



WOMEN
Wendy Clark discusses the women's division's plans for this year.

page 2



EXPERIENCE
Dancer Pascual Olivera conquers his self-doubt.

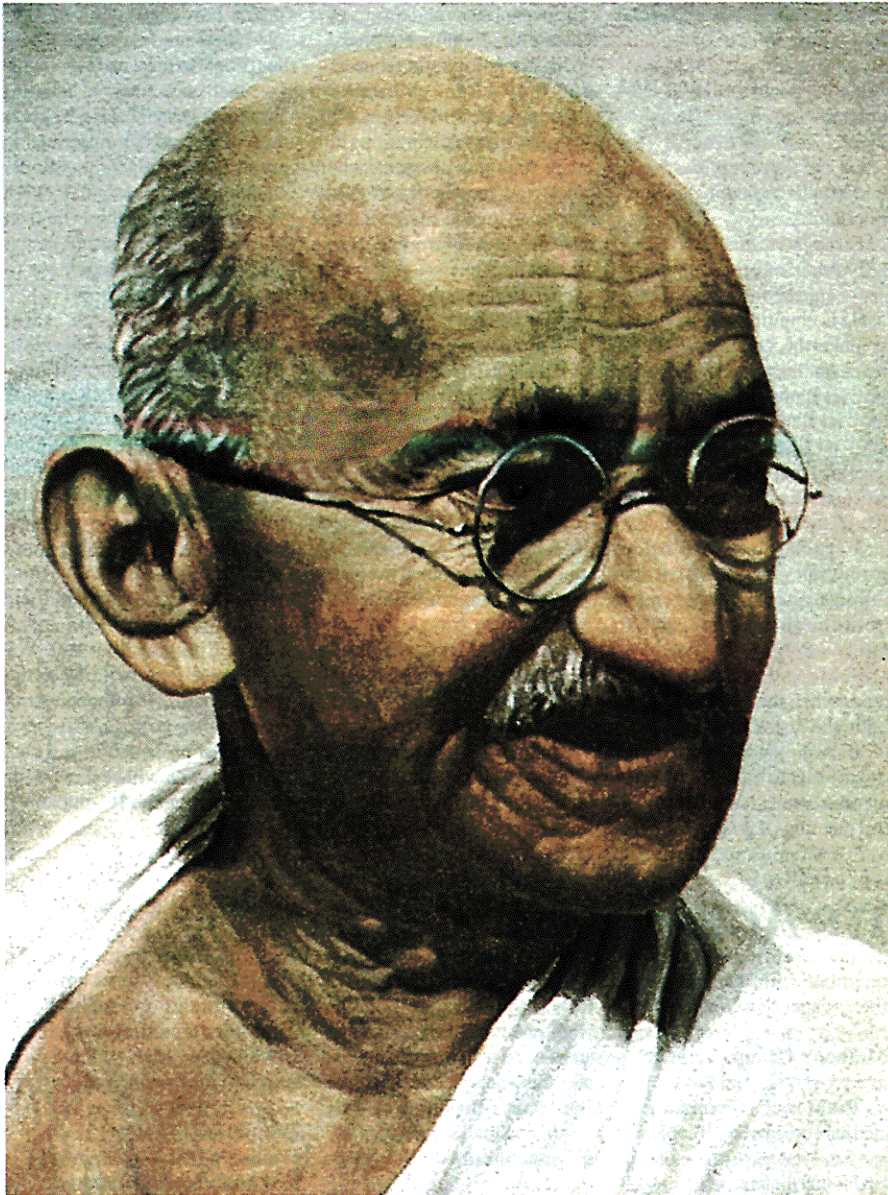
pages 6-8

No. 3224

JANUARY 8, 1999

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECH

True Joy – It's All in the Struggle



In his December Headquarters Leaders Meeting speech, the SGI president shares the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi as to where true happiness lies: 'Joy lies in the fight, in the attempt, in the suffering involved, not in the victory itself,' Gandhi teaches.

Through your brave, vigorous efforts and leadership, the SGI has made great strides forward in 1998, another important year in our movement.

My deepest appreciation to all of you for your tireless devotion. Let's praise each other for our achievements in 1998 and also make a great pledge to win in all our endeavors in 1999.

The SGI has now developed into a monumental people's movement with more than 10 million members. This dynamic momentum toward kosen-rufu has been created through the praiseworthy struggles of each of you.

The benefit that you are accumulating as a result will not only stay with you lifetime after lifetime but will enfold your children and grandchildren and descendants throughout posterity. Your entire family will prosper eternally. Nichiren Daishonin assures us of this in his writings.

Once again, I humbly thank and commend each of you from the bottom of my heart. You have made outstanding efforts.

All those exerting themselves to propagate the Mystic Law deserve the highest respect and praise. Position and status do not determine a person's greatness; most worthy, most precious are each of you striving sincerely in SGI activities.

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MESSAGE

The SGI president's message to the fourth SUA graduating class.

page 3

NEWS

The CEC makes plans for 1999.

page 8

WORDS

'Words to the Wise' on overcoming obstacles.

page 10

Price: \$2.00

Celebrating SGI-USA Women's Day

By WENDY CLARK
SGI-USA WOMEN'S DIVISION LEADER

SGI President Ikeda has said that the 21st century will be the century of women! Our meetings commemorating Feb. 27 — SGI-USA Women's Day — will be a momentous occasion to embark on the new millennium.

To actualize this year's theme, the Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century, based on dialogues among the regional women's division leaders, we would like to adopt the motto: "Breaking Through the Barriers of Our Own Limitations."

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 deflated, giving up the fight. Everything then will move in the direction of failure. I want you to understand the subtle workings of the mind. How you orient your mind, the kind of attitude you have, greatly influences both yourself and your environment" (July 11, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 14).

"Breaking Through the Barriers of Our Own Limitations" means to have an undaunted determination to win. It means

to resolve that nothing is impossible with the power of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. This is the spirit with which we should live every day in order to fully enjoy our lives. Breaking through our limitations also means to reach out and help others by sharing this practice with our friends.

During his visit to the United States in 1990, the SGI president announced the first Women's Day, and shared the profound "clear mirror" guidance. At that time, women from throughout the country gathered at Soka University in Los Angeles (Calabasas campus) for a historic meeting that has become the springboard of our annual women's celebrations. He explained that the only difference between a Buddha and a common mortal is that a common mortal is deluded. Using the metaphor of a tarnished mirror, he described how we can use our practice to brighten and transform our lives: "A polished mirror is the Buddha's life, whereas a tarnished mirror is that of a common mortal. Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is what polishes our life. Not only do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that the mirror of their lives shines brightly, too. Thus, it can be said that we are masters of the art of polishing the mirror of life" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 84).

At the end of the meeting, President Ikeda dedicated the



Wendy Clark

following poem to all SGI-USA women:

*Let the flowers of the Law
Bloom with beauty and
purity
Throughout this land of
America.*

He is counting on all women to make the greatest waves of peace on this new departure for the 21st century. He encouraged us to have a strong sense of responsibility for and to be extensively involved in our kosen-rufu activities. He compared the district to a port. Just as ships get fuel, supplies and food before setting sail, our friends receive support and encouragement from the district in order to safely navigate the ocean of daily life. All of the SGI succeeds when the members flourish in the district.

In keeping with his guidance and in order to build on the great success of our November general meetings, I propose the fol-

lowing guidelines for our Women's Day meetings:

- To hold the Women's Day meetings at the chapter, district or group level: We participated in several November district meetings small enough for members to have the opportunity to dialogue with one another and share from their hearts. President Ikeda calls district meetings "an oasis in today's world, where people from all walks of life ... encourage one another and discuss the means for attaining happiness." With that spirit, rather than having only large, entertaining meetings, let's make our 1999 Women's Day celebrations intimate dialogue sessions where all of our members and guests can open up and share with one another in a warm and caring environment.

- To have encouraging and inspiring meetings: You can base your meetings on whatever theme or topic you choose. You can use any guidance from President Ikeda, any writings from Nichiren Daishonin or other materials you think will be appropriate. The most important thing is that you have a meeting where everyone feels refreshed, encouraged, inspired and determined to create a victory in their life.

- To invite as many women's members and guests as possible: Build on the success of our November district general meetings to make sure that you reach out to women in your locale, guests who attended your general meeting, colleagues from work, friends and neigh-

bors. Guests do not have to be restricted to women. Each group is free to choose whom they'd like to invite.

Please note that while Feb. 27 is SGI Women's Day, the commemorative meetings may be held any time during February.

As the millennium draws to a close, it seems that people are increasingly lonely, isolated and fearful. Although technology such as e-mail, cellular phones and pagers have made our lives simpler, there are less opportunities for people to meet and communicate with one another in heart-to-heart dialogues. That is why holding warm, intimate meetings is important. At these meetings, members and guests can share their joys and sufferings. They can also renew their sense of mission and receive encouragement to challenge themselves.

Mrs. Ikeda once said, "There is no more noble action than caring for people's happiness." Let's create Women's Day commemorative meetings at which everyone feels invigorated and nurtured, where all participants will be inspired to challenge all their obstacles with a winning spirit so they can truly break through the barriers of their limitations.

