



EXPERIENCE

Luis Nieves and his family built the house that they dreamed of when they were poor.

pages 6-7



YOUTH

'Get Real': dealing with family relationships.

pullout section

No. 3219

NOVEMBER 27, 1998

ROGER RESSMEYER/© CORBIS



Read SGI President Ikeda's essay on the 'Universal Perspective,' page 3.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S POEMS

To My Noble Friends

SGI President Ikeda dedicated the following poems to all SGI members, presenting them on Nov. 11 to representatives from 60 countries attending the 24th SGI General Meeting in Nagoya, Japan. (President Ikeda's speech at the SGI General Meeting will appear soon in the *World Tribune*.)

*I call on the Buddhist gods
To protect the champions of
kosen-rufu
Who embrace in their hearts
The treasure of the Mystic Law*

*How profound is my joy
To see the widespread propagation
of the Law
Enveloping the world
Exactly as Nichiren Daishonin
taught*

*Heroic Bodhisattvas of the Earth
Brimming with the pride of Soka
Live and triumph resolutely
In this existence*

—With sincere prayers for the happiness of the millions of SGI members in 128 countries around the world and for the valiant endeavors and long lives of the representatives gathered today at this SGI conference.

I dedicate these three poems to all of you, my noble friends, in commemoration of the 24th SGI General Meeting.

Daisaku Ikeda

Nov. 11, 1998

STUDY

What does Buddhism have to say when Buddhist practitioners become ill?

page 2

ESSAY

Despite many demands on their time, women make invaluable contributions to the SGI.

page 5

PERSPECTIVE

Denise Snaer asks, 'How can parents empower themselves?'

page 10

Price: \$2.00

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401 and at additional mailing offices
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401-1403

RETURN POSTAGE
GUARANTEED

Five and Three

By LISA JONES

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

I have written out the prose section of the *Hoben* chapter for you. You should recite it together with the Jigage, which I sent you earlier. ("Reply to Soya Nyudo," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 163)

In this passage written in 1275 (after the Sado Exile), the Daishonin prescribes that a Buddhist practitioner recite portions of the Lotus Sutra—which we in the SGI do each day when we perform gongyo.



In My Life

NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS IN ACTION

While it's clear that the Daishonin recommended that we recite the sutra as well as chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo, he never said that we should recite these portions five times in the morning and three times in the evening. Rather,

five-and-three was originally prescribed during the time of 26th High Priest Nichikan and was adopted by the SGI as the basic practice of Buddhism.

I've dabbled, I admit, with other formats — one and three, one and one, five and none — usually because of time constraints. But I've learned that nothing revs my enthusiasm and boosts my self-confidence more than a consistent five and three. It's worth making time for.

To me, the SGI is like a track coach who says, "Look, if you want to be a strong distance runner, this is your training regimen, this is how you should practice." I'm always free to find my own regimen. And it's up to me to ask myself: Am I getting the results I want? Am I becoming a wiser, more compassionate human being?

This is a subjective question that we each have to answer for ourselves. From a more objective view, though, I look at people who have practiced in accord with the SGI's "coaching," and I see people who have developed the kind of faith that heals, creates and illuminates — the kind of faith for which I strive.

There are days when (for whatever reason) I can't do a full five and three — but that only helps me appreciate the value (for me) of five and three even more. ☐

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

How Does Buddhism View Sickness?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

Q What does Buddhism have to say when Buddhist practitioners become ill?

A First, Buddhism views sickness as something inherent in life and therefore unavoidable. It is part of the cycle of birth, old age, sickness and death.

Yet Buddhism urges us to awaken to the fact that illness is not something permanent in life — it is a temporary phenomenon — and that it can be a meaningful event in one's eternal life.

When we fall ill, we tend to see the current sickness as the only thing that matters, and therefore we can become its slave, perceiving it as an immovable wall or foreboding obstacle separating us from happiness. Some people who are ill may even lose the will to live out their existence joyfully.

However, when we realize that becoming ill is only a natural phase of our lives — and that it can be an opportunity to build an even more solid foundation of happiness in ourselves — then, we can tap the courageous spirit to face the illness and battle it, as Nichiren Daishonin states, "From illness arises the mind that seeks the way" (*The Major Writings of*

Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 5, p. 280).

Therefore, the important thing when it comes to this problem is to have strong will to triumph over the "devil of sickness." This is the faith with which you can say to yourself: "I will defeat my sickness! I will change poison into medicine!"

In other words, often times, sickness itself is not the real problem. If we are defeated in our life-condition by sickness, that is the problem.

SGI President Ikeda says: "In life, you may, by rights, become sick from time to time. However, as you practice to the Gohonzon, you will come to realize that you are now sick because being sick now is the most natural thing for your life at this moment. In other words, you can consider your sickness to be the sickness of *hon'nu* [a natural illness that accords with the rhythm of the Law]. Put another way, if your life-condition remains healthy through the practice of faith, you will never be swayed by your sickness. You will never fall into painful agony due to your illness. Rather, as you go through your current sickness, you will find your true self or absolute happiness solidifying."

In the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, there is a phrase that reads: "This sutra can save all living beings.... It can cause living beings to cast off all distress, all sickness and pain. It can un-

loose all the bonds of birth and death" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 286).

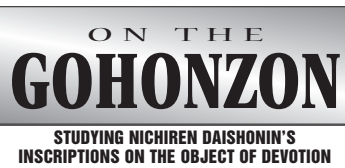
Lecturing on this passage, Nichiren Daishonin states, "In view of the enlightened vision of the essential teachings of the 'Life Span' chapter, 'cast off all distress, all sickness and pain' means to have a clear awareness that all our sickness, pain and distress are natural parts of our lives that occur as they should" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 773).

Finally, President Toda gave the following encouragement to a person struggling with a serious illness: "A human being has a body that has the potential of developing all kinds of disease, including stomach cancer and tuberculosis. Likewise, we innately possess the ability to cure sickness in the body. Curing our own illness is just like the person who has climbed a slope and will surely climb down it. I can say this with conviction based upon the philosophy of Buddhism."

He added: "Faith is not something we practice out of formality. Chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo to the Gohonzon with all your heart — with a burning desire in your heart to overcome your sickness. No sickness will remain uncured if you chant with the type of determination to offer your entire life from now on for the cause of the Gohonzon, that is, for kosen-rufu, for the peace and happiness of all humanity." ☐

THE DEVIL KING OF THE SIXTH HEAVEN

A Heaven of Desire



By TERRY ELLIS

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Devil King of the Sixth Heaven appears in the second tier of characters on the Nichikan Shonin-transcribed Gohonzon.

The concept of devils is a long-standing notion in both religious and secular circles. So the saying goes, "The devil made me do it." Devils may be taken in a superstitious way, but the concept also embodies a healthy fear of those things that destroy life. In Buddhist philosophy, devils literally are known as "robbers of life."

SGI President Ikeda says that "if you can imagine a 'heaven of desire' produced from having all of your desires fulfilled, you will find at its summit the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. A life or a society devoted solely to the pursuit of desire is ruled by this devil king. No condition is more horrid and miserable."

While Buddhist philosophy acknowledges the reality of external forces which

influence our lives, it always places the highest priority on the internal power of the individual.

"Buddhism teaches that our body itself is a manifestation of the Mystic Law and a microcosm all its own," SGI President Ikeda explained recently (Oct. 21 *World Tribune*). "According to the Daishonin, our eyes correspond to the sun and moon, and the hair on our heads, the stars."

The King Devil exists within us, in the fundamental ignorance that prevents us from realizing that we are essentially Buddhas. When we chant to the Gohonzon, we open our eyes to our internal power and gain the wisdom to gauge influences in our environment — for example, to ask, "Is this person or situation pulling me in a negative or positive direction?"

Another name for the Devil of the Sixth Heaven is Mara. This devil appeared before Shakyamuni Buddha just after he realized enlightenment and tempted him in various ways. First, Mara appeared as sensual women dancing and then as armed men attacking. Each of these "devils" disappeared as Shakyamuni realized that the desires and fears arising from his life were, literally, illusions.

The last, most difficult illusion that Mara elicited from the Buddha's life was a sense that he could never communicate his enlightenment to other people. Shakyamuni doubted himself and almost gave up. Then, at the thought of all human suffering, he pulled himself up from under the Bodhi tree where he attained enlightenment and began to share his wisdom. This was the beginning of his 40 years of teaching, which culminated in the Lotus Sutra, the basis of our practice of Buddhism.

In short, once Shakyamuni broke through the illusions of the world of heaven, he set his mind on his mission to share the Law with others. We face the same challenge, and chant to the Gohonzon to also break through illusions and share the Law with others.

As the Lotus Sutra explains: "He [the Buddha] uses the Law to teach and convert all living beings, and watches his worthy and sage armies as they battle with the devils of the five components, the devils of earthly desires, and the death devil. And when they have won great distinction and merit, wiping out the three poisons, emerging from the threefold world, and destroying the nets of the devils, at that time the Thus Come One [the Buddha] is filled with joy" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 207).

We are both the "worthy and sage armies" who are winning "great distinction and merit" and the Buddha "filled with joy."

Eleven in a series

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY



UNIVERSAL PERSPECTIVE

'When people adopt a cosmic outlook, their way of thinking is transformed,' SGI President Ikeda writes.

This autumn, we've been hearing a great deal about events in outer-space. On Oct. 8 and 9, the Giacobini-Zinner meteor shower was visible over Japan, and before dawn on Nov. 18, the anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai, a major Leonid meteor shower was seen for the first time in 33 years.

Further, on Oct. 30, Japan's first woman astronaut, Chiaki Mukai, climbed aboard the U.S. space shuttle *Discovery* and make her second trip into space. With all the gloomy news recently, including Japan's economic problems, Dr. Mukai's trip seemed a bright ray of hope.



After returning from her first shuttle mission in 1994, Dr. Mukai was featured in the Sunday edition of the *Seikyo Shimbun*. She described her reaction to the experience of space flight: "I felt that the entire universe, including the Earth, is a single living entity."

