



EXPERIENCE

Jack DiPietro,
Rancho Santa
Margarita, Calif.

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EXPERIENCE

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From a Survivor Into
a Winner.

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SGI President Ikeda Travels to South Korea

SGI President Ikeda and his wife, Kaneko, visited South Korea's Cheju National University on May 17. The SGI leader was conferred an honorary doctorate for his contributions to world peace and the advancement of learning and culture. President Ikeda spoke of the great cultural debt Japan owes Korea, saying that if Japan learns from Korea, it will be on the path to peace and prosperity. But if Japan becomes arrogant, it will fall into ruin, he said. (See President Ikeda's speech, p. 6.)

That evening, the university hosted a dinner for President Ikeda at a hotel in Cheju City, and Mrs. Ikeda was presented with the university's first-ever Award of Highest Honor. President Ikeda said that he and Mrs. Ikeda were dedicating this honor to the mothers of South Korea and all the mothers of the world. He praised the mothers of the world for continuing to make valiant efforts each day to improve society.

On May 18, President Ikeda in turn hosted a dinner for university officials and faculty. He shared with them the greatest pride of his youth: that he had fully supported and protected his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, even giving up his own dream of going to university when his mentor faced severe hardships.

To make up for this sacrifice, President Ikeda explained, his mentor tutored him privately in a wide variety of subjects. This went on almost every morning for 10 years. President Ikeda said that he feels the honor he received from the Korean university is entirely due to his being a graduate of "Toda University."

President Ikeda met with SGI of Korea members on May 19 for a commemorative photo session. He encouraged them: "All of

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 ony for Conferring an Honorary in Doctor of Philosophy
 on the Honorable Daisaku Ikeda, Founder of Soka Uni
 1999年 5月 17日



Cheju National University President Cho Moon Boo (left) confers an honorary doctorate on President Ikeda for his contributions to world peace and the advancement of education, May 17.

you are great leaders of the 21st century. To the women, I ask that you give thought to the question 'What is happiness?' and become people who are truly happy and fulfilled — each and every one of you! And I ask you, the men, to gain a sound understanding of the essence of society and Buddhism and achieve success, becoming victors in life — each and every one of you! I want to thank all of you for your tireless efforts!"



Dr. Fuyun Hsu (center), co-founder of UNICEF, cuts the ribbon for the exhibition opening on May 20 with SGI-USA General Director Zaitzu (left) and Bruce Williams (right), representing San Diego Mayor Susan Golding.

'Children's Rights and Realities' Exhibition Receives Warm Welcome in San Diego

Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" opened in San Diego on May 20 with honored guest Dr. Fuyun Hsu, co-founder of UNICEF, in attendance. Dr. Hsu, now 93 years old, was recognized for his achievements when SGI-USA General Director Zaitzu presented him SGI's Liberty Award to a standing ovation. One of the highlights of the evening's program came when, in an unprepared address, Dr. Hsu declared: "Long live SGI-USA! Long live UNICEF!"

Representatives from local and state officials were also present to read proclamations of their support. San Diego Mayor Susan Golding declared May Children's Rights Month in recognition of the exhibition's significance to the community. Each child who visits the exhibition can express his or her hopes for the future on paper leaves, which are to be hung on a life-size Tree of Dreams.

More than 200 dedicated SGI members worked around the clock to get the exhibition ready. The hall was scrubbed clean and hung with children's artwork from 25 local schools. It took three days for thousands of donated fresh flowers to be assembled into elaborate arrangements for the opening.

— LIZ ANDERSON

The hands-on exhibit educates the public about basic human rights abuses facing youth around the world. San Diego is the exhibition's 14th stop; it travels next to Tacoma, Wash.



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The SGI president's
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For years, the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, D.C., whose mission statement echoes that of the SGI Charter's principle number seven, lacked a voice from the Buddhist community. Now, in answer to a call, the IFC found that voice in young men and women of the Washington, D.C.-area SGI-USA.

Considered by the Washington Post "one of the most dynamic and diverse interreligious coalitions in the U.S.," the IFC aims to increase understanding and dialogue among peoples of diverse faiths and to address issues of social and economic justice. For two decades, the IFC's "Spring Dialogue" engaged interreligious laity. But when the IFC decided it wanted to hear more from youth, an event aimed at sharing core values was held, and members of SGI-USA's youth division found themselves representing Buddhism.

The event, called "Coming Together To Lead the World: Questions for the New Millennium," held in Washington in February, gave SGI-USA youth a seat at the table of local representatives of participating religions. "One of the most significant aspects of this activity is that we were lumped in there with all these traditional and very much established world religions," says Steve Wunder, Washington, D.C. Region young men's leader. "For me it was really affirming to be in the same peer group."

While attending IFC planning meetings for the event, Steve found himself facing members of a variety of religions during opening ice breakers. Attendees were expected to sit and talk with someone they did not know. "I started to see how much in line with the SGI Charter interfaith activities

D.C. SGI-USA Youth Represent Buddhism to Religious Communities



Steve Wunder (left), Washington, D.C. Region young men's leader, talks with youth from other religions.

are, but at the same time I had to deal with preconceptions I brought with me," he says. His first ice breaker was with a cloth-covered Muslim and the second with a teenage follower of Hare Krishna. "When it was over," he says, "I realized that others had the same preconceptions about me that I had about them."

The SGI-USA youth's participation served to fill a dearth of knowledge about Buddhist faith and practice after roundtable discussions led to a presentation, both orally and on poster boards, of each religion's core values.

Locals Nathan Gauer, 17, Sydney Herbert, 13, and Stacey Smith, 18, presented for the SGI

"Knowing that I am planting a seed for someone to learn about the practice gives me energy," says Nathan, a senior at Chantilly High School in Virginia, who brought a guest. Afterward, members of the audience expressed appreciation to the youth of SGI-USA for bringing Buddhism to the interfaith community. "The SGI-USA youth were in a situation where they could express their religion and they were accepted and respected and

that was really valuable," says Steve. "It allowed for all these walls to be brought down."

Interfaith encounters may conjure images of religious debate, or an opportunity to "fix" others' "mistaken" ideologies. But the hallmark of today's established interreligious dialogues is a venue in which to share values, overcome preconceptions, find common ground, and build coalitions. Issues the IFC works on are welfare reform, racism, and hate speech. During preparation of a joint IFC statement on welfare reform in 1997, former IFC President Fr. Paul D. Lee lamented that "the absence of Buddhists is conspicuous." The IFC had lacked Buddhist involvement since its 1978 inception, but now has encouraged SGI-USA to help bring together an inclusive representation, so that Buddhists may in time participate by joining the IFC's board of directors, and become its ninth participating faith tradition.

"To bring about change in the world we're going to have to get over our differences," says Nathan. "This was all about not letting those differences get in the way of communication." For certain, there is no "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" attitude in the IFC, with attendees expecting participants to recite others' denominational prayers as a testament of good will—in fact, such a notion would disavow the underpinnings of the IFC's and the SGI's mission statements. "The ultimate goal of SGI is world peace through dialogue," says Elena Lim, a former Byakuren leader of the Dallas area who participated. "Through dialogue we can create value by discovering shared values, and from there we can reach our goal of world peace."