I am praying that our women's meetings, building on the success of the November district general meetings, will be a model for propagation and participation and will be a cause for successful March 16 youth division meetings. WV

Other Women's Activity Guidelines

Each region can decide how to best implement the following activity guidelines, based on its respective circumstances.

Sophia Group

President Ikeda established the Sophia Group in May 1990 with the intention that its members would expand their intellect while deepening their commitment to exert themselves for their own personal happiness as well as for others' happiness.

Its purpose is to develop a core of women who deepen their understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and courageously challenge themselves in faith. By studying *The New Human Revolution* and/or *The Human Revolution*, they learn about the Gakkai spirit and the mentor-disciple relationship. The Sophia Group is also an activity in which young women who are transferring into the women's division can become ac-

quainted with the women in their respective locale.

Mother's Group

The Mother's Group was created for women who have children age 5 and younger. At times it may be difficult for women with small children to do a focused gongyo and attend activities. Therefore, this group provides an opportunity for them to attend an activity with their children to deepen their faith without being concerned about disturbing others.

In an environment conducive to warm, open dialogue, the women can inspire one another and discuss how to gradually impart the principles of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to their children. Smaller meetings are suggested in order to achieve this.

Women's Planning Committee

The purpose of this committee is to assist the women's region leader in better serving the members while also enhancing the women's activi-

ties. Its members serve a two-year term and are generally district level-and-up leaders; however, any level of leadership may be considered.

Transition of Young Women's Division Members to the Women's Division

It is important that all young women's division members be connected to a district of their choice, and that the women's leaders develop warm, nurturing relationships with them.

OPEN WIDE

the Windows



In his message to the 4th graduating class of Soka University of America, the SGI president advocates a global 'dialogue of the civilizations.' He encourages the Soka students to 'open wide the windows' of their hearts, so that they can make friends throughout the world.

My most heartfelt congratulations on this brilliant departure on the voyage of your lives to the hope of the 21st century, the standard-bearers of a new renaissance of life, the members of Soka University of America's 4th graduating class!

I express my sincere appreciation to my respected friends, Dr. Lou Ann Guanson and other distinguished guests, who have taken the time amid the many demands of your pressing schedules to attend today's graduation ceremony. As Soka University founder, I also wish to thank most deeply the teaching faculty, which has so sincerely encouraged and guided these students, these young people more valuable to me than my own life.

And finally, I express my congratulations to all the family members and friends of the graduating class.

In January 1995, thanks to the kind support of Dr. Guanson, I had the unique privilege of speaking on the subject of human security at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. I consider it one of the most significant events in my life, this opportunity to participate in a dialogue of the civilizations at that most august of settings, the wonderful rainbow island of Hawaii, so rich with beautiful, varied hues of human diversity.

Last month, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution designating the year 2001 the U.N. Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. In today's world, civilizations that previously had only limited contact are now

encountering one another at a pace and depth unknown in earlier times.

We must not allow these inter-civilization encounters to end in tragic conflict and confrontation. We must persist in developing the kind of dialogue that is based on friendship, that creates genuine peace. Humanity's future rests on the success of our efforts toward this.

The great philosophers of the American Renaissance, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, derived profound inspiration and creative energy from their encounter and dialogue with non-Western civilization. It was likewise Emerson and Thoreau who introduced the American people to the Lotus Sutra, the essence of Mahayana Buddhism.

The philosophy of the American Renaissance, which drew from the wisdom of the East, eventually influenced Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi, and then returned to American soil through the ideas and actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The philosophy of non-violence has in this way traversed and embraced the entire world.

By the way, I am presently conducting a dialogue with Professor Majid Tehrani, an Iranian scholar, who teaches at the University of Hawaii. Our dialogue is on the vast theme of Islam and Buddhism.

To the young successors gathered here today, I wish to say this: Do not be bound by the narrow confines of a particular ideology or culture! Open wide the windows of your heart and life! Spread the wings of your youth as you pursue vibrant exchange with

friends throughout the world!

SUA is a university seeking and creating bonds of friendship on the basis of impartial equality with the entire world. I hope that you will always maintain a profound sense of pride in having studied at this center of learning as you set out as brilliant pioneers of a new, global, 21st century civilization.

Next year will witness the first step toward the realization of a unified European currency. Years ago, I spoke with Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the intellectual father of the European Economic Community, who shared with me these words: "A civilization, if it is to be genuine, must, in addition to having a basis in scientific technology, be based on a respect for human dignity."

The philosophy of Soka education grew out of an absolute pacifism rooted in a firm respect for the sanctity of human life.

As you proceed on your chosen path of life amid the swamp-like realities of today's society, you will find yourself facing constant trials and challenges. At such times, I hope that you will remember the father of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who continued to travel and take action for the sake of the people until just moments before he was arrested by Japan's militarist authorities.

And I hope, with strength and perseverance, that you will dance the dance of your own, unique mission in life!

I ask that you share with me the founding spirit of this school as you create a clear, wide path of victory —

a path that will be traveled by untold numbers of you juniors, all those who will follow after you.

One person who is said to have had a decisive impact on the formation of Emerson's thinking and character was his aunt, Mary Emerson. In particular, Emerson, made her following words part of his philosophy, the creed to which he adhered throughout his life: "Scorn trifles, lift your aims: do what you are afraid to do: sublimity of character must come from sublimity of motive...."

Life is long, and you are all young. There is no need to be anxious or impatient. It is human nature that if everything goes smoothly from the start, you become lazy and passive. The most valuable, praiseworthy way of life is found in steady, step-by-step efforts to improve and elevate yourself.

Each of you is precious. Each of you is irreplaceable. I will always pray that, without exception, each of you will adorn your life with victory, health, glory and happiness.

I conclude by sharing these words of Mahatma Gandhi: "My goal is friendship with the world and I can combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong." As I offer these words to you, I envisage, stretching bright across the skies of the 21st century, the great rainbow of solidarity of the seven members of the 4th graduating class.

Dec. 16, 1998
DAISAKU IKEDA
Founder

By DAISAKU IKEDA
SGI PRESIDENT

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAYS



LIKE THE MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN

A spectacular sunset behind Mount Fuji causes the SGI president to reflect on the spectacular character of his mentor, Josei Toda. 'Mr. Toda's character was much like the majestic mountain,' President Ikeda explains. 'He stood absolutely unwavering in the midst of storms of criticism and insult. He was a brave figure of great faith and commitment.'

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Mount Fuji can sometimes be seen from the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo.

It was a crimson sunset. The sky blazed scarlet, the clouds transformed into golden waves, and the town and the people were all bathed in amber light. Beyond and above the city's buildings, Mount Fuji stood majestically, cloaked in violet hues. Its beauty took my breath away.

It was the first time I had seen Mount Fuji against such a spectacular sunset. It was the evening of Nov. 7, 1998, and I was looking out from the Soka Culture Center at our Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

As I was drove around the neighborhood a little later, the dusk spread and deepened. It was like a painter's masterpiece. I felt as if the heavens were celebrating the Soka Gakkai's Day of Founding, which was approaching on Nov. 18, with this gift of natural beauty.



I remember Mr. Toda suddenly saying to me once, "Let's go look at Mount Fuji." I accompanied him to a bridge, where Mount Fuji was often visible. Unfortunately, that day the sky was hazy, obliterating Fuji's noble peak from view. I still remember the expression on Mr. Toda's face as he sadly murmured, "What a shame that we can't see it!"

He was very fond of Mount Fuji. The Gakkai song "Song of Comrades," which he wrote the lyrics for, contains the lines "Can you not see Fuji's summit?/ Rally now, quickly, in growing numbers!" Mr. Toda's character was much like the majestic mountain: He stood absolutely unwavering in the midst of storms of criticism and insult. He was a brave figure of great faith and commitment. Like the broad foothills of Mount Fuji, his wide, compassionate embrace enveloped all humanity.

The name Mount Fuji is also written with the Chinese characters meaning oneness, indivisibility and not two. I have accepted Mr. Toda's towering example into my heart and proudly walked the road of the oneness of mentor and disciple.



Today, given the increase in cars and high-rise buildings in Tokyo, it is more difficult to glimpse Mount Fuji from Shinanomachi these days, but earlier in this century, it seems, the famous peak was often visible. The caption for an illustration labeled "Shinanomachi Station" in the

1903 book *New Edition of Illustrated Famous Places of Tokyo* says: "This is an elevated area, so the views are especially fine.... Mount Fuji and the mountains of Hakone can be seen in the distance and enjoyed in all four seasons."

The Shinanomachi area was one of the most scenic in all metropolitan Tokyo and a quiet, residential neighborhood. Such literary figures as Takizawa Bakin, who wrote the famous historical novel *Satomi and the Eight Dogs*, and the poet Saito Mokichi lived here, as did the social activists Sakai Toshihiko and Hiratsuka Raicho, and the political leader Inukai Tsuyoshi.

Even today, Shinanomachi is quite beautiful throughout the four seasons. Greenery is provided by Meiji Shrine Outer Garden and Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. And with sports facilities like the National Stadium, the Jingu Baseball Stadium, the Jingu Swimming Pool and the Tokyo Gymnasium here, Shinanomachi is a popular gathering spot for young people.