She then said something that left a deep impression on me: "We only live, at most, for 80 or perhaps a hundred years. It seems a terrible waste to spend that brief time pursuing selfish interests or fighting wars over petty differences."

When I met ex-Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to go into outer space, she said much the same thing, as did Gerald Carr, former U.S. astronaut and commander of America's Skylab 4 mission.

When people adopt a cosmic outlook, their way of thinking is transformed.



Astronomy was among the subjects that I studied under Mr. Toda. As he introduced many different theories to me, he often used to say: "Our present research indicates that there are an

infinite number of solar systems like ours throughout the cosmos. This is precisely what Buddhism teaches when it talks of 'major world systems' (Jpn *sanzen daisen sekai*). As science continues to advance, the truth of the Buddhist teachings is gradually being verified, and people will no doubt come to understand just how great Buddhism truly is."

He would also say: "I want to undergo another persecution for the sake of Buddhism and be imprisoned again. My cell was cramped, it's true, but I didn't perceive it so. Each of us is identical to the entire cosmos. In my life in my tiny cell, I was embraced in the vast entirety of the universe."



Mr. Toda had grasped the essence of Buddhism, the fundamental law of the universe. He always thought from a cosmic, universal perspective. In February 1952, as the rift between the Eastern and Western blocs was deepening, he spoke out, advocating global citizenship. He firmly believed that humanity must transcend its ethnic, national and ideological differences and, as a global family sharing one, unified world, blaze a new path of peaceful coexistence. What a pioneering vision he had!

Buddhism teaches that all

things, all human beings, possess the Buddha nature. It regards the universe as a single living entity and expounds that each individual exists in an inseparable unity with the environment.

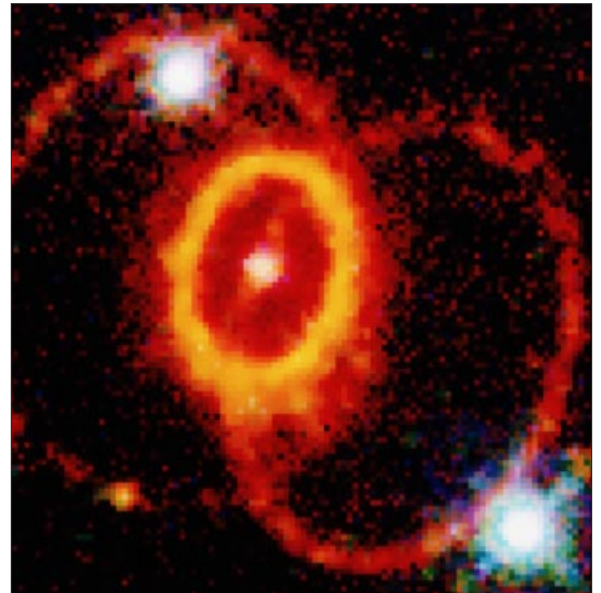
The Buddhist worldview is not anthropocentric; it does not regard humankind as the center and ruler of the Earth. Instead, it teaches harmony and fusion, a cosmic humanism.



For the last several years, the Earth Charter Committee has been at work preparing a draft for an Earth Charter. Mikhail Gorbachev, former Soviet president, and Maurice Strong, former U.N. under-secretary-general, cochair the committee. The idea behind the charter is to create a set of guidelines that every nation and people should observe to protect the Earth's environment and all living things, including people, on it.

The peace institute that I founded, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, is cooperating with the committee, conducting seminars to awaken interest in this topic and educate the public about it. As part of that effort, in November last year the center published a booklet titled *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*.

I was asked to contribute a pref-



Mysterious rings around supernova 1987A, a star that exploded in 1987. Taken by Hubble Space Telescope.

ace to that booklet, and in it I introduced the Buddhist ideas of dependent origination and the oneness of life and its environment. The booklet was adopted by four U.S. universities as curriculum material and was also used in a class on Buddhism and social change at Harvard University.



People the world over are

looking to Buddhism today and gradually moving toward the global citizenship that Mr. Toda advocated. The world is thirsting for the wisdom that Buddhism has to offer.

The dawning of the space age is also the dawning of the great age of Buddhism. Our mission is to communicate this philosophy of life from friend to friend and to link the world.

As we look up at the star-filled heavens and embrace the

SPACE TELESCOPE SCIENCE INSTITUTE/CORBIS

vast universe in our hearts, we continue to carry on vibrant dialogue — dialogue dedicated to transforming this precious planet into an oasis without borders, a true Buddha land. ☸

This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

The World TRIBUNE
The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

(ISSN-0049-8165)

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

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401-1403

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

Copyright © 1998 by SGI-USA. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA

SUBSCRIBE TO THE WORLD TRIBUNE!
All the Basics You Need for Breakthroughs in Your Life!

SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS!
 Save more than **50%** off the cover price!
 17 weeks for only \$15 (a \$34 value)

The SGI-USA's weekly newspaper brings you:

- ✓ *Inspiration*
- ✓ *Testimonials in Faith*
- ✓ *SGI Happenings*
- ✓ *Buddhist Study*

OFFER EXPIRES DEC. 10 AND IS LIMITED TO NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Order Now and You'll Get a Free Copy of **The Winning Life: An Introduction to Buddhist Practice**

MAIL YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
 SGI-USA, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

Name (please print) _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Phone (____) _____ Source code (if known) _____
 (For gift subscription, please include sender's name and address)

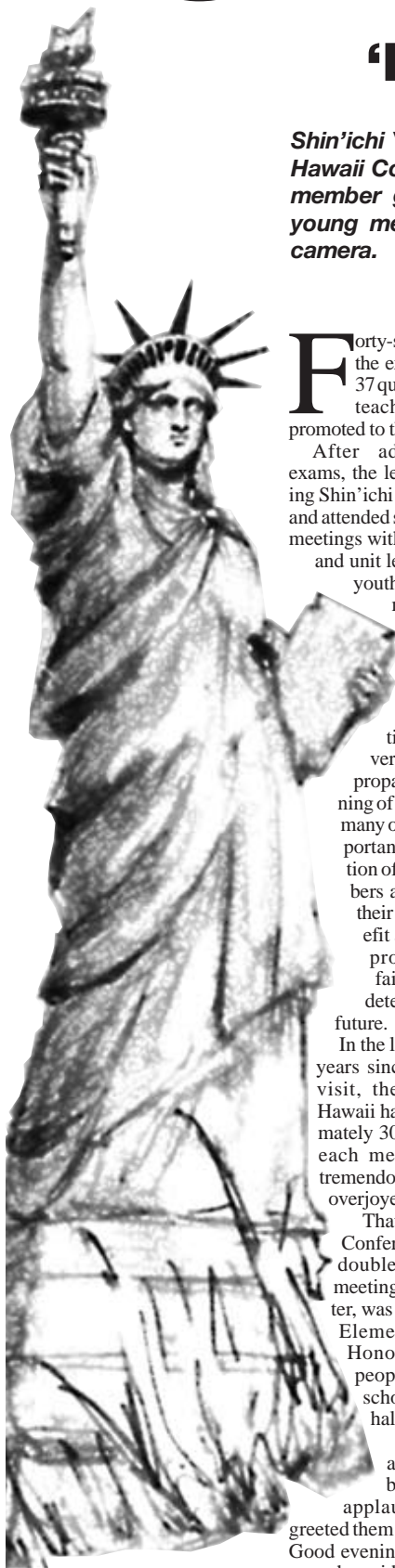
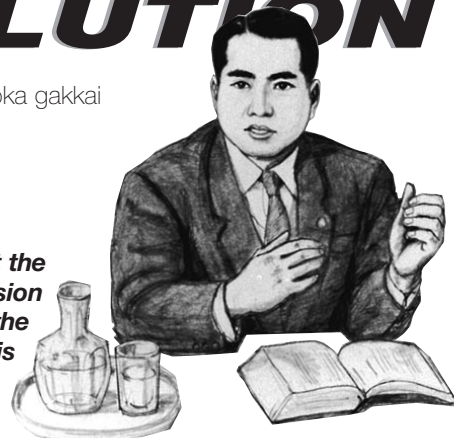
the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

a novelized history of the soka gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 9-10

Shin'ichi Yamamoto changes the overly formal atmosphere at the Hawaii Conference, and Hawaii Chapter is born. A men's division member gets so mad when his friend is transferred into the young men's division that he rips his jacket and breaks his camera.



Forty-seven people passed the exams in Hawaii — 37 qualifying as assistant teachers and 10 being promoted to the teacher rank.

After administering the exams, the leaders accompanying Shin'ichi Yamamoto split up and attended separate discussion meetings with the group leaders and unit leaders, as well as a youth division guidance meeting.

A youthful, vibrant seeking spirit pervaded each meeting. The participants' question topics were diverse — ranging from propagation to the running of the organization — many on issues of vital importance for the promotion of kosen-rufu. Members also eagerly shared their experiences of benefit and of overcoming problems through faith or related their determinations for the future.

In the little more than two years since Shin'ichi's first visit, the membership in Hawaii had risen to approximately 300 households, and each member had grown tremendously. Shin'ichi was overjoyed.

That night, the Hawaii Conference, which would double as the inaugural meeting of Hawaii Chapter, was held at the Kaewai Elementary School in Honolulu. About 400 people gathered in the school's multipurpose hall.

When Shin'ichi arrived, the members cheered and applauded. Waving, he greeted them in English: "Hello. Good evening!" Then, in Japanese, he said: "It's great to see

you again after all this time. I'm delighted to find you all in such high spirits!"

There was a large stage at the front of the hall set with a speaker's table, draped in white cloth, and chairs for the top leaders. This created an atmosphere of rather austere formality. Shin'ichi went up on the stage, picked up a chair and moved it down to the floor level — he was level with the audience members.

"Today, let's do away with formality," he declared. "Since we're all equal before the Gohonzon, let's bring the speaker's table down to the floor as well. It would be another thing if there were many people, and those in the back could not see. But with this number of people, I don't think that there's any need for us to use a platform. We are all comrades, members of the Soka family, a global family. There are no distinctions among us."

