

## **EXPERIENCE — CARRIE TRIFFET, VAN NUYS, CALIF. TO REACH THE HEARTS OF TEMPLE MEMBERS**

When the temple issue erupted, Carrie Triffet's husband joined the temple and is now a member of their advisory board. Her love and concern for him have crystallized into a determination to protect all temple members from the temple's influence. 'While on the surface they all seem to be doing fine,' Carrie says, 'I know their lives are being subtly poisoned by pernicious false doctrine. It's an emergency situation of epic proportions, but the damage is taking place in such slow motion that it's virtually undetectable to the naked eye. Radical changes have to be made, because lives are at stake.'

In 1990, after four years of practicing Buddhism, I met and married a wonderful man. We married in the Nichiren Shoshu temple and went to the head temple in Japan for our honeymoon, to chant to the Dai-Gohonzon. But then within weeks of our return from Japan, the temple issue exploded.

Over the next two years, my husband slowly moved toward the temple, ultimately embracing it fully and taking his entire district, many of whom are our mutual friends, with him. With his sincerity and hard work, he soon rose to the top of that organization, becoming a member of their advisory board. He also produces all their publications, which means he's on the temple payroll.

I love my husband very much. I made the determination long ago to fight this ignorance on his behalf and to protect him from his slanderous causes with my life itself if necessary. But for the past six years, I saw it as a very private campaign. Honestly speaking, like many other SGI members, I was at first disappointed by the SGI's "official" handling of the priesthood issue. Even though it was a very real part of my daily life, I would turn away every time I heard or read information on the subject. I found the SGI approach to be superficial, disingenuous, and even at times counterproductive and harmful. So I distanced myself as much as possible from the larger organization, while continuing to practice hard at the grassroots level.

But this past summer, while involved in some very messy and painful human revolution on another subject altogether, I realized that if I wanted to change my life, I was going to have to challenge the temple issue. While chanting, I suddenly knew that I couldn't sit on the fence anymore, arms crossed, being critical of the SGI from the sidelines. This is my organization. I needed to commit to it 100 percent. I realized it's the only credible hope in the world at this moment for the attainment of kosen-rufu. So it is infinitely precious, warts and all, and I need to do everything in my power to protect and nourish it. That means, if there's something I see that's wrong, I need to take responsibility to fix it myself. And with that realization, I turned around to squarely face my real mission for the first time. ALL suffering temple members are my problem. Not just my husband or my friends. While on the surface they all seem to be doing fine, I know their lives are being subtly poisoned by pernicious false doctrine. It's an emergency situation of epic proportions, but the damage is taking place in such slow motion that it's virtually undetectable to the naked eye. Radical changes have to be made, because lives are at stake.

Once my mission was defined, I looked around wildly for someone smarter, stronger and way more enlightened to whom I could hand this mission over, and then I could just

Title: To Reach The Hearts Of Temple Members

Subject: World Tribune 03/05/99 n.3232 p.8 WT990305p08 Van Nuys, California

Author: Carrie Triffet

Keywords: California Carrie Experiences Hearts Members Nuys Priesthood Reach Temple Triffet

support them from behind the scenes. But I couldn't find anybody like that. So I had no choice but to vow to the Gohonzon that it's me. I will be the one to take full responsibility, alone if necessary, for creating the conditions that will bring temple members back to correct practice.

Shortly after vowing to accomplish my mission alone, I found I didn't have to. I was able to meet and join a small, determined temple issue committee in the San Fernando Valley that's been resolutely chanting together seven days a week for the last two years. Their original goal was to chant together to stop the temple's negative influence. There is nothing more powerful than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. But precisely because chanting is infinitely powerful, I feel we need to set our sights as high as possible. I feel it's very important that when we chant about this issue, we dig down to illuminate the nature of the evil itself.

My prayer is that each of us will take full responsibility for this priesthood issue. It's in our lives — we're practicing during this time, so we must have some karmic connection to it. If each of us made the determination to do our own human revolution, as courageously as necessary, for the sake of others, we could fight to eradicate evil from our own lives. Injustice, authoritarianism, arrogance — they all exist in our own lives, and therefore also in the SGI because the SGI is us. If we volunteer to break our own karmic bonds to all these forms of evil, I feel we can simultaneously uproot the hold that Nikken has over the lives of his followers.

This is the daimoku talking, but I really believe with my whole heart that this is where the real answer lies. Lots of courageous individual SGI members doing our own human revolution for the sake of suffering temple members would create such a shimmering explosion of joy and light and creativity within the SGI, as well as within our personal lives. It would shatter deadlocks, moving us all forward toward becoming the people we want to be for the 21st century. But most important, I believe the shock wave from that explosion would reach the deadened hearts of those countless temple members, and they'd be drawn irresistibly back toward the light. And when all those temple members drift away from the temple of their own volition, maybe that's what causes a local temple to stop negatively influencing people for good.

I've been reaching out to members and leaders these last few months, having dialogues on this subject. I've been talking a lot with young men's leaders in particular and I'm very hopeful that I'm making real concrete headway. It is my sincere desire to help create a beautiful new SGI-USA that SGI President Ikeda can really be proud of. Virtually all of my prayers, every day, go into this mission, so I know that continued effort will create real change for the better. And as a result of all this, I've begun to experience within my own life the kind of changes that I just spoke of.

The act of standing up alone has brought forth an avalanche of obstacles both from inside and outside my own life; I won't pretend that it hasn't been hard. But because with each new obstacle I refuse to be defeated, I seem to have found that elusive key to unlocking my life. Lately I can feel all kinds of deeply imbedded karmic hindrances starting to break up and disappear. My whole life seems to have reoriented itself toward success, and it's now jetting at light speed in that direction. And I only started noticing recently that at the moment it's raining benefits. To give just one example, after suffering from various seemingly unrelated health problems the last few years (including one that caused me to under-

go two painful surgeries earlier this year), I recently met an excellent nutritionist who has found the underlying related causes for all my health problems and is working to quickly bring me back to total health.

This principle is exactly what President Ikeda and the SGI have been telling us from the very beginning. President Ikeda says: "When your determination changes, everything else begins to move in the direction you desire. The moment you resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in your being immediately orient themselves toward your success. On the other hand, if you think, 'This is never going to work out,' at that instant, every cell in your being will be defeated, giving up the fight. Everything then will move in the direction of failure." We've been hearing for years that Buddhism is win or lose. Now, I've finally made my choice. I'm going to win.

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