

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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The story of the first women's division member in Los Angeles to accomplish President Yamamoto's challenge for all the Japanese members to get driver's licenses. 'In the process of challenging and achieving one immediate goal after another, we forge the way for our glorious future,' President Ikeda writes. 'A winner in life successfully surmounts each day's hurdles.'

BY DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI PRESIDENT

Shin'ichi Yamamoto and the other leaders from Japan were driven from the Kuwano home to their next appointment by a young women's division member named Chikako Hayashida.

Hayashida worked as a nurse at the Los Angeles County Hospital. She had been assigned to the night shift in the ward for patients suffering from lung disease. Her having attained such a post was actual proof of the power of her faith.

Hayashida was a third-generation Japanese-American born in Washington State. When U.S.-Japan relations grew hostile during World War II, her entire family was placed in an internment camp for those of Japanese ancestry. That was where she had spent the early years of her childhood.

After the war, her family returned to Japan, settling in Kumamoto, Kyushu. There, Chikako attended high school and later nursing school. When she qualified as a nurse, she moved back to the United States to join her elder brother.

Although she had been born in America, she knew almost no English. She found work as a nurse's aide in a hospital serving the Japanese community in Los Angeles. Chikako first heard about Buddhism from a member named Kazuko Ellick, who worked in the same hospital.

Believing that a person needs a religion in life, Hayashida quickly made up her mind to join the Soka Gakkai.

As she deepened her faith, she came to feel that it was important to show actual proof in society as a Soka Gakkai member. She began studying English at night school with the goal of becoming fluent.

Also, in order to get certified as a nurse, she took a job as a nurse trainee at Los Angeles County Hospital. Hayashida succeeded in getting her license and began working as a full-fledged nurse at the same hospital, eventually being assigned to work in the ward for lung patients.

When President Yamamoto first visited the United States in 1960, he gave the Japanese members three guidelines: 1) to gain U.S. citizenship and become a good American citizen; 2) to obtain a driver's license; and 3) to master English. Already a U.S. citizen and able to speak English, Hayashida therefore challenged herself to learn to drive.

For Hayashida, getting a driver's license was very difficult, both because of the time that it required and because of the expense involved. Still, believing that it would somehow help advance kosen-rufu, she summoned up the determination to succeed. And of the women's division members in Los Angeles, she was the first to obtain her driver's license.

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Hayashida lost no time in taking out a loan and buying a car. Winning trust at her workplace, her income gradually increased. She used her car to pick up and drop off members,

and drove across the vast state of California, meeting people and telling them about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Hayashida had been hoping that the next time President Yamamoto came to the United States, she could take him somewhere in her car. She wanted to show him how she had put his guidance into practice.

The Japanese members living in the States began to deeply sense the importance of the three guidelines Shin'ichi had given them. This was because Chikako Hayashida and others who had actualized these guidelines had settled into American society remarkably quickly.

One Japanese woman, a non-member who was a longtime U.S. resident, remarked upon hearing of the three guidelines: "That's the same conclusion we've only just arrived at after having lived in this country for decades and given long thought to how to fit into American society. I am surprised at how quickly you Soka Gakkai members have realized these things. I'm sure you will find success."

Hayashida drove Shin'ichi and the others at an easy pace, exercising caution to avoid any accident and taking care to shift gears smoothly and quietly.

"You're a fine driver," Shin'ichi told her.

Hayashida was elated.

"Incidentally, about how many YWD members are there?" he asked.

"There are now 21."

"Is that so? That's a big increase."

Hayashida was appointed YWD district leader during Shin'ichi's first visit. When she was appointed, there was no other YWD members for her to do activities with.

Having joined the Soka Gakkai in the United States, Hayashida did not have a clear idea of the nature of the YWD. As a result, even though she had been appointed a leader, she was not confident that she could fulfill the responsibility. Because of her misgivings, she had told Eisuke Akizuki, the Soka Gakkai youth division leader, and Katsu Kiyohara, the women's division leader, who had both accompanied Shin'ichi on that occasion, that she wished to turn down the appointment. However, the two of them dissuaded her from doing so, and she became a YWD district leader.

Hayashida began her new responsibility by ordering the Gakkai's newspaper and other publications from Japan, hunting through them for YWD-related articles and learning about the division's mission and activities.

Awakened to her mission, whenever she heard of members who might fit the YWD profile, she would get into her beloved car and go to see them. No matter where they lived or how far she might have to travel, she would go to give them encouragement.

Often, however, she found herself unable to answer the members' questions. And mindful of her responsibility as a leader, she felt obliged to somehow offer them a correct reply.

So, upon returning home from visiting a member, she would pour over her publications and other materials. And she would chant wholeheartedly, seriously pondering how to answer that person's question in a way that would be convincing and satisfying.

She did not try to justify her limited ability on the grounds of her difficult circumstances. Rather, she determined in her heart to accept and stand up to every challenge that she faced.

It is under such conditions that people can display their abilities to the fullest.

To be continued

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