Shin'ichi then asked the youth division event staff to bring the table, microphone and chairs down from the stage. Shin'ichi then took his seat and declared, "Let's begin the Hawaii Conference!"

The leaders traveling with Shin'ichi offered greetings, and then the formation of the Hawaii Chapter and the related leadership appointments were announced.

Mitsuru Kawakami was appointed chapter leader. Despite only having joined the Soka Gakkai a short while before Shin'ichi's first visit to Hawaii, he had been exerting himself earnestly in faith and had been made district leader when Honolulu District, the second district in Hawaii, was formed.

The 47-year-old Kawakami was proficient in both Japanese and English, and he commanded trust and respect in the community, having gained a good reputation through his work.

Tatsuko Hirata was appointed the women's division leader of the new chapter. Hiroto Hirata, whom, on his first visit to Hawaii, Shin'ichi had given the nickname Riki, was her husband. He resembled the famous Japanese wrestler Rikidozan. Hawaii District had been formed on that occasion, and Hiroto had been named district leader. At that time, his wife had still been in Japan. After joining her husband in Hawaii, Tatsuko, formerly a district women's division leader, had undertaken activities as the effective central figure of the Gakkai organization in Hawaii. This was in part because the Hawaiian-born Hiroto, though fluent in English, could speak only limited Japanese; the majority of the members were Japanese women, who spoke nothing else. This presented problems when Hiroto tried to give them guidance or encouragement.

When Kiyoshi Jujo and other Gakkai leaders had visited the United States on a guidance trip in August 1961, Tatsuko was named Hawaii District leader and her husband, Hiroto, a district advisor. Now Tatsuko had become the Hawaii Chapter women's division leader, while Hiroto was given responsibility for heading up the Hawaii Chapter young men's division.

Japanese women were the main force among the Hawaiian members. And many of them had husbands or sons who could understand only English. From that standpoint, it made a lot of sense to place Hiroto in charge of the young men's division. But it seemed that there were members who were disappointed to hear of Hiroto Hirata's transfer from the men's division to the young men's division.

There was a man of about 30 named S. G. Rike, who was photographing the meeting. Rike, who had a large build, was

dressed in a suit and drenched in sweat. An American serviceman, he had begun practicing about a year and a half earlier on the urging of his Japanese wife, Katsue. Since then, as one of the few men's division members, he had grown close to Hiroto and joined him in many activities. But when he suddenly heard about Hiroto's transfer to the young men's division, he felt terribly lonely, as though he had been abandoned.

He was straightforward and hot-tempered, and when the meeting was over, he called out in English, "Why can't I join the young men's division, too?!" And, with the camera still hanging from his shoulder, he tore off his jacket and angrily threw it on the floor, ripping his jacket and breaking his camera in the process.

Some days later, it was decided to allow him to participate as a young men's division member. This episode spoke eloquently of the trust members felt for Hiroto Hirata. The Hawaii young men's division under Hiroto's leadership became known as the Pineapple Corps, and its members distinguished themselves in their kosen-rufu activities.

At the conference, a Hawaii Chapter young women's division leader was also appointed. In addition, it was announced that the number of districts making up the Hawaii organization, which until then had been two — Hawaii District and Honolulu District — would now be expanded to eight, signifying a new start for the Hawaii members.

To be continued

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963. Illustrations by Ken'ichiro Uchida.

By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY



WOMEN SHINE

Despite many demands on their time, women make invaluable contributions to the SGI. 'Their efforts will imbue their lives with the golden hue of eternal good fortune and beautifully luminous character,' the SGI president writes.

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



'Women who are fighting for something they believe in are beautiful,' writes SGI President Ikeda.

Women who are fighting for something they believe in are beautiful. In the SGI, their dedication to the happiness of their friends and fellow members shines with purity and warmth. Their lives exude compassion, optimism and vitality. Their faces always wear a bright smile, as befits these wonderful champions of kosen-rufu, our women's division members.

Now the members are all praising and warmly supporting our district women's division leaders and vice leaders: "They are the most beautiful, the most brilliant, the most outstanding of all!"

This summer I proposed that we change the women's division titles *chiku tan* and *chiku kanji* (literally, district person-in-charge and district staff) to *chiku fujin bucho* and *chiku fuku fujin bucho* (literally, district women's division leader and district women's vice leader). This proposal was discussed by the Soka Gakkai women's division executive conference and adopted.

I want to explain my reasons behind this suggestion.

.....
Women will create the momentum for fresh growth and development.

This was my thinking: Who is it that will create the momentum for fresh growth and development in each district as we prepare to launch into the 21st century? The answer is clear: the women's division.

We must turn to the women's division, especially the district-level leaders. That is why I suggested the new titles — out of my wish that they will embark on a new phase, with a fresh spirit and a fresh determination, in their activities to promote Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism.

The titles district person-in-charge and district staff have a long tradition in our organization. They have become symbolic of the women's division. But titles should express reality.

The district persons-in-charge, for instance, have not merely been "in charge." In most cases, their roles have far transcended their titles, and they have virtually come to represent the district. What title, then, would better describe their true role? Since the district persons-in-charge have had responsibility for every aspect of the district, it might be more accurate to call them district presidents. Unfortunately,

that doesn't leave any room for the men's district leader! With that in mind, the women's division executive conference unanimously settled on the more literal title of district women's division chief.

.....

In the Soka Gakkai, there are women's division leaders on the national level, as well as the regional, prefectural, ward, zone and chapter levels. These distinctions are only a matter of functions and roles within the organization; they have nothing to do with greater or lesser degrees of faith. The requirements for women's division leaders are the same at every level: faith, a strong sense of responsibility to work for kosen-rufu and initiative. As far as I am concerned, each of our district women's division leaders is equally qualified, in terms of faith, to be a national women's division leader. This is why the Gakkai is so strong.

.....
There's no greater honor than working for the happiness of all.

After we married, my wife was the group women's division leader of the Meguro Group of Kamata Chapter for a short while. In those days, groups consisted of several units, and a group was roughly equivalent to our present district. My wife was in her 20s then, and the unit women's division leaders and most of the group members were older than she. That inspired her to work twice as hard as anyone else, and she engaged herself busily in propaga-

tion activities and in encouraging and supporting her fellow members, a smile always on her face.

"There's no greater honor than working for the happiness of all," she used to say. I fondly recall how she'd cheerfully set out into the blustery winter cold to undertake various Gakkai activities, leading our eldest son by the hand with our second son strapped to her back.

.....

I try to be very aware of the hardships faced by our district women's division leaders and vice leaders. Many have small children to care for. Some of them are holding down jobs. Many are also delivering the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

How noble they are, as day after day they devote themselves to the wonderful work of kosen-rufu, as they burn with a sense of mission! People like this embody the most beautiful, the most admirable volunteer spirit. A brilliant sun of joy shines in their hearts. They are regal champions of the spirit, and the road they walk leads to the palace of absolute happiness.

Their efforts will imbue their lives with the golden hue of eternal good fortune and beautifully luminous character.

.....
When our districts flourish, the Gakkai as a whole succeeds.

The district is the home port of kosen-rufu. Just as ships take on fuel and supplies in a port before they set out to sea, our members set forth from the district and gather there again to refuel. When our districts flourish, the Gakkai as a whole succeeds. A leader without a firm footing in a district is like a ship without an anchor, floating aimlessly.

It is the district leaders who keep our districts, our home ports, running smoothly. And their unity is a strong seawall that protects our members.

The reason I suggested that the title of district staff be changed to district women's division vice leader is that I would like these vice leaders to have the same sense of responsibility as the leaders they are supporting and strive to forge even stronger unity at the district level.

A leader and vice leader have an indivisible relationship. Only when they communicate, respect each other, get in rhythm and work together can they set the wheels in motion for success.

The 21st century is the Century of Women. May you advance with pride in your mission as pioneers, along a path of joy, of flowers, of rainbows.

This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

SGI Plaza To Open

The SGI Plaza, which will serve as the new SGI-USA Headquarters, as well as the SGI North America office, will open early next month. (The seven-story facility has been undergoing extensive renovation for more than a year.) Meanwhile, the World Culture Center, which has been the Headquarters for 24 years, will close for one year for required seismic rehabilitation. The World Peace Ikeda Auditorium will also be closed, since the lobby space it shares with the WCC also requires seismic rehabilitation. During this period, reception for domestic and international visitors will be at the new Los Angeles Friendship Center. Please visit the LAFC when you are in Los Angeles — it's located at 5899 Venice Blvd. (Venice and Fairfax); the phone number is (323) 965-0025. The WCC bookstore, which serves Los Angeles members and visitors, has also been relocated to the Friendship Center. The phone number for the SGI Plaza, where you can reach staff members in the organization, administration and publications centers, is (310) 260-8900; fax (310) 260-8917. The mailing address is SGI Plaza, 606 Wilshire Blvd./P.O. Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427. Thanks for your understanding and cooperation!





Luis with his son and daughter.

EXPERIENCE

Mr. Nieves Builds His Dream House

Over the past 30 years, Luis Nieves has gone from being a disturbed youth to a successful entrepreneur. He and his family eventually built the house that they had dreamed about when they were poor. 'I can now report that all prayers are answered, all sins forgiven, all righteousness proven. And SGI President Ikeda's guidance is unfailingly true.'

vited to a Buddhist meeting. I was passing through on my way north to Napa. I thought, "There might be some eligible girls there, some in-cense, who knows?" I was prepared to trivialize the poor, the sick, the ignorant and the lost, misled zealots I knew that I would have to meet and tolerate for an hour or so. My arrogance, my slander of life, was astounding.

But I received the Gohonzon immediately. The man who had invited me, who also led the meeting, had some striking quality. It was not what he said; I've forgotten that. It was that he was fighting to achieve something greater than himself. He had some great and different way of seeing life.

And he acted as though he really knew me, knew me well and genuinely liked and cared about me, which I still believe that he did. I had the distinct impression that I was an important part of what he was fighting for in his life. He was to be the first of many men to show me the way to myself.

