical health that he instructed the Study Department leader to be prepared to give the lecture instead.

But when evening came, Mr. Toda got out of bed and declared: "I'm going to give the lecture myself after all. The 'Life Span' chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, 'This, the Buddha's work, I have never for a moment neglected' (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 226). A Buddha works continuously to save all suffering beings, never taking a moment's rest. I've come all this way to give a lecture, and I can't very well turn it over to someone else now. It's my wish to give this lecture, even if I should die doing it!"

From my mentor's example, his willingness to risk his health and his life to deliver a study lecture, I learned how gravely serious is the work of transmitting the Daishonin's Buddhism.



In my youth, I studied the Daishonin's writings diligently. I stud-

ied so hard that I ended up memorizing many of the major writings. This study has become the foundation of my life today.

Study exams are the best encouragement there can be to study Buddhism. To the examinees I said: "Do your best! May you make this summer one of hard work and growth — one you will remember fondly for years to come — as you strive to become winners in faith and unrivaled experts on the humanistic teachings of Buddhism." ❏

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Creating a Foundation for the Future

General Director Zaitzu shares guidance from a recent trip to Japan.

From a speech given at the Sept. 13 region leaders teleconference.

By FRED M. ZAITSU
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

Last month I participated in a training course in Japan along with 11 other representatives of SGI-USA. Everyone was celebrating the 51st Anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's beginning to practice Buddhism. He was very healthy and full of vitality.

For the past 51 years, President Ikeda has dedicated his life to the members' happiness and kosen-rufu. The atmosphere in Makiguchi Hall, during the headquarters leaders meeting on Aug. 27, was filled with great appreciation and joy.

President Ikeda said: "What was the human quality most val-

ued by U.S. President John F. Kennedy? The answer is courage... President Kennedy said, 'Courage, not complacency, is our need today.'"

When we try to advance, we need courage to break through and win. If we remain satisfied with things just as they are, then we can not expect to grow. President Ikeda asserted that everything changes except Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. This means that we must determine to break out of our old shells. We shouldn't stay in our comfort zones but rather make efforts to challenge ourselves to show growth and value in our lives. There will surely be progress in our lives when we work for kosen-rufu.

We also had the opportunity to meet with SGI Deputy President Akiya. He said that in order to advance our kosen-rufu movement, we must create the foundation for the new generation. To do this, leaders must become like stepping stones.

In other words, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves to be like stepping stones across a river for our members and youth

division so they can safely cross to emerge and blossom for the 21st century. This determination will bring victory to the future of America kosen-rufu.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind) prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas in *dotai ishjin* (one in body, different in mind), they can achieve nothing remarkable" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 153).

One person asked President Ikeda: "What does it mean to fight directly connected with our mentor?" He replied, "It is to fight on the front lines of our movement and protect those who are exerting themselves for kosen-rufu. This is what connecting with the mentor means.... It is not enough to just simply pray. We should move and take action."

President Ikeda also talked about the importance of fighting evil. He quoted the Rissho Ankoku Ron, stating "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be

better to simply outlaw this one evil doctrine that is the source of all the trouble."

He went on to say that authority, power and arrogance are evil. Those who try to deceive the Soka Gakkai are evil. We must fight against such evil. Kosen-rufu will be propelled when we fight against evil. We must create true causes starting fresh from today. We must not relax.

President Ikeda talked about sincere spirit in our prayer by again quoting the Daishonin, "What we call faith is nothing extraordinary." It means to accomplish our mission in this life, to continue our faith and dedicate ourselves to kosen-rufu lifetime after lifetime. Then we can experience great health and vitality. According to our determination, we can develop boundless wisdom.

Faith is manifested in one's character. Your character is ultimately manifested through your practice of Buddhism. Leaders should not harbor jealousy towards others or look down on them. Rather, leaders should be

humble, embracing everyone with their hearts.

We should all make sure to check our own faith and practice. Sometimes we tend to be strict with others but not ourselves. However, it should be the opposite. We must embrace others and be strict with ourselves and be leaders who are trusted. Then kosen-rufu will definitely advance.

President Ikeda quoted the famous words of John F. Kennedy. "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." If we apply these words to ourselves, rather than asking what can the organization do for us, we should ask ourselves what can we contribute to our organization and determine to do anything for kosen-rufu.

I am determined to challenge myself to the utmost to lay a solid foundation for the younger generation. Let's strengthen our commitment to always dedicate ourselves for the sake of the members, SGI-USA and kosen-rufu. ❖

Three Goals Outlined at Teleconference

By GREG MARTIN
VICE GENERAL DIRECTOR

At a Sept. 13 region leaders teleconference, Greg Martin talked about the three goals the Central Executive Committee decided upon in June and shared some points of guidance from a recent trip to Japan. The following is based on his speech.

1) PROPAGATION: To ensure that each member knows about, understands the importance of and is inspired to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I was very encouraged to read in the Sept. 11 *World Tribune* about two districts in St. Louis that had more than 240 guests combined this year. Also, recently I participated in a series of introductory seminars in Texas and Oklahoma Region where nearly 200 guests were introduced in five days in six cities. I could see the members' great joy in sharing this Buddhism.

Propagation efforts are definitely happening in the SGI-USA. People are bringing guests

to all kinds of meetings. Still, not many guests are actually joining the organization. Only about 750 members have joined this year so far, on pace for about one new member per district by year's end.

This indicates, to me, the need to pay more attention to follow-up. And if it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes a group or district — a joint effort of people, not just leaving it up to the sponsor — to raise a new member. Creating ways to support sponsors in teaching interested guests how to practice will help each district reach this goal, I believe.

During my recent trip to Japan I talked to a Soka Gakkai vice president about propagation activities in his organization. He talked about how young people and new members work together with experienced men's and women's division members when sharing this Buddhism with friends. "Propagation requires conviction in faith," he said. "Senior members have the confidence based on years of experience, while young people and new members, can often bring guests. Doing propagation activities together with young

people will help them to gain confidence."

General Director Zaitzu has made his personal determination to have an active membership of 100,000 by the year 2001, which all region leaders likewise agreed to as their goal. Mr. Zaitzu has said that this goal could be attained if each district gained just two new members each year.

2) DISTRICTS: To ensure that each member knows what district he or she is in, understands the district's role in nurturing members and promoting kosen-rufu, and participates in district activities.

Next month we will be holding our traditional Nov. 18 commemorative meetings (usually held by district). In June, the Central Executive Committee agreed to the overall target of 50,000 participants for these.

Success will be guaranteed, I feel, if all leaders take an active role in supporting the districts and if many members, particularly youth division members, have the opportunity to display their talents in the planning and execution of these meetings.

On a practical level, when counting attendance for these meetings let's be sure to count everyone who contributed to the success of the meeting whether they actually attended or not. For example, if members attend a chanting session for the meeting's success or help make gifts or fliers, let's count them. Let's give everyone the feeling that his or her efforts count.

While in Japan, I asked several leaders about the importance of leaders being involved on the front lines. "The battle ground for all leaders is the discussion meeting," SGI General Director Eiichi Wada said. "This applies to every leader of the organization. When we go to the front lines, although we may only connect with two or three members, the influence of that effort will expand throughout the organization. Leaders must be committed to making this effort. Squeeze home visits or discussion meetings into your schedule. Without going to the districts, leaders cannot see the impact of their leadership; they are blind and cannot lead effectively. You just have to do it."

For myself, I've been seriously trying to be more involved

in the front lines in my local district, not so much for the district's sake as for my sake. Three months ago I decided to devote 10 percent of my time (three days out of 30) for activities within the district. I schedule these days ahead of time and protect them from other meetings. The leaders seem thankful for my participation and district attendance is up. I believe that if all leaders set aside some portion of their time specifically to support one district, the commemorative meetings in November will be a success.

3) PUBLICATION PROMOTION: To ensure that each member knows about, understands the importance of and has the opportunity to subscribe to the *World Tribune*.

With the *World Tribune* so important to the advancement of our movement in America, I asked many questions about promoting it while in Japan. I can summarize the guidance and my understanding of it into three main points:

PLEASE SEE MARTIN, 7



Knowing the Causal Law

What happens to those people who harass Buddhist practitioners? In this speech, the SGI president outlines the tragic effects they must always face in the end.

Part 2 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 25th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Aug. 27.

I now want to quote some passages from the Daishonin's writings. In the well-known letter "On the Buddha's Behavior," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The destiny of Japan depends solely upon me. A house without pillars collapses, and a person without a soul is dead. Nichiren is the soul of the people of Japan" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 919).

Citing these words in a February 1957 lecture on "On the Buddha's Behavior," President Toda declared: "Today, the Soka Gakkai is propagating the

Gohonzon of the Daishonin throughout Japan. Were the Soka Gakkai to be destroyed, it would mean the end to true prosperity for the country. The Soka Gakkai is the pillar and the eyes of Japan."

It is no exaggeration to say that now, too, the destiny of Japan clearly depends on the Soka Gakkai.

Severe Retribution

There was a ruthless, powerful official, who sought to ruin and eliminate the Daishonin, the pillar and soul of Japan. This was none other than Hei no Saemon.

What was his fate? I have spoken on this many times, but I want to touch on it again today to reaffirm some key points — to provide a clear insight on the

present situation in Japan and on the future.

Hei no Saemon-no-jo Yoritsuna wielded staggering power. With military, police and administrative affairs under his complete command, he was the effective ruler of the Kamakura military government.

He used terror to rule the land. But ultimately, this tyrant came to an abrupt, pitiful end.

In April 1293, 14 years after the Atsuhara Persecution, Hei no Saemon was betrayed by, of all people, his son Munetsuna, who accused him of plotting a revolt against the government. Family infighting seems to have been behind Munetsuna's actions.

Within a short time of the accusation, government forces surrounded Hei no Saemon's residence — the very compound at

which the three martyrs of Atsuhara had been tortured and executed. A little while after Munetsuna's accusation, Hei no Saemon and his younger son Sukemune died wretched deaths.

Sukemune, who had at one time terrorized and harassed the Atsuhara peasants by indiscriminately firing arrows at them, experienced hellish suffering in his final moments. Furthermore, all of Hei no Saemon's relatives and retainers — his entire clan, which had once boasted such prestige and prosperity — were slaughtered at one stroke by the authorities.

Munetsuna, who had betrayed his father, was meanwhile exiled to Sado Island. Hei no Saemon's entire line was wiped out.

The causal law of life is uncompromising.

Using the destruction of Hei no Saemon's clan to discuss the strictness of the Buddhist Law, the Daishonin's successor, Nikko Shonin, in the document "List of Recipients of the Gohonzon," says: "This is not an ordinary occurrence. They have incurred the actual punishment of the Lotus Sutra [the Mystic Law]."

These developments took place in the 12th year after the Daishonin's death. Nikko was 48, and his successor, Nichimoku, 34. This defeat of the Buddha's enemies was surely the solemn fruit of that tenacious struggle for the Law by the second and third high priests, loyal disciples of the Daishonin fighting with the same spirit as their mentor.

The 26th high priest, Nichikan, wrote about the downfall of Hei no Saemon in a commentary on the letter "Selection of the Time": "The distant cause is the offense of striking the Daishonin, while the near cause is the offense of executing the three martyrs at the time of the Atsuhara Persecution."

How severe is the retribution befalling those who persecute the mentors and disciples of the Mystic Law!

Nichikan elucidated how the offense of attacking the Lotus Sutra's votaries will bring inescapable retribution upon the perpetrator, in accord with the Buddhist principle that "the injury will rebound upon the originator" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 304). In the same commentary, he writes: "Hei no Saemon's beheading was retribution for the offense of striking the Daishonin across the face, while the beheading of his favorite son [Sukemune] was retribution for the offense of attempting to behead the Daishonin" and "The exile to Sado Island of his son [Munetsuna] was retribution for the offense of exiling the Daishonin there."