—Rosalie M. Bliss

TEMPLE ISSUE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why Have SGI Members Been Exchanging Their Gohonzon?

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

For the last five years, many SGI members have been exchanging Gohonzon inscribed by Nikken for Gohonzon inscribed by the 26th high priest, Nichikan, who lived in the 18th century. Why have they been doing so?

A little history is necessary to explain: Once Nikken became high priest in 1979, he began inscribing the Gohonzon for new members of the SGI. Until 1991, the SGI happily propagated the Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon throughout the world.

But when Nikken excommunicated the SGI in 1991, started altering Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings and began propagating his delusions worldwide, Nichiren Shoshu separated from the mainstream of the Daishonin's Buddhism and became its own, new religion. The SGI continued

to correctly carry out the teachings of the Daishonin and the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shoshu did not.

In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin says that the Gohonzon is "the banner of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 211). Conferring the Gohonzon is one way that this Buddhism can spread. Today, the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon is "the banner of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra" of the SGI, which is practicing Buddhism correctly.

To practice this Buddhism correctly means to practice it with the same mind or heart as the Daishonin. Of course, we do not get the same spirit as him just by joining the SGI or receiving the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. It's only when we have the spirit to educate ourselves and others about the Daishonin's true philosophy—when we are determined to

speak the truth of this Law for all people's sake—that we can say we are practicing correctly.

The point is that this is what many people feel the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon represents today: the correct practice. It is the banner behind which the correct practice is being taught. Only in the SGI is this spirit taught. Only in the SGI is this spirit put into practice.

Nikken's excommunication of all SGI members in 1991 and again in 1997 made it clear that he had no desire to save people; excommunicating these millions of people, he said at the time, guaranteed them a trip to hell. From 1991 to 1993, no one could receive the Gohonzon from Nichiren Shoshu unless they promised to part with the SGI. In 1993, reformist priests thus came up with the idea of the SGI starting to confer the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. (Nichikan is known as a high priest

who brought the Daishonin's spirit back to the priesthood at a time when it had been forgotten.)

First, new SGI members received the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. Soon, there were many requests from other members to exchange their Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon for the Nichikan-transcribed; this began in 1994.

There's a lesson to this history: The temple issue is not the case of two different organizations both practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism and simply not being able to get along with each other. It's the case of two organizations that both say they are practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism—but one is not. Again, Nichiren Shoshu has become its own religion, one that actually has nothing to do with the Daishonin's Buddhism. This is why the SGI sometimes calls it the Nikken sect.

Four in a series

From a Survivor ... into a Winner

My Buddhist practice over the last 14 years has enabled me to reflect on the true source of anger and pain in my life. My realizations have led me to understand that my feelings of self-contempt, self-hatred and the certainty that I was unloved and undeserving attracted the same type of people into my life. These realizations also have enabled me to forgive many people in my life. Now I cherish my life, every bit of my past. I would not trade a single experience that I've had. I realize my life experiences have shaped me into the person that I am today, and quite frankly, I like who I've become. I'm not perfect — I'll settle for being human.

My family put the "func" in dysfunctional. I had an older brother, a baby sister, and a dad who loved my mother with every ounce of his soul. He also was an alcoholic. My mother suffered from acute neurosis, but my father was in denial so Mom never received treatment. Dad just put her to bed, told us she was ill, and took full responsibility for my brother and me. In fact, when I was only 7, Mom went into that room and didn't come out until I was 9. After she came out, she turned my life into a living hell. Anytime she felt I'd done anything wrong, real or imagined, she'd beat me with a stack of wooden coat hangers until each one broke. I was never able to talk her out of it, so I protested by refusing to cry; I refused to be broken by her.

At the same time, my father's so-called friends were sexually abusing me. They threatened that if I ever told anyone, they would hurt my father. I believed them. Although I eventually told my parents about it, my father insisted I was a liar and a troublemaker, and my mom didn't stick up for me either.

I became angry at the world. By age 12, I was involved with the juvenile authorities. At 14, I was a ward of the court as a habitual runaway and by 17 was living in a foster home. Then I fell in love with the most beautiful Latino man I'd ever seen. I got pregnant, and in my third month, we ran off to Reno, Nev. Full of hope for a new life filled with love, I lied about my age and married my "prince charming."

Unfortunately, my prince turned into a mean frog. Willie constantly beat and terrorized me. One beating almost made me lose the baby, so I had him arrested. I testified against him. Mom paid for an annulment. Willie was still in jail, and she was with me when the baby was born. But I was only 18, young and naive. I believed if Willie and I could build a happy family with our new baby, the violence would end. When he got out of jail and came back to me full of promises, we remarried. But he hadn't changed. After he almost killed me, I had him arrested and testified against him in court again. He went to jail again.

Of course, he came home after he was released, and, of course, the beatings started again. I became convinced I'd never be free of him unless I personally took care of my "Willie problem." I arranged for us to use a friend's mountain cabin. While Willie rested with his eyes closed, I crept up to him and softly called his name. When he opened his eyes, I had a rifle pointed between them. I was cold as ice; I was going to blow his head off. He begged for his life. Killing him, I thought, would relieve him of his suffering. I wasn't in the mood to do him any favors, so I said: "Okay, I'm going to take this gun off of you. But if you ever hit me again and let me live, I give you my solemn promise, I will kill you." We packed up our stuff and drove back home in silence. I felt free. Empowered. No one would ever control, terrify or beat me again. I got away, but Willie's second wife wasn't so lucky.

For the next 15 years, I became a heroin addict. I started off with a \$5-a-day habit and finished with a \$500-a-day habit. I packed a .44 Magnum and ran with the biggest drug dealers in the Southwest.

At 21, I was sentenced five years to life for selling marijuana and sent to the California State Institution for Women's prison; I served three

years and was paroled to Los Angeles. While incarcerated I earned a cosmetology license through the Chino adult school.

One year later I was married to Art, a former heroin user from Venice Beach, and together we started using again. We had two children in the process. I loved them—I did



Della and Ed Quinn, at their home in Venice, Calif.

my best for them. In spite of my insanity and my addiction, I made sure they ate well, went to school, had toys and most of all, knew they were loved.

I had my own moral code: I never stole anything from my family or friends; I never sold to minors; and I never introduced anyone to heroin. I knew what being an addict meant. The last thing I wanted was to take anyone to where I was in my life.

I was a two-time convicted drug felon. If I got busted a third time, I would get a mandatory 50-year-to-life sentence. The police were always harassing me. I knew if I didn't get out of town my way, I'd be leaving their way.

Art and I moved to Las Vegas. When we ran out of drugs and money, we cleaned our lives up—"cold turkey." It almost killed us but we got through it. We found jobs and went on to build as good a life as we could for our family.

Five years later Art began using drugs again. Filled with bitter disappointment, I got a 24-hour divorce. With two nickels in my pocket, I moved with the kids to Venice. I was

alone again.

I was fortunate to receive further training as a geometric hair designer. I fought tooth and nail to develop a stable existence for my kids and I. I was successful, but I was totally bankrupt in every other aspect of my life.