I experienced benefits immediately from my practice. I hitchhiked the 50 miles to San Francisco every weekend to attend meetings. My faith sponsor then told me that to really get great benefits, I must bring others to the meetings and read President Ikeda's guidance, which I began to do. Initially, that was the easy part. His guidance and the theories of Buddhism, along with my actual proof, struck a resounding chord of refreshing truth within me. I could not help but tell almost everyone I met of the wonder of this religion.

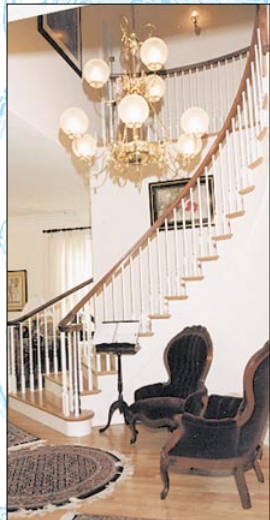
Ten years later, I fell in love with a young woman, Linda, whom I met at a Buddhist meeting, and we got married. Our first child was born with the most serious congenital problems. Her lower legs and feet were horribly

deformed. Her birth coincided with my being fired from my job, which itself signaled the beginning of a journey through years of dark wilderness. It was also the end of a long period of growing arrogance in faith, which itself grew in proportion to the amount of money I made. And I was making a lot of money — before it ran out.



Linda and I knew that our karma was the cause of Margaret's deformity. We knew this in spite of the fact that Linda's prescribed medication was the medically suspected cause. The doctors pronounced that her troubles were not limited to her legs; she would be retarded and dwarfish at best. And I had no money to pay for operations nor did we have insurance.

Linda and I began a strong campaign to chant and share this Buddhism with others, all the while studying President Ikeda's guidance and the Daishonin's writings. We took Margaret everywhere with us. As she grew,



An interior view.

By LUIS A. NIEVES
NAPA, CALIF.

My father was killed in an auto accident when I was 12. I joked and played with him before going to bed one night, and the next day, while walking home from school, I saw him pictured face down in the street on the front page of our local paper. Gone.

Our lives changed instantly and forever. My mother had to go to work immediately to support three kids. We lost our home and had to move far away, closer to family, in order for her to make more money. From upwardly mobile and prosperous to poor and constrained almost overnight, we were uprooted, just like that.

We crashed into the reality of the transience of life, and I was scared. I began to view my immediate family and relatives in a new way. None of my relatives — and I had many — were satisfied in their lives or happy.

Money and education made no difference, because our family covered the spectrum on both counts. If no one I knew of was happier as they aged, then why live? To grow old, get sick, and die? There had to be some answer to my problem.

Perhaps if a man had come into my life at this time who kept his word, whose actions were consistent with his words, who genuinely cared about me, I might not have remained lost in life as long as I did. Such a person was not to come into my life for years after my father's death.

Today I actually chant with wholehearted gratitude for having been such a disturbed youth. I have deep appreciation for my dear father's life and his most difficult yet successful mission to have prepared me for a happy and challenging life, together with my mentor, SGI President Ikeda.

In August, 30 years ago, having just hitchhiked to San Francisco from Long Island, I was in-



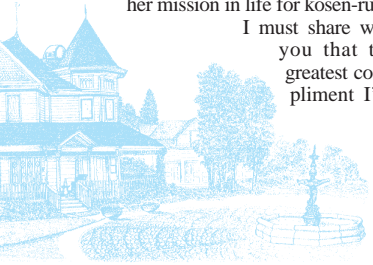
Luis and his wife, Linda.

formed. Her
n coincided
from my job,
d the begin-
through years
It was also
iod of growth,
th, which it-
rtion to the
made. And I
f money —

we taught her gongyo. We also encouraged her to help invite potential guests to meetings.

As the years passed, through a series of serendipitous events, Margaret's physical problems were cured. She grew into a fine student and sincere young woman of big heart and strong character. Today, she attends a small, exclusive private college and is on her way to discovering her mission in life for kosen-rufu.

I must share with you that the greatest compliment I've



ew that our
use of Mar-
ve knew this
that Linda's
ion was the
d cause. The
ed that her
retarded and
nd I had no
operations
insurance.

received in my life came from my daughter. Upon returning very passionate from a student division conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, she was studying one of President Ikeda's dialogues; we were driving along in my car. She told me she loves to read his guidance because he somehow reminded her of me. She said that she felt the way he spoke sounded to her a lot like me. I tried to reply in a light-hearted way, but I must admit it was a moving experience.

Our son, Eugene Takashi, came eight years after Margaret. At 10 years old, his life

is quite unlike mine was growing up. Eugene attends a small, exclusive private school, which he loves. His teacher is an educator whose educational philosophy parallels that of Tsunesburo Makiguchi.

My son was born as I began my quest in a concrete way — a quest to keep the vows made to the Gohonzon during my youth and throughout the years of suffering poverty; vows made to prove to society with my life the greatness of the Gohonzon.

The first thing my wife and I did after marrying was to commission the building of a unique, beautiful altar for kosen-rufu. Poor as we were, we somehow got the money together to have it built of the finest woods and beautifully crafted. We knew that if we ever wanted to actualize our dream of building a grand home for kosen-rufu, we should start with a grand altar to put the Gohonzon in.

We held fast to our dream, through every storm, through thick and through very thin.

Today, we live in that home! And that altar is its centerpiece. We had the best architect, the finest contractors and even a famous colorist design and build the house in the Queen Anne style, authentic in every detail. We enhanced its beauty with world-class landscaping. This home, with its prestigious address in beautiful Napa Valley, is adorned with fountains from Florence, a room from England, custom-period lighting from the White House's and the Smithsonian's craftspeople. There are original paintings, an observatory and marble from the quarry Michelangelo used. This place of beauty would need its own brochure for a complete description.

I'm also pleased to tell you that the seven-figure cost for this project did not faze or strain me in the least.

As for the financial fortune necessary to make this dream come true, I will tell you this: At the end of the wilderness period referred to earlier, I was looking for a concrete business opportunity to actualize my vows of appreciation and gratitude. At the moment that I deeply understood what the Daishonin meant when he said that should the gods forsake him, should all persecutions assail him, he would never forsake the Lotus Sutra, my phone rang from thousands of miles away. Someone who proved to be a great mentor of strong, pure character in the insurance business, at a multi-billion dollar international company, hired me.

I began what was to be five years of training under this man's tutelage, learning the intricacies of a little-known yet often used aspect of the industry. I took this opportunity quite joyfully, determined to prove the power of faith. President Ikeda, after all, tells us that an untrained man is a loser in life. Through strong prayer and overcoming many obstacles, I succeeded brilliantly in actualizing what were, if you will, this man's teachings.

With that success, and many other related experiences, I began my own small company 10 years ago. Today, I am president of two very small insurance companies and on the board of a third. Small, in insurance company terms, is defined as having less than \$500,000,000 in assets.

Our core administration company home office has the most cheerful, hard-working and dedicated employees imaginable. They are well paid, enjoy two company-paid retirement programs, company-paid health care for them and their families and many other benefits. We do business nationally. We are often told, by visiting executives and

clients, that we have an unusually good reputation within our industry. I'm honored to report that industry colleagues and other business visitors from around the country often ask me about Buddhism, having heard that I practice.

So, that's about it. OK, Luis, you say, you've got the eight-figure net worth, seven-figure income and drive the black Mercedes instead of hitchhiking. Well, I say, don't miss the point of my story.

This past August, I celebrated my 30th year of doing gongyo and practicing this Buddhism, never having quit. When we were new in faith, my young friends and I often wondered what life would be like after 30 years of practice. Would our dreams have come true by then? All we were certain of was the necessity of sharing this Buddhism as much as we could, participating in every activity and studying. In our hearts, we trusted that in this way, we would accumulate enough power to create the kind of indestructibly happy lives we yearned for, and which the Daishonin and President Ikeda promised us, both for ourselves and for the rest of society.

I can now report that the promises are true: All prayers are answered, all sins forgiven, all righteousness proven. And President Ikeda's guidance is unfailingly true. ❧



The family home in Napa Valley.

三世諸佛總勘文教相廢立

——立足三世的生命觀

(總勘文抄)

一 二七九年(弘安二年)十月五十八歲作

耳其諺語

佛法所指為何?
就如號稱「八萬法藏」,佛法有龐大的佛典、無數的解釋。這龐大的數量當前時,相信誰都會產生如未帶地圖入叢林般的茫然感。

然而,日蓮大聖人卻明快教導:
「八萬四千法藏,我身一人之日記(佛典)」、「總勘文抄」,即「所謂佛典,非指他事,皆是記載有關你自身生命的文書、日記。」
佛法一切皆與你自身有關,無一可免。

生與死之理,是生死的理、靈魂也、靈魂也。以本變之理,正我心性,則無可生之理,故亦無可死之理,此非已離生死之心法耶?劫火不燒,水災不灼,劍刀不斬,弓箭不射。入芥子中,芥子不廣,心法不壞。滿虛空中,虛空不廣,心法不壞。

《通解》
生與死二理(現生死為二)的看法)是「生死(迷法)夢」之理,是妄想、顛倒。

若以本覺真實之悟(從迷覺醒,真實的悟得),正視我心之本性,則既無生之始,何來死之終,(也就是說)心法(生命)已是脫離生死。

此心法(生命)不但是劫火(世界末日時發生的大火災)所不能燒毀,更生(世界末日時將發生的)水災所不能腐朽,刀劍所不能斬,弓箭所不能射穿。心法(生命)如放入芥子粒中,芥子既不會因而擴張,心法也不會緊縮。又即使置於虛空中,既不會因而顯得過寬,亦不見狹窄。

生命才是永遠,故應廢之
生與死,對聖人而言,沒有比這更切身的問題。無人能逃避,也沒有能說「死與我無關」。
不過,也很少有像這種事關聖人,而眾人卻不願認真思考的問題。有句話說:「有兩者是人無法一直注視的,即太陽與死。」(土