In conclusion, Nichikan says: "[The prophecy of strict retribution in accord with the law of cause and effect] has already come true. It is impossible to escape retribution for this most serious offense [of persecuting the Lotus Sutra's practitioners]."

I first read this commentary shortly after I joined the Soka Gakkai, at age 19. The causal workings of the Mystic Law are strict and unerring. All who have harassed, persecuted and betrayed the Soka Gakkai have incurred — and will definitely continue to incur — strict retribution.

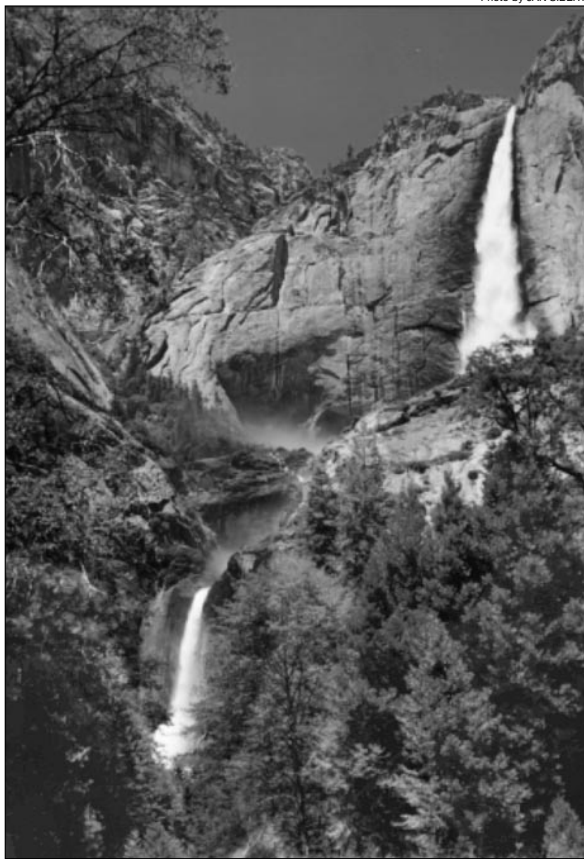


Photo by JAN SIBERT

The Buddhist law of cause and effect is very strict.

Hunting Down Negative Forces

Buddhism is about winning, about showing actual proof. President Makiguchi declared that this is the very life or essence of religion. He knew that clarifying right and wrong, good and evil, would upset attachments and arouse doubts and awaken people to the truth. Undertaking such efforts is genuine courage and compassion.

Mr. Makiguchi said, "The harder we fight and the stronger we become, the more swiftly actual proof of victory in our Buddhist practice appears." I feel that, recently, the success of our efforts is beginning to happen much more quickly. What do you think?

All of you, the great Soka Gakkai members, have worked incredibly hard again this year, chanting and striving wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu, activating the protective forces of the universe and scoring momentous triumphs. Thanks for your tireless efforts.

In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin says on the meaning of benefit: "The element *ku* [in the word *kudoku* or benefit] means eliminating evil, while the element *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). So benefit arises from erasing suffering and creating happiness. Immeasurable benefit accrues to those who fight injustice and defeat the negative forces seeking to undermine Buddhism. That is why the Daishonin urges his followers to refute the erroneous, reveal the true and teach others the Mystic Law — and to stand firm against malign forces.

My impression of Mr. Makiguchi is that, like the Daishonin,

he purposefully hunted down negative forces and called forth persecution upon himself. Kosen-rufu goes hand in hand with fighting and triumphing over injustice and evil.

The Daishonin declares, "If we surmise the degree of benefit according to the degree of punishment, then there can be no doubt that my followers will enjoy 'good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles [of the Buddha, expressing his virtue, wisdom and compassion]" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 342).

The Daishonin's words here are based on the passage from Miao-lo "Those who vex or trouble [the Lotus Sutra's practitioners] will have their heads split into seven pieces, but those who give alms to them will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles" (Annotations on Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra, vol. 4.)

When we realize how strict the retribution of the Mystic Law really is, we appreciate all the more the greatness of the Mystic Law and the immense benefit that results from fighting against the negative forces seeking to destroy Buddhism.

Japan suffered severe retribution for persecuting the Daishonin. Japan persecuted president Makiguchi and Toda and was subsequently destroyed.

In contrast, we of the Soka Gakkai, we who are carrying out the Buddha's will and decree, lead lives that shine with ever-increasing benefit and good fortune. This is the Daishonin's promise.

So let us all work even harder.

Hope, Courage, Energy

The Daishonin writes, "When the people's despair grows, the nation declines" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1004). Today in Japan, despair is rampant. Many people have lost hope, direction and meaning. All these signs portend the nation's decline.

In such dark times, who is striving to infuse people's hearts with hope, courage and energy? It is us, the Soka Gakkai members. This beautiful body of human harmony, the Soka Gakkai, is the sole hope for Japan. It is a bright beacon for the entire world.

Let us advance with this pride.

To be continued in next week's World Tribune

SPEECH, FROM PAGE 6

If this were not true, the Buddhist teachings would be a lie. I have learned this through my life-and-death struggles to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism these 51 years. I wish to make this point clear for future generations.

In the letter "On Persecutions Befalling the Buddha," the Daishonin writes, "In the past, and in the present Latter Day of the Law, the rulers, high ministers and people who despise the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seem

to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they are all doomed to fall" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1190). It is exactly as this states: Though one may commit an offense and evade prosecution and punishment by the laws of the land, one cannot run or hide from the inexorable workings of cause and effect of the Mystic Law. Just as the Daishonin says, those who hold Buddhist practitioners in contempt might seem to be free from punishment at first, but ultimately they cannot avoid suffering the retribution due them.

Three Goals Outlined at Teleconference

MARTIN, FROM PAGE 5

1) Promotion: SGI President Ikeda said: "Your prayer as a leader and the person responsible to increase readership is most important. The newspaper is close to my heart—please promote its readership based on your strong determination."

2) Timeliness: SGI Deputy President Akiya said: "The newspaper is a letter of encouragement from President Ikeda. The organizational newspaper is the vein that allows this blood to flow. When President Ikeda's encouragement is quickly communicated, cell growth will occur at the front line of the or-

ganization." We should look forward to reading and absorbing President Ikeda's guidance it as soon as possible.

3) Textbook of faith: President Akiya also said that we should focus on the group and district. "Make the *World Tribune* the basic material used at every meeting, a textbook of faith." The *World Tribune* is full of articles that can be easily used at discussion meetings, and the staff is working to provide even more. The more we use the *World Tribune* at meetings, the more interest in the paper will be generated.

I feel goals are most meaningful when they are personal

and self-motivated. So I've decided to accomplish the following three things before the end of the year:

- Help one person join the organization or help one sponsor encourage their guest to join.
- Commit time to one district in support of their November commemorative meeting.
- Encourage one person to subscribe to the *World Tribune*.

I hope everyone who's read this article will make their own personal goals for the rest of the year. Our collective efforts will advance kosen-rufu dramatically this year.

**THE POWER OF THE PEN!
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 2, 1998**

The 1st Annual 'Seize the Day' Essay Contest

THEME: *The role of youth in improving the world these last couple of years before the 21st century.*

CATEGORIES: *Junior High School
High School
College
General Youth*

"Seize the Day" invites all youth division members to share their thoughts on the social responsibilities of youth in these last couple of years until the 21st century. These years have been likened to a runway to the next century. How can the power of youth change our world for the better as we rush down this runway?

Be as specific as possible about what you think youth need to change, and how you think that they can do it.

The length is 900–1,200 words, typed, double-spaced. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing, the depth of thought, originality and whether you include concrete examples. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in "Seize the Day" in 1999.

To enter: Send your essay and a photo of yourself to "Seize the Day," 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 or seize@sgi-usa.org. Indicate which category you are entering and include your return address, phone number and e-mail address (if you have one). All essays become the property of "Seize the Day."

法華經의 지혜

제29회 테마: 여래수광품 ④

※정정

W/T 8월 28일자 SGI 조급 시험 예상 문제집 중 50번 -즉신성불이란 무엇인지 상보로 설명하여 주십시오-의 상보를 삼신으로 정정합니다.

사이드 교학부장: 지난 회는 수량품에서 밝혀진 석존의 「본인본과」에 대하여 말씀을 들었습니다. 니치렌 대성인의 「태양의 불꽃」이 얼마나 큰 불꽃이고도 광대한가, 영원한 생명관을 가진 인생이 얼마만큼 훌륭한가를 다시금 실감했습니다. 라는 독자 여러분의 반응도 대단했습니다.

이케다 SGI회장: 우리들은 「무상도(無上道)의 인생」을 살고 있습니다. 그것을 자각하는가 안 하는가입니다. 불법은 무엇을 위해 있는가. 그것은 만인을 「행복」하게 하기 위해 있습니다. 만인에게 「대환희」의 경예를 열게 하기 위해 있습니다. 불스토이는 이렇게 쓰고 있습니다. 「기쁘하라! 기쁘하라! 인생의 사업, 인생의 사명은 기쁨이다. 하늘을 향하여, 태양을 향하여, 별을 향하여, 풀을 향하여, 수목을 향하여, 동물을 향하여, 인간을 향하여 기쁘하는게 좋다. (불스토이의 말) 인생의 사명은 기쁨에 있다! 이것이 대문호가 내린 하나의 결론입니다. 그 본뜻을 알고 있는 이들이 우리들입니다. 법화경이야말로 「대환희의 대환희」(어서 788 쪽)를 여는 경전인 것입니다.

앤도 부교학부장: 석존이 보리수 밑에서 언급하는 그 어떤 것도 막을 수 없는 「대환희의 경예」였군요.

SGI회장: 맞습니다. 「사상정각」이라던 어딘지 익숙한 느낌이 들지만 알기 쉽게 말하면 보리수 아래에서 깨달음을 얻은 순간 석존의 흉중에 「환희의 태양」의 태양이 찬란하게 떠올랐던 것을 말합니다. 불법의 심계론은 모든 사람들을 그 경예로 봅니다. 그렇기에 평등한 것입니다. 재산이 있는 사람이라도, 가난한 사람이라도, 지금 일순간 「지옥계」의 고통에 허덕이고 있다면 모두 지옥계이기 때문입니다. 그리고 모든 사람들이 속해서 「불계」의 가능성을 보고 그것을 열어나가자는 자비가 삼계론의 안목입니다. 그 진수가 수량품인 것입니다. 한번 이 경예론의 관점에서 「심계」에 대해서 서로 이야기하면 어떨까요.

사이드: 네. 회원분들도 「친구와 불법대화를 할 때 심계론을 알기 쉽게 말해줄 수 있는 교제가 필요합니다.」는 의미가 들어있고 있습니다.

스다: 「우라시마 효과」에 대한 이야기가 종전에 나왔습니다. 우라시마 타로 이야기는 심계론을 배우는 좋은 단서가 되지 않을까요.

SGI회장: 그렇지요. 일본인이라면 누구나 알고 있는 옛날이야기니까요. 이것을 심계론으로 보자면 어떻게 될까요.

앤도: 그렇군요. 이야기는 어부인 우라시마 타로가 해변에서 거북이를 괴롭히는 것을 만나는데 데서 시작됩니다. 거북이를 괴롭히는 소년들의 경예는 심계로 말하면 「축생계」이지요. 「축생의 마음은 약함을 위협하고 강함을 두려워하느니라」(어서 957쪽)이니까요.

스다: 그렇군요. 괴롭힘을 당하는 거북이는 「지옥계」이고요. 우라시마 타로는 소년들에게 돈을 주고 거북이를 놓아줍니다. 이 타로의 행동들은 「보살계의 일부뿐이지요. 돈을 받았다는 면에서 본다면 아이들은 「아귀계」일지도 모릅니다.

앤도: 거북이는 그 은혜를 잊지 않고 수일 뒤에 우라시마를 찾아옵니다. 그리고 답례로 타로를 등에 싣고 용궁으로 안내합니다.