Fourteen years ago, at age 46, I met a client who never seemed to get caught up in the chaos of life. I thought she must be using a pill or smoking some kind of good dope, so I asked her what she used. She told me she was a Buddhist and didn't use anything. She invited me to attend a Buddhist meeting at her house that Sunday.

On that morning I called her crying. I explained that I was simply too miserable to be around people and hung up on her. Later that day, three women showed up at my door. They said my client had sent them. I was pissed. How dare they upset my nervous break-down!

They asked me what I wanted for my life. Peace of mind was my response. Buddhism, they said, could answer that prayer. I didn't believe them. The more they spoke, the more the pain in my life was rising closer to the surface. I began to cry and eventually I found myself around the corner at a Buddhist meeting. Shortly thereafter I began my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I was not an easy convert. My greatest blessing was that people were committed to helping me and they never let me go. No matter how many times I hung up on them, slammed the door in their faces, or "flaked" on coming to SGI activities, they never gave up on me. In time I was completely won over by their commitment and conviction that I could lead a life of complete joy.

I began to crave a deeper understanding of this Buddhism the way I used to crave dope. I read everything I could get my hands on and barraged experienced members in faith with

questions. I was determined to become happy. My life began changing positively and rapidly with tremendous benefits.

Eight years ago, my dad got ill, so I took care of him. Before he died he chanted with me; we had a beautiful closure. Although Art died of liver cancer in 1985, he stopped using heroin in 1984 and died clean and sober. We also had a great closure. While my relationship with my mother is still a work in progress, I chant for her happiness daily.

On Sept. 24, 1995, I married my current husband, Ed Quinn, the kindest, most generous, protective, hard-working man I've ever known. We strive for each other's happiness. My children are all adults now, two are successful, productive citizens and I'm still working on the third.

In the 14 years I've practiced this Buddhism, all of my specific prayers have been answered. Before I started chanting, I was miserable 90 percent of the time. After only a few months of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and learning gongyo, I became happy 90 percent of the time — I still battle my misery the other 10 percent. Today as a 60-year-old young woman, I can honestly say my practice of Buddhism has transformed my life from being a survivor, living by my wits, into a winner living based on wisdom and fortune!

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EXPERIENCE — JACK DiPIETRO, RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CALIF.

Writing a New History For Myself

Jack DiPietro explains how his life went from 'hell to happy' during his 26 years of Buddhist practice. Besides enjoying numerous treasures of the heart, he is currently working toward acquiring a Ph.D. in English, despite being diagnosed with congenital aphasia, 'a total or partial loss of the power to use or understand words.'

In 1971, I was devastated over the murder of my friend Eddy in Santa Monica. Stabbed 13 times because he owed some guys \$30, Eddy died at my feet, begging, "Help me, Jack, I'm dying." Though I had nightmares every night, and feared for my own life, I fingered the guys who did it, which led to the police finding the murder weapon and a bloody jacket in the home of the primary suspect, the makings of a strong case — or so I thought.

At the arraignment, the judge threw the evidence, the eyewitness (me), and the case out of court. At this point in my life, I became a practicing nihilist; I believed in nothing; the physical world was all that existed for me, and I was convinced the universe was totally indifferent toward me. I believed in no supernatural or spiritual existence, influence or significance. My life was hell. Sartre was wrong. I remember thinking back then, hell isn't "other people," hell is me. *Webster's* should have had my picture next to the word *hell* — an 8 x 10. Then, when my girlfriend, Tricia, a Playboy bunny, left me a year later, I plunged into the deepest and darkest, the mother of all hells.

Fortunately for me, however, my friend Cleve had joined the SGI-USA in 1971. Cleve had been my guru, of sorts. For a couple of years, I had a quasi teacher-pupil relationship with Cleve. However, I broke off that relationship in 1971 when he joined what I figured was some kind of weird cult. Nevertheless, it was Cleve whom I called when Bunny Tricia left me. I was totally incredulous, to say the least, when he told me to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to get my girlfriend back. Despite the fact that I would miss *The Sonny & Cher Show*, I attended my first Buddhist meeting that night, and there and then I joined the SGI-USA.

Twenty-six years later, I'm so incredibly happy I did. Everything changed — my life went from hell to happy. Since practicing this Buddhism, I've received extraordinary benefits, overcome tremendous obstacles and steadily deepened my faith in the Daisshonin's Buddhism. To illustrate, in 1976 I married a young woman who has since become the touchstone and mainstay of my life. I had joined the SGI-USA because I wanted Bunny Tricia back. I really believe that I got back in-

stead my wife from my eternal past, my soulmate. Ironically, her name is Tricia, too. We call each other Wyatt and Doc, as in Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday. I'm Doc.

Over the course of our 22-plus years together, we've backed each other's play in many an OK Corral. For example, for 12 years Wyatt and I tried desperately to have children. The many doctors we went to over the course of those years, however, couldn't diagnose why we couldn't. Finally, we sought advice from a senior in faith who told us to treat the SGI members as our children, figuratively speaking, that is. As chapter leaders practicing together at that time, we put her guidance into action immediately. Shortly thereafter, the problem was diagnosed, and today we have two precious children, Tom and Tracy, whom we are raising with tremendous joy, love and appreciation. This memory and these children are both my precious treasures of the heart.

SGI members are also precious treasures of the heart for me. I remember back in 1992, for example, how Jon, a member in my chapter, saved my life.

He was just returning the favor, actually, because a few years earlier I had helped save his. I'll never forget, when he called to tell me his doctors had just given him 30 days to live: advanced stages of lung cancer. "Jack," he said, "the doctors told me to get my things in order." I was stunned. I almost told him I'd get someone more experienced to call him back because I felt I didn't have the wisdom to help him. Then I remembered that almost 20 years earlier my friend Eddy had died at my feet while I stood by helplessly, and I knew I wasn't going to let that happen again. After all, I wasn't helpless this time.

Amazing confidence surged to the surface of my life; the words came out of my mouth almost as though they had a life of their own. I said to Jon: "Your doctors don't know about the power of the Gohonzon, Jon, the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. You're not going to die, I promise you! You're going to live because you have a mission for kosen-rufu to fulfill! Why don't you chant 10 hours every day so that you can live to fulfill that mission?"

Jon lived. He confounded all those doctors at the City of Hope Hospital who incorrectly foretold his doom.

A couple of years ago, Jon came up to me after a discussion meeting and asked me if I remembered telling him to chant 10 hours a day. He said: "I never told you this before, but I couldn't chant the whole 10 hours. I felt so ill all the time, what with the heavy doses of chemo and radiation I was taking. So I could only chant three hours each day. I'm sorry, Jack." Members are indeed such wonderful treasures of the heart.

As I said before, though, Jon was just returning the favor.

By January 1992, the family business — Wyatt and I are self-employed banking consultants — had been "circling the toilet" for the last couple of years due to the awful economic downturn California suffered in the early to mid-'90s. We had already lost our three-acre estate, cars, horses and savings. We had experienced similar obstacles 10 years earlier and had overcome them with our Buddhist practice. For some reason, however, I was dumb enough to think that by overcoming such financial obstacles once, I would never have to confront them again. And so I was surprised when they recurred, on a much larger scale, 10 years later.