It is nearly the center of Tokyo's 23 wards, close to the new metropolitan center in Shinjuku and easily accessible by public transportation. I have heard that in the future a new station on Subway Line No. 12 will be opened at nearby Sendagaya, not far from the Soka International Friendship Hall.



The Soka Gakkai Headquarters moved to Shinanomachi from Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo, in 1953. For its new base, the Gakkai had bought and renovated a Western-style stucco building that had previously been used as the residence of a foreign ambassador.

Five months before his July 1943 arrest by the military authorities, Mr. Toda had visited the vicinity of Shinanomachi Station to teach others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I cannot help sensing some deep connection between this place and Mr. Toda.

And I am awed by his foresight in having chosen this location for the Soka Gakkai Headquarters.

I will always remember how excited and happy everyone was when the decision was made to move to Shinanomachi, some exclaiming how apt it was that we should be moving here, as the Chinese characters for Shinanomachi can be read to mean the Town of Strong Faith.



When you exit Shinanomachi Station, you find yourself in front of Keio Hospital. There's a famous story about a bombing raid on the hospital during World War II: At dawn on May 24, 1945, this area was the target of a concentrated fire bomb attack — so fierce and intense that bombs fell at a density of one per every 4 square yards. The students lodged at the hospital as a volunteer corps, and the nurses and medical staff all worked together to fight the fires while also trying to evacuate the patients.

Most involved in the rescue effort were young men and women, and the newspapers of the time recorded that some of them even cleared away the fire bombs that

had landed on the hospital roof with their hands. Due to these young people's valiant struggle, every single one of the 180 patients was safely evacuated without so much as a scratch.

In addition, they saved the hospital annex, its library and its preventative medicine department from being consumed by the fierce flames. The newspapers praised the efforts of these young people with this headline: "Victory Achieved Due to the Efforts of Young People; All Keio Hospital Patients Safely Evacuated."



Today, our World Youth Center stands in Shinanomachi, and SGI youth from all around the world gather there joyously with the shared commitment to safeguard the future of humanity. How bright are their smiles!

Many other buildings dedicated to promoting peace and culture, such as the Min-On Culture Center and the Josei Toda International Center, have also risen around the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi.

Now, Shinanomachi has become a headquarters for kosen-rufu, a source emanating peace, culture and happiness. I am deeply committed to building on the fine tradition of Shinanomachi and, working together with members of the local community, creating an "International Shinanomachi," an eternal capital that will shine with brilliant light in the 21st century.

To be continued

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

a novelized history of the soka gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 19-20

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 Elick, 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.

In the process of challenging and achieving one immediate goal after another, we forge the way for our glorious future. A winner in life successfully surmounts each day's hurdles.

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 di-

vision 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.

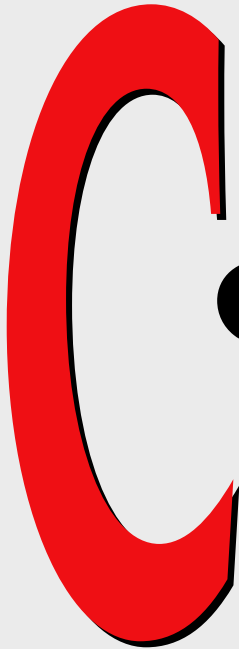
So, upon returning home from visiting a member, she would pour over her publications and other materials. And she would chant wholeheartedly, seriously pondering how to answer that person's question in a way that would be convincing and satisfying.

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

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



CONQUERING Self-Doubt

By PASCUAL OLIVERA

SGI-USA ARTS DIVISION DIRECTOR

The following is excerpted from a presentation given at the SGI-USA Culture Department Conference, which was held Nov. 13-15, 1998, at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

When I've had the opportunity to speak with many SGI artists, I've noticed that a subject that comes up a lot is concern about self-doubt. Many of us in the arts are confident and optimistic, but all of us have to deal with self-esteem questions at one time or another. I, like many artists, have had to struggle with self-doubt in my own life.

Even before I entered the first grade, I already knew that I wanted to become an artist. I was interested in all forms of art: visual arts, the theater and, of course, Spanish dance, which is now my career. I was lucky that my first-grade teacher saw that I had an artistic nature. She was the first person to nurture, support and encourage my interests in the arts at an early age.

My parents did not take my interest in the arts seriously until much later when I decided to do this for a living. In fact, they tried very hard to discourage my creativity. My response was to shut down — and I flunked the fifth grade. After that, they realized that I was serious about pursuing my artistic interests, so they consented to let me go to dance school and acting classes. Still, they thought the whole idea was silly. This is what I heard: "You'll never amount to anything." "Going into the arts is dumb. You're dumb." "Give it up, be practical." "You will suffer and starve in the arts." "You're not good enough."

Then my classmates found out that I was going to dancing school and theater classes instead of playing football, basketball or baseball. I was derided by them, too: "Only girls go to dance classes." "You're a sissy." "Don't come near me."

Ideas like that became ingrained in my life at a very early age, so they had a lot to do with how I thought of myself. These dis-

EXPERIENCE

couraging forces — many years of negative thinking about myself and being brought up in an environment of negativity — were the foundation of my becoming a skillful self-slanderer.

I met José Greco, the famous Spanish dancer, many times when he performed near my family home in Cleveland, Ohio. Eventually he took an interest in me and advised my parents to send me to Spain for training. If I made it through that, he would allow me to audition for his company. My dream of working for him kept me going through four years of studies in Spanish dance in Spain.

When I returned from Spain, I went to my audition with the José Greco Spanish Ballet only to be told, even before he saw me dance, that I had grown too tall for his company.

I was devastated, but I was used to accepting rejection. After all, I was never going to amount to anything. "I was stupid. They were right; this is not practical. Anyway, I haven't suffered enough — I haven't starved yet. Of course I was rejected!" I was perfecting the art of self-slander along with a career full of rejections. (Later I did get

into the José Greco Company and became his lead dancer. It was while I was in his company that I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.)

When I was 18 years old, I went to New York to seek my fortune in the arts. I needed an agent. I had heard about the famous William Morris Agency, so I looked them up. The receptionist must have taken a lik-

I learned immediately that you should never slander the Gohonzon, the members, the leaders or the practice, or you will see the bad effects in your life and will be miserable. For some reason, I got that down real fast and since I desperately wanted to succeed in my life, I did my best to abide by those basic ideas. At the time, however, there was not much talk of self-slander. I practiced very hard and made my dreams come true in spite of what I was thinking about myself: "I'm not a very good member." "Wait until they find out that I am not a very good person." "I'm a terrible leader. It's only a matter of time until they discover that I'm stupid."

In spite of my negative thinking, I still made my Buddhist practice work for me in many ways (that's how powerful Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is), but, fundamentally, I was not happy. I was not free.

In 25 years as a Buddhist, I had overcome many obstacles and had many turning points. All my dreams had come true — I had the career of my dreams, the marriage of my dreams against all odds, the home of my dreams, I had overcome an incurable illness, I had even become a successful leader — all in spite of myself, but I was still imprisoned by my negative thinking.

Then I had another turning point, which came in the form of an obstacle so gigantic that this time I thought even my practice to the Gohonzon could not save me.

I contemplated suicide. I considered not chanting anymore. (I never understood how people could stop practicing, but now, at this impasse in my life, I had the very same thoughts.) Fortunately, I was — and still am — diligent about observing gongyo, so even during this horrific time, I never stopped doing gongyo. Sometimes I felt like I was chanting in a coma. I was numb, but I did not stop.

Then I read something from SGI President Ikeda: "Each of us has 'one fundamental evil' — one basic fault — that stands in the way of our personal growth. If we can overcome our fundamental fault, everything will open up dramatically" (Sept. 12, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 13).

I decided to try again and, this time, I would challenge myself to find my fundamental evil.

"When your determination changes," President Ikeda says, "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" (July 11, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 14).

After chanting much daimoku, I realized that my one fundamental evil and the destructive roots of my life were self-slander and self-doubt. I was determined to conquer my negative thinking about myself. For



Pascual and Angela Olivera in Spain.

Photo by GARY MURIE

ing to me and my raw enthusiasm because I got an interview with an agent. He really liked me and wanted to sign me to a seven-year exclusive contract. It so happened that the William Morris Agency was the casting office for the musical *The Sound of Music*, starring Mary Martin. The agent wanted to place me in the musical so I could make

enough money to live in New York and continue my studies in acting, singing and dancing. He was going to help direct my career. I left the William Morris office on cloud nine. My feet hardly touched the ground.

Then I started to think... "But I'm not ready for this, it's too fast. Where is the suffering, the starving for my art? What if they find out I'm not really good enough? I'm stupid. I will not amount to anything anyway." Overwhelmed with self-doubt, I never went back to the William Morris Agency and never returned their calls.

I had many opportunities like this in my career and I always managed to sabotage them. I finally ended up in a traveling musical revue that performed in supper clubs. The owners were alcoholics and very abusive. I felt right at home and stayed for almost two years.

In 1968, I started to practice Buddhism.

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three weeks I did not let one negative thought enter my mind. Then something negative happened and I attacked myself with a vengeance. After two days of beating up on myself, I felt I was in my element. I had my true identity back. I had found my way back to my comfort zone and the struggle was over, or so I thought.