사이드: 은혜를 잊지 않고 은혜에 보답한다-이것은 「인계」가 아닐까요. 보은은 인간답다는 증거입니다.

SGI회장: 거북이인데도 「인계」이군요.(웃음)

사이드: 네. 인간이라도 은혜를 모르면 축생 이하가 되고 맙니다. 「개목은 축생」이 「축생조차도 역시 은혜를 모르는데」(어서 204쪽)라고 하시며 보은의 소중함을 가르치시고 계십니다.

스다: 용궁에서 타로는 오토히메의 환대를 받고 마시고 춤추면서 즐겁게 지냅니다. 이것은 단연코 「천계」이군요.(웃음) 덧붙여 이 「용궁」이란 법화경 제바달다품(제 12장에 나오는 바다 밑의 「사갈라 용궁」의 불전에 영합이 있지 않은가 하는 이야기)도 있습니다.

앤도: 그런데 집에 돌아가는 것도 있고 즐겁게 보내고 있는 사이에 3년의 세월이 지났습니다. 「세월이 가는 것도 즐겁다!」 생각되는 기쁨의 세계이니 갖는 순간 시간이 지나가 버렸던 것입니다. 타로는 오토히메에게 이별을 고하고 선물로 받은 옥수상자(심계 열여섯 보일 수 있는 소중한 상자)를 거드랑이에 끼고 돌아옵니다. 그런데 옥지에 올라선 그는 깜짝 놀라고 맙니다. 세상이 완전히 변해버린 것입니다. 용궁에 있었던 3년 동안 지상에서는 무려 3백년이나 지나고 있었어요. 바로 「우라시마 효과」로서 지상의 시간은 그를 내버려 두고 훨씬 빠르게 진행되고 있었던 것입니다. 그것을 알고 타로는 절망했습니다. 가족도 이제는 없다. 친구도 두루너라 남아있지 않고 정치도 본적도 없는 정체가 끝없이 펼쳐질뿐...

SGI회장: 이때 타로의 경예는 「지옥계」라고 할지도 모르겠군요. 보는 것도 듣는 것도 모두 자기라는 존재를 거절하고 있다. 세계의 어느 곳에도 자신이 「있을 만한 장소」가 없다. 타로의 생명공간은 순식간에 위축됩니다.

스다: 거기서 타로는 단 하나의 희망인 옥수상자를 열어봅니다. 그 순간 무럭무럭 연기가 나오면서 타로는 머리카라도 새하얗게 되고 눈에서 허적허적하는 노인이 되고 맙니다. 일순간에 늙고 추려져서 망명하게 해변에 주저앉는 타로... 생각해보면 충격적인 마지막 장면이군요.

SGI회장: 그런데 이것은 어떤 계열이군요.

앤도: 어렵군요. 지옥계였던 타로를 다시 깊은 절망에 빠지게 했다는 해설이 많을 것일나. 그렇다고 하면 너무도 비참한 것일뿐입니다.

스다: 오토히메도 엄청나게 잔혹한 선물을 준 것이 됩니다.

SGI회장: 그렇게 생각하면 하나의 해석으로서는 이것은 「이승계」로 들어가는 단서를 보여준지도 모릅니다. 니치렌 대성인은 「세간의 무상은 눈앞에 있으니 어찌 인계에 이승계가 없으리요」(어서 241쪽)라고 말씀하십니다. 이야기는 그 어느 것도 말해 주지 않으나 나이를 먹은 타로에게는 그때까지 보이지 않았던 「무상」이 보이기 시작한 것이 아니었을까요.

사이드: 「저 즐거웠던 나날도 모두 사라지고 말았다.」 얼마나 안타까운 생각일까요. 비애와 같은 여운을 남기고 이야기가 끝납니다. 분명 「육도」의 세계를 편력하고 「이승계」를 시작하는 곳에서 막을 닫고 있을지도 모릅니다.

스다: 다시 생각해보면 「인생이란」 「인간계」의 「하미」 생각을 하지 않을 수 없는 의미장한 이야기이군요.

SGI회장: 불법의 생명론을 알고 있으면 무엇을 보고 들어도 본질을 꿰어 알 수 있습니다. 이것은 교학을 배우는 하나의 의의입니다. 여하튼 「인간계」에 참된 행복이란 무엇인가? 여기에 심계론의 기초를 이루는 물음이 있는 것입니다. 그러면 심계 하

나하나에 대하여 경문과 어서를 배견하면서 보아갑시다. 대전제로서 먼저 이해해 둘 것은 법화경에서 「심계호구」가 밝혀짐으로써 비로소 심계를 인간 자신의 「경예」로서 말할 수 있게 되었다는 것입니다. 「심계호구」에 대해서는 다시 논하기로 하고, 여하튼 이 「호구」가 없으면 심계의 중생은 각기 다른 세계에 사는 서로에 대해 완전히 연이 없는 존재가 될 뿐입니다.

사이드: 「인계」의 중생-우리들을 말합니다. 「인계」의 생명에도 「심계」가 갖추어져 있다고 생애했기 때문에 심계를 경예론, 생명론으로서 이해할 수 있는 것입니다. 거기서 경예의 변형도 가능해지는 것이요.

스다: 심계 각각의 이름은 법화경 사공덕품(제 19장)에 나옵니다. 「삼천대천세계의 아래로는 아버지쪽에 있고 위로는 유정에 이른다. 그 가운데 내외의 종족은 온갖 이인, 음성, ...남성, 여성, ...천성, 용성, 야차성, ...수라성, ...지옥성, 축생성, 아귀성, ...성문성, 벽지불성, 보살성, 불성을 들도다」(개경 543쪽).

SGI회장: 그렇지요. 우리들은 불계의 「소리」로 사람들을 구제해 가는 것입니다. 입을 다물고 있어서는 안 됩니다.

앤도: 이 경문들에 기초하여 천태가 지옥, 아귀, 축생, 수라, 인, 천, 성문, 연각, 보살, 부처의 열가지 경예로 정리한 것이 「심계론」입니다. 심계 가운데 지옥계에서 천계까지의 여섯개, 「육도」는 인도의 바라문교 이래의 세계관에 기초한 것입니다. 바라문교에서는 생명이 살아가는 장소-세계로서 크게 이 여섯가지로 생각했습니다. 각각의 장소에서 과거세의 행위(수업)에 의해 태어난다고 생각하고 있었습니다. 인과응보 사상입니다. 업보에 의하여 이 육도를 윤회한다고 했습니다. 이 윤회론에서 벗어난 경예가 성문에서 부처까지의 이른바 「사상」입니다.

스다: 각각의 경예를 보자지요. 우선 지옥계입니다. 원래의 범어는 나카라로 「지하의 감옥」이란 의미입니다.

SGI회장: 지금도 「나락(나카라)」에 떨어진다고 말하지요. 지옥의 지는 최저라는 뜻이고, 옥이란 구속받고 엄매인 부자유함을 나타냅니다. 괴로움을 속박된 최저의 경예입니다.

앤도: 니치렌 대성인은 「관심의 본존조」에서 「노함은 지옥」(어서 241쪽)이라고 말씀하십니다. 노한다는 것은 탐욕·진애·우치의 삼독(탐, 진, 지) 가운데 진애를 말합니다. 자기 생각대로 되지 않으면 괴로움을 가져다 준 상대에게 원한을 마음 품는 것은 「진」이 아닌가 합니다.

SGI회장: 지옥계에도 여러단계가 있지만, 살아있는 것 자체가 괴롭다는 「무엇을 보아도 불행은 느낀다」는 경예라고 말할 수 있지요. 「생」의 힘이 극도로 쇠약해지고, 「사」에 가까워진다. 노욕을 이긴다. 그러나 어떻게 할 수 없는 생명의 「신음소리」로 표현할 수 있을지도 모릅니다.

앤도: 자살이나 비행은 저지르는 청소년의 「살아있는 것 자체가 힘들다」 「이 세상에서 자신이 있을 곳이 없다」는 비통한 소리를 듣는 경우가 있습니다. 생명공간이 재로에 가까워졌을 때 스스로 죽음을 선택할 수밖에 없었다-바로 지옥계입니다. 가슴을 드러내듯한 마음입니다.

SGI회장: 누구라도 좋다. 곁에 있어주는 것입니다. 함께 있으면서 이 야기를 들어줍니다. 그것으로 괴로워하는 마음에 맞으면서 「생」의 불꽃을 지피웁니다. 자신의 일을 생각해주는 사람이 있다-그 반응이 고뇌하는 사람의 생명공간을 활짝 열어주는 것입니다. 타인이나 세계와 함께 한다는 실감이 있다면 반드시 일어설 수가 있습니다. 그것이 바로 생명이 가지고 있는 힘입니다. 그렇기에 「좋은 연이」 중요합니다. 불법에서 말하는 「선지식」입니다.

사이드: 사람은 역경에 부딪히고 곤란에 직면하면 자칫 자기 혼자만 불행한 것처럼 생각하고 다른 사람됨을 원망하고 사회를 원망하고 자신의 곁집에 틀어박히고 하는 경우가 자주 있습니다. 불법에서 말하는 지옥이란 주어진 상황이나 환경에 있는 것이 아니라 오히려 환경에 휘둘리고 지배당하고 거기서 한 걸음도 빠져 나올 수 없는 「생명력의 약함」이라고 생각합니다.

SGI회장: 그렇지요. 다른 곳에 있는 것도 아닙니다. 니치렌 대성인은 「대지 지옥과 부처는 어느 곳에 있는가 하고 찾아보면 혹은 지하라고 하는 경문도 있고 혹은 서방동이라 하는 경문도 있습니다. 그러나 자세히 찾아보면 우리들의 오적의 문안에 있다고 쓰여 있습니다. 그렇기도 하다고 생각되는 것은 우리들의 마음속에 아버지들 결별하고 어머니를 소홀히 하는 사람은 지옥이 그 사람의 마음속에 있습니다. (어서 1491쪽)라고 말씀하십니다. 「마음」속에 있는 지옥에 행복은 없는 것입니다.

앤도: 다음에는 아귀계입니다.

사이드: 대성인은 「탐함은 아귀」(어서 241쪽)라고 하시며 삼독 가운데 「탐욕」에 자리매김하십니다. 천태는 「이 경향성은 기갈이 많은 고로 아귀라 이릅니다.」라고 기록하고 있습니다.(법화문구) 굶주림에 괴로워하면서도 어떻게 해도 채워지지 않는 경예입니다.

SGI회장: 욕망에 휘둘리는 경예입니다. 그러므로 마음이 자유롭게 되지 않고 괴로움을 낳게 된다. 욕망의 노예가 되고 있습니다.

앤도: 네. 다만 지옥계로 비유하면 생명공간은 약간이지만 넓혀지고 있습니다. 강한 경예를 벗어나 「무엇인가」를 구하면서 살아가고자 합니다.

스다: 욕망은 「살아가는 에너지」이기도 하지만, 다만 그 욕망이 채워지지 않고 심각한 「욕구불만」의 상태에 빠지고 있습니다. 먹을 것이 없단다. 입을 것도 살 집도 없다. 이러한 기아나 빈곤은 현대세계의 심각한 과제입니다.

사이드: 그러나 이른바 「풍요로운 사회」에도 굶주림은 있습니다. 예를 들어 작년 미국의 「뉴스위크」지에 미국의 현대사회에서 「갈취어」가고 있는데도 누구나가 모두 불만을 가지고 있다. 그것이 우리들 시대의 모습이다.는 논평이 있습니다.

SGI회장: 인간의 욕망에는 제한이 있습니다. 「살아간다는 근본적인 욕망이 있으며 나아가 탐욕등의 본능적인 욕망, 소유욕등의 물질적인 욕망, 자기욕 등의 심리적인 욕망이 있습니다.