元前三一九—二七二,伊庇魯斯

王),企圖征服義大利。國王身邊的賢者就問道:「征服義大利後,接下來想做甚麼?」

「西班牙之後呢?打算如何?」
「征服非洲。」
「非洲之後呢?」
「征服全世界。」
「到那時,再好好休息。」

賢人於是說:「大王啊!如果目的是為了好好休息,為何現在不為呢?為甚麼要大費周章,流這麼多血,甘冒生命的危險征服世界?」
這則故事是蒙田(文藝復興時期法國的哲學家)在「隨想錄」中介紹的。原本出自普盧塔克寫的英雄傳。後世的帕斯卡也曾提及這則軼事。

確立生死皆幸福的大境涯
人極不願意面對自己的生命和生死,於是不斷思考去找尋其他可熱中的事物。

人往往想逃避最重要的「磨練永遠生命」這一點,結果來不及作任何的心理準備,還是難逃一死。從這裡可看出人的愚昧。

托爾斯泰(俄羅斯文豪)曾說:
「死這一刻是比明日將至,晝去夜來,夏過冬至,這些事實還準確無誤。然而,人們為何只為明早、明晚或過冬先作準備,卻不願為死作好準備?我們應先作好死的唯一準備,那就是以善養生。」
所謂以善養生是指,要人們磨練自己、鍛鍊生命,自知上進。

蘇格拉底則稱此事為:「精神修煉」。這句話與他說的:「哲學即指死的練習」同義。
誠如大聖人在本篇御書中所說的,永遠的生命是火所不能燒,水所不能腐朽,武器也是無法破壞。若以為生命將融於浩瀚的大宇宙虛空中,但其外表有時卻如極微小的芥子粒。所以說,生命是自由自由在如「一空」。

佛正是教導我們,如何對此自由自在的生命作用與力量運用自如。能達此境地就叫妙法、一念三千、信心。
我身當中具有堅固無比如宇宙般大的「生命力」。只要能湧現這生命力,就一定能克服任何煩惱。
凡夫迷於我心,不知不覺,佛悟而顯之,名為神通。神通者,神之通一切法無礙也。此自在之神通,真在於一切情之心,故狐狸等亦各有通力,皆心神部份之悟也。由此心之一法,有國土世間出現。

如何確立獅子王的「信心」,可說是今世人生的目的。
大聖人說:「以心之不思議,為經論之證要也。悟知此心,名云如來。」(總勘文抄)
佛法是從各種角度來闡明「心的不可思議」。能精通此法者,是謂成佛。

一代聖教,是說此者也。此云八萬四千法藏,皆悉一人身中之法門也。然則,八萬四千法藏,是我身一人之日記文書。此八萬法藏存於我心中,以我身中之心,思於我身之外,求佛、法、淨土,是云達也。

《通解》
一代聖教(釋尊一生中所謂的神聖教義),為說示此事,並稱之為八萬四千法藏。此皆悉一人身中之法門。因此,八萬四千法藏乃指我身一人之日記文書。
於我心本已孕持,抱持此八萬法藏。(相形之下),若已心認為佛、法、淨土皆於己身之外(有之),而欲(於己身之外)求之,則稱為迷。
佛法是為你本身而說

八萬四千這數目意指,人的煩惱有八萬四千種,佛教經典則闡明克服這些苦惱的方法。
佛典是指佛自身的日記文書,也就是「以一人為範本,一切眾生平等」(總勘文抄)。
也就是指你自身的日記文書。只是看你相不相信,能否想起它而已。因為佛教是「為了你」而說的教誨。

若然如此「心之不可思議」,人生便能自由自在,沒有無法超越的苦惱,祈無不驗,福無不來。如此人生歷程也必成為生也歡喜、死也歡喜。
幸福不在「我身之外」,而在「我身之內」,在於自身的境涯中。
現代文明直將眼光朝外,也被稱為是「忘死的文明」:視為棘手物,儘可能不去想它、接觸它。但如果說忘卻死,人生難道會變得更加豐富嗎?

科學即使能拖延死,卻無法消滅死。死是無法逃避的「做為人的條件」。因此,忘卻死的文明等於就是忘卻人的文明。而忘卻人的文明,不正是無法使人類幸福的文明嗎?

托爾斯泰說:「真正的文明人是指,知自己為何而生,必須完成何事的人。用不著努力想成為學者、有教養的人。而應一心努力,成為真正的文明人。」
基於此意,立於永遠的生命觀,不斷磨練自己,為他人貢獻心力的學會員,不正是「真正的文明人」嗎?
學會裡有出現過無數的莊嚴生死劇。
有的人在病床上訴說了感謝學會之意後,道了一聲:「我先走了」後去世。
也有人說:「我會馬上再出生,回到廣布陣列!」之後,微笑著過世。
也有人一邊聽著「同志之歌」新生活躍而逝。
這種人生不正是自覺永遠生命「真正文明人」的一生?
以「磨練生命」為基礎的文明社會,將尊敬「為人佼佼者」,並重視「有智慧者」。
軸的現代社會裡,常會以有無用處「來判斷人」。
其結果,導致老人和病人易被忽視。不願正視「死」的文明,是置「老」死於不顧的文明。這將導致高齡化社會一片晦暗。
但是,重視人的練達、深度、智慧,的文明,將不致如此。
不僅春天的嫩草、夏天的陽光可貴,秋天的熟樹、冬天莊嚴的夕陽也貴。
何況長年修行佛法者的人生,其老年時期,可說是每天都在寫著「一生成佛的黃金日記」。
而且,天天過著肩負使命的日子,將自己體會到的「心之不可思議」(一念的力量)告知後輩,並加以證明。
此生此世是多麼寶貴、無法取代。

(轉下頁)

友誼的時代

以下是今年九月廿一日洛杉磯友誼中心開幕時，池田國際會長對與會貴賓的致詞：

我衷心感謝諸位貴賓在百忙之中，撥冗前來參加(SG) USA洛杉磯友誼中心的開幕典禮。各位對於此新中心，我們學會，以及我本人致力於促進友誼、瞭解、與和平的認可，我感動不已。洛杉磯縣委員伊鳳·布賴斯穆特·勃克代表洛杉磯委員會宣稱今日是「國際創價學會青年日」。洛杉磯市的宣言，由洛杉磯市議員馬克·瑞德、湯瑪斯代表致贈。傑美·卡索先生宣讀聯邦眾議員伊斯德班·托



▲正本堂入口處五根大柱已經全部毀掉

時，第一次到洛杉磯以來，這些年來，我拜訪洛杉磯多次，對洛杉磯市民感到特別親切。我個人非常高興此中心設在洛杉磯。我希望此中心成為友誼的中心，並溫馨地歡迎本地社區居民多多使用於各種活動。同時希望在此中心，公開討論有關教育文化等話題，並且經由對話促進彼此之間的瞭解和尊敬。我也深信，只要堅持人類幸福的崇高目標和對人類生命尊嚴的尊敬，我們必定可以達到彼此瞭解和心靈的境界。這也是我多年來所堅信。

羅莎·派克斯在她的著作的日語版前言中說：「身為渴望和平的人類，我們可以經由友誼和精神交流克服任何種族或宗教的差異，一起創造偉大的價值。」

今日，我們獲贈的獎章當中所含有的各位的期望，本人決意達成。為了我們珍貴的青年們，我們將會將廿一世紀造成充滿友誼的世紀。

立足三世的生命觀

(文接上頁)

當他想到自己在幾分鐘後將不在人世時，強烈地感到：「若能保住一命將是如何呢？那會是多麼的無限啊！而且那無限的時間將完全成為自己的。如此一來，我會珍惜每一分鐘如百年，並仔細計算每一分鐘，再也不失去一分一秒，不，該說是再也不為任何事物浪費一分一秒。」

雖說處決在臨執行前中止，但這個體驗一生不斷左右著他。

每個人都是「二死刑犯」

這或許是個極端的體驗，但若理性地思考，儘管時間的長短不同，

此靈魂精神土壤，大地生靈雖然，民眾和傳統的多元化——產生新文化，新人性

洛杉磯是孕育著未來的都市，

洪健地譯自世界聖報

十月十六日

連結東方和西方的橋樑，廿一世紀的太平洋區域，洛杉磯將是東方之都。

我的身體原本也是危在旦夕，所以才會珍惜每一瞬間，用在佛法上。

重要的是要行動、磨練。須深信信心，日夜朝暮磨之不懈。——(人生成佛抄)。

這正是人生命的根本目的，是御書「三世諸佛總勘文抄」的結論，也是集三世所有的佛(三世諸佛)之總意(總勘文)的結論。

每天認真在實踐此佛法肝要的，就是我們。所以我們等於是手已握八萬四千法藏。這種人生及日日是何其珍貴！

(譯自聖教新聞一九九六年七月三十一日，取材自《通訊第二〇六三號》)

直接面對問題

Dave McNeil (世界聖報九月十一日)

我們心中是否都有一個小日顯？不是的，Dave McNeil如此說：與內在的弱點奮鬥和直接以語言的力量對抗日顯，不該混為一談。記得宗門事件爆發後所參加的第一個座談會上有人問我：「為甚麼法主會錯到如此地步？」經過討論後，我們斷定這件事情給我們一個教訓：如果法主，一個被委以護法重任的凡夫都如此迷惑，我們也一樣。佛法稱此偏離成佛正軌的傾向為元品無明，這是我們每天必須征服的傾向。

大約就在那個時候，學會開始說：對抗宗門是正義之戰、對抗權威之戰，而這正是學會的傳統精神。那是發生在學會內部根據池田會長一九九〇年二月的指導，開始改革之後大約一年。

所以當一位年輕人對宗門事件感到很洩氣地說：「我所知道的最專橫的人就是我的老闆和我的佛教導師。一，我並不驚訝。這幾年來，我們都懂得佛法真正教導的就是維護正義，對抗各式各樣的權威。」