It was at that moment that I realized that if self-doubt was at the core of my life and this was where I could find comfort, then I was in deep trouble. That obstacle and that realization were the turning point for me and I made a big step in my lifelong quest for inner human revolution.

I started the process with the most difficult task: learning to like myself. I could never say to myself, “I like you, I love you.” That seemed awkward for me, so I pictured myself as a little boy hiding in the corner — crying and bruised and filled with pain. I had to picture myself embracing this little child (myself) and saying things to him like: “I will never hurt you again (by slandering you). I will never abuse you again or let anyone else abuse you again. I will make you the happiest person in the world. I will never let you cry or make you sad.” I did this once a week for two hours at a time. Each time I had negative thoughts about myself, the image of this little boy would appear and I would not break my promise to this now happy child.

When people tried to abuse me, I would not allow it. I also kept a journal during this time and wrote out all my most negative and secret feelings about myself and others. For a year I wrote three pages a day, no matter what. I wrote until I had no more negativity to write. I had worked through it, let it go, and now my inner child was happy and at peace. I had cleansed myself by purging my negativity in writing — and by chanting.

Sometimes I would watch myself in different negative situations just to see how I would react, but nothing could bring out self-slander anymore because it was gone. I was healed.

I don’t want to give the impression that I’m perfect. Inner revolution is an ongoing thing. I can still be negative and complain with the best of them. The difference now is that I always go back to the Gohonzon and change my problems. I don’t let bad things linger anymore.

Not long ago, I was greatly disappointed with some changes that took place in the organization. I felt like I had been kicked in the stomach. I moaned and groaned for a short time. Then I dragged myself to the Gohonzon and chanted and chanted through my pain, discovering that I had a lesson to

learn, that this was no coincidence. This was my opportunity to grow and develop my faith. My prayer was heartfelt and a few weeks later the circumstances changed and became the best situation I’ve ever had. I had been suffering for 15 years with this issue and it all came down to changing my own attitude.

Today I can sincerely say I have a life of true freedom and happiness. I have no regrets in my life about anything.

I only want to help the many artists who are still trapped in their own self-doubt and who have made this their comfort zone without realizing it.

Everyone has a different experience of how they became self-doubters. In a creative life, it’s easy to do. As artists we live in a world of rejection. “You’re too tall.” “You’re not tall enough.” “You’re too good-looking.” “You’re not good-looking enough.” “You’re too young.” “You’re too old.” “Your work is too modern — too abstract. We can’t sell that stuff here.” “Your work is too realistic — not modern or abstract enough. Go somewhere else.” “Who ever told you you could write?” “Don’t give up your day job.” “Just put it on the pile marked Z and don’t call me.” “What symphonies have you played with?” “Sorry, you’re over qualified.” “Sorry, you’re not qualified enough.” “Sorry, you’re just not good enough.” “Sorry, you’re just too good for us.” “YOU GOT THE JOB!!” “Why me? I’m not good enough. I’m not ready. I haven’t suffered enough. I have to wait tables just a little longer. They deserve the job more. They are much more talented than I will ever be!”

I was once asked this question at an Arts Division meeting: “I have two actresses in my artist group at home. They are both the same age, the same type and go out for the same parts. One is much more talented than the other, but the less talented one always gets the jobs. The more talented one has not had an acting job in a year and waits tables for a living. How can that be?”

My guess would be that the one who is always working in her profession has this thought process: “I got up late. I just started my period. I feel terrible, but I will put this aside and go forward and win. I am the best person for this part. This part was made for me. I should have this part and I will prove that in my audition. I am grateful to be able to play this role. I will sign a contract and this film will be a success because of my talent and contribution. This is my lucky year and my lucky day. I’m not in great shape, but they will love me anyway.”

The other actress thinks: “I got up late, why bother even going now? I just started

my period and I feel terrible. I may just stay in bed. I probably won’t get the part anyway. There will be a lot of talented actresses auditioning and I don’t have the talent to measure up. I can’t handle being rejected. I have not had a part in over a year. What if I get the part? I have not worked in over a year. I’m out of shape. I hope I don’t have to wait another year. This is just not my year. This is not my lucky day!”

Who do you think will get the part?

As artists, we must overcome the fear of failure — and the fear of success. We must develop the courage to remember that there is no such thing as failure in Buddhism, only turning points. With the sword of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can battle our greatest fears, our most negative thoughts, and we can replenish our lives with hope and optimism.

President Ikeda says, “In other words, don’t make excuses. Take responsibility for your life — resolve to be victorious. If you allow yourself to be defeated, all the excuses in the world will get you nowhere. Defeat is defeat no matter how eloquently you try to justify yourself. The important thing is to win where you are right now, to achieve victory without fail. No matter what obstacles we face, it is crucial that we transform the situation and realize victory right where we are. This is the way of the Lotus Sutra” (April 18, 1997, *World Tribune*, pp. 9–11).

The most rewarding part about talking about this topic is that once someone realizes that they have a tendency toward self-doubt, they can then go through the process of healing. It really is a process of healing. Until you completely heal, you will continue to bleed. The benefits are wonderful. I get letters and postcards from artists telling me that through working and chanting to rid themselves of negative thoughts, they have become successful beyond their wildest dreams. We must clear the way for our creativity to be able to flow in a manner that will influence, inspire and touch the human heart — stemming from a happy and positive state of life. With this spirit...

Our SGI president says in *Learning From the Goshu: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin* (pp. 128–29): “*Spirit* means inner state of life, or one’s heart. It decides what we devote our lives to. It is the fundamental prayer on which we base our existence. A person’s spirit is invisible but becomes manifest at a crucial moment. Not only that, it also controls everything about a person, each moment of every day — it is the fundamental determinant of one’s life.

“The Kegon Sutra says, ‘The heart is

like a skilled painter.’ Like a great painter, the heart freely creates representations of all things. One’s heart is the designer, the painter, the sculptor and the architect of his or her being...

“It is our spirit, our life-moment, that counts. Our spirit is our hopes, our prayers. And it can also be identified with the subconscious.

“‘What kind of future do I envision?’, we may ask ourselves. ‘What kind of self am I trying to develop? What do I want to accomplish in my life?’ We should paint this vision of our lives in our hearts as specifically as possible. This ‘painting’ becomes the design for our future. The power of the heart enables us to actually execute a wonderful masterpiece in accordance with that design. This is the doctrine of a life-moment possessing three thousand realms.

“The more specific and detailed the blueprint we have in our hearts, the better. The point is to continue vividly painting the target we have and to advance toward that goal single-mindedly. Then, at each instant, the reality of our lives will gradually approach the painting that is our aspiration.

“Everything depends on what is in our hearts. Heartfelt prayers will definitely be answered. If we decide that something is impossible, then consistent with our minds in thinking so, even things possible will become impossible. On the other hand, if we have the confidence that we can definitely do something, we are already one step closer to achieving it.”

Complete freedom in your life is possible. In the past, I seemed to attract negative people to me. Now they shy away. I am now very much aware of people who try to slander, abuse, take advantage, use, disrespect or dishonor me, and I do not permit it. I realize that I was a slave to my own negativity. Now I can truly feel more compassion and appreciation for other people because

I appreciate and have compassion for myself. Unhappiness, misery and depression used to be my comfort zone. True indestructible happiness was alien to me. I didn’t think it was really attainable. Now, with my new happy state of life, I can never go back to the other again. I feel like Ino longer practice Buddhism in my head, but in my heart. I’ve learned that a change of destiny doesn’t just happen, you have to work at it.



Human Rights Day Held at SUA

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Arun Gandhi speaks at SUA, Dec. 8, 1998.

Soka University and its Pacific Basin Research Center hosted a Human Rights Day, Dec. 8, 1998. The daylong event included a testimonial by Magda Mozes, a concentration camp survivor, and a talk on "Human Rights, Relationships and Responsibilities" by Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi.

Arun Gandhi shared how, when he was a teenager, his grandfather taught him to deal with anger: Gandhi told him to keep an "anger notebook," to write down everything that made him mad — and the solutions to everything that made him mad. One of the greatest stumbling blocks to human rights worldwide, Arun Gandhi said, is that we don't know how to deal with anger in such constructive ways.

The PBRC has recently completed a cycle of research on historical policies that led to advances in human rights; the results are now available in a new book of essays, *Human Rights: Positive Policies in Asia and the Pacific Rim* (Hollis Publishing).

— JEFF FARR

CONQUERING, FROM PAGE 7

a change of destiny doesn't just happen, you have to work at it.

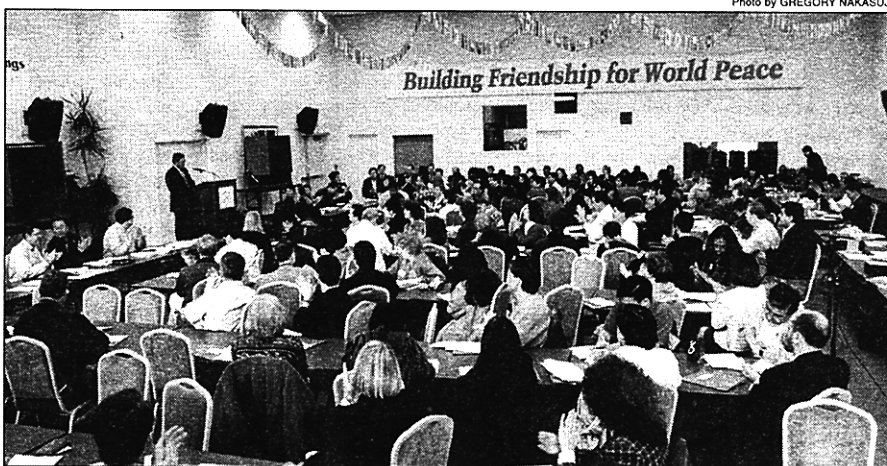
Please be kind to your fellow artists. We all get so little of that from society in general. As artists we sometimes live in an isolated world, a world where we can feel completely alone. That's why extraordinary acts of human kindness bring about extraordinary benefit in our lives and are great sources of propagating this Buddhism.