스다: 권력욕, 명예욕, 지배욕등도 그러합니다. 남에게 존경을 받고 사랑을 받고 싶다는 욕구도 있습니다.

인간이 욕망이 없어서는 살아갈 수 없는 것도 사실입니다. 또 그 욕망들이 인간을 진보하게도 만들며 향상시키는 에너지가 되는 경우도 있습니다. 그렇기에 아귀계는 「이 길을 다룬 길과 오고가며 선악이 서로 통한다.」라고 합니다. 욕망이 어떻게 사용하는가 문제인 것입니다. 아귀계란 욕망을 가지창조로 사용하는 것이 아니라 욕망의 노예로 되고 있는 것 애입니다. 욕망이기에 자신을 괴롭히고 타인도 상처를 입힌다.-그렇기에 「약도」라고 불립니다.

스다: 축생계는 어떤 경예일까요. **사이드:** 본래는 물론 새나 짐승등의 동물의 경예입니다. 「관심의 본존조」에는 「어리석음은 축생」(어서 241쪽)이라고 했습니다. 삼독 가운데 「우치」입니다. 인간으로 말하면 눈앞의 것에 사로잡혀 사리에 어두운 현상을 말합니다.

앤도: 「축생의 마음은 약함을 위협하고 강함을 두려워 하느니라」(어서 957쪽)고 말씀하셨어요. 경사·선악의 판단을 하지 못하고 본능 그대로 살아가는 경예입니다. 지옥계나 아귀계에 비하여 생명공간은 넓은 듯이 보이나 역시 약도를 벗어나지 못합니다.

SGI회장: 자기 속에 정확한 선악의 기준이 없다. 규범이 없다. 본능적으로 행동하며 부끄러워 하는 법이 없다. 바로 「약함을 위협하고 강함을 두려워 하느니라」는 힘의 논리입니다. 약육강식입니다. 인간이면서 「인간다운」을 잃어버린 모습이라고 할 수 있겠지요. 인간은 인간으로서 교육을 받고 나서야 비로소 인간이 된다. 인간으로 태어났다고 인간이 될 것은 아니다. 인간으로서 교육을 받은 다음에야 비로소 인간이 되는 것입니다. 그렇기에 교육이 중요 합니다. 「축생도의 지구」라는 말이 있지만 약육강식의 전성기 일어난 것은 참된 「인간」이 너무도 적었기 때문입니다. 「축생」의 마음에 세계가 변동되고 말았습니다. 그 비참함을 두번 다시 되풀이하지 않기 위해서라도 「인간다운 인간」 「인간성 넘치는 인간」을 속속들이 세계에 배출해 가지 않으면 안 됩니다. 이것이 우리의 신념이여 비원입니다. 광선유포는 말하자면 인류의 운명을 짊어진 「인간교육의 대운동」입니다.

앤도: 이러한 체험을 들었습니다. 조금 긴 이야기지만 독자를 위해서 소개해 드리겠습니다. 1957년 겨울, 생활고에 지쳐 자살하기로 마음먹은 부인이 있었습니다. 하야시 다미코씨라고 합니다. 죽기전에 한 편지라도 어머니를 만나고 생각하여 마지막으로 남은 백엔짜리 물건을 주고 열차를 탔습니다. 물론 입신계전의 일입니다. 나고야에서 오고오리 역까지 가는 열차였습니다. 바지에 알치마를 두른 하야시 씨는 초라한 옷차림이 부끄러워 움추리고 있었다고 합니다. 두 살 난 딸을 데리고 갔습니다. 열차가 역에 멈출 때마다 도시락을 파는 판매원이 왔습니다. 어머니 딸 모두 배가 고프는 상태였으나 도시락을 살 줄 없었습니다. 마이하라인지 도쿄인자 기억이 나지는 않습니다. 여하튼 나중에 한 청년이 열차에 올라탔습니다. 그다지 청결한 옷차림은 아니었습니다. 그 청년은 하야시 씨 모녀와 마주하여 앉았습니다. 청년은 그는 가족으로 된 두터운 책(나중에 어서였음을 알았다)을

자비는 동고(同苦)의 마음

「새와 벌레는 울어도 눈물을 흘리지 않는데 나처럼은 울지 않거만 눈물이 마르지 않는나라」(어서 1361쪽) 새와 벌레는 울어도 눈물은 흐르지 않는다. 나처럼은 (새와 벌레들처럼) 울지는 않아도 눈물이 끊이지 않는다. 사도에서의 유명한 말씀이다. 나처럼 대성인은 넘쳐 흐를듯한 대강정의 분이셨다. 대강정이 대지성과 완전히 일치하신 분이셨다. 「위대한 사상은 위대한 지성에서보다 위대한 감성에서 생겨난다.」(도스트 예프스키) 불법은 「자비와 지혜」의 종교이다. 그리고 이 두 가지는 일체이다. 참으로 지혜있는 사람이란 누구보다도 자비가 있는 사람을 말한다. 자비가 깊은 사람이야말로 불법의 지혜를 체험하고 있는 사람인 것이다. 그리고 「자비」의 「비(悲)」에는 「신승화리」라는 의미가 있다. 함께 괴로워하고 함께 신승소리를 낸다. 그것이 자비이다. 부처란 먼저 「함께 괴로워 해주는 사람」이다. 예를들면 아이를 잃은 모친이 망연히 길가에 앉아 있을 때 어떤 말을 걸어도 어머니의 마음은 치유할 수는 없었지. 모두가 어떻게 해주지 못하고 어머니 앞을 어떻게 지나갈 수 밖에 없다. 잔혹하며 무서워서 깨달은 듯한 얼굴로 아이를 끌어안는 성직자도 있을 수 있다. 그러나 누구도 어머니의 슬픔을 보살피지 않는다. 아무리 과학이 발달하여 인간을 우주공간에 보낼 수 있다 해도, 어머니의 슬픔을 치유할 수는 없는 것이다. 또는 같은 처지에 있던 여성만이 말을 건넬 수 있을 수 있다. 그 경우에 부처란 어떻게 했을까. 아마도 부처는 어머니 옆에 앉았을 것이다. 아무말도 하지 않고 다만 함께 앉아 있었을 것이다. 설사 아무말도 하지 않았어도 어머니를 생각하는 부처의 따뜻한 마음이 소리를 어머니에게도 전해질 것이다. 부처의 마음의 맥박이 들려올 것이다. 마침내 어머니가 얼굴을 든다. 눈앞에는 모든 것을 알아주는 부처의 얼굴이 있다. 부처가 고개를 끄덕인다. 어머니도 고개를 끄덕인다. 말은 없어도 마음이 통하면 더할 나위 없는 격려가 되는 것이다. 반대로 백만마디를 해도 마음이 통하지 않으면 아무것도 전해지지 않는다. 마침내 부처는 일어선다. 어머니도 추켜 올리는 듯이 일어섰을 것이다. 그리고 함께 한걸음 앞으로 발을 내딛는다. 일보, 또 일보, 그 앞을 뿔뿔이 다정하게 비추는 것이다. 그리고 부처는 마지막까지 계속 격려한다. 어머니가 태양을 바라보는 날까지. 죽은 아이의 뭇가지 가지있는 인생을 살아갈 결심이 설 때까지. 어느 때는 살아갈게, 어느 때는 강하게, 또 어느 때는 언어의 꽃다발로 어느 때는 행동을 함께 하면서. 어머니에게 있어서 슬픔을 함께 해준 부처는 정말로 자기편이다. 가장 안심할 수 있는 사람이요. 그렇게 때문에 부처의 말이 가슴에 스며드는 것이다. 자비라고

9, 10월 어서강의
우에노전어서
(A Letter of Condolence)

그 근거는 함께 괴로워하고, 함께 기원하는 「동고」의 마음인 것이다. 대성인도 그러하셨다. 16세의 청년을 잃은 우에노전의 어머니-우에노전(난조도키미쓰)의 어머니에 대해, 나처럼 대성인은 함께 울고 한탄하셨다. 그리고 어머니의 흉중에 불이 켜져 질 때까지 격려를 계속 하셨다. 죽은 이 1년여 동안, 고인에 대해 쓰신 편지는 약 10통을 헤아린다. 그 대성인의 따스함이 차가워진 어머니의 마음을 얼마나 따뜻하게 했을까. 난조가 보내신 편지를 배전하며, 그 인간도라마를 배우기도 한다. 「난조시치로고전의 사거의 일, 사람은 태어나서 죽는 것이 정칙임은 지자도 우까지도 상하일동으로 알고 있으나 그때가 되서 비로소 한탄하거나 놀라거나 할 일이 아니라고 생각하지 않는다는 것은 나도 알고 남에게도 가르치고 있었지만 (실제로 시치로고로전이 사망하셨다고 하는) 예를 당하고 보니 꿈인가 환상인가 아직껏 분간하지 못합니다」(어서 1567쪽 3행~3행)

괴로울 때도 기쁨 때도 고락 함께 제목을

「생」의 기쁨의 드라마가 있으면 「사」의 슬픔의 드라마가 있다. 훗날 3년(1280년) 가을, 난조가 두가지의 드라마가 잇달아 일어났다. 「생」의 드라마는 난조도키미쓰에게 남아가 탄생한 것이다. 8월 26일자의 편지(우에노전담서)에서는 도키미쓰부부가 여자아이 한 명, 남자아이 한 명을 갖게 된 것을 대성인께서 기뻐하고 있다. 대성인께서 직접 남자아이에게도 「히와카(日若)님」이라고 명명하셨다. 나처럼 대성인은 「일(日)」자를 하사받은 데에 부부의 감동은 한층 더 했을 것이다. 훗날 2년(1279년)의 아신상하라뿐만으로부터 1년, 고투의 난고가 날아가 버리는 듯한 심정이었던지도 모른다. 누구보다도 도키미쓰의 어머니는 가족을 계속할 손자가 탄생해 대성인으로부터 축복받은 데에 무상의 감개가 있었음을 틀림없다. 그러나 그날로부터 불과 10일, 9월 5일, 난조가에 돌연 불행이 찾아왔다. 도키미쓰의 막내아우인 난조시치로고로가 죽은 것이다. 16세의 청년이었다. 죽음의 원인은 알 수 없었지만, 어떻게든 예기치 않았던 갑작스런 사거였던 것은 틀림없었다. 「생」의 축복은 일변해 「사의 비애」로 바뀌었다. 일가의 슬픔은 헤아릴 수 없었을 것이다. 대성인도 놀라셨다. 급사를 알리는 사자가 도착하자마자

대성인은 즉시 도키미쓰 앞으로 편지를 쓰셨다. 그것이 어. 9월 6일의 「우에노전어서」이다. 생사의 무상은 인생 세상의 이치, 불법의 기본 중의 기본이다. 세상사도 한탄할 일은 아니다. 생도 사도 영원한 생명에서 본다면 작은 한도막의 사건에 지나지 않는다 할 수 있을 것이다. 그러나 그것만으로는 이룬다. 사람의 마음은 이룬으로써만 잘라 말할 수 없다.