Nevertheless, I started chanting two, then three, four, five hours each day to overcome these obstacles. But no matter how much I chanted, nothing seemed to change. After almost two years of this, one Sunday morning in

January told Tricia, "Boy, I've angry because said, I w most 20 trated an my karr hard I pr

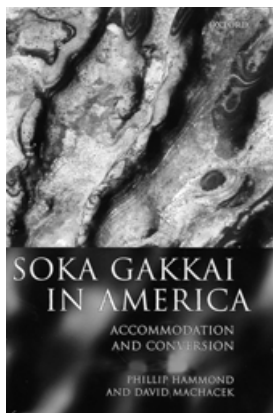
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actually, d helped when he had just advanced he said, y things most told erenced I didn't hen I re- s earlier my feet d I knew en again. s time. d to the ame out they had n: "Your power of of Nam- o going to live r kosen- chant 10 n live to all those Hospital oom.

January 1992, after doing gongyo, I told Tricia I was quitting the practice. Boy, I've never seen my wife get so angry before; but, no matter what she said, I was determined to quit after almost 20 years of practice. I was frustrated and angry that I couldn't break my karmic deadlock, no matter how hard I practiced.

While my wife was still yelling at me, however, the phone rang. It was Jon. His group was having a meeting, the theme of which was favorite quotes from Nichiren Daishonin's writings. He asked if I could locate a particular passage for him. I knew exactly which passage he was looking for. I read it to him over the phone: "This time I am sure that you will give up your faith. If you do, I have not the slightest intention of reproaching you for it. Likewise, neither should you blame me, Nichiren, when you have fallen into hell. It is in no way my responsibility" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2, [2nd ed.], p. 243). How wondrously amazing that Jon should call me at that crucial moment and prompt me to read this most appropriate guidance. As I read the passage, I felt as though the Daishonin was speaking directly to me.

So there I found myself back in the life-condition of Hell, from which I had emerged 20 years earlier when I first started chanting. I knew at that moment I was *not* going to quit; I realized I was not going to give up on myself, this Buddhist practice, Jon and all the other members who counted on me. I remember thinking: "I swear, Daishonin, I'll never quit; never give up; never forget my promise. I will win, no matter what; just watch me." At that moment, I broke through my deadlock.

Consequently, in the next three months our business earned over \$100,000. Since then, while three-quarters of our competitors have gone out of business, our little two-person company has become one of the foremost executive search firms in the Southern California banking industry. In contrast, I dread to think of what would have become of me if my dear friend had not called me that Sunday morning in 1992.

For many years now, I have wanted to write my experience in faith. I haven't, though, because I have a very difficult time with language. I have aphasia, which *Webster's* says is "a total or partial loss of the power to use or understand words, usually caused by brain disease or injury." While I did suffer a severe skull fracture as a child, I've actually been diagnosed as having congenital aphasia, which makes sense because my 10-year-old son has inher-



Jack and Tricia DiPietro with Tracy, 8, and Tom, 10.

ited it from me. Tom's case is more severe than mine, however. Whereas mine results in a moderate loss of verbal ability, his results in a substantial loss of the ability not only to use words but also to understand them. Tom did not speak until he was 7, and did not use complete sentences until he was almost 9. Because of these symptoms, an elementary school psychologist once told us that our son was retarded.

Two years ago, however, after chanting a tremendous amount for Tom's sake, his true aphasic condition was finally diagnosed. We found a very special speech therapist, whose skill and determination have empowered Tom to advance his language skills exponentially over the past two years.

Because of Tom, my own aphasic disability also became clear to me. I was so happy to finally discover that what had plagued me all my life was clearly physiological. The words just wouldn't come, especially whenever I tried to express them in writing. I had always thought I was just plain stupid.

Despite this condition, however, I'm completing a Ph.D. in English at Claremont Graduate University. I started on my master's in January 1992, and have been working very hard ever since. How hard? Well, for example, whenever I've had to write a paper,

I would take four times as long to write it as would my classmates. Since 1992, I've had to write 68 papers. In addition to my studies and my full-time consulting business, I'm also an adjunct professor of English at Saddleback College. I've been teaching college part time since 1993. Freshman composition — how ironic!

I've finally completed my Ph.D. course work, and my qualifying exams are in August. Then I will have to write a 200-page dissertation.

Because writing is so difficult, this dissertation has worried me from the very beginning of my graduate stud-

ies. Yet I have just got to do a good job — no, a great job — on this ultimate paper of mine. I'm writing about SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, comparing his writing to the Transcendentalist writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. My dissertation committee will be: the chair of the English department at Claremont Graduate University; the chair of the English department at California State University, Los Angeles; and Dr. Alfred Balitzer, professor of political science at Claremont and the honorary president of Soka University of America. This is why I think the time has come

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Peace Is Found in the Hearts of Young People

Receiving an honorary degree from Cheju National University in South Korea, President Ikeda emphasizes the cultural debt Japan owes Korea. If Japan "behaves arrogantly toward Korea, failing to acknowledge its great debt to Korea, it will decline," he says. The hope for continuing peace, he says, is educating youth wisely. He requests that all of us "work tirelessly to inculcate in young people's hearts a humanistic philosophy and value system based on respect for life."

I am honored to receive this honorary doctorate from Cheju National University, which shines as a bright sun of the New Renaissance of the coming century. I accept it with inexpressible gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility.

Embraced by your sincerity and friendship, which is warm and accepting as the seas that surround Cheju Island, I have now fulfilled my dream of visiting this fine university that is an "older brother" to Soka University in Japan.

Tucked in the foothills of the island's commanding peak Halla-san, what an ideal capital of learning this is! The bright azaleas in bloom on your campus are stunning, and the vivid green of the avenue of cherry trees leading from the university's front gate particularly was a delight to behold. It is believed that Japan's cherry trees originated in Cheju, an indication of just how is the connection between Cheju Island and Japan.

Japan has repaid its debt to Korea only with the most barbaric acts.

The cultural contributions that Korea has made to Japan are too numerous to mention. Even Japan's transformation from a martial society to a civil society in the Edo Period can be traced to the wise teachings of Korea. During Japan's indefensible, immoral invasions of Korea, which occurred in 1592 and 1597, the eminent Korean scholar Kang Hang was taken prisoner. Through dialogue with him, Japanese scholars opened their eyes to the philosophy of a peaceful civil government.

Eventually, Japan's military government of that time was swayed in that direction. And, with the added help of cultural ambassadors invited to Japan from Korea, Japan underwent a major transformation.

Yet in recent history, we Japanese have repaid this debt only with the most barbaric acts, causing great suffering to the Korean people. Toward the end of World War II, the Japanese military sta-

tioned 60,000,000 soldiers on Cheju, and in their typical authoritarian manner, they conscripted the people of Cheju for forced labor. They were planning to make your lovely island of "three beauties" and "three treasures" a last fortress for the defense of Japan, as they did with Okinawa.

Let's work tirelessly to open young people's hearts to the true path of humanity.

If Japan reaches out to Korea in friendship and respects Korea if Japan learns from the Korean spirit it will proceed toward peace and prosperity. On the other hand, if it behaves arrogantly toward Korea, failing to acknowledge its great debt to Korea, it will decline. It will suffer ruin. This view of history must be forever engraved on the hearts of our people. This is the path of humanity.