Please always remember that we are unique, a one of a kind. All of us are. No two performances, works of art, poems or books are ever alike. Every waking moment of every human being is influenced by an artist. The coffee cup we drink from, the clothes we wear, our cars, our houses, televisions, movies, radio, theater, music, even our shoes and socks, all come from the creative imag-

ination of artists just like us.

I love what Broadway star Tommy Tune says about life in his book *Footnotes*: "It's all so completely simplistic, so frustratingly complex. This is not a dress rehearsal. THIS IS THE SHOW!"

I hope that as artists we can create great fortune for ourselves and become happy, successful and wealthy so that we can do even more for kosen-rufu. The world will not survive without us. We have the power to reach out and bring human life to the Gohonzon through our art. Our talent is our gift; use it in a positive way. Be it from the written word, the spoken word, from a gallery or museum wall, from the stage, from the television, radio or a movie theater — art has the power to touch and move the human heart like nothing else in the world. That's how powerful our lives are. WT



General Director Zaitzu speaks to the Central Executive Conference at the Los Angeles Friendship Center.

Central Executive Conference Meets in Los Angeles

The Central Executive Conference, SGI-USA's main decision-making body, met in Los Angeles Dec. 4-6, 1998, to discuss the organization's direction for 1999.

The SGI as a whole had already agreed on three goals to support the 1999 theme, the Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century: 1) to win in our daily lives; 2) to develop trust and friendship in our communities; and 3) to continue to fight the injustice that

obstructs the advancement of kosen-rufu (see Jan. 1 *World Tribune*, p. 3). The 173 leaders gathered in Los Angeles agreed on three more goals specific to SGI-USA for 1999: 1) to increase our propagation efforts; 2) to increase readership of the SGI-USA publications; 3) to increase participation in district activities.

A quarterly plan was also adopted toward the three goals: December 1998-February: propagation; March-May: special

contributions; June-August: publications promotion; September-November: discussion meeting participation.

Also during the CEC meeting, a new zone system was announced. The SGI-USA will have eight zones across the country; zone leaders will function as an extension of the national level, between the region and national levels, to support organizational communication.

— JEFF FARR

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ALSO, CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHORS & ILLUSTRATORS.

SGI-USA Publications is planning several new book projects for 1999 and beyond, and we are seeking professionals to help on a project-by-project basis.

If you have experience in any of these areas and are interested in helping with



exciting new projects, please send a description of your background or contact Dave McNeill at 310-260-8934 or dmcneill@sgi-usa.org for more information.

SPEECH, FROM PAGE 1

Let's make 1999 the start of the 21st century!

What will be a key term for Japan in 1999? The Tokyo-based think tank Dentsu Institute for Human Studies maintains that it will be *soft power*. I also stressed the importance of soft power in a speech at Harvard University seven years ago.

Indian philosopher Dr. Lokesh Chandra visited Japan recently, and I want to share some related points that he made during our conversation. I will convey them just as he said them; they are a reflection of his great expectations for all SGI members: "Today, the SGI is linking the world through such soft power [as culture and education] and building ties of friendship between countries.... You, President Ikeda, are a symbol of the soft power of the 21st century.... I hope that you will spread this philosophy of soft power, so that it might be integrated into a global culture of humankind."

People of outstanding intellect are free of envy. They perceive with impartial clarity what the future needs.

Now, many thinkers in Japan are finally beginning to turn their attention toward soft power. Our early advocacy of this course, I believe, is one clear proof that our movement is on the forefront of the times.

1999 will soon be here. Let's make 1999 the start of the 21st century and advance with that spirit in all our activities, ensuring that we stay in the vanguard. What do you think?

I am determined to travel once again throughout Japan and around the world for peace. The stage for the Soka Gakkai's endeavors is not limited to this tiny country of Japan.

Buddhism encompasses the universe. The entire world — wherever people live — is the grand stage of our activities.

Winning is great — but the challenges we surmount along the way to victory are even better.

Where is joy found? Mahatma Gandhi declares, "Joy lies in the fight, in the attempt, in the suffering involved, not in

the victory itself."

It is exhilarating to win — but the challenges we encounter and surmount along the way bring an even greater sense of fulfillment.

True joy is found in struggle. Once we've accomplished a goal, it can leave us feeling drained, a little sad that the challenge is over. What's valuable is not only the goal but the process that we go through to achieve it.

If we look at the process of falling in love and getting married, this may be easy to understand. Still, there seem to be an awful lot of people who, once they've married, start to complain: "Marriage is a cemetery." "It was great until we tied the knot...."

Or let's take another example — train travel. Cultured people in countries other than Japan tend to sit back, relax and enjoy the passing scenery. But Japanese travelers are generally preoccupied by what time they'll reach their destination or how much the trip is costing them! They're stressed out and impatient.

And then, inexplicably, the minute the train starts moving, they drop off into sound sleep. They miss the wonderful sights along the way — when the entire journey is a motion picture, a painting, poetry, music!

Life's true exhilaration lies in how we live each moment, in how hard we strive and challenge ourselves in the present in our journey to ultimate victory. Life is interesting precisely because we have to battle our way through all kinds of ups and downs.

We are enacting the drama of *kosen-rufu* on an infinitely grand stage.

Nothing is more foolish than to be a slave to fear.

The great hero of India, Mahatma Gandhi — why did he succeed in his struggles?

Dr. N. Radhakrishnam, director of the Gandhi Memorial Hall in India and a champion of Gandhian ideals, attributes Gandhi's success to his fearlessness. To fear nothing is the greatest happiness. To be unafraid, no matter what happens — this is the life-condition of Buddhahood.

Gandhi teaches that we mustn't try to avoid our suffering for the sake of truth, nor should we

be afraid to stand up and fight for our beliefs. By the same token, it is vital that we in the SGI never shun hardships in seeking and deepening our understanding of the supreme truth, the Mystic Law.

Gandhi describes fear as a worse disease than malaria, declaring, "Fear is not a disease of the body; fear kills the soul." If we let our spirit wither and die, we lose. And that only strengthens the hand of our would-be oppressors.

Nothing, therefore, is more foolish than to be afraid. Nothing is more degrading. There is nothing as counterproductive as allowing ourselves to be tormented by fear.

I declare to you: Friends, don't be afraid! Do not fear persecution. Do not fear liars. Do not fear attacks inspired by jealousy. What is there to fear from base, cowardly individuals anyhow?

Gandhi asserts that fearlessness is the first requirement for spirituality. Such fearlessness is the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism and the SGI. It is the spirit of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, the spirit of the lion king. In the more than five decades since I, at age 19, embraced faith, I have feared nothing.

Not only Gandhi was afraid of no one — he instilled this courage in his fellow citizens' hearts. He urged people to discard fear and become lions of courage.

"Democracy," he explains, "is not a state in which people act like sheep." Genuine democracy exists when each individual, armed with unshakable conviction and humanistic philosophy, stands up to champion justice and truth.

The SGI is the epitome of such democracy.

U.S. Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin took a lone stand against America's declaration of war on Japan.

Today is Dec. 8. Many of you may not be aware of the significance of this date. On Sept. 8 [Japan time], 57 years ago, the Pacific War began. Not many Japanese know that there was a lone member of the U.S. Congress who voted against the declaration of war on Japan: Her name was Jeannette Rankin, the first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.



U.S. Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin.

After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, American public sentiment overwhelmingly supported a declaration of war. Congress, too, rang with calls for swift retaliation against Japan.

Since Japan had initiated the hostilities on the States, this reaction was perhaps understandable. It was in this state of things that Rankin took a lone stand and spoke out courageously against war. She categorically rejected war as an option under any circumstances.

Women are strong at the crucial moment, whereas men can often be weak. It's the same in the Soka Gakkai.

Some astute observers have even said that a more appropriate name for our organization would be the Soka Women's Gakkai!

Rankin stated before Congress, "As a woman I can't go to war, and I refuse to send anyone else." She championed moral right with unflinching confidence and dignity. Her actions were those of a true representative of the people.

But her declaration produced an uproar in the chamber. Boos and hisses rang from the floor and galleries. She was angrily reviled as a traitor and Nazi spy. There were heated calls for her resignation. She later received death threats and abusive letters demanding her immediate departure to Japan.

Rankin was 61 then. Her courage is to be admired.

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 29th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Dec. 8. Part 2 will appear in next week's issue.