부처란 「함께 괴로워 해주는」 사람

대성인은 어디까지나 인간이었다. 누구보다도 인간다운 인간이었다. 급보를 듣고 「꿈인가 환상인가 도저히 믿을 수 없고 편지를 계속해서 쓸 마음조차 나지 않을 정도로 놀라 어찌할 말을 모르겠습니다」라고. 그 말씀은 그대로 유족분들의 심정을 대변하고 있었던 것이 아닐까. 약 1주일 후의 편지라고 하는 「난조전담서」에서 대성인은 이렇게 기술하고 있다. 「고난조시치로고로전의 일, 지금까지는 꿈인가 환상인가 환상인가 하고 의심하며 거짓이 틀림없다고만 생각하고 있었는데 (다시 도키미쓰 전이 보내신) 이 편지에도 (죽었다는 것이) 적혀 있었다. 그러면 진실인가 진실인가 하고 비로소 그렇게 생각하는 마음이 자생합니다」(어서 1566쪽)라고. 대성인 자신조차, 시치로고로의 죽음을 좀처럼 받아들이지 않고 나서 가장 발악하는 남편과도 남아우인 어분본이신가, 육친과 같이 젊은 문하의 사거를 슬퍼하고 있다. 그 대차대비의 생명을 그대로 써 놓으신 어분본이신가. 우리는 기쁨에도 괴로움에도 「고」는 고라고 깨닫고, 낮은 낙이라고 열어서 고락 함께 아울러 생각하여 兩無妙法蓮華經이라고 부르고 계시라. (어서 1143쪽) 하신 말씀대로 설하고 있을 뿐이라서 이것은 불행이다. 부처란 진실로 모든 속에서 끝까지 살고 함께 슬퍼하며 함께 괴로워하고, 함께 희망을 갖는 것이요. 「본불」의 모습이다. 하물며 어분본은 「숙명」을 안이하고 내세우거나 하지 않으셨다. 괴로워하고 있는 사람에 대해 당당한 얼굴로 「그것이 당신의 숙명」이라고 냉정한 입장으로 말한단다. 그것은 괴로움을 대해줄 말한 일이었다. 숙명을 당한 사람은 말하자면 마음에 폭풍우가 휘몰아치고 있는 듯한 것이다. 그럼 함께 비바람

을 맞으시다. 함께 흥백 젖으며 함께 길을 찾으시다. 그것밖에 인간으로서 할 수 없는 것이 아닐까. 안전하게 할 수 없어도 그 노력이 인간과 인간 사이에 다리를 놓는 것이 아닐까. 그것은 단순한 동정도 아니거나 감상도 아니다. 근저에 「기원」이라고 하는 생명과 생명을 맺는 동고의 노작업이 있기 때문에 생명과 생명을 뒤흔드는 것이다. 「더구나 어머니가 얼마나 슬퍼하시겠습니까. 함께 슬퍼하시라. (사치로고로전의) 부모님들도 형제들도 다 여의고 나서 가장 사랑하는 남편과도 사별을 하였으나 자식들이 많이 있어서 마음이 위안되기도 하셨을텐데 (시치로고로전) 사망스러운 아이인데 게다가 사대아일. 용모도 남보다 뛰어나고 마음도 확고해 믿음직하게 보아서 다른 사람들도 상쾌하게 보았을 때 (젊은 나이에 사망한 것은) 말할진 꽃에 바람이 시들고, 보름달이 갑자기 이지러진 것처럼 생각됩니다. 사망했다는 것이 아무래도 진실이라고도 생각되지 않으므로 (편지)를 더 쓸 생각이 없습니다. 또 다시 말씀드리겠습니다. 공공균은. 훗날 3년 9월 6일 우에노전담서

***추신: 이 6월 15일에 상편하였을 때에는 참으로 대답한 겨우나 과연 남자의 남자가 보았는데 다시 볼 수 없게 된 것이 참으로 슬픔을 깊이 신앙하고 있었으니 임종도 훌륭하셨습니. 마음은 틀림없이 부친이 계시는 영산정도에 가서 손을 잡고 머리를 마주하여 기뻐하고 있을 것입니다. 얼마나 훌륭한 일입니까」**

(어서 1567쪽 3행-1568쪽 2행)

모든 어머니와 자녀를 위해 사회의 저류에 「자애의 대화」를

도키미쓰의 어머니는 고생이 많은 여성이었다. 문영 2년(1265년)에 부군인 난조호에 시치로를 잃었다. 아직도 한창인 나이의 앞날이 기대되는 남편을 잃었다. 뒤에는 5남 4녀의 어린 애들이 남아 있었다. 차남인 도키미쓰가 딸락이로 7살. 모두 여섯다. 더구나 막내인 다섯 번째의 남자아이는 남편을 잃었을 당시 아직 어머니의 뱃속이 있었다. 「고우에노전계」는 한창일 때에 먼저 세상을 뜨시(어머님께서)는 한탄도 깊었으니, 이 자식을 회임하지 않으셨더라도 볼 애도 뛰어들어 뒤를 따르려고 생각했으니 이 자식이 무사히 태어났

므로 누구에게 맡기고 투신하라(그럴 수는 없다)고 생각하여 이렇듯 마음을 달래면서 24, 5년을 지냈습니다」(우에노전도 친담서 1572쪽)

그 남자아이 가 바로 급사한 시치로고로이다. 어머니는 도키미쓰와 시치로고로, 두 사람의 성장을 낙으로 삼으며 의지하고 있었다. 게다가 시치로고로는 용모도 훌륭하고 재능도 갖추고 있어 사람들에게 칭찬받던 아이였다. 또한 효자였다. 그렇게 때문에 대성인께서 어머니에 대한 격려의 말을 이룰 수 없었을 정도였던 것이다. 그리고 그 심정 그대로 슬피 전해 주고 계신다. 편지의 글 속에 배어 있는 대성인의 상냥함을 슬픔 때문에 민감해진 어머니의 마음은 예민하게 감동했을 것이다. 슬픈 마음이 대성인의 따뜻함에 얼마나 위로가 되었을 것인가. 모든 것을 알아주는 사람이 있다--그것으로 사람은 「살아가는 힘」을 얻을 수 있는 것이다. 대성인은 주신에서 전도 양양한 청년의 사거를 거두어 애써해 가지고 있다. 대성인은 난조호에 시치로가 죽었을 때 다음과 같이 격려하셨다. 「살아 계실 때는 생의 부처, 지금은 사의 부처. 다같이 부처이니라」(어서 1504쪽) 젊은 생이라고 해도 묘법으로 생명을 물으신 생안 생과 함께 「부처」란 것을 가르치고 있는 것이다. 본조의 주신에서도 대성인은 시치로고로가 영산에서 반드시 죽은 아버지와 재회할 것이라고 격려하시고 있다. 또 다른 편지에서는 어머니께서 이렇게 쓰시고 있다. 「하다못해 (시치로고로전)이 가다가 만나게 될 곳이라도 말해 두었더라면 (당신) 날개도 없어도 하늘에라도 오도 수 있을 것입니다. 배가라도 해도 당토라도 건널 수 있었을 것입니다. 대지의 밑바닥에 있었다 들면 어떻게 해서든지 땅에라도 파들어가고 생각했으리라. 실은 아주 쉽게 (시치로고로전)을 만날 수 있는 방법이 있습니다. 부디 석존에게 인도되어 영산정도에 가서 만나 보십시오」(우에노노부인담서 1576쪽) 그만큼 자신을 잃은 어머니의 충격은 다른 사람이 헤아릴 수 없을 정도이다. 나도 만행의 전사 통보를 받았을 때 어머니의 모습이 아직도 잊혀지지 않는다. 전사의 통보를 받았을 때 어머니는 등을 돌리고 있었다. 어머니의 어깨는 작고 슬퍼 보였다. 어머니는 우리를 앞에서조차 눈물을 보이지 않으셨다. 그러나 그 날 이후, 어머니는 눈에 띄게 연로해 지셨다. 이것이 진정한 간혹함이다. 그러므로 나는 전세계의 어머니를 바탕으로 빠뜨리는 전생에는 전생에는 전생명을 결코 반대하는 것이다. 모든 어머니와 어린이를 행복하게, 모든 어머니와 어린이가 웃을 때 얼굴도 청공을 향해 나아가실 것은 사회를. 그러기 위해 사회의 저류에 「자애」의 대화를 넓히고 있는 것이 우리의 운명인 것이다. (리빙 부디듬 98년 9월)

치고 무언가 부지런히 쓰고 있었습니. 어린 딸은 도시락을 파는 사람을 볼 때마다 「배고고파라」고 되풀이 했습니다. 역에 닿을 때마다 떨어 썼습니다. 어머니는 비참한 마음을 억누르고 「안돼!」라고 꾸짖을 수 밖에 없었습니다. 이윽고 양치기 수청년 「도시락 두 개 주세요」하며 도시락을 샀습니다. 「아, 저 사람은 좋겠구나. 도시락을 두 개씩이나 사다니, 부럽다.」 하야시 씨는 생각했습니다. 그런데 그 청년은 하나를 내밀면서 말했다는 것입니다. 「아기에 먹이세요.」 하야시 씨는 일순 때문에 막혔습니다. 「에! 에!」라고 할뿐. 주위에 는 훌륭한 웃을 입은 사람들이 많았으나 모두 모른척하고 있었습니

다. 「그러나 이 청년은 자신도 좋은 행색이 아닌데도-처음 보는, 그것도 거추차근하고 같은-저희들에게 도시락을 주었습니다. 이 세상에 그런 사람이 있었다니..」 그 놀라움과 감사의 마음을 하야시 씨는 선명하게 기억한다고 합니다. 「감사합니다」라고 겨우 말할 수 있었습니다. 우선 남부끄러워 어떤 말도 할 수 없었습니다. 도시락의 내용물도 잊혀지지 않았습니. 밥이 삼분지 이, 나머지 절반은 반찬으로 구운 생선이 들어있었습니다. 「얼마나 상냥하고 아름다운 눈을 가지고 있는가! 청년은 오사카에서 내렸 습니다. 내일 에! 에!라고 한 마디 했다고 합니다. 뒤라고 할 수 없는 따뜻한 마음이 가슴에 퍼져 갔

습니. 그 목소리로 잊혀지지 않습니다. 하야시 씨는 「다시 그 청년의 눈을 보았습니. 얼마나 따뜻한 눈일까...」 이순간 죽을 결심은 어딘가로 사라지고 말았던 것입니다. 우배에서 어머니를 만나고 1개월 정도 함께 살다가 나고야로 돌아왔습니다. 그 직후 어느 화원회에서부터 불법의 이야기를 들은 하야시는 결심하고 심신을 시작했습니다. 당시 어분본을 모시려던 오백 엔의 공양금을 내는 것이 원칙이었는데 하야시 씨에게는 그런 돈이 없었습니다. 일하고 기원하고 일하고... 1958년 1월 마침내 어분본을 수지할 수 있었습니다. 다음해 1959년 3월 22일, 도요하시시에 있는 마쓰바 초등학교에서

어서 강의가 행해졌습니다. 이케다 선생님(당시 총무)이 담당이셨습니. 하야시 씨는 둘째아이를 임신하고 있어 남산만한 배를 하고 도요하시에 갔습니. 단상은 멀리 있어 간부의 얼굴이 잘 보이지 않았습니. 그런데 이케다 총무가 이야기들을 시작한 순간, 하야시 씨는 놀라워하면 서 너무도 기뻐했습니다. 「아, 바로 그 청년이! 틀림없어!」 죽을 각오로 단 열차에서 들었던 저 목소리를, 죽을 생각을 막아주었던 계기가 된 저 청년의 목소리를 어찌 잊을 수가 있겠는가! 일생의 각오, 일생의 맹서가 이때 솟아올랐습니. 「설령 이 세상에서 화원회나 혼자 남겨 될지라도 나는 절대로 이케다 선생을 따라

가겠다.」 도시락을 받은 따님(오카다 미사코씨)은 현재 불복 담당원으로 열심히 활동하고 계십니다. 도요하시에서 두 번째 만났을 때 임신하고 있었던 아드님(하야카와 마사키씨)은 시구간사로 활약하고 계십니다. **사이토:** 훌륭한 드라마입니다. 가슴을 흔드는 이야기입니다. 이케다 선생님이 그토록 한 사람 한 사람의 서문을 꺼내듯이 격려해 오신 사실에 마음이 숙연해집니다. 저희들도 「경애력행」에 진심으로 노력하겠습니다. (리빙 부디듬 98년 5월)

Promises Kept

EDITORIAL

It's time to assess what promises we've kept and what ones we haven't (yet) this year. What we do now makes all the difference.

By **JEFF FARR**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It's that time of year again: The End.

