

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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At the America West General Meeting, the main event of Shin'ichi Yamamoto's Los Angeles visit, a Seattle women's division member shares her experience of coping with the death of her husband. 'Personal experiences of overcoming life's travails are testimonies of human triumph, laurels that adorn the lives of those who advance on the sure path of kosen-rufu,' President Ikeda writes.

BY DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI PRESIDENT

At the two exam sites, in Los Angeles and San Diego, lectures were held on Nichiren Daishonin's writings after the exams were finished.

The next day, Jan. 12, Shin'ichi Yamamoto and the other leaders from Japan finalized their selection of leadership candidates and devoted most of their time to giving personal guidance.

That evening, they attended the America West General Meeting — the main event of their Los Angeles visit — at the Embassy Hall downtown. Members from San Francisco and Seattle made their way to the meeting on buses chartered for the occasion. Close to a thousand people filled the meeting place, and the air buzzed with excitement and anticipation.

When Shin'ichi entered, the members welcomed him with loud applause. The First America West General Meeting was declared open, and a member came to the microphone to relate her experience in practicing Buddhism.

Personal experiences of overcoming life's travails are testimonies of human triumph, laurels that adorn the lives of those who advance on the sure path of kosen-rufu. What we must do, then, is resolve to always make propagating the Daishonin's teaching the path we follow in life. We must rise with all our might to the challenge of our Gakkai activities, regarding each activity as an opportunity to transform our destiny for the better.

Sharing her experience on stage was Masako Clarke, the Seattle District leader. When Shin'ichi visited Los Angeles the first time, a little more than two years earlier, she told him after the inaugural chapter meeting that she would have to move to Seattle shortly because her husband was being transferred there for work. At that time, Shin'ichi wrote her a short poem, wishing her a bright future, on the inside cover of a book she was carrying. It read: "Illuminated by the Mystic Law / May you soar / Like a queen."

She now told her story.

Masako's husband, Harry, was a U.S. army officer. He was exposed to radioactive ash during an atomic bomb test blast. As a result, he suffered from poor health and was told by doctors that he would probably be sterile as a result.

Masako had joined the Soka Gakkai in Japan in 1955, but her husband remained a non-member. About two years later, Harry fell seriously ill with a stomach ulcer. The doctors' prognosis was grim; there was nothing more they could do.

But Masako continued to chant fervently for her husband. Her prayers were answered, for her husband made a miraculous recovery.

Then, in 1959, her husband was transferred back to the United States, and they took up residence in San Diego. Masako's English was still poor, but, intent on changing her

karma, she devoted herself energetically to propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism. A short time later, she found that she was pregnant, and in July 1960, the following year, she gave birth to a baby girl.

Harry was away in Japan on business when the baby came, and she informed him by letter, sharing her joy at the baby's birth. Upon reading the news, Harry was profoundly moved.

The birth of his child marked a turning point for Harry, and he began practicing Buddhism.

Three months later, Shin'ichi visited America for the first time and, after the meeting establishing Los Angeles Chapter, he encouraged Masako. A little while later, she and her husband moved from San Diego to Seattle.

Masako became the Seattle district women's division leader, but the woman who was the district leader left the organization a short time later. With the district chief position unfilled, Masako had to effectively take on all the leadership responsibilities for the district.

She would tell herself: "Don't even think of leaning on anyone else, because the moment you do, you're done. If you don't stand up, who else will? And if you don't stand up now, then when will you? Doesn't the Gakkai's path of mentor and disciple mean taking full responsibility for kosen-rufu?"

Inspired by President Yamamoto's warm words of encouragement and the poem he had written her, Masako set to work building the district in Seattle. She was convinced that the courage of pioneers of the Mystic Law would definitely open a way forward.

Day in and day out, she visited friends at home, talking with them and passionately explaining the validity and justness of the Soka Gakkai's aims, as well as the truth of the Daishonin's teachings. When eventually she was appointed district leader, Seattle District grew by leaps and bounds.

In 1962, she became pregnant with her second child. Her husband Harry, too, had gained a deep appreciation of the unfathomable power of the Mystic Law. In December that year, Masako gave birth to a baby boy.

Harry, who was at the hospital with his wife, was overjoyed. He quickly ran out to buy some orchids for his wife. But that same day, he collapsed again with a stomach ulcer. He was placed in the same hospital as his wife, where he lay in a coma for several days.

When he regained consciousness, he told his wife that he wanted to do gongyo with her. In his hospital room, they did gongyo and chanted daimoku together. Then, peacefully, he drew his last breath.

Masako was grief-stricken at the sudden death of her husband, whom she had loved so much. She felt stunned, at an utter loss.

Nevertheless, she did not suffer financially. What her husband left her was more than enough to raise their two children, and she also was to receive a widow's pension, ensuring that her life would be financially secure and comfortable.

As she related this sequence of events to the audience at the America West General Meeting, her voiced choked with emotion, and she could go no further. Tears filled her eyes.

It was only a little more than 10 days since her husband died. The eyes of many in the audience moistened, too, as their hearts reached out to hers.

To be continued