Linus Pauling Virtual Tour

You may have missed visiting the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition in San Francisco, but now you can *virtually* visit it. A virtual tour has been completed and added to the official exhibition Web site, www.paulingexhibit.org. While the virtual tour uses text and images from the exhibition, it's designed for an optimal Web experience and doesn't simply duplicate the actual exhibition space. It also explains the story behind the creation of the exhibition, co-sponsored by the SGI.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Words to the Wise

Many hear about and accept this sutra, but few continue their faith in the face of great obstacles. To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith. Those who embrace this sutra should be prepared to meet difficulties. ("The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith," The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 127)

From SGI President Daisaku Ikeda:

As long as we live, we will experience problems and sufferings. They are proof that we are alive. We encounter obstacles precisely because we are making progress. When we fearlessly forge ahead and overcome them, our life becomes brighter and richer and our horizons broaden. True happiness is, after all, the feeling that one's inner world has been enriched. The problems we face become our teachers, pointing out life's treasures to us. (July 1997 Living Buddhism, p. 53)

On the level of the individual, practicing the Lotus Sutra means confronting the fundamental darkness in one's own life. In terms of society, it means confronting corrupt power and authority. Practicing the Lotus Sutra, therefore, necessarily entails challenging great difficulties. Someone who does not confront great hardship is not a true votary of the Lotus Sutra. (August 1997 Living Buddhism, pp. 42-43)

It could be said that the human revolution is a great struggle with the self.... By undergoing difficulties and struggling to overcome them, we can eradicate the fundamental darkness in our lives. Apart from this, there is no true attainment of Buddhahood. (August 1997 Living Buddhism, p. 46)

[Peace and security is] not a matter of leading a timid and weak existence, seeking to avoid obstacles and difficulties. Rather, we should have the spirit: "Come what may, I will survive!" "I will climb another mountain! And the more I climb, the more I can enjoy my life, and the more people I can help become happy." Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the teaching for leading the ultimate "active life." (September 1997 Living Buddhism, p. 38)

In our practice of the Daishonin's teachings, we may sometimes encounter unpleasantness from others; we may also exert ourselves twice as hard as others. But this is all part of our Buddhist practice. The Daishonin teaches that we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. To do so, we have to pass through the trials of the three obstacles and four devils. Yet that's all we need to do to attain enlightenment in this lifetime and enjoy boundless Buddhahood over eternity. So no matter what happens, it's essential that we keep advancing joyfully and courageously, never succumbing

to fear. (Sept. 5, 1997, World Tribune, p. 8)

Since the days of my youth my motto has been "The greater the resistance waves meet, the stronger they become." This conviction resonates at a fundamental level with the idea of challenge and response, the theory of history espoused by the great historian Arnold Toynbee. He maintained that a civilization would continue to develop as long as people had the energy and vitality to accept life's inevitable problems and obstacles as challenges and respond to them by growing stronger. Conversely, when people lose the energy and vitality to respond positively to challenges, a civilization will begin to decline. (Dec. 19, 1997, World Tribune, p. 13)

Those who have experienced great suffering must win in life and become happy. If you're always losing and miserable, then you are not practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism correctly. You are not following life's true path. Buddhism teaches the means by which the sad become happy and the happy become happier still. That is the reason for our practice. And isn't becoming happy one of life's most important goals? (Aug. 15, 1997, World Tribune, p. 13)

Just as one cannot graduate from school without passing a test, one cannot become a Buddha without defeating devilish functions. To the extent that we struggle against and defeat such obstacles, we approach Buddhahood. (Aug. 15, 1997, World Tribune, p. 15)

One remark of Goethe's in particular struck me: "One can bear most things in life, / Except for a monotonous run of prosperity." These are golden words. If our days are always tranquil and uneventful from the time we are young, we will soon tire of life — the boredom of such an existence becoming unbearable. In other words, adversity give birth to greatness. The greater challenges and difficulties we face, the greater opportunity we have to grow. A life with adversity, a life of ease and comfort, produces nothing and leaves us with nothing. This is one of the indisputable facts of life. (July 18, 1997, World Tribune, p. 17)

There is a saying that "While a block of

marble is an obstacle to the weak, it becomes a steppingstone to the strong." Strong people make the most of obstacles. The stronger we are, the more joyful our lives. It all comes down to life force, spiritual energy. And these fundamentally derive from the power of faith and practice. (Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, vol. 1, pp. 128-29)

President Toda said: "Faith is a never-ending battle against impasse. It is a struggle between the Buddha and devilish functions — between negative and positive forces. This is the meaning of 'Buddhism is concerned with winning.' Everyone encounters an impasse at some point in life. However, the power of the Gohonzon is immeasurable, as vast as the universe itself. Our lives, too, have infinite potential. Everything hinges, therefore, on whether we allow our inner determination to become deadlocked. When we truly grasp this point, the path to victory is already open." (Sept. 19, 1994, World Tribune, p. 13)

Just as a river courses over rocks and stones, life is full of problems and sufferings. If the river flows strongly, the rocks and stones will not only be submerged but will eventually be eroded and washed away. The profound inner joy and dynamic vitality of a life dedicated to achieving the mission of peace known as kosen-rufu resembles the powerful flow of a river. With the joy of faith, one can calmly sweep away and triumph over all sufferings, no matter how numerous they may be. (The New Human Revolution, vol. 1, p. 160)

You cannot truly grow if you are always flattered and spoiled by those around you. You must resolve never to avoid hardship. If anything, you should have the spirit to go out of your way to find and challenge difficulties. The ultimate victors in life are those who have undergone and triumphed over hardships. Life is long. There is no need to be impatient. The important thing is to steadily and surely build a solid self. Since you uphold faith in the Mystic Law, whatever may happen, you can propel yourself in the best possible direction. I hope you will advance with that conviction. (April 11, 1997, World Tribune, p. 13)

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

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Experience Book

For many years, at the beginning of my practice, I didn't have any experiences to share with members to encourage them or with friends who were interested in the practice. I was told by my leaders to share others' experiences if I had none of my own.

The experiences in the *World Tribune* have always touched my heart and I have had occasion to use them as encouragement for others. I have often thought of Xeroxing them to keep them together so I could refer back to them. What I was wondering was would you consider having them bound into a book? I believe myself and others would benefit greatly.

—MICHELE CLOUTIER,
Boston

Language of the Heart

This is in response to Cesare Civetta's letter in the Dec. 18 & 25, 1998, issue titled "Speak English." I feel that Civetta has valid points in focusing our organization to articulate our ideas in a more mainstream way. However, I feel that the way Civetta approaches this idea is in a very offensive manner. Many words that we use in our current English language come from foreign words! What is wrong with using foreign words? The English language is always evolving.

I think that guests (at SGI activities) respond more to one's heart than one's words. I can remember so many times when a member, who may not be fluent in English, was able to move a guest's heart profoundly. I also know guests who thoroughly enjoy learning new words, and hearing these new words only enhanced their experience of being at a Buddhist meeting. If we conduct meetings in English, why not translate *gongyo* and *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*? Even the word *shakubuku* cannot be simply translated into English. Chinese characters have many layers of meaning.

The essence of many foreign words cannot be trans-

lated. That is where our heart becomes the key.

It is just like listening to music or going to the opera or — chanting together.

I know many foreigners who speak English more correctly and fluently than many native English-speaking Americans. Yet, because their appearance may not be typically "American" and their mannerisms are foreign, many "Americans" who don't even speak a second language have used the excuse that they weren't able to understand these foreigners and that is why "they" (Americans) made a mistake. Humble and appreciative Americans always make an effort to understand these foreigners, and if they don't, I never hear these Americans make excuses for themselves. They usually ask twice and make sure that both parties understand each other.

I truly believe that one of the major problems facing our American society today is the fact that people only hear the surface of words and use interpretations of these words as weapons, instead of carefully listening to the heart of the person conveying those words.

—LISA ARAGAKI,
Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Substance or Formality?

I would like to thank Lisa Jones for her article "Bell, Book, Candles and Saxophone" (Nov. 13, 1998, *World Tribune*). Thank you for educating us on the origins and the clarity of individual choice concerning these rituals, formalities and offerings. Practice that comes from the heart is extremely powerful and allows us to gain the most joy and benefit possible.

In response to letters written by Ralph E. Hicken & Peter Dannenfels II, which appeared in the Mailbox section (Dec. 11, 1998, *World Tribune*) I would like to say: There are many of us who began practicing in the late '60s, '70s and '80s, whom I believe sincerely incorporated all the formalities and rituals at the time as part of our Buddhist practice....

During and since his trip to the United States in 1990, President Ikeda has spent much time and energy encouraging us how to derive the most joy and benefit from our practice; as well as educating us how to conduct our kosen-rufu movement joyfully and effectively.

In his 1990 speech at the 2nd Pan American Conference, President Ikeda spoke about formalities: "President Toda detested formalities. And for this reason, as his disciple, I have tried to place foremost emphasis on substance. Formalities are important in certain cases, but mere formality that lacks substance is an evil. Formalities in and of themselves have no life, whereas substance is alive. Formality is provisional and substance is essential. Formality is conventional therefore conservative, but substance provides the impetus for progress and development."

In this same trip President Ikeda spoke at the first youth training session: "I always place high value on personal initiative. Spontaneity underlies the spirit of autonomy and independence; conversely, taking action because one is told to amounts to slavery of the spirit. Kosen-rufu will be advanced by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*."