October, November, December — The End of 1998. It's time again to assess how far we've come both with our personal and organizational goals from New Year's; we have just three months left to finish things up.

And whether we're satisfied or dissatisfied with where we're at, three months is plenty of time to do something great. It's certainly not over yet!

At a telephone conference with region leaders on Sept. 13 (see p. 5), General Director Za-

itsu shared how SGI President Ikeda is encouraging all SGI leaders that to achieve the great goals our organization has, each of them has to change first — each leader has to take action first. For instance, President Ikeda is emphasizing that all leaders should be on the front lines of the organization, in the districts and in one-on-one meetings with members.

In the same way, when we change, when we do human revolution, we move closer to fulfilling whatever dreams we have. As Buddhism teaches, "If you want to see what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 172). Our focus should be on what kinds of changes we can make right now.

Hank Aaron says that the secret to hitting home runs is focusing on the ball to the point where "it looks as big as a grapefruit" — the grapefruit in a home-run life is keeping our focus on the human revolution that we're doing today.

Then, our dreams *have to* come true.

But sometimes our dreams, especially the bigger ones, can feel burdening. There may even be times when we feel a certain resentment about our determinations being difficult to realize. We have to remember that we chose these determinations of our own free will. Why not appreciate the determinations that make us struggle most? These are exactly what allow us to grow the most, to change the most. When we consider setting a big dream aside, we have to ask ourselves if we're setting our growth, our human revolution, aside, too.

In Buddhism, to set a determination means to commit yourself to an eventual victory — it is, in the end, to make a promise. On the one hand, it may be a promise to people important to you: your parents, your partner, your best friend, your children, your district members, whomever. But it's also always a promise to yourself.

You are, after all, the only one who ever really knows how

much you've kept the promise or not. As President Ikeda says: "It doesn't matter how others judge you. When all is said and done, you are your own judge."

The SGI president is a great example of someone who keeps his promises. The promises he made to his mentor, the promises he made to the SGI members — he has, in a sense, paid these in full. He has won in his personal life and his activities for kosen-rufu. He has been true to himself; he promised himself to win in everything, and he has.

One lesson to take from this is that it's one thing to call yourself a disciple, and another to say that you've won as a disciple. In the same way, it's one thing to say that you've lived and another to say that you've won in life.

As we assess what promises we've kept and what ones we haven't (yet) this year, let's keep this in mind: There's a big difference between a promise made and a promise kept, and that difference is us — that difference is the changes we can make now. **W**

An Auspicious Beginning

PERSPECTIVE

'I loved her fierce, funny, light spirit so much,' Shavawn Berry writes in remembrance of her friend Melissa Braff.

By **SHAWAWN M. BERRY**
LOS ANGELES

I got a phone call early one morning recently telling me that my friend, Melissa Braff, died in a hang-gliding accident Sept. 7 near my home of Bellingham, Wash. She was a young woman: vibrant, passionate, shining with promise and life. She had planned to visit the Florida Nature and Culture Center this weekend. She graduated from college this past June and was burning with excitement and plans. That her life ended while she was still so young saddens me. However, I find that I am encouraged by reports of the sheer magnitude of her happiness at the end of her life.

I took care of Melissa when I was a young woman's divi-

sion district chief in Bellingham several years ago. Mostly I chanted for her at the time because she had stopped coming to meetings, and I did not know how to reach her for more than a year. I kept her name on my altar and chanted for her each day.

When she reappeared 18 months later, I found she had joined another district. I saw her soon after she had returned and she ran to me, kissed me and thanked me repeatedly saying, "I could feel you chanting for me. That's how I found my way back." Tears ran down her face and she embraced me. I have never forgotten that moment.

I left Bellingham in 1994 and have only seen my friend occasionally since then. She always showered me with joy and gratitude whenever we met, almost an embarrassment of riches, I might add. She never forgot to acknowledge the debt of gratitude she felt toward me. It made a difference in my life many times, when I felt that I might not be able to continue. She was a constant reminder to appreciate my own life.

I have a picture of the two of us sitting in a restaurant with a gaggle of other young women,

eating dim sum during the holidays of 1994. She is sitting behind me with her arms thrown around my neck, her face glowing with happiness. I remember that day clearly: how I cried all through the meal over the losses I was experiencing and how she sat smiling and encouraging me, telling me that I was a beautiful young woman, that I would overcome the deep suffering I was feeling. I have always loved that photograph, keeping it with me as I have moved from place to place. Now that Melissa is gone, I treasure it as a reminder of her bright, giving spirit.

This morning after I did gongyo, I opened up *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and re-read "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life." In it, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "For one who summons up his faith and chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the profound insight that now is the last moment of his life, the sutra proclaims: 'After his death, a thousand Buddhas will extend their hand to free him from all fear and keep him from falling into the evil paths.' How can we possibly hold back our tears at the inexpressible joy of knowing that not

just one or two, nor only one or two hundred, but as many as a thousand Buddhas will come to greet us with open arms?" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 22).

Today, my eyes fill with tears, knowing that these are the beings that greeted my Melissa. At the end of her life, she was flying in her glider, carried by strong winds, high over a multitude of evergreen trees and the glittery surface of Silver Lake. The world must have stretched out before her, under that dome of sky, in a way she had never previously known. A friend I called today to tell of her death said she was sure that Melissa reveled in her "last look" at this lifetime, in the minutes and hours before the accident.

I feel sure Melissa is preparing for the next phase, the next place she will emerge and bloom. I wish her a speedy journey, untroubled by all she left behind. I loved her fierce, funny, light spirit so much. I cannot believe she is gone. But I comfort myself with the fact that she lived her life ablaze with joy, that until her last moment she burned her life to ash.

What a victory! What an auspicious beginning. **W**

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The *World Tribune* welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

'Pretty Much It'

In the middle of washing dishes and waiting for something to finish baking, I skimmed my *World Tribune*, as I always do, when it first arrives. Of course, since it's now much easier to read, I immediately read through it the same way I do *Martha Stewart Living*. But this particular article ("Perspectives," Sept. 4) I think even Martha would appreciate.

I have a saying that I use frequently when, say, a picture says it all. (I've also heard Jay Leno use it occasionally.) When I see or hear something that says it all, or someone makes a statement that completely sums up a topic, "hitting the nail on the head," as it were, my first comment is usually, "That's pretty much it, isn't it?" (Usually it's a bad comment, but sometimes, it's a good comment.) Lisbeth Gant-Britton's article ("One Person, One Mile, One Smile At a Time") elicited that response from me. Good points, good topic, and it says it all.

When she described the aftermath of a KKK rally, witnessing one of their inebriated "youth division," the same comment came to mind: "THAT'S pretty much it, isn't it?" No, I don't know that I'd chat with them about Buddhism, either, and I'm just as white as they! Her district leader, however, did it completely correctly — no violent confrontations.

I always appreciate more modern ways of looking at and applying Buddhism in daily life, particularly when I don't feel like a stellar example for others. (That's been the case quite a lot lately for me.) The books, the articles, the "Mailbox," all of it — brings Buddhism right into your home. All these things clearly demonstrate that although the practice originated in Japan, it's universal. Anyone, anywhere, regardless of any difference, can practice this Buddhism, and it's

literally "one size fits all." Ms. Gant-Britton's article was very clear, to the point and made complete sense. More articles like this, please!

And with that, I'll say it again: That's pretty much it, isn't it?

— AMY O'DONNELL,
Metairie, La.

More on the 'Mailbox'

In the Sept. 4 "Mailbox," Dale Anderson stated "Lately, some of the letters in the "Mailbox" section have been very unencouraging...." The feeling that Dale had (if I understand correctly) was that because members are sending in letters disagreeing with each other (and as we all know, sometimes very strongly) the *World Tribune* "Mailbox" should be discontinued.

To me, if we would do that we would be cutting off one of the best aspects of our great SGI organization. The opportunity to express ourselves in an open forum and then hear the opinions of others is truly wonderful. Just because there are other places for this kind of dialogue does not take away from the need for this space in our *World Tribune*. I personally have had my eyes opened many times about various issues from the responses of members from around the U.S.A. and the world...

As Dale says "we have discussion meetings to work out any differences of opinion...." but until Dale starts visiting Brooklyn monthly (from Portage, Mich.) for my meetings, and members from Los Angeles, Memphis, Atlanta, Miami, Chicago, New Orleans, etc. do the same I will not have the opportunity to discuss the

many issues brought up in the "Mailbox" with all the members in SGI-USA.

Lastly let us not forget that Nichiren Daishonin when inscribing the Gohonzon did not represent only the more comfortable parts of his enlightenment. He inscribed all of the potential life-conditions. As we all strive to do our human revolution, we must expect the road to get bumpy at times. And if I'm going to read something that may disturb me, then where is there a better place than the SGI publications where I can turn the page read some guidance, or an experience or some study material so that I can get encouraged to take my feelings to the Gohonzon....

— MICHAEL WALTERS,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Please don't discontinue "Mailbox." Every reputable newspaper publishes letters from readers, even when they differ from the editorial stance of the paper. I find the "Mailbox" letters submitted in the past year so often validate my own experiences within SGI over 23 years. I'm so happy people are speaking their minds. Also, I get a chuckle out of some of the more outspoken viewpoints. Thanks for the *World Tribune*. What would those of us in the "outlying" areas do without it?

— KATHY JERNIGAN,
Knoxville, Tenn.

Fasten your seatbelt, Dale, I'm going to disagree with you. In all the opinions on various issues that have been penned to the "Mailbox," I have been impressed by not only the passion and commitment but also the restraint and calm deliberation of our contributors. Unless I missed some particularly virulent issue, I don't recall any com-

ments which I would characterize as "barbs" or "insults." Because of our various karma and locations in time and place, we will all necessarily have differing view points. The dialogue that unfolds in the "Mailbox" is a fine medium for working this through.

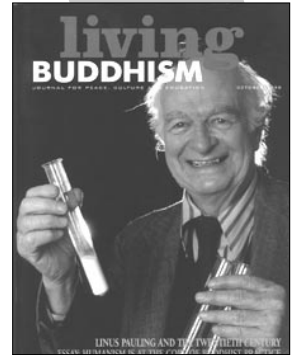
While some readers turn first to the experiences, I go right to the "Mailbox." It is my "discussion meeting." I live on a tiny island and because of physical isolation I haven't been to a meeting in four years, but through the *World Tribune* lifeline I feel connected to our organization. If the *World Tribune* prints this letter I am part of the nationwide (worldwide?) dialogue, unfettered by the groupthink that a particular district may fall prey to....

I shared an issue of the *World Tribune* with a new friend of mine who practices Buddhism in another tradition. She loved the *World Tribune*. She called it a "practical foot." The "Mailbox" letters more succinctly than any other segment demonstrate the application of our philosophy and practice to our lives and the thought processes behind our actions (and reactions). This on-the-spot sharing of our hearts and minds is vital to my practice.

Someone out there will undoubtedly suggest I hook up with other members through the Internet. No, thank you.... Printed media are under assault from aggressive information technologies, and worthy publications struggle to stay afloat as they lose their advertising base and readership. Those of us who have not hit the information highway need not be excluded from public discourse as long as the tried-and-true periodical tradition of letters to the editor thrives. Please don't take my "Mailbox" away.

— BEVERLY BAGANS,
Isla de Culebra, Puerto Rico

COMING SOON October's



Linus Pauling Exhibition

A pictorial of the exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century," which opens Sept. 20 in San Francisco. Also a story of its creation and an experience of one of the exhibit planners.

Humanism and Buddhism

Brian Matsuo, an SGI-USA vice general director, sees the history of Buddhism as a reform movement to establish humanism as a fundamental principle in society.

History of the Fuji School

Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan's efforts to restore Nichiren Shoshu to the original teachings of the founder, Nichiren Daishonin.

