



EXPERIENCE:
Angie Lead faces her shyness while attending graduate school at Soka University of America, Calabasas.

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THEME FOR FEB. 27 COMMEMORATIVE WOMEN'S MEETINGS EXPLAINED

The Power of One Woman To Make a Difference

Photo by EDWARD CLARK

By **MATILDA BUCK**
SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER

This year's theme for our commemorative women's meetings is: The Power of One Woman To Make a Difference. I hope that using this theme, each woman of the SGI-USA chooses to make a victory in her life unmatched by any she's previously experienced. I hope that this will be the year that we each carve out another layer of incredible actual proof. Then with powerful lives and a deepened conviction in faith, the women of the SGI-USA can inspire and encourage everyone we come in contact with. In other words, we will make the difference.

During the month of February, we'll be celebrating the 10-year mark of SGI President Ikeda's guidance given to the women of America on Feb. 27, 1990, which came to be known as the "clear mirror" guidance. He begins with: "What is the purpose of life? It is happiness. But there are two kinds of happiness: relative and absolute." I would like to discuss with you some of my thoughts on how we establish this seemingly elusive condition of absolute happiness based on the prac-

tice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

In the guidance, President Ikeda cites a passage from "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime," in which Nichiren Daishonin writes: "This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality. Arouse deep faith and diligently polish your mirror day and night. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

Many of us after reading this letter arrived at the conclusion that we must look into the mirror of the Gohonzon to observe our lives, see our faults and then chant to correct them. That is certainly one perspective. But the Daishonin also states in other writings that we can attain enlightenment just the way we are. So an additional perspective on this quote is that observing one's life means to chant to see our innate Buddhahood reflected in the mirror

of the Gohonzon. That means we already have it. We just need to uncover it.

For example, today, my daughter is happily married and a great mom. But, her senior year of high school was a turbulent time for our family. Every day, like millions of mothers across the country, I sent my daughter off to school with no inkling that anything was not as it should be. Until the day the school phoned me and asked me was I aware that my daughter was not going to graduate because of her truancy rate and all the work she had not handed in. They also told me the school was not going to allow her any opportunity to make the work up. To make matters even worse, when my husband and I confronted her, she told us in no uncertain terms that she didn't care.

I was shocked, angry and hurt. I couldn't stop thinking about all the efforts we had made for her. How could she do this to us? How could she do this to herself? Slowly I moved from focusing on her to a deep, more familiar feeling of guilt and self-abasement. I had totally failed as a mother.

One night, I overheard her crying while talking on the



Matilda Buck, SGI-USA women's leader, discusses the upcoming commemorative women's meetings in February.

phone with her friend. She told her friend she would just die if she didn't graduate. It melted my heart. I went to get guidance from someone whom I trusted.

It was pointed out to me that I was only focused on how her behavior made me feel as a mother, not on her actual suffering. He suggested I chant to understand my daughter's suf-

fering and to take responsibility for her victory. With this new perspective, I began praying that my daughter become happy and that she not suffer any further. I prayed that she graduate from high school on time.

At first, there seemed to be no change in her attitude or effort. I prayed to open myself up

PLEASE SEE BUCK, 3

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Cara Roberts presents a proclamation from the City and County of Denver naming Jan. 2 President Ikeda Day to SGI General Director Eichi Wada.

City and County of Denver Names Jan. 2 President Ikeda Day

With a fresh start for the new millennium, Rocky Mountain Region members celebrated the news that Jan. 2, SGI President Ikeda's birthday, would be President Ikeda Day in Denver. Cara Roberts, Elbra Wedgeworth and Dennis Gallagher, representatives from the City and County of Denver, presented the proclamation to Eichi Wada, SGI general director.

Mr. Wada replied with a message from President Ikeda expressing his deepest appreci-

ation to Mayor Wellington Webb and the citizens of Denver. It read in part: "I want to share today's honor with all the SGI-USA members, who have exerted themselves as good citizens in the community. I'm also sure that all the SGI members from 148 countries will be celebrating their joy together with you. We, the SGI members, have been nurturing a deep friendship with the City of Denver for more than 10 years by the annual planting of

cherry trees. It is an honor that the City of Denver opened the Ikeda Cherry Tree Garden in 1998. Soon, the City of Denver, Denver University and the SGI-USA will cosponsor the 'Dialogue with Nature' photo exhibit. I'm overjoyed that we can contribute to your city's prosperity and happiness. SGI-USA members are determined to continue our persistent efforts in promoting peace, culture and education."

—IRLENE OWADA

SOKA SPIRIT: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why Has the SGI Focused on the High Priest So Much?

By **JEFF FARR**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

When Nikken, current Nichiren Shoshu high priest, excommunicated the SGI in 1991, one choice our organization could have made would have been to walk away from the whole mess, ignoring all the terrible things that he was doing. We could have devoted all our energies to developing our own movement, to making the best SGI possible.

Why, then, have we kept talking about Nikken? Why has the SGI kept such a strong spotlight focused on him — on pointing out his bad points — for all these years?

Nichiren Shoshu, under Nikken's leadership, is negating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by spreading a twisted version of it throughout the world. The Nikken sect's religion is not the Daishonin's religion at all — but Nikken is still pretending that it is. He is the one in charge of this spiritual con game, thus playing the role of the devil king of the sixth heaven, who entices people away from correct Buddhist practice.

The SGI's Soka Spirit efforts have been, in the face of Nikken's efforts to confuse, all about clarifying the Daishonin's Buddhism — what exactly this Buddhism is and is *not*. An important component of this has been letting people know that Nikken's lead has taken Nichiren Shoshu far, far off-track.