President Ikeda's expectation is that we, the members of the SGI-USA, stand up and take the lead of kosen-rufu into the 21st century....

Let's ask ourselves these questions: Are we focusing on substance or mere formalities? Are we taking personal initiative or do we feel it's someone else's responsibility? Are we becoming brave people armed with the spirit of independence or are we afraid to change? Are we voluntarily striving to fulfill our vow or do we only take action when we are asked? Are we using our passion to understand the hearts of others or are we caught up in the lesser

self? Are we developing the wisdom to en-

courage others to realize their full potential...? Are we encouraging practice that comes from the heart or are we insisting others do it our way?

Let's continue to develop our spirit of independence, bravely forging ahead as we lead kosen-rufu into the 21st century based on substance founded in treasures of the heart.

—SANDI JOHNSON,
Northridge, Calif.

Crossing the Legs

My writing is inspired by the letter (Dec. 11, 1999, *World Tribune*) from Peter Dannenfels II of Sacramento, Calif. I was glad he made the point that there is a point to each of the taboos or forms for doing gongyo and chanting before the Gohonzon. Lisa Jones' iconoclastic editorial, at the same time it was refreshing, was also disturbing. In my laziness I walked away from reading it with a non-committal "that's interesting."

However, when I sound the gong, or pay attention to where I put my book down, or pick the time carefully to regulate the incense, I increase my awareness of where I am in relation to gongyo itself. Am I planning dinner, or what I am going to say to a colleague who annoyed me, or am I doing gongyo? If doing gongyo is waking up my Buddha nature, and I know it is, then the gong better be recognizable and in keeping with doing gongyo. A saxophone wouldn't do the job.

Now I come to why I was inspired to write. It was Peter's comment about crossing the legs. I like to sit on the floor or on a cushion on the floor. It is my preference and my SGI friends can sit wherever they like. However, I can sit cross-legged. Am I resisting gongyo or showing a lack of respect? I don't feel that I am. Sitting cross-legged in meditation has a long and venerable history. This posture of cross-legged or "half-lotus" sitting is different than

the casual crossing of the legs when one is seated in a chair. The bottom line is that we all serve ourselves well if we look at what we do with the question in mind, is this furthering our commitment to doing an attentive and sincere gongyo? Thanks, Peter, and thanks, Lisa. Thanks to all the readers who take the time to share their thoughts on this practice. I love the Mailbox.

—DIANA COOK-
PEARL,
Los Altos, Calif.

A Fan Letter

I've been meaning to write. Letters in the Dec. 11, 1998, issue have me reaching for my pen.

I'm a 25-year member who leans heavily on the *World Tribune* and appreciates its tremendous growth and continual improvement. Thank you all!

But this is a more specific fan letter — for Lisa Jones. I am amazed over and over at the quality of her pieces. New information, a different slant, never dogmatic, authoritarian or guilt-producing. Always well thought out and with a tone of freshness, sincerity.... ("5 and 3" is a gem. The title alone is brilliant.)

Thank you so much.
—JUDY ADCOCK,
Pownal, Maine

Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune. In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation. Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Send letters to "Mailbox," World Tribune, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; or e-mail at wt@sgi-usa.org.

A Touch of CULTURE

The 3rd SGI-USA Culture Department Conference was held on Nov. 12-15, 1998, at the Florida Nature and Culture Center with approximately 160 participants from throughout the country. The first conference session began with a joint presentation by SGI-USA Culture Department Leader Gerry Hall and Eric Hauber, academic division leader, on the topic "Who Are We, Where Are We Going?"

In the remaining conference sessions, participants broke off into their respective divisions — academic, arts, educators, healing arts and legal — and shared personal experiences and encouragement.

The Culture Department's mission statement reads, "The mission of the members of the Culture Department is to develop their highest potential in their respective fields, based on their human revolution, and to support the SGI-USA movement of peace, culture and education in the United States." — TESHAYE ABAGAZ

Photos by Cheryl Utley, Prairie Village, Kan.



COMING NEXT WEEK

Part 2 of President Ikeda's December speech

SPECIAL
PULLOUT
SECTION

FRIENDS for Peace

JAN. 8, 1999



By DANIEL DEWEY, 7
Correspondent
Nov. 8, Boston

Today we had our monthly Young Lions

Young Lions Roar in Boston

activity at our Boston Community Center. (I think SGI President Ikeda called us Young Lions when he came to Boston.) The meeting started with people chanting to the Gohonzon. We did a slow gongyo and then we heard the story about the jewel in the robe. One time a friend sewed a jewel into a poor

man's coat while he was sleeping. Years later this friend met the man again, and he was still poor — he had had this jewel in his robe all along but he didn't know it!

We learned that in the same way we all have a Treasure Tower inside of us but we don't always know or remember about it.

After these words, we

all made treasure towers of our own. We started with a piece of paper that was rolled up into a round tower. Then we decorated it with beads and fake pearls and jewels and all sorts of other sparkley things!

We took pictures of ourselves with our towers out in front of the community center. (This was

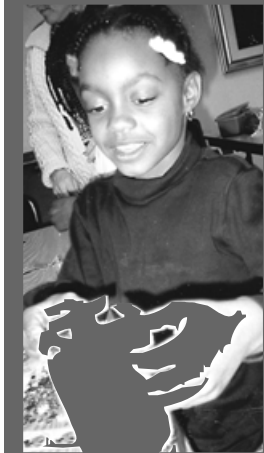
the last meeting we'll have at that center because we are moving to a new one in Waltham.)

When I got home from the meeting, I wrote these words:

You all have a galaxy inside of you!

When you are hurt the stars and planets go apart.

When the galaxy forms you feel better. ☼



SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group

FOCUS FOR 1999

During 1998, The Year of Victory of the People for the New Century, you each achieved some personal victory, whether in school, sports, family, friends or in your individual character development. We

congratulate all Boys and Girls Group members, as well as your families and fellow members who offered much support and encouragement.

The SGI theme for 1999 is the Year of Victory in the

Community for the New Century. SGI President Ikeda stated that 1999 will be "a year in which each of us must display the vitality and wisdom we have developed through our faith in order to transform our

communities into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light."

Let's continue to build upon the foundation for the Boys and Girls Group in 1999 with the following focus:

- 1 STUDY HARD AT SCHOOL.**
- 2 TRY YOUR BEST AT GONGYO AND DAIMOKU EVERY DAY.**
- 3 CHERISH YOUR FRIENDS!**
- 4 RESPECT EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY.**
- 5 BELIEVE IN YOURSELF! NO MATTER WHAT, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP ON ANYTHING!**

Thank you so much!
Let's enjoy ourselves as
we continue taking steps
to accomplish our dreams
during 1999!

EXPERIENCES

CAITLIN NORTHCUTT, 9

Turkey, N.C.

I am a fortune baby. My mom was born into an SGI family. My grandmother has been chanting for 33 years. And my mom tells me sometimes to chant. One day, my friends and I got lost in the woods. We started to get scared. My friend told me and my brother to pray, but me and my brother chanted sincerely. And after that we got home, and we were safe. I like chanting because it's fun and it's different. I drew a picture in my class, and they put it in my hometown newspaper. I am a straight-A student at my school, and it is all because I study and chant. 🌟



RYAN HARVEY, 8

Fallston, Md.

I'm on a travel soccer team, and we've had a hard year. In fact, we lost 10 games in a row! We were getting very tired of losing. Recently, I decided to invite two of my teammates over to chant before the game. We all chanted together to finally win a game. In the first half and most of the second half, we were down 2-0. Then, amazingly, in the last six minutes of the game, we scored four goals, including one of mine! After that, we were very excited and the coach served us Slurpies, and we all got together to see the game film that night. It was like we'd won the championship! 🌟



Ryan Harvey (left) learns to win!
I'm on a travel soccer team, and we've had a hard year. In fact, we lost 10 games in a row! We were getting very tired of losing. Recently, I decided to invite two of my teammates over to chant before the game. We all chanted together to finally win a game. In the first half and most of the second half, we were down 2-0. Then, amazingly, in the last six minutes of the game, we scored four goals, including one of mine! After that, we were very excited and the coach served us Slurpies, and we all got together to see the game film that night. It was like we'd won the championship! 🌟

TRUE FRIENDSHIP!

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

What's it all about?

©Jennifer Kubota

Question: Is this a good friend?

Answer: No

She's scared of the bully too!

Q: Is this a good friend?