從以上兩件事，我學到對抗日顯的精神的兩個用途：對抗內心負面作用的決心及對抗邪惡的決心。不管它在何處出現。很多人的確因為領悟這兩個教訓，而在宗門問題中看到與個人相關之處。有些人甚至說，在對抗負面的想法或內省時，他們是在和內心的「小日顯」作戰；或者說，當他們在日常生活為正義奮起時，他們製造了擊敗日顯

之因。將一切負面作用看成日顯的化身，在某些方面或許有所助益，但也會導致混淆。

日顯並不存在於你的或你老闆的心中，日顯就是日顯。對抗內在的負面作用及為人權而努力，都是菩薩的重要任務，他們誓願對抗企圖摧毀眾生幸福的所有形態的邪惡，但這種行為並不能直接擊敗日顯對世人的影響。採取這些行動對擊敗日顯之惡，構構自己與別人的幸福大有幫助，但擊敗日顯的影響完全是另一回事。

最能直接戰勝日顯的影響力的方法之一就是以維護大聖人教義的純正的決心說明此事。每一個人都可以說出或寫出日顯的錯誤的見解，和別人分享自己的想法，並幫助他們瞭解問題的真相。

但這並不只是新的推理，或非成功不可的爭論。當我們向他人解說宗門問題時，重要的是與聽者建立信任感。池田先生曾說，他在瞭解大聖人佛法之前很久就加入學會，只因為了他聆聽戶田先生解說佛法時，他感覺戶田先生是位值得信任的人。

當人們面對宗門問題的重要時刻時，他們不會記得我們的完美的推理：他們記憶最深刻的會是我們的心，我們對他們的幸福的關懷，我們的誠意，這一切完全從我們所說的話語中流露出來。

直接談論日顯會助長個人的成長，事實上，從對抗日顯及他所代表的低俗化了的大聖人教義中，我們得到內在改革所須要的生命力，從而給我們改變社會所須要的力量和影響力。

日蓮大聖人說：「伏強敵而後知力士。」(御渡御書)要真正與邪惡抗爭，我們首先必須確認它所呈現的所有形態，但日顯的邪惡是日顯一人特有的。(Mori Ueno譯)

社論

從以上兩件事，我學到對抗日顯的精神的兩個用途：對抗內心負面作用的決心及對抗邪惡的決心。不管它在何處出現。很多人的確因為領悟這兩個教訓，而在宗門問題中看到與個人相關之處。有些人甚至說，在對抗負面的想法或內省時，他們是在和內心的「小日顯」作戰；或者說，當他們在日常生活為正義奮起時，他們製造了擊敗日顯

Keepers of the Future

PERSPECTIVE

By DENISE SNAER
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

On Oct. 24, at the Los Angeles Friendship Center, LA Bridges hosted a conference and workshop on "Parenting Techniques in the Next Millennium" by noted parenting experts Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Sylvia Ann Hewlett. They shared their views with the parents of more than 200 middle-school children. Dr. West called today's parents "the great American heroes, most respectable, and the only remaining sector in society not driven by monetary reward." He inspired those in attendance to utilize any and all opportunities to unite parents across America — in the midst of a society that chooses not to reward them. Dr. West challenged parents to solidify their voice, to send a strong, compassionate message to the country's leaders.

In his new book, *The War Against Parents*, co-authored with Dr. Hewlett, founder of the National Parenting Foundation, Dr. West identifies how political, social and economic deci-

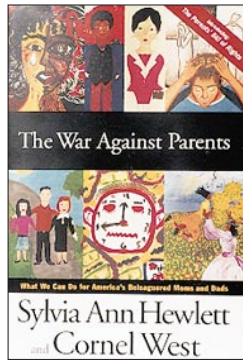
TODAY'S PARENTS ARE KEEPERS OF THE FUTURE; THEIR INFLUENCE ON THEIR CHILDREN CREATES THE FUTURE FOR US ALL. HOW CAN WE EMPOWER PARENTS IN A SOCIETY THAT DOES LITTLE TO REWARD THEM? AND HOW CAN PARENTS EMPOWER THEMSELVES?

sions impact parents in our communities. He addresses the plight of contemporary parents and their battle against a slew of negative imagery produced by sensationalist television and — even more daunting — the set-up of our corporate structure, which undermines support of today's parents.

Dr. West points out that in the late 1990s, the mass media has bombarded us with negative stereotypes of parents with dismissive put-downs of the parental role and function. In best-selling books such as *Toxic Parents* and *Spoiling Childhood*, parents are portrayed as dysfunctional and incompetent. "No other country in the world has our alarming statistics on child violence, delinquency and death," he writes. "Why has

America visited such treachery on its children?"

Parenting has become a dying art. Dr. West cites some particularly suspect movies. In



Home Alone, a pair of well-meaning but totally inept parents depart for Paris, leaving their 8-year-old son behind. The mother flies back to Chicago to rescue the stranded child, only to find that he is doing far better without his parents than he did when they were monitoring his every move. In their absence he courageously defends his home from burglars and helps an old man reconnect with his children and grandchildren.

Conversely, in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, an ordinary mother stands firm as the future comes hunting to kill her

son. The premise is this: Machines now rule a devastated world, but a single man/woman can still make a difference. Hope arrives in the form of a machine, Arnold Schwarzenegger, sent from the future to change the outcome of disaster. This machine is a metaphor for the courage of all parents who take the challenge to protect their children from all threats against their future. The mother is relentless in her determination to save her child's life, thereby ensuring the future for all other children as well.

How is this quest different from ours today?

Dr. Hewlett remembers the courage of her own parents. "The steadfast, sustained love of our parents gave us the wherewithal both to develop our skills and to 'grow our souls,'" she writes. "The key to the future is the creation of a new political and cultural environment that supports the work of parents. The main thrust of any new initiative should be to affirm and enhance the heroic energies of moms and dads."

As parents, we are in the business of growing souls. We are spiritual caretakers of valuable and trusting baby and child lives. A study on the Internet shows that the only element a child needs to withstand gangs and other negative influences is the voice of an adult. That voice stays within children even when they are on their own — they carry our voices with them.

Let's embrace our hurting children and look at life through their eyes.

LA Bridges, a city-wide comprehensive program serving youth between ages 10 and 14 is designed for parents in urban areas to improve their skills in helping their children turn their lives around. This conference was headed up by City Councilman Ridley Thomas, who was also at the recent opening of the Friendship Center. Mr. Ridley-Thomas expressed great satisfaction at the success of the event, as well as at witnessing the center's immediate action to carry out its stated mission to envelop and support programs by and for people of the community. The lively atmosphere of dialogue between parents and speakers there cemented a vow of hope and action to safeguard our children — to safeguard the future.



Photo by LISA HOLLIS



Cornel West (left) and Sylvia Ann Hewlett discuss 'The War Against Parents' at the LAFC, Oct. 24.

World TRIBUNE The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

Publisher
Fred M. Zaitsu

Executive Editor
Ted Morino

Managing Editor
Dave McNeill
dmcneill@sgi-usa.org

Assistant Managing Editor
Lisa Carter Kirk
lkirk@sgi-usa.org

Associate Editor
Jeff Farr
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

Staff Writer
Lisa Jones
ljones@sgi-usa.org

Graphic Artists
Don Sanders
dsanders@sgi-usa.org
Ellen Brown

Contributing Editors
Nikki Amdur
Terry Ellis

Staff Translators
Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi
Yoshiko Nakamura

Chief Photographer
Gregory Nakasuji

Photo Editor
Lisa Hollis
lisahollis@earthlink.net

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

Contributing Photographers
Kirk Condules
Jonathan Wilson
Dixon Hamby

Foreign Language Pages
Chinese: Ingrid Yeh
Korean: Charles Lee
Spanish: Cesarina Caro

READERS COMMENTS
Send to:
Mailbox
525 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401
or e-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS
1-800-835-4558
or e-mail: SGISUBS@aol.com

FRIENDS FOR PEACE
ffp@sgi-usa.org

SEIZE THE DAY
seize@sgi-usa.org

FINE PRINT
fineprint@sgi-usa.org

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

A Story

In response to the new Buddhist Basic series, I'd like to offer you a story called "The Evil Giant and the Tiny Wren."

An evil giant once terrorized a distant land. He stole the peasants' livestock and ate their crops. His mighty arms destroyed whole villages. His careless footsteps wrecked woodlands. Even the king's best soldiers could not stop him. No one knew what to do.

Then a tiny bird made a great determination. She was just a common wren, but brave and wise. Every night she left her warm, safe nest and flew to the valley where the giant slept. There she sang until dawn, keeping him awake. Her dull color and smallness kept the giant from ever discovering the source of his insomnia.

Finally, after many weeks of singing, the giant, teary-eyed and exhausted, left the kingdom. He never returned.

The evil giant represents devilish functions and negative karma. The tiny wren represents ordinary people. And singing every night represents consistent Buddhist practice, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

— DON HANSBROUGH, Seattle

Questions About Formalities

I have some questions regarding "Bell, Book, Candle and Saxophone" in the Nov. 13 issue. First I'd like to thank you for writing such a great article. I have had several questions regarding the formality of keeping an altar and your article certainly offered clarification on some issues.

The main question I have is how to avoid creating a negative cause by not following

formalities. Is there a "line" that can be crossed? How do we know what is timeless and what is a fad? To quote a friend of mine, "If yoga is the latest thing, should we all do gongyo while standing on our heads?" I have four specific questions that I would like advice on.

The first is regarding whether it is OK to cross your legs in front of the Gohonzon. Often, when I am sitting, I like to cross my legs. I have been told by my fellow members that one should keep both feet on the floor when you chant. Is this true?

The second question is regarding keeping pictures on my altar. I was told that you should not keep pictures of loved ones on or around your altar. It was explained to me that pictures will offer a distraction. I am seeking guidance on this issue because I really disagree with this point of view. I feel that one reason I am even chanting at all is because of the people in the pictures. I feel that instead of offering a distraction, they help me focus on my human revolution. I don't keep the photographs where they would obstruct my view of the Gohonzon. I have followed guidance to remove these pictures, but it is an issue that concerns me.