It is thus very important to work tirelessly to inculcate in young people's hearts a humanistic philosophy and value system based on respect for life. I am determined to carry out sincere communication and exchange between our two countries so as to open the way for solid understanding and trust between the younger generations of our countries.

Humanistic education is the supreme art, the most sacred of professions.

Tsunosaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president and the originator of Soka education, was a fierce opponent of Japanese militarism and died in prison resisting military authorities. He was also a geographer with many unique ideas. He had a strong interest in islands, believing that island residents, because they face so many natural hardships, can make astounding progress in their lives. He also was convinced that because their spirits are as open and free as the ocean surrounding them, they can radiate a new light of civilization, all the way to distant shores. Mr. Makiguchi always stressed the infinite possibilities of island life and island cultures.

Cheju Island has endured the harsh trials of the 20th century and triumphed. I know that in the 21st century, Cheju, this island jewel of the East, will shine with unequalled hope, happiness and glory. Cheju has much scenic beauty and, I am sure, will become a popular tourist destination. At the same time, it is a crucial hub of Northeast Asia, linking Korea, China and Japan.

Cheju National University, under the superb leadership of President Cho Moon Boo, is the driving force for establishing Cheju as a great center for peace in the 21st century while preserving and making the most of its bountiful natural gifts.

Today, I have become a member of your worthy institution. I vow now to devote myself with my fullest energies to working alongside you in the spirit of your inspiring school anthem, which asks us to be "seekers of truth," "pioneers of culture," "creators of history" and "leaders of the people."

Humanistic education, which brings the highest luster to the treasure of life found in both oneself and others education that creates limitless value is the supreme art, the most sacred of professions. I pledge with my whole heart to join forces with the Cheju National University faculty and all the teachers of Korea to create a song of human solidarity and a painting of the unity of our peoples. And then to pass these on to later generations.

Let me once again express my great respect and appreciation to those who have made this wonderful ceremony possible and to all who have attended today despite your busy schedules. I pray for the vigorous health of all of you and, with a hope-filled vision of the brilliant young graduates of this school taking their place in the world as leaders of the new century, I conclude my acceptance speech.

Kamsahamnida! (Thank you very much!)

SGI President Ikeda's acceptance speech on receiving an honorary doctorate from Cheju National University, Cheju City, South Korea, May 17.

Moratorium on the Death Penalty

SGI members of Italy have joined in a worldwide petition drive calling on each nation to establish a moratorium on the death penalty by the year 2000. Nicoletta Nencioli says that 'indifference, detachment, silence or lack of dialogue are the most fearful dangers on private or public issues.'

PERSPECTIVE

By NICOLETTA NENCIOLI
WASHINGTON, D.C.

"Life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 267)

Every time I want to introduce someone to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism; every time I chant, I think, I reflect on how to reach another's



heart, on how to plant the seed of hope through my Buddhist practice, I find the same answer: This religion honors above all the sanctity of life, of human life, of every

single life. This is why I am a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Because one day someone reminded me how valuable my life was, and how blind I was in not recognizing it. And I inevitably find out again and again that the only thing I have to do to open an unexpected ocean of hope even in the most pained, tortured, suffering or just distracted person is to convey the simple, revolutionary message: Each of us possesses a Buddha nature. Even you. You have an immense wonder of treasures, an infinite source of happiness inside yourself. Your life is so precious that "even one day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the universe" (MW-1, 231).

To me the message of Nichiren Daishonin is as clear as crystal: Each person is a manifestation of the Mystic Law, is inherently invaluable and irreplaceable. There is no human being to give up on, there is no single human being who can't be awakened, who can't start the transforming spiritual journey we all undertook: The seed of Buddhahood can be buried in some remote corner, be hidden behind the most unfair, incorrect existence, but it is there. And to me what makes all the difference is this HOPE: There is hope, always, for every one. Right now. Nothing is impossible with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Each person is capable of achieving their human revolution. The Daishonin's Buddhism encom-

passes the most powerful, compassionate, humanistic way of living life.

It is a teaching that invites all of us to practice one of the most challenging lessons of the Lotus Sutra: to honor the Buddha nature inside every human being, even the apparently most despicable, lost and depraved. To honor it in our enemies. To learn how to fight the devilish nature inherent in life by appealing to the Buddha inside the original self.

But this does not mean to be weak, yielding or lacking in firmness. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda reminds us by pointing to President Toda's message advocating the abolition of nuclear weapons that "it is the duty of Buddhists to struggle dauntlessly against those who would rob life of its sanctity" (Lectures on the "Expedient Means" "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, vol. 1, p. 157).

In his speech before the Rajiv Gandhi Institute in 1997, President Ikeda affirmed the primacy of the Buddhist principle of non-harming. The first key principle for a new humanism must be non-killing, he states: "Humans should under no circumstances kill other humans.... Too much blood has been shed in the name of 'justice'.... Such suffering must never be repeated. Thus, the first provision of a new humanism must be an absolute injunction against the taking of human life" (January 1998 *Living Buddhism*, p. 14).

It was on this basis that our sister organization the Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai, "based on Buddhism's fundamental respect for every form of life," has joined in a worldwide petition drive calling on each nation to establish a moratorium on the death penalty by the year 2000. The appeal, which has been endorsed by the Vatican and by numerous human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the International Red Cross, will be delivered to the U.N. Secretary General by October 1999. The goal of the appeal is to press the Secretary General to ask each member nation for a formal statement on the death penalty. The appeal invites everyone, even those in favor of the death penalty, to seriously consider the need to stop the executions. It goes on to say that "the death penalty is the ultimate denial of the universally recognized right to life; it is a punishment incapable of fighting violence. It instead legitimates the worst vio-

lence: the one that takes human life by social law; it is a concept that makes our world more inhuman by making revenge the only winner, and eliminating forgiveness and rehabilitation from the justice system."

The appeal also points out that "according to the United Nations there are no data demonstrating that the death penalty is effective in preventing the worst crimes and that wherever the capital punishment has been reinstated there is no evidence of any decrease in serious crime."

The SGI members in Italy are collecting signatures and every member has been invited not only to sign the petition themselves, but to become an active promoter of the appeal and try to collect 20 additional signatures.

President Ikeda has been on different occasions adamant on the issue of the death penalty. In *Choose Peace*, his dialogue with Johan Galtung, he says: "As a Buddhist, I oppose capital punishment as an extreme form of state inflicted violence. Nothing justifies deliberately depriving another human being of life. Justice may sometimes miscarry; when it does, the innocent may be wrongly executed. The crime-deterrence of the death penalty is widely claimed but remains unproven" (p. 67). And he quotes Mahatma Gandhi's words that "it is braver to forgive than to punish an enemy."

The message of President Ikeda is consistent. Twenty-five years ago in his dialogue with Arnold Toynbee, in *Choose Life*, he expressed the same concept: "My reason for insisting that the death penalty ought to be abolished everywhere is based on the Buddhist respect for the dignity of life.... Whether it has this effect [of reducing the crimes perpetrated] or not, the concept of the death penalty involves the taking of life as a warning to other people or as a retaliation for crime. But one retaliation, by inevitably leading to another, sets in motion a course of wicked acts. I feel that life, as an absolute entity worthy of the profoundest respect, must never be treated as a means to achieving anything else than life itself. The dignity of life is an end in itself; therefore, when social restraint is necessary, it is certainly better to devise a method that does not tamper with life. The use of the death penalty as a warning manifests a regrettable tendency.... That tendency is the habit of undervaluing human life." (pp. 158-59).