Answer: yes

Q. Is this a good friend?

Answer: yes

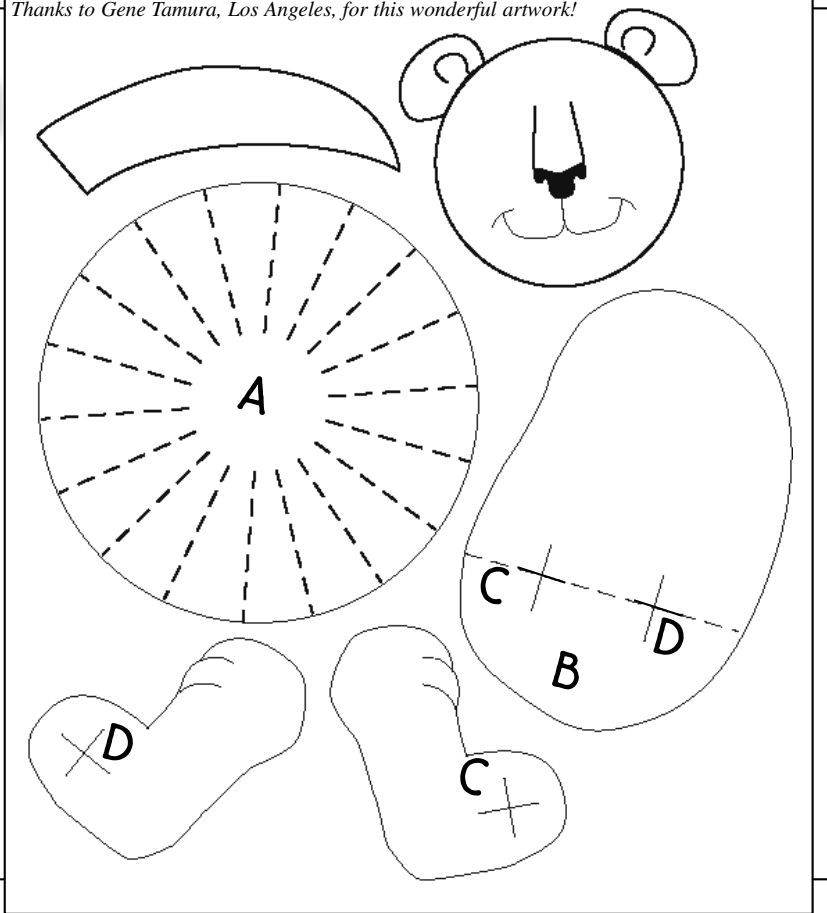
It's good to have lots of good friends. Everyone has the potential to make tons of friends. To be a nice person who has tons of friends, chant Nam-Myo-Ho-Ren-ge-Kyo to get out good feelings

Color each heart for every friend that you have or make!

Make Your Own COURAGEOUS LION

- 1 Cut out each shape (works better with construction paper).
- 2 Cut each of the four "+" marked.
- 3 Cut the dotted lines on the mane (the larger of the two circles).
- 4 Draw in the eyes on the lion's face and color in the other shapes in any way you like.
- 5 Glue the face to the "A" marked on the mane.
- 6 Glue the mane to the "B" on the lion's body.
- 7 Glue the "C" on the right leg to the "C" on the body (line up the "+").
- 8 Glue the "D" on the left leg to the "D" on the body (line up the "+").
- 9 Glue the tail on — you know where to put it!
- 10 Put one finger through each of the "+" — and you've got a lion finger puppet! 🐾

Thanks to Gene Tamura, Los Angeles, for this wonderful artwork!



A Skit



By JENNIFER KUBOTA
Correspondent
Weston, Fla.

I would like to report how my friends and I celebrated our Nov. 18 commemorative meeting. We, the members of the Boys and Girls Group and the Junior High Division, played a skit titled "Run Melos." This story was written by a famous Japanese writer, Osamu Dazai, and it is based on an old Greek legend. When my mom read me this story in Japanese, I really liked it. This teaches me how

A GREEK SHEPHERD on November 18

important it is to keep the promises made to friends. Basically, this story is about a Greek shepherd named Melos who is against a cruel king (in our skit, I was a queen in place of the king) who kills people because he can't trust them. Melos is caught by the king's guards, and he promises the king to come back as long as he is given three days to go to his only sister's wedding. Serinantes, who is Melos' best friend, is held captive in the king's palace instead of Melos. If Melos doesn't return, Serinantes would die.

Despite bandits, muddy streams and evil thoughts in his way, he overcomes them and vigorously heads toward the king's castle.

Tangible things and problems like muddy streams and bandits are hard to overcome, but evil thoughts and bad habits that come from within ourselves are even harder to overcome.

Melos was about to give up on himself, but because of his true friendship, he won over his bad thoughts. The king was so surprised that Melos came, so he let both Melos and Serinantes live and asked them to forgive him and be his friends. Now the king truly understood the meaning of friendship and trust.

I'm sure we were able to learn how important and faithful it is to make true friends in order to become a person who has good character. I felt that I was able to establish something important in my life at the commemorative

meeting for the establishment of the Soka Gakkai.

The characters were played by:

- Narrator: Sandy Silva
- Melos: Kouichi Saito
- Phyrostratos (Serinantes' disciple): Ami Saito
- Crowd: Bryan Kubota, Gino Flores, Mika Ikeda
- Guard: Bryan Kubota
- Bandit: Bryan Kubota
- Old Person: Jeremy Champagnie
- Serinantes: Duane Francis
- Queen: Jennifer Kubota (me)

(A special thanks to Duane and Jeremy — they aren't members, but they helped bring this skit together. Also, Emily Kubota, who set up this skit and translated it; Mr. Shigeaki Saito, who made beautiful background artwork; and Mrs. Minako Saito for setting up the props.) 🐾

for the Children

Excerpts from SGI President Ikeda's essay "Never Lose Heart," in which he recalls his days as an editor for children's publications. (See the Dec. 18-25 issue of the World Tribune for the entire text.)

Meeting people broadens our minds....

I entered Mr. Toda's company at the age of 21 in January 1949, and was given responsibility for the children's magazine *Boy's Adventure*. In May of the same year, I became editor-in-chief.... I often spoke with writers and illustrators about creating a magazine that would give hope and inspiration to children....

By the time I was made

editor-in-chief, Mr. Toda's publishing company was already facing very hard times, but I was determined to surmount those difficulties by coming up with new ideas for the best children's magazine possible, a magazine that was both entertaining and educational. From the October 1949 issue, I renamed the magazine *Boy's Japan*, and completely revamped the contents as well.

I made a strong effort to publish good fiction. At that time, Sohachi Yamaoka was a very popular children's writer. I realized what a busy man he was, but I eagerly entreated him to write a novel for our magazine.

"Children are the messengers of the future," I said. "We want to give them courage and nurture their sense of justice, of right and wrong."

The bearded Mr. Yamaoka smiled and nodded in agreement, "I'll do it. You've won me over with your enthusiasm."


He then continued: "A novel has to be entertaining, first of all. I'll do everything in my power to write just the kind of novel you want — a novel that will have readers wringing their hands in anxiety, sobbing when the hero is in trouble, and laughing out loud at the funny parts, all the while inspiring and ennobling them."

And with those words he began to write *Three Young Swordsmen....*

Boy's Japan was well received and sales increased, but by this time Mr. Toda's business was really in desperate straits and, although it broke his heart, he closed his publishing company at the end of October. The December issue of the magazine was the last. The children's writer Yoichiro Minami (also known as Nobumasa Ikeda), contributed to the final issue an installment of a novel as well as a poem titled "To the Young, Who Carry the Future." The poem went:

Whatever happens, let's

*never lose heart
If we lose heart, we're double losers
Everyone experiences setbacks or defeat sometimes
It can't be helped
But we mustn't lose heart when that happens
We mustn't be fainthearted and become double losers....*

I had been an editor for only a year when my career suddenly ended, but my earnest encounters with so many fine writers and artists remain a golden memory that I will cherish forever. I wonder what my young readers of those days are doing today, the young children who read with me the words: "Whatever happens, let's never lose heart." 

The 1st Annual Friends for Peace' ESSAYContest

Looking to Families for Peace and Happiness in the 21st Century

THEME:

How the happiness of my family affects the peace and happiness of the world.

TOPICS:

- **What** I like about my family.
- **What** I learn about peace and happiness from my family.
- **How** I contribute to my family's happiness through chanting.

CATEGORIES:

- 5-6 years old
- 7-9 years old
- 10-12 years old

DEADLINE:

January 31, 1999


One of the SGI's eternal guidelines is for its members to create happy and harmonious families through faith. Happy families are the building blocks for a happy and peaceful world.

SGI President Ikeda encourages us:

"Families that share bonds of closeness based on day-to-day efforts are ones in which the members feel comfortable and at ease with each other, no matter where they are or what they're doing."

Think about how the happiness of your family will affect the peace and happiness of the world in the coming 21st Century. Then choose and share your thoughts with us about one of the above theme topics.

The length is no more than two pages, double spaced. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing, the depth of thought, originality and whether you include actual (real, concrete) examples to explain your thoughts. The top three winners in each category will have their essays published in "Friends for Peace" in 1999. Essay participants receiving Honorable Mention will be announced.

To enter: Send in your essay and a photo of yourself to Friends for Peace, P.O. Box 1427, 606 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427. Indicate which category you are entering and the theme topic you have chosen. Please include your name, address and telephone number. All essays become the property of "Friends for Peace." 

Boys and Girls Group Study Topics for 1999

January	Conviction and Determination
February	Courage
March	Diversity
April	Three Basic Practices of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism
May	Cause and Effect
June	Seeking Spirit
July	Concept of Mentor and Disciple
August	The SGI
September	Sense of Responsibility
October	History and Important People
November	Appreciation
December	Friendship; Respect

If you would like to contribute to the study material for any of these topics, please send your ideas to: "Friends for Peace," P.O. Box 1427, 606 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427.