Third, I have been told that it is inappropriate to have anything in the room higher than the Gohonzon. I have followed guidance on this issue by remodeling my altar, but now it looks awkward. (Not to mention it is really hard to decorate due to this issue.)

Finally, what about having plants around your altar? Do they have to be green? Are fresh cut flowers OK?

I would truly appreciate any advice you can give me on

these issues.
— SUSAN MA-SOTTI, Salt Lake City

Editor's Note: Crossing your legs while chanting is not a big issue. In general, when we chant we should be alert and focused on the Gohonzon, and our posture should reflect this.

The objects that we place on our altars are offerings to the Gohonzon. To put a watch or clock on your altar, for example, isn't an offering — it's more of a convenience or a distraction. (After all, the Gohonzon is timeless!) It's a matter of personal choice whether to put photos on your altar — as long as it's clear that the Gohonzon is the object of devotion and that you're chanting to it, not to the photos. The altar should be uncluttered.

In some Asian cultures, placing something higher than everything else in the room is a way of expressing respect. But in other cultures (and if no disrespect is intended), having lamps or paintings higher than the Gohonzon in a room does not imply disrespect.

In future issues, we hope to examine more formalities, such as your plants/flowers question. Overall, adhering to Buddhist formalities in itself is not the purpose of Buddhist practice — the purpose is simply to change our lives for the better. Formalities should be understood in this context.

Love the Changes

Love your new changes. The thicker paper makes it easier when using a highlighter and it's so much easier to read with the background white. Thanks for constantly trying to make it better!

— ANN DIAMOND, Rochester, N.Y.

Send Your New Year's Message to Fine Print!

SHARE your New Year's goals and greetings with all the readers of the *World Tribune*!

To be included in the special New Year's edition of Fine Print, messages must be received by Dec. 7. Be creative — and please try to keep it short, around 50 words or fewer. (We reserve the right to edit messages.)

E-mail to fineprint@sgi-usa.org, or send to Fine Print, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401. For your message to be considered for publication, please include your name, address and telephone number along with your message.

The Whole World Wants To Come to Your Discussion Meeting!

That's right! The whole world is knocking on your door!

Send us PHOTOS of your Nov. 18 commemorative discussion meeting and a short report, and we'll do our best to introduce it in the pages of the *World Tribune* — this way, you can let all the *World Tribune* readers attend your special meeting. In your report, you don't have to include everything that happened at the meeting. Focus on a couple of highlights, and try to keep it to about 200 words. Color photos are preferable. No group shots, please (we want to see your faces!).

In addition, send us any EXPERIENCES in faith given at your commemorative meeting; please include the individual's full name and telephone number. Mail everything (soon) to: Nov. 18 Meetings c/o *World Tribune*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica CA 90401.



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) 260-8900.

PHOTO ESSAY — DIXON HAMBY, SEATTLE



ARTOBER Fest in Seattle

An article in the Oct. 19 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* quotes a new report from the U.S. Department of Commerce stating that the amount of money Americans have spent on the performing arts has doubled since 1982. By comparison, spending for sports and movies has stayed about the same. As the article asserted, this report “puts some data behind the notion that the arts are not peripheral, but at the center of our national life.” Pacific Northwest Region members didn’t spend a dime to attend the Artober Fest on Oct. 17, sponsored by the Culture Department’s arts division, but it certainly proved the notion that the arts division is not at the periphery of our practice but at the core, that it supports all that inspires people from within. More than 300 members and guests attended, and the Seattle Culture Center rocked with the joy of quality performance. Yes, art is important for all of us, and it showed. Leo Tolstoy writes in his essay “What Is Art?” that “the task of art is enormous.... Art should cause violence to be set aside. And it is only art that can accomplish this.” The members succeeded brilliantly at this enormous task and are looking forward to doing it again next year.

— ALLANA BOURNE



(Top left) Larry Coryell, famed jazz guitarist, jams with Tor Dietrichson, percussionist, and Steve Kim, bass guitarist. (Top right) A showbiz medley choreographed by Lanii Chapman. (Above) Rachel Greenspan (piano) and Kay Rynerson (clarinet) team up on an aria from Verdi’s opera ‘La Boheme.’ (Left) Sisters Kate and Angela Moore are serious students of the classical art song. They perform ‘My Dearest, My Fairest’ by Henry Purcell. (Below) A portion of SGI-USA playwright Glyde King’s new play, ‘Flight of the Flapping Bird,’ is staged.



WORLD PEACE **To speak as**
IS A GOAL **WORLD CITIZENS**



By **RENU JIANDANI**
SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leader

In September, I had the opportunity to attend a youth training course in Japan, along with 27 other youth representing regions throughout the country. We had great experiences together.

The day after we arrived in Japan, we participated in an awards ceremony, in which the cultural minister from the Republic of Krygyzstan presented SGI President Ikeda with the Abdumomunov Award. Prior to the awards ceremony, I participated in the dialogue session between President Ikeda and the cultural minister of Krygystan, along with a few youth representatives.

After the dialogue, President Ikeda immediately stood up and came toward me and said, "Thank you for coming, I've been waiting!" Before going to Japan, I was praying to truly represent the youth of America and that when President Ikeda saw me he would feel the determination of the American youth. I feel that even in some small way I conveyed that

Continued on page B

Renu Jiandani, the recently appointed young women's division leader, and James Herrmann, the young men's division leader, participated in the recent SGI Youth Training Course. Here are their experiences on the trip with SGI President Ikeda.

By **JAMES HERRMANN**
SGI-USA Young Men's Division Leader

Along with 27 other youth from around the United States, I participated in the SGI Youth Training Course in Japan; it was attended by a total of 250 youth from 50 countries. Late in the evening prior to our departure for Japan, I was informed by the SGI Headquarters that SGI President Ikeda had requested I speak at the 26th Headquarters Leaders Meeting on behalf of the youth from around the world. Needless to say, I was extremely nervous. The next day, we departed Los Angeles, and I desperately drafted my speech on the airplane. I wrote about my determination and my experience with my late father. I wanted to share this with the youth division members. The moment we arrived in Japan, I was asked if my draft were ready. It was, and I submitted it. What a relief!

On the second day of the training course, an SGI staff member handed

Continued on page B

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

IT'S TIME TO SHARE YOUR STORY

It's your turn to seize the day! Share your experience of doing human revolution with all the "Seize the Day" readers throughout the country. What struggles have you been through? What victories have you achieved? What have you learned? Write it all down — get a friend to help you, if you want — and send it in to "Seize the Day." Experiences for "Seize the Day" should be around two pages, double-spaced (approximately 600 words).

SEND YOUR EXPERIENCE — and a photograph of yourself to:

World Tribune
525 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica CA, 90401

By fax to:

(310) 260-8910

Or e-mail to:

seize@sgi-usa.org

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

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



SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda at the Abdumomunov Award ceremony, Sept. 19.

JIANDANI continued from page A

spirit to him through this encounter.

I want to share a couple of other things that made an impact on me during the training course. When I first joined the SGI, I would hear that the purpose of our organization is to create "world peace through individual happiness." I loved that phrase but thought, "That's cool but idealistic!!"

I used the phrase myself many times, but it was during this trip that I felt this phrase really penetrate my heart. For this youth training course, we had a total of 250 participants from 50 countries. Every moment seemed incredible. We did not all speak the same language; however, the first time we did morning gongyo together, I had chills all over my body. I looked around the room, and I felt an amazing bond with all the youth.

I could feel in my heart that they were all challenging their own lives, organizational responsibilities, health and difficulties just like we are in America. I felt a deep sense of respect

for each person.

Another point that really touched my heart was that I realized that each person was there to learn from President Ikeda. I expanded my capacity to understand my own relationship with my mentor by the words and actions of these other youth. I will always treasure that they gave me more hope about my growth as a disciple.

During the Headquarters Leaders Meeting, all 250 youth sang "Marching Forward to Victory in the 21st Century" with President Ikeda in attendance. While we were singing, I thought again of the phrase *world peace through individual happiness*. I realized that this idea is no longer just an ideal to me but a definite goal that I engraved in my heart. I know that every goal takes effort, but I felt so honored to share this goal with all of you and the other youth from around the world I met during this trip. ♪

HERRMANN continued from page A

me back an edited version of my speech — it had been edited dramatically. My experience had been edited out, and my speech became purely an activity report. Although I was surprised at how much my speech had changed, I was determined to give the best report, no matter what.

The day of the meeting, a typhoon was occurring in Japan, and many leaders were worried about the members' safety traveling to and from the meeting. So out of President Ikeda's consideration for the members, the meeting began an hour early. It started with speeches from various Soka Gakkai leaders.

After the young men's division leader, Mr. Sato, spoke, I was alerted that I was next. Then President Ikeda walked in, greeted the women's division members and made a bee line for me. He said: "Danshibucho (YMD leader), I'm sorry. I know that we were going to hear from America today, but because of the typhoon we should get started right away. I want you to close today's meeting." In a light manner, he added, "I want you to speak on behalf of the U.S. president."

Due to the weather conditions, the meeting ended early and President Ikeda left the stage. And it was at this time that I was

introduced as the final speaker. Rather than sharing the entire text of my speech, I shared what I felt to be the essence, my determination: "The 250 youth who have gathered from around the world came here to be with our mentor. During our one-week stay here in Japan, we have definitely strengthened our bonds of mentor and disciple. And we are determined to go back to our respective countries and create a new era of kosen-rufu."

I learned many things from this experience. I realized that President Ikeda had requested I speak out of his great expectation for America — for America to speak on behalf of the youth of the world. When President Ikeda asked me to speak on behalf of the U.S. president, he taught me that youth must develop the ability to speak as world citizens and instill hope and provide a vision for the future.