I started chanting in this country.

I encountered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through the words and the compassion of the American members, and my mentors, my friends are active members of SGI-USA. I learned gongyo with such an American accent that Italian members tease me. My bonding and gratitude are deeply connected with this country, this earth, these people. But I learned over time that in the American culture, even in the SGI-USA culture, the death penalty is a very controversial issue. It is something so deeply rooted and widely accepted that to my surprise, at least in my experience, the topic is rarely approached. Individually, members are committed to one or the other side of the arena, but to my knowledge there has not yet been any collective reflection. This puzzles me.

I oppose with no ambiguity the death penalty. I subscribe entirely to President Ikeda's thought. But what I believe most is that an issue like this cannot be ignored. Indifference, detachment, silence or lack of dialogue are the most fearful dangers on private or public issues.

Dialogue is the most powerful and pacific tool to change the world, our lives and the destiny of the societies where we live. It is only when we don't talk that we can't create bridges among different positions, and instead remain disengaged, isolated, in personal relationships as in public matters.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism invites us to understand and become involved in worldly affairs. One of the Buddha's 10 honorable titles is "Understanding of the World." The Daishonin teaches that "a person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but rather one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world may be governed" (MW-6, 142).

Mr. Makiguchi declared that "a religion that refuses to involve itself in society has no reason to exist."

President Ikeda always invites us not to be bystanders, but to take action, to live by our conviction based on faith. My conviction based on faith is that the only way to build peace across the globe, to purify the land, to construct a better society, is through nurturing a culture of uncompromising respect for life, a culture that does not allow the capital punishment. And that the starting point to achieve this goal is an open dialogue.

1st Thai and Cambodian Joint Conference Held



Florida NATURE AND CULTURE CENTER Event

By JOE FIROVED AND JOSEPH GRONER
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENTS

The first Thai-Cambodian language conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center on May 13-16, after nearly two years of preparation. Overcoming many difficulties, holding many chanting sessions and preparation meetings, 114 Thai and Cambodian members gathered for this historic conference from all across the United States. Two leaders from SGI-Thailand, Mrs. Siriporn Aphiratkasem, SGI-Thailand vice women's leader, and Mrs. Somsri Kraissakawat, region vice women's leader, also attended and worked tirelessly giving encouragement until late at night.

One unique aspect of the conference was that the Thai members did not speak Cambodian, nor did the Cambodian members speak Thai. However, simultaneous translations in Thai and Cambodian made every session a total success. Following a lecture on "Happiness in this World" and presentations on such subjects as propagation, human revolution and the temple issue, intense dialogue sessions were conducted. On Saturday, following sightseeing and tours, a Thai-Cambodian friendship exchange was held. From the colorful Thai drummers to the beautiful and graceful Cambodian dancers, each act was alive and joyful.

Rising above many centuries of conflict between their countries, every member burned with the desire to return to their respective communities refreshed and committed to kosen-rufu. ☐



Photos by JOSEPH GRONER

SGI President's Message

ENJOY LIVING, FEAR NOTHING

My dear Thai and Cambodian Group members, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on your first conference in the splendid environment of the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

You have come from Southeast Asia, across the Pacific Ocean, and gathered here in order to study Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which radiates like the sun. Your noble efforts are symbolic of the arrival of a new era, of the start of the great voyage of the people. You have surmounted the struggles of living in the United States and brightly and cheerfully come together. You are proof of the great victory of faith.

The Daishonin states that "there is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161). For what purpose were we born? To enjoy living, Buddhism explains.

Reality is full of suffering and constant change, but those of us who embrace the Mystic Law need fear nothing. From chanting daimoku, we gain the fundamental power to live; this is the source of our strength to change our karma and solve our problems.

Please continue to chant daimoku while encouraging one another in your daily SGI-USA activities. Please lead supremely happy lives as practitioners of the Lotus Sutra who "enjoy themselves at ease" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 230).

Every day, I am earnestly praying for the good health, success and prosperity of you and your families, whom I dearly love. Please give my sincerest regards to those who were unable to be here today.

May 13, 1999
Daisaku Ikeda



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FRIENDS for Peace

JUNE 4, 1999

Greetings

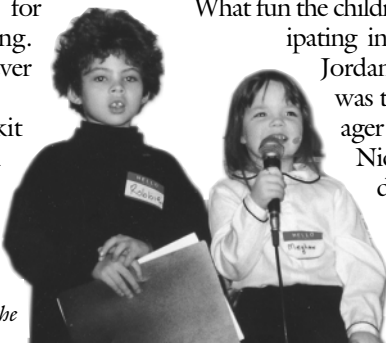
From the New York Boys & Girls Group

By Barbara Comeau
New York

March 21 was an exciting day for the 5- and 6-year-old members of the New York Boys and Girls Group. The staff and the children worked together to prepare for our March meeting. The theme was "Never Give Up Spirit."

The plot of the skit revolved around the growth of a tiny seed. Throughout the

Robbie Taliaferro (left) and Meghan Byrne are the masters of ceremony.



performance, the children watered and nurtured the seed, never giving up hope that one day it would become a magnificent flower. The theme of "Never Give Up" was emphasized by the little actors and actresses throughout the performance.

What fun the children had participating in the meeting.

Jordan Corbin, 6, was the stage manager for the play.

Nicole Dallesandro, 5, joyfully played the piano for us. Most important, the children

really enjoyed working together and had so much fun. The entire audience was full of good cheer and friendship as we closed our meeting by chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo three times.

Lana DiCostanzo, 6, led gongyo, and said: "I like to chant every day.

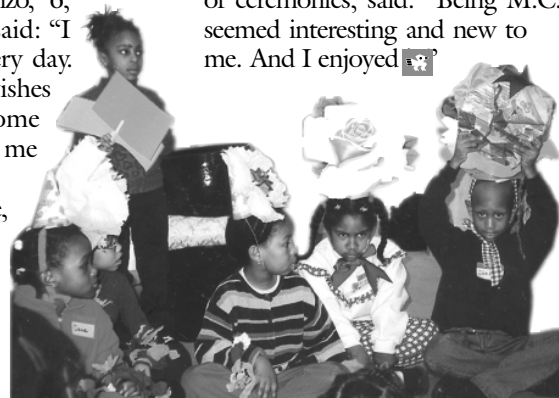
It makes my wishes and dreams come true. It makes me very happy."

Meghan Byrne, 5, was the master of ceremonies, and said: "I really liked being the M.C. I am so happy to learn

how to read. It was fun being part of the Boys and Girls Group meeting."