True Buddhist leaders lead through their behavior. The Daishonin teaches that the real meaning of Buddhist practice lies in one's "behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). He set the example for us by acting as sovereign, teacher and parent to the people, just as Buddhism teaches that leaders should. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni expresses the three virtues this way: "Now this threefold world / is all my domain, [corresponds to sovereign] / and the living beings in it / are all my children. [parent] / Now this place / is beset by many pains and trials. / I am the only person / who can rescue and protect others. [teacher]" (*The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 69–70).

Do we see these virtues in Nikken's actions? First, Nikken has not been the kind of sover-



eign Shakyamuni is talking about — the kind who thinks of all humanity, whose determination is to save every

person in the world from suffering. Instead of embracing all of us, Nikken has tried to destroy our unity and turn us on one another. In 1991, he ordered the Soka Gakkai to disband and excommunicated 12 million lay believers; he split the body of practitioners in two.

He refused to confer the Gohonzon upon SGI members any longer and stopped allowing us to visit the head temple to worship the Dai-Gohonzon, the Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin for all humanity. Only if we promised to join the temple organization, which entailed turning our backs on our SGI family, would he grant us access.

Second, the Lotus Sutra says that a true teacher directs people to enlightenment by instilling in them the correct teachings, giving them the tools to win their own happiness. It is in this area that we see perhaps the worst thing about Nikken: the way he has discarded the Daishonin's teachings. He has tried to fool people into taking

his new ones — which revolve around deference to him as a godlike intermediary between us and the Gohonzon — as the real deal on the Daishonin's Buddhism. When he had the chance to teach, Nikken chose to miseducate.

In the Daishonin's conception, the high priest's role was simply to teach this Buddhism the right way, with his or her whole life, turning over all of Buddhism's wisdom to the people. The high priest's role was never meant to be some kind of barrier to the Law.

Third, Nikken has failed to show us the immense parental compassion — as if we were all his own children — that a Buddhist leader must. In its place, what we've seen has been his contempt. Wasn't this one of the motivations that led him to destroy all the believers' donations of facilities to the head temple? The Grand Main Temple, for example, was the crystallization of 8 million members' sincere offerings of more than \$360 million (which would be triple that today, somewhere around a billion dollars). The razing of this edifice of peace was meant as a big slap in the face to each one of these 8 million people.

In 1990, Nikken revealed his true feeling to an anti-Soka

Gakkai journalist that "I'll be satisfied if 200,000 Gakkai members out of 2 million side with us." What father could abandon his children so callously?

In "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin states, "I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan" (WND, 287). Nikken could never honestly make such a statement, for he is no sovereign, no teacher and no parent. He is not "the Daishonin of modern times," which is what he lets his followers call him.

So, do we pay no attention to someone who does the things that Nikken has done and just proceed toward kosen-rufu? Or is facing this kind of person — denying his or her slander outright — the quickest, surest way of achieving our dreams for kosen-rufu?

The Daishonin devoted his life to refuting slander. Using the examples of the many Buddhist sects then popular, highlighting how they advocated provisional teachings, he set up a distinction: how his Buddhism was different, how his Buddhism was true. His going head to head with priests like the revered Ryokan was not done out of spite — it was in hopes that such engagement would lead to the immortalization of this Buddhism, to

the spread of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and to the people's happiness far into the future.

All the Daishonin's efforts, all his writings, are our greatest education. And the SGI's Soka Spirit movement, based entirely on these, is the same education for a new era.

Then again, it's the same era. We're still here in the Latter Day of the Law. The Law is still being slandered. The king devil of the sixth heaven is here with us. The grand history of delineating what is and is not the Daishonin's Buddhism is not over yet.

When we join the Soka Spirit cause, we become part of this history. Our lives become part of the enormous victory of the Law that will surely unfold. As the Daishonin writes: "It is a time when...truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku" (WND, 126).

It's clear, then, what the Daishonin thought we should do when someone set on slandering the Law appears before us: *something*. We must say something, we must do something, and we must prove the truth.

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FROM BUCK, 1

even more. I saw, while I was chanting, that I still kept focusing on what was wrong with her behavior or how deeply flawed I was as a mother. Things began to turn around when I understood what I was up against—her loss of hope. This lack of hope was stopping her from taking action. I put my love for my daughter into my prayer and let go of my belief that there had to be something wrong with her or me. I graduated my prayer to: "Wait, I've got the Mystic Law. I can change this."

Soon after, my daughter found the courage to ask her teachers to reconsider their decision and allow her to make up those missed assignments. When they said yes, she went into overdrive getting those past assignments done well and turned in on the agreed upon dates. When she graduated on time, it was a victory for both of us.

I also learned from this experience that how we view ourselves as we pray is as important as what we are praying for. As women, we must guard against our tendency to pray to the Gohonzon like damsels in distress, victims desperately in need of rescue. And we must guard against praying while being so self-critical that we paralyze ourselves. As I learned the hard way, those prayers are weak. And we must avoid taking the easy route, choosing to solely focus on the "tarnish" because the tarnish is so obvious.

A long-time leader from Kansai once shared some insight on this tendency to focus on the negative. He said the reason that the members of Kansai were able to achieve so many individual and collective victories was contained in a formula: First, to determine that you will achieve some particular thing. Second, to pray concretely and positively toward that goal and, finally, to take the appropriate action.

I had heard this formula before, but he added an important ingredient. He said the formula is infallible—the only thing that can destroy its efficacy is if you carry grudges in your life. If you blame your history, your circumstances or other people