Before this training course, I used to think that taking leadership in the 21st century was something that I needed to prepare myself for now. However, after participating in this training course, I developed a whole new perspective. Rather than thinking President Ikeda is going to pass us this baton of kosen-rufu in the 21st century, I feel in my heart that he has already passed it to us. He is hoping we will run with it. ♪

YOUTH STUDY FOR DECEMBER

THE EIGHT WINDS (2)

If master and disciple pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water. Even if they pray with one mind, their prayers will go unanswered if they have long slandered true Buddhism by adhering to inferior teachings. Eventually, both will be ruined. (“The Eight Winds,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 206)

DETERMINE TO SUCCEED

By ULISSE GALLO
Berwyn, Ill.

There will be times in our practice when we may feel we are in a rut. For all our chanting and praying, our efforts do not quite seem to be enough, and our resolve feels like it’s had the wind knocked out of it. This is probably not too far off from Shijo Kingo’s situation described in “The Eight Winds”: He was facing the possible loss of his property and income.

Nichiren Daishonin understood the human tendency to not believe that we have the answers, the wisdom, the potential within ourselves to overcome our situations.

He tells Kingo, “If master and disciple pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water.”

Here the Daishonin encourages Kingo to pray strongly for the resolution of his plight with the same mind as the Daishonin.

What does that mean to our practice?

First, to pray with the same mind as the Daishonin means to pray with the determination to succeed.

Second, praying with the same mind as the mentor also involves our efforts to develop our ability to discern the true nature of our circumstances through the wisdom of Buddhism; that is, we must study.

Third, another of the keys to overcoming our problems lies in our willingness to seek the answers through the wisdom, experience and sincerity of our friends both in and outside the SGI.

As we continue to pray with confidence in our innate power to surmount our obstacles and seek the wisdom of Buddhism to shed new light on our circumstances, we will break through for sure.

It is precisely through the repetition of such tenacious efforts that we will change our confusion to clarity, our despair to hope. ♪

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEEKING A MENTOR

By MAIA GUEST
New York

The mentor-disciple relationship is a concept that long puzzled me. I felt unsure of its importance to my life, especially when I first started practicing Buddhism.

It was only recently, in attending the SGI Youth Training Course in Japan, that I came to better understand it. Meeting members from around the world was an incredible experience.

I had never met so many individuals so happy and committed to their unique missions. I began to see their connections to President Ikeda, as their lives were all proof of their sincere practice inspired by the examples set by President Ikeda, who is, as I witnessed, completely dedicated to people’s happiness.

In Buddhism, what qualifies one to be a mentor is not his or her status. One’s profound understanding of Buddhism and, more importantly, ability to translate the humanistic ideals of Buddhism into reality are what make one a mentor. In the context of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, a mentor is someone who, in sync with the Daishonin both in intent and action, has brought the Daishonin’s teaching to as many people as possible.

We at times become ensnared by our selfish ego and lose sight of the correct path of faith. But no matter how wonderful the Daishonin’s philosophy may be, if we go astray from his teaching, we may not enjoy benefits otherwise possible. Herein lies the importance of seeking a mentor whose action serves as a guide to our practice.

As the Daishonin explains in “The Eight Winds,” when we pray strongly to the Gohonzon with the same mind as our mentor, we can accomplish peace in our society, not to mention all our dreams. In this sense, striving to practice after our mentor’s examples is very important; it is now my foundation in Buddhist practice. ♪

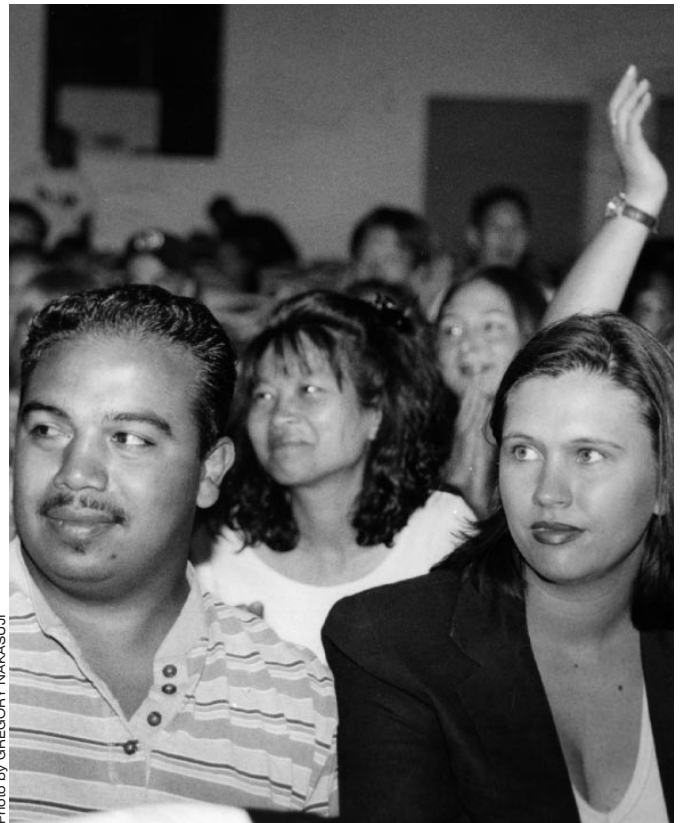


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What does it mean to be a disciple? Does having a mentor mean the loss of your freedom and identity? What do you think is the difference between a disciple and a blind follower?
- 2) What is the basis of the trust between mentor and disciple? What makes you trust someone? Is it his or her appearance or position? Or is something else more important?
- 3) Praying with the same mind as the mentor — what does this mean to you in resolving your problems?

This is part 2 of the Youth Division Study Committee’s focus on the letter “The Eight Winds.” The Daishonin writes that “a truly wise man will not be carried away by any of the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering and pleasure” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 206). Part 1 discusses how to not be swayed by these eight winds in Buddhist practice (see the October issue of “Seize the Day”).

GET REAL UP TO THE FAMILY CHALLENGE



Jeannie Olander

By JEANNIE OLANDER
Junior High School Division Leader

Last year, I went to a Rocky Mountain Region camp-out, where I found myself in awe of the many experiences of the junior high and high school division members. Nanna Ogburn, a high school student from Mesa, Ariz., happened to be in a discussion group with me. She talked about how she had turned around her relationship with her father. Because family relationships was one of the topics that I had planned to write about for "Get Real," I thought that an interview with Nanna would be most encouraging.

Nanna: Even though I was raised with this practice, it wasn't clicking for me, you know. And all through junior high, I tried to avoid my father as much as possible. I went out for a lot of extracurricular activities, even though I'm horrible at sports — just to avoid my dad. I even joined the school magazine, so I was writing articles in my room instead of being out in the living room with my father. Finally, I went to my mom and my sister, and I guess that I broke down. Tears just came out everywhere. I told them

everything: All the rejection, all the hate, all the fear.

Jeannie: What made you able to share that with them?

Nanna: I'm not sure. I think it's 'cause I didn't hate them.

See, I think that I spilled some perfume in my room, so it really smelled. And so my dad started screaming and yelling at me and telling me that I was the stupidest person for doing that. And for some reason, that incident really got to me. It was, like, heartbreaking to me.

My mom realized how much this was really affecting me — you know, she didn't just say "Chant." I guess that she never thought my problems were bad until then, 'cause I was just a little kid.

So my mom decided that we needed to have a family discussion. I know this is, like, so Brady Bunch. Everyone got together — my brother, my sister, me and my dad.

We had a couple of rules: Everyone gets to talk as

one voicing any opinion about what's happening in the family — what's bugging them. And finally it gets to me, and I am, like, shaking. My sister was like, "Don't you have something that you want to tell Dad?"

Then I started crying. Everything came pouring out, everything I had ever thought about him. Finally, I was like "Daddy, you don't love me!" I was pissed and hurt, because he wasn't doing anything or saying anything.

And then, all of a sudden, I could see one tear coming out of his eye. And I thought, "Did I actually do something?" I realized that

strange.

But after a month and a half, my dad would come in, and we'd sit there and talk. And then it was a lot more comfortable to do gongyo with him.

And after another month or so, I'd come in and ask him about how his day was the day before — and he'd, like, really tell me! I started to realize, oh, my dad has problems?! Before, all his emotions were hidden from me. And it made gongyo almost enjoyable, 'cause we were actually bonding!

But the real important thing was that me and my dad were friends — and had gotten over the fact that he was sometimes an angry person, and that I'm also sometimes an angry person.

That was the reason that we were blocking each other out.

I'm like my dad! And that was a really scary concept at first.

But now I'm accepting it. He still puts pressure on me: "Go to the best college," etc. But I'm up to the challenge, because I realize that he's pressuring me to do it because he knows that I can.

Jeannie: Wow!! Thank you for sharing this life-changing story. You, your father and your whole family really won.

Three in a series



Photo by MISA CRYSTAL

long as they want, and no one is allowed to interrupt until they're done, unless they allow them to interrupt. No one could yell or take their voice above the level of just plain talking. My sister and mom were totally behind me. They wanted me to share how I had been feeling with my dad, because they really didn't think that my dad knew.

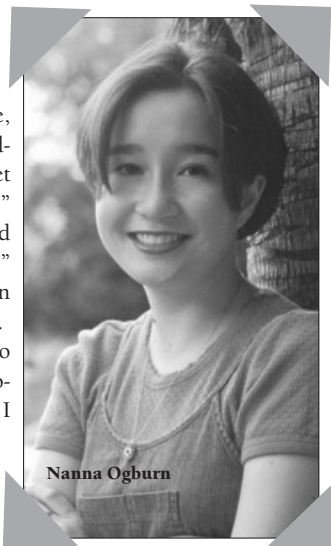
Jeannie: It must have taken courage.

Nanna: So we're all sitting on the couch. We start off going around the circle, every-

he wasn't a stone, a rock. He was just a person. He was just an angry person.

After that, he started actually complimenting me, 'cause he realized that I needed it. He said, "We should get some ice cream to celebrate." And that had never happened before. He said, "I love you." At first, it seemed like foreign words. But he kept saying it.

Me and my dad decided to do gongyo every morning together. He's a teacher, and I have to go to school, so every morning at like 5:00 we'd do gongyo together. And for a while it was



Nanna Ogburn