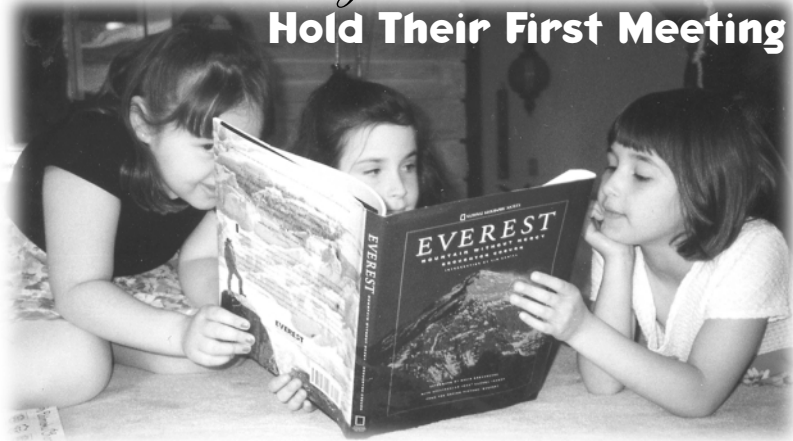
Mary Reagan, 5, said, "I like the Boys and Girls Group because it's fun and I have a lot of friends."

Robbie Taliaferro, 6, also master of ceremonies, said: "Being M.C. seemed interesting and new to me. And I enjoyed



Madison Boys and Girls

Hold Their First Meeting



The Madison Boys and Girls Group acts out the worlds of Learning (above), Anger, Compassion and Hunger at their April Boys and Girls Group meeting.

By Kerstin Meyer
Monticello, Wis.

Madison Chapter had its very first Boys and Girls Group meeting on Sunday, Oct. 25, 1998. We met at Carol Weiss's house.

We had an egg hunt. There were questions in the eggs about Buddhist concepts. This was a pre-test to find out what we knew. We

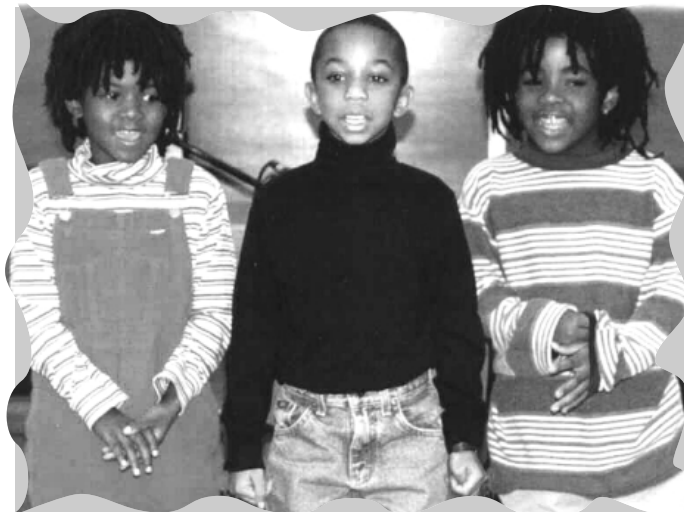
played two games to get to know one another, chanted, made Halloween spiders out of cake and candy, and ate spaghetti. Then we went to the Janesville Corn Maze.

We learned about Wisconsin by reading the signs in the maze. The maze was shaped like Wisconsin, and it took us two times going through to finish the whole thing.

We had lots of fun!

Reciting Poetry in Philadelphia

"Friends for Peace" is an excellent part of the *World Tribune!* Three of us (boys and girls) memorized a poem we read in our section of the newspaper. Then we performed it at the Boys and Girls Group meeting and at our area kosen-rufu gongyo meeting. Everyone loved it! We had fun.



(From left to right) Dallas Meadows, Jaron Horne and Omar Roper.

EXPERIENCES

SOPHIA KAWAGUCHI, 6



Columbia, S.C.

Hi. I want to tell you my experience. One day, my dad gave me a very special necklace. I wore it. I came home, and my sister jerked it off my neck. Then I lost the locket. I looked everywhere for it, but I couldn't find it. I chanted to find it for several days, and I found it by the fireplace. Now I keep it in a safe place. No matter what happens, you should still chant. 🙏

KIMBERLY HOGANCAMP, 5

Lakewood, Wash.



Hi, my name is Kimi. I got to Lake City Elementary School. I'd like to share my experience with you. When I first started kindergarten, I was so happy and excited about it. But after a couple weeks, two girls in my class started to pick on me and wouldn't let me play with them. After that, I started going home looking sad and upset. My mom could tell that something was wrong, and she asked me to tell her what was going on, so I told her. It was hard for her to understand me because I was crying about it so much. My mom told me to go and chant about my situation with her. She said that the Gohonzon can solve any situation, so I started chanting sincerely with her. A week later, my principal, Mrs. Green, sent notices home for all kindergarten parents to attend a meeting on a Tuesday night. The meeting was about my teacher, Mrs. Schwartz, who was teaching 30 kids in the morning and 31 kids in the afternoon. That was too many kids for just one teacher! Our principal hired a new kindergarten teacher for the afternoon and asked parents to volunteer their kids for that new teacher's class. But after seeing that not many parents were volunteering their kids, my principal used slips of paper with our names on it in a big bowl to pick the kids for the new class. One of the girls who was picking on me was chosen for the new class. Now the other girl who was picking on me is starting to be a friend to me. My mom taught me that when I have any problem, go to the Gohonzon and chant about it! 🙏

NORA KAWAGUCHI, 6

Columbia, S.C.

I started chanting when I was 3 years old. In first grade, we take AR (accelerated reader) tests on the computer. I was scared I would fail the test. My mom told me to chant and study hard, so I did. Soon, I got 100 on my AR tests. And sometimes I make an 80 or 90 on my test, but it doesn't matter. I am working hard. My mom says the Gohonzon is not magic. Now when I chant, I believe with all my heart that I will do my best. So I will continue to chant for one minute every day. And I was chosen as Good Citizen of the Month (for March). 🙏



MARIA KAWAGUCHI, 8

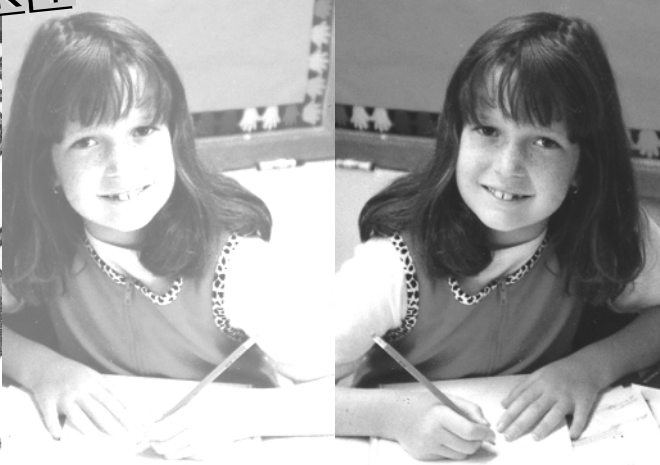
Columbia, S.C.



Hi! I am a third grader. I started chanting when I was 3. One time, my dog got very, very sick. I was worried. I sat down at the Gohonzon and chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. The next day, my dog was better. I was happy. Chanting really works. If some of you try this, it can really work. If you really believe in your heart really hard, it can work. Those of you that think it's magic, it is not. When you chant, you are making things better inside of you. You are raising your life-condition when you chant. 🙏

"FRIENDS for Peace" thanks everyone who contributed to this issue. Please send your experience (around 150 words), comments, questions or news article to: "Friends for Peace," World Tribune, 606 Wilshire Blvd., P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427.