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Our Purpose: The SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Peace is inseparably linked with each individual's happiness; SGI-USA members, through their faith, seek to become happier and contribute to society. The SGI exists in 128 countries and was founded in Japan in 1930.

Our Practice: The basic practice is chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of devotion. According to Nichiren Daishonin, chanting this phrase allows us to be in harmony with the universe and create great value. Faith in this principle is gained through practical experience.

Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th-century Japanese reformer, championed the Lotus Sutra, which teaches that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — thus, all people can become Buddhas. He introduced the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Gohonzon is the mandala expressing this essence.

For more information, contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you or call (310) 451-8811.

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PHOTO ESSAY — JONATHAN WILSON, PHILADELPHIA

Aesthetically Enhanced

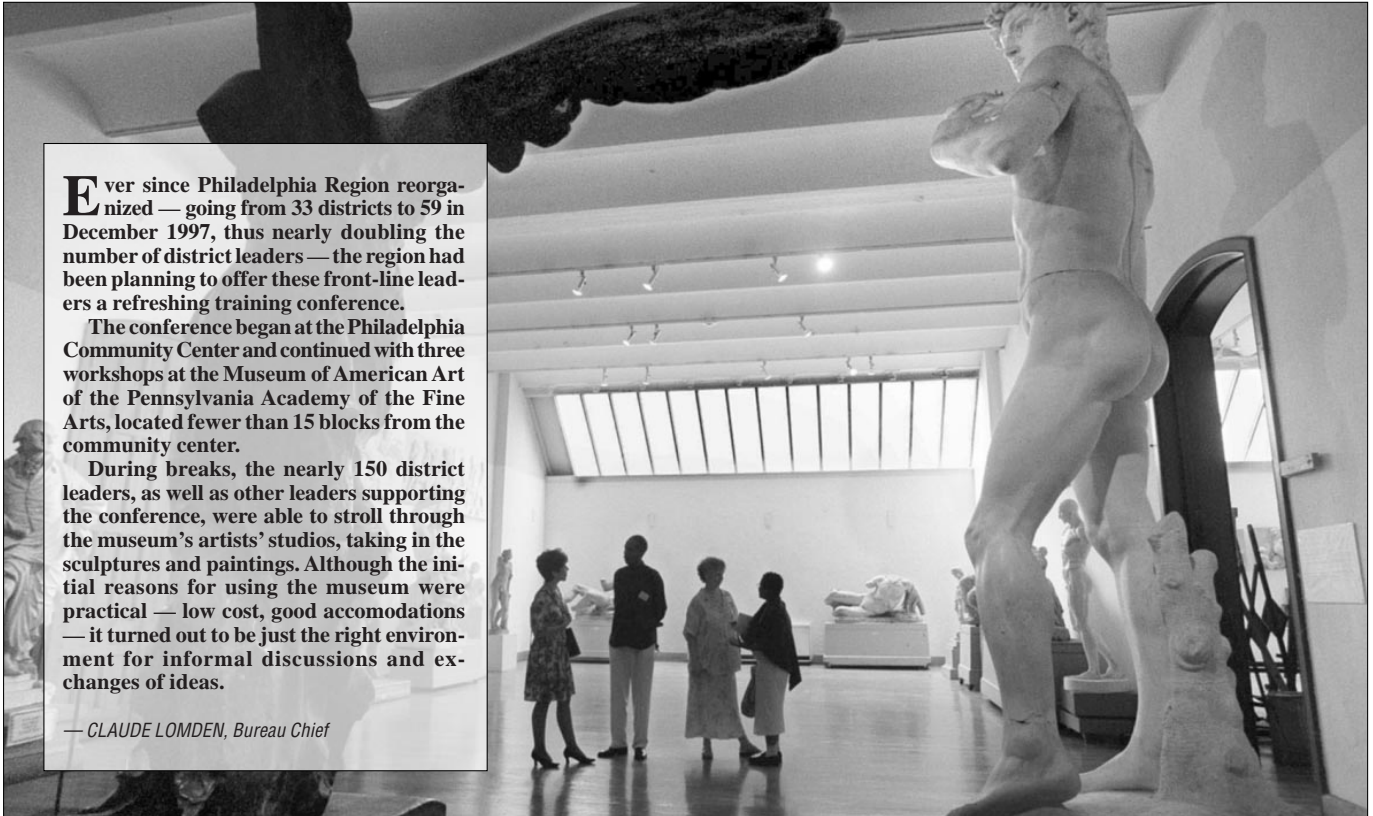


Ever since Philadelphia Region reorganized — going from 33 districts to 59 in December 1997, thus nearly doubling the number of district leaders — the region had been planning to offer these front-line leaders a refreshing training conference.

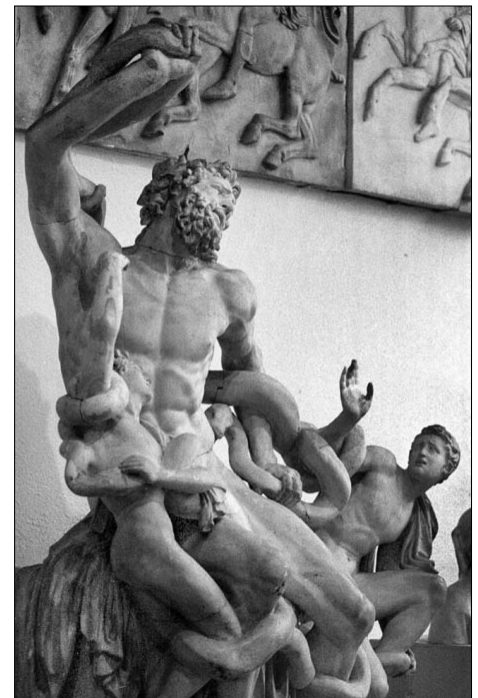
The conference began at the Philadelphia Community Center and continued with three workshops at the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, located fewer than 15 blocks from the community center.

During breaks, the nearly 150 district leaders, as well as other leaders supporting the conference, were able to stroll through the museum's artists' studios, taking in the sculptures and paintings. Although the initial reasons for using the museum were practical — low cost, good accommodations — it turned out to be just the right environment for informal discussions and exchanges of ideas.

— CLAUDE LOMDEN, Bureau Chief



(Top right) During lunch, Connie Rhymes, Megan Dejarluis and Linda Saelg share a light moment. (Above) Framed by replicas of some of the world's most noted sculptures, South Jersey Area members Suzanne Washington, Gerald Roberts, Nancy Mallory and Bev Collins Roberts take a break between sessions in the academy's casting studio. (Right) Seminar staff members Quintine and Barron Draper review the details of their seminar on joyful district activities.



(Left) Region leader Carmela Menchaca addresses a room full of district leaders. (Right) Reproductions from the academy's casting studio.

COMING NEXT WEEK ▶ **Opening of the Linus Pauling Exhibit**



Bringing Your

Passion to Your District

The summer youth conferences at the FNCC were all a big success, and now it's time to focus on the Nov. 18 district commemorative meetings coming up, says Ed Feasel.

By **ED FEASEL**
SGI-USA Youth Division Leader

In June 1996, SGI President Ikeda visited the Florida Nature Land Culture Center and officially opened it. This summer, we celebrated the center's second anniversary by holding five youth division conferences. Nearly 800 youth from across America gathered to hold dialogue, study Buddhism together and refresh their

who came from across the country. Each conference was a total success — participants leaving with a renewed determination to challenge their personal growth and the growth of the SGI-USA organization in their area. For many, this was the first opportunity to meet other youth from across the country.

During the final session at one conference, a high school student from San Francisco shared his impression: He mentioned how he had met President Ikeda's in 1993 in San Francisco. He went on to say that meeting all the students at the conference reminded him of

spirit.

I attended three of the conferences and was very impressed with the seeking spirit of all the youth

the same feeling he had when he met Mr. Ikeda.

I think that he expressed the same feeling that many of the youth who attended the summer conferences had. I could clearly see that, through the hard work of the conference organizers and the seeking minds of participants — not to mention the constant prayers of President Ikeda — the FNCC has truly become a center where capable successors are emerging one after another.

As the summer ends, it is time for us now to focus on the remainder of the year. As an organization, we have set the goal of ensuring that all members understand the district's role in nurturing members and promoting kosen-rufu and therefore support their district activities. On of the major milestones left this year will be the Nov. 18 commemorative district meetings.

Recently, in Japan, SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya reminded visiting SGI-USA leaders that it is at the front lines of the organization that the growth of our organization occurs. He said that our "cell division" occurs in the

district.

As youth, let's have the spirit to make our Nov. 18 commemorative district meetings fresh and exciting, meetings where all members and guests can thoroughly enjoy themselves. I'm confident that as long as youth bring their passion, creativity and energy to every district, we will be completely victorious in our meetings.

Finally, I want to share that President Ikeda is in great health and spirits. I attended the Headquarters Leaders Meeting in Japan at the end of August that celebrated his 51st anniversary of joining the Soka Gakkai. At that meeting, Mr. Ikeda mentioned how President Kennedy often spoke of the importance of having courage (please see the Sept. 18 *World Tribune*). President Ikeda, too, urged us to have courage and said that having strong faith is in itself courage. With strong faith, we will never act cowardly. We will continue to strive to develop our ability to help others.

With this courage, let's continue to advance under President Ikeda's leadership toward the new century right around the corner. ♪

RUNWAY TO THE 21ST CENTURY **ESSAY CONTEST**

The 1st Annual
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THEME:

The role of youth in improving the world these last couple of years before the 21st century.

CATEGORIES:

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High School

College

General Youth

DEADLINE: Oct. 2, 1998

"Seize the Day" invites all youth division members to share their thoughts on the social responsibilities of youth in these last couple of years until the 21st century. These years have been likened to a runway to the next century. How can the power of youth change our

world for the better as we rush down this runway?

Be as specific as possible about *what* you think youth need to change, and *how* you think that they can do it.

The length is 900-1,200 words, typed, double-spaced. A special committee will judge the essays on the

quality of writing, the depth of thought, originality and whether you include concrete examples. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in "Seize the Day" in 1999.

To enter: Send your essay and a photo of yourself to

"Seize the Day," 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 or seize@sgi-usa.org. Indicate which category you are entering and include your return address, phone number and e-mail address (if you have one). All essays become the property of "Seize the Day." ♪

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

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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 seize@sgi-usa.org.

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

San Francisco Teens Show

THEIR TRUE SELVES

By LAMAR MITCHELL
Oakland, Calif.



Ah! Summer's here! The flowers are in full bloom, the heat is frying everything in sight...and parties are being thrown. And that, kids, is what the junior high and high school division of the East Bay did July 18: an all-day blowout clearance sale of adrenaline, high life-condition and fun.

The vibe was very magnetic (that's why at the door they collected all pacemakers and other electronic devices, heh heh), and energized convos danced around, littering the outsides and insides of the San Francisco Ikeda Auditorium, where most of the function was held.

But the most important thing was the theme: "Revealing Our True Selves."

After morning gongyo and performances, including the Red Phoenix Drama Group's presentation of SGI President

Ikeda's *pièce de résistance* July 3 poem on the youth, we migrated, like a teenage Exodus, in nomad-fashion to a nearby park. (Oh yeah, Moses had to part the Red Sea for us to get by, heh heh). There everybody kinda loosened up and separated into groups. Some playing basketball, others on volleyball, some on baseball — and shuffleboard (um, maybe not the last one).

At this point, it got real laid-back, just real mellow and settled. You could've scored reggae to the scene if you filmed it (unless it

the Culture Center and filled our stomachs with sandwiches and veggies.

OK, now that we had taken off all the crust edges off the toast and discarded it, it was time to zero in on the bread: the youth discussions and workshops. These discussions were pretty interesting, even though I was so tired by this point I kinda zoned out a couple of times.



Two cool dudes enjoying hamburgers!

was a DePalma movie, then you'd have to get Bernard Herrmann, blah). And indeed, ironically, some Bob Marley was playing on a few boom boxes.

Then, we all trudged back to

And as we broke up into groups to discuss certain Buddhist-related quotes (our Holy Scripture), it became revealing how much some kids actually DO know about life. Their views may lack experience and years, but their insight was



Members and guests from San Jose.

beautiful. Take that slacker bashers!

And the workshops — well at least the only one I took part in, since you could only choose one (I chose the writing workshop) — were pretty enlightening too.

"You shouldn't really care too much about what people perceive of you" — from one workshop partaker in the writing workshop.

Later on came the dance.

Wow.

Wow.

Definitely the pinch hitting 4th batter there. Cleaned up everything. A nice capper to a long day. It was a good dance. Some thought the music was lacking, but I thought it jazzed up the crowd nicely. It really had me energized; the rave music was just fine to get me up and jamming, and I thought there was a nice variety to the music, not as diverse as it could have been but still varied. All around — fun! ♪

New Vice Music Corps Leader Appointed

WHY I JOINED THE MUSIC CORPS

By ANDY MATSUDA
SGI-USA Vice Music Corps Leader

Why did I first join the Music Corps 15 years ago? At 11 years old, I really admired the Music Corps members. I thought that they were cool!

Now that I am older, I think what impressed me most was not their instruments or even their music. It

was the shared sense of mission that was so apparent in all the Music Corps members' faces.

And their camaraderie.

At the time, rehearsals were long and grueling, but members always found time to talk to and encourage one another. This was regardless of their age or where they came from or what they did

outside of SGI activities. There were no distinctions among them. They were all the Music Corps.

As I continued to participate in Music Corps activities through the years, I always had Music Corps friends who supported me, on whom I could depend. Even when only a handful of members were coming to Music Corps activities, I was so fortunate to always have at least one person who encouraged me — when all I really wanted to do



JUNIOR HIGH & HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

By TANYA BASTONE
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Lotus Flowers & Lion Kings

er," he advised. "Tanya, use Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to unlock the door to your full potential as a human being."

I had a conflict that led me to greatly misinterpret Ed's guidance. "My full potential as a young women's division member...hmmm," I thought. At the first big YWD meeting I attended, a speaker addressed us as lotus flowers. And I'd heard young men's division members referred to as lion kings before that. I had developed a nasty habit (lazy habit, too) of attaching *lotus flower* to mean young women and reserving *lion king* for young men.

"Right, right...I'm a YWD...lotus flower...that's what I am after...full potential..." That was what I thought Ed was talking about. To overcome my battles, I was go-

ing to have to be the lotus flower and rise above all personal struggles. I chanted to, like the flower, grow despite difficulty. Something was off, though. There was a piece that I knew was missing.

I had a hard time convincing myself that a lotus flower was my full potential. After all, the strength of the Gohonzon knows no boundaries. Treasure Towers, indeed, are limitless — they have no finite end.

My full potential as a human being did not simply stop once I reached lotus flower. I didn't get it. I wanted to get it. I kept chanting that weekend.

Dialogue with the lion kings, the mighty YMD members, turned out to be very helpful. With each young man who gave an experience or with whom I spent time, I noticed a

common denominator: These guys did not fear vulnerability. They were gentle, compassionate and extremely honest. Tears were not a sign of weakness but a means for empowerment.

I listened to my new friends talk about their struggles: parental pressures, questioning their sexuality, fear of failure, lack of intellectual confidence. The obstacles were many, the mud was thick. Over the course of the conference, growth took place.

These young men struggled — and blossomed into tremendous lotus flowers. "These brothers 'lotus' as well as anybody," I remember thinking.

I began to see a connection between vulnerability and strength. To own or embrace one's vulnerability is a powerful thing.

Expressing a fear (without apology) is to begin to confront it.

I thought again about the advice Ed had given me — "full potential as a human being." I had not listened. I had fallen back on what I thought was the logical role for me, as a young woman, to assume: lotus flower.

The young men were going for full potential. They were lion kings. They were lotus flowers. My mistake was in choosing one over the other. As we work toward unlocking the doors of our Treasure Towers, it's essential that we chant and struggle to be the lion king *and* the lotus flower — that is, toward full potential.

As youth division members, we must demand of ourselves both. As youth division members we *are* both. ♪

While attending the Junior High and High School Division Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, July 23–26, I got a chance to hang out/talk with Ed Fasel, the SGI-USA youth division leader. "Remember the Treasure Tow-

COLLEGE STUDENTS SHARE THEIR DREAMS AT FNCC

The national student division conference, "Student Fest '98: Dreams Into Reality," was held Aug. 6–9 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. This was the first time that the student division, which is now a year-and-a-half old, held a national meeting — the first time that students from across the country got to meet one another.

In one of the conference sessions, "Discovering Our Mission as Students," the students studied the "Young Eagles" chapter of The New Human Revolution, volume 6, in which SGI President Ikeda expresses his high expectations for students in the SGI.

"The student division [is] the only hope for the future," he writes.

Vice Student Division Leader Arch Asawa then led the 172 participants in drafting a resolution to President Ikeda based on their individual goals. The resolution pretty much sums up the students' feelings about their first time to meet together as a national student division.

To SGI President Ikeda:

We, the participants of the first SGI-USA student division conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, on this eighth day of August, 1998, hereby resolve:

1 To achieve victory for worldwide kosen-rufu and show actual proof in all aspects of our lives

• Become leaders and inspirations to others within our chosen fields

• Develop the compassion, wisdom and courage to raise capable youth

• Secure the happiness and alleviate the suffering of our friends, family and all people

2 To fight against all forms of evil that seek to deny all people's right to true happiness

• Stand up against any injustice and refute any false or erroneous teachings and priests

• Introduce Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to people in our communities and learning institutions

• Protect the SGI and strengthen our mentor–disciple bonds with you

3 To build a solid foundation for the future of the student division

• Truly learn the treasures of the heart and develop strong bonds of lifelong friendship through dialogue, understanding, trust and respect for each student division member

• Dedicate ourselves to never be defeated by obstacles or self-doubt and to find the wisdom to develop our infinite potential

• Pledge to establish the SGI-USA student division as the center for kosen-rufu by advancing along the path of each individual student's human revolution

Are you an SGI-USA college student in a new town? Please contact your local community center to find out about student division activities near you or e-mail the national student division at student-div@sgi-usa.org.



A TRIP That Changed My Life

By CHRISTOPHER ALDRIDGE
Fort Polk, La.

EXPERIENCE

My mom first heard about the Florida Nature and Culture Center in late 1996, and she was determined to send me to the junior high and high school division conference. She and my father talked to me about it a few times. And she chanted countless hours to be able to send me.

At the time, I was chanting very little and very rough on gongyo. When my family would go to meetings, I would tag along just to see my friends. As I saw how much my mom was working for my trip, I saw that this was no joke. So I started

chanting more every day, improving my gongyo, and I actually paid attention at meetings.

But I kept having these psycho dreams that the FNCC was a huge place where members and leaders would lock you in a huge building and force you to chant for four straight days! My mom said I was crazy.

About three weeks before my departure date, I was avalanched with obstacles. They were trying their best to keep my feet in Louisiana. First, I had to change the departure date on my plane ticket, and that made the ticket price jump up dramatically. Then, my little brother was in need of thousands of dollars' worth of dental work. After that, our Mustang was having very costly problems. Above all, my dad, a senior NCO in the Army, was preparing to leave for Bosnia! It was stressful. I



told my parents that I didn't want to go. I told them to use their money wisely and send me next year. But they told me that we couldn't give up.

I decided to go, and I finally went. The whole 20-minute ride from the Fort Lauderdale airport to the FNCC, I had that picture in the back of my mind of hundreds of youth locked in that huge building and chanting their lungs out for four days straight!

But when I got there, one thing that I saw was cool about the FNCC was the people. Most of the people were dressed like me — and from the way I dress sometimes, I don't look so friendly. So seeing all these guys dressed like me, I was nervous to talk to them. But, to my surprise, it was easy. Everyone was outgoing and nice. I was chanting and doing gongyo with more than 200 people not only my age but who had some of the same interests as me and were working toward the same things. And we weren't locked up in a huge building to chant!

At the FNCC, I learned to become a lot more serious about my practice. That was hard for me, because I'm always the class clown. I used to even joke around in front of the Gohonzon or when chanting or doing gongyo. My mom once told me that if you joke

in front of the Gohonzon, your life will become a joke. I understood this and a lot more because of my trip.

I'm still the comedic guy I used to be (when appropriate), but now I'm more of a take-charge person. I'm not so lazy anymore. Every morning, I get up between 6:00 and 6:30 to do morning gongyo before school. That's quite an accomplishment — trying to get me up in the morning used to be (and, well, still is) a challenge in itself. Because I do it every morning, though, my days are better, my life is improving, and school isn't as boring as it used to be (although I think that no amount of gongyo is going to rid school of its boringness). I also chant an hour every day and help out my dad, who is a leader here. Goals and determinations I now have, I would never have thought of before the FNCC. ♪



By GREG MARTIN
SGI-USA Study Department Vice Leader

THE PRIESTHOOD'S NEW INVENTION

The current priesthood's insistence that Nikken alone is the Treasure of the Priest flies in the face of what the priesthood has taught in the past — including what Nikken himself is on record saying.

Traditionally, within the priesthood, it's been emphasized that, in the specific sense, the Treasure of the Priest is Nikko Shonin only. For instance, High Priest Nittatsu, the 66th high priest (and

Nikken's mentor), writes: "The Treasure of the Priest is Byakuren Ajari Nikko Shonin, the second high priest, who received the pure lineage of true Buddhism in its entirety from Nichiren Daishonin. Nichimoku Shonin [the third high priest] is referred to as *zasu*, or the 'lord of the chair' of the entire world. It is the role of the later high priests to succeed to the chair of Nichimoku Shonin until the dawn of kosen-rufu.... The fundamental tenet of this school is that we should revere the three treasures of the Gohonzon, Nichiren Daishonin, and Nikko Shonin as the Treasure of the Priest" (July 27, 1977).

High Priest Nittatsu also said, "Nichimoku Shonin's successors [succeeding high priests] are all just like so many pieces

of piping whose only purpose is to receive and transfer the Daishonin's teachings. For this reason, none of the successive high priests is the Daishonin. Problems often arise when people mistakenly write that the high priest is the Daishonin. I want to be clear about this point" (May 26, 1977).

And Nikken himself stated several years ago: "Even the Daishonin referred to himself as an 'ordinary priest.' Moreover, at this time, 700 years later, the capacity of the people having generally declined, everyone, myself included, is an ordinary person. From this standpoint, although to say that the [high priest] is a reincarnation of the Daishonin or to refer to him as the Daishonin of the present time might seem to be a way of showing great re-

spect, in fact it often engenders exactly the opposite sentiment" (March 31, 1983).

Also, on March 28, 1980, Nikken stated that "the successive high priests or regular priests are not regarded as the Treasure of the Priest."

The Essential Doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu, published by the head temple, reads: "The Treasure of the Priesthood indicates first of all Nikko Shonin, who alone correctly inherited the Great Pure Law from the Daishonin. In a broader sense, the Treasure of the Priest also includes all priests and lay believers of this school who embrace the True Law with faith, practice it and take responsibility to propagate it to the best of their ability."

So even the temple at one time took pains to clarify that

the Treasure of the Priest is not the high priest alone. The temple agreed with the SGI that, based on the Daishonin's writings, the correct interpretation of the *Treasure of the Priest*, in the broadest sense, connoted the entire body of believers, all believers from high priest to lay members.

The current position of the priesthood — that Nikken is "the Daishonin of modern times" — completely contradicts its own published doctrines, the words of Nikken himself, the words of High Priest Nittatsu and, most important, the words of the Daishonin. In short, the idea that Nikken is the only Treasure of the Priest is a new invention of Nichiren Shoshu.