POETRY

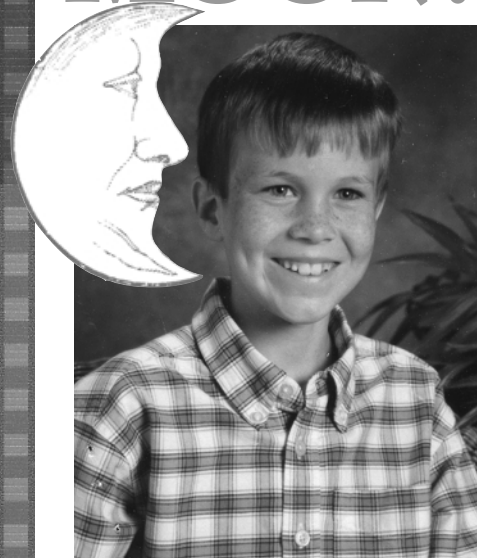


The Mirror

I look in the mirror and who do I see?
Whose soulful eyes look back at me?
She has my hair, my eyes, my face.
Her movements are filled with grace.
At times she is a blur to me,
I have to focus carefully.
The mirror reflects who we can be,
So polish your mirror carefully.

*by Lauren Lichtenberger, 8
Waukegan, Ill.*

Is There a MAN in the MOON?



*By Michael Berg, 9
Oceanside, Calif.*

Is there a man in the moon?
That is what I want to know.
Will we be able to see him soon?
I sure hope so.
I have to get a rocket.
And while I'm working I will chant.
And fit the rocket in my pocket.
I'm not going to say I can't.
But from the research I've done.
It was really fun.
That it wasn't a race
But just starrng and looking in space. 🌑

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GOSHO GOODIES

MENTOR & DISCIPLE

If mentor and disciple pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water. (“The Eight Winds,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 206)

This passage from Nichiren Daishonin teaches us the importance of uniting with others, each person having the same heart and passion to accomplish something. It is very important whom we choose as our mentor or teacher in life. A mentor with lots of experience, someone who shows compassion and concern for others’ happiness, can help guide us.

SGI President Ikeda states:

Being in rhythm is very important in the mentor–disciple relationship. This is also true in sports: A team can’t win unless its members are in rhythm and united in purpose. This accords with reason. And how much more this applies to Buddhism, the realm of “many in body, one in mind”! A person who is out of rhythm with everyone else, a person who destroys the beautiful atmosphere of camaraderie and shared purpose, commits an offense tantamount to disrupting the unity of the samgha, or community of believers — a grave offense in Buddhism. (from a speech given in Tokyo on Feb. 3)

He also said:

The mentor–disciple relationship, in fact, forms the crucial foundation in Buddhism. We might say that everything is determined by whom a person chooses as a mentor in life. The future is also determined by the kind of disciples the mentor has. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 223)



When Two Great People FIRST MET...

Here’s a story from *The Human Revolution* (vol. 2) describing the first meeting between Josei Toda, then president of the Soka Gakkai, and 19-year-old Daisaku Ikeda, who was just learning about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. In *The Human Revolution*, the character named Shin’ichi Yamamoto is actually Daisaku Ikeda.

Shin’ichi Yamamoto knew nothing about Buddhism, but he was moved by Josei Toda’s sincerity... Though his feelings at the moment were complex, Shin’ichi was for some reason filled with a deep satisfaction....

[Shin’ichi] came to his ultimate moment of decision. “How succinctly he answers! There is no confusion in him. I think I can believe and follow this man. He answered my questions politely and sincerely, without any superfluity. What will this man mean in my life?”...

Yamamoto was gazing fixedly, his face flushed. He made as though to speak again, but fell into an uneasy silence. Suddenly he stood up with determination and said: “Thank you very much, sir. A maxim of the *Book of Rites* reads: ‘Even if you agree, you had better think again. Even if you disagree, you had better think again.’ Following your guidance that I should study and practice as befits a youth, I would like, if I may be permitted, to study under you. I would like to recite a poem of my determination as a token of my gratitude, although it is a very poor one.”

Toda nodded silently. Everyone was astonished. Closing his eyes, Shin’ichi began to recite in a sonorous voice:

*Traveler,
From whence do you come?
And where do you go?*

*The moon has set,
But the sun has not yet risen.
In the chaos of darkness before the dawn*

*Seeking
the light,
I advance*

*To dispel the
dark clouds from
my mind*

*To find a great tree unbowed by the
tempest*

I emerge from the earth....



As soon as Yamamoto sat down with a shy air, Toda spoke to him.

“Mr. Yamamoto, you seem vigorous enough, but how is your health?”

Shin’ichi was startled. “Not so good, sir. I have a lung problem.”

“Tuberculosis? Don’t worry. I had it, too. One of my lungs was terribly affected, but it healed before I knew it. Eat a lot of roasted chicken and rice, and sleep well when you are tired. Don’t worry, anyway. Take care of yourself.”

After saying this in one breath, he said, as if to himself: “Nineteen years old! Fine! Nineteen years old....”

Strangely enough, Shin’ichi felt very close to Josei Toda.

[On the train going home from the meeting, Toda was very quiet.] He was recalling the spring days when, at 19, he first came to Tokyo from Hokkaido. His first meeting with Tsunesaburo Makiguchi took place in August of the same year.

Life after that was completely refreshed and took quite a different course, he recalled with unusually deep emotion. At that time, Josei Toda was 19 and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was 48. Now, Toda had become 48, and Shin’ichi Yamamoto, whom he had met for the first time that night, was exactly 19.

Entering Makiguchi’s school at the age of 19, Toda had safeguarded his master in all activities. Time flew by, and he seemed to have been waiting secretly in his heart for the emergence of a young disciple who could be likened to the coming of the glorious dawn....

That evening, when he heard Shin’ichi Yamamoto say that he was

19, Toda immediately recalled himself at that age, 29 years earlier....

Being lulled by the swaying of the train, he gazed into the darkness outside the window. There were many youths of 19. However, it was only tonight’s young man who reminded him of his encounter with Makiguchi, 29 years before....

The deep benevolence of the Daishonin enlightened only Josei Toda to the mission of achieving kosen-rufu in Japan.... This realization originated from the fact that he was a true disciple of Makiguchi, and that the mentor and disciple both fought valiantly against the persecution that befell them.

Now, when he was 48, a young man destined to share with him the task of accomplishing Makiguchi’s will had appeared before him.

If Buddhism is true, then, in the course of human history, among those who carry out the unprecedented religious reformation, the bonds of mentor and disciple will surely materialize.

QUESTIONS to consider:

- **How** do you think the young Yamamoto felt about meeting President Toda?
- **How** do you think President Toda felt about meeting the young Yamamoto?
- **Do** you think the young Yamamoto felt he could learn something about life from President Toda; some thing that he could use to become a better person?
- **Do** you have some person or persons whom you trust as mentors? What can you learn from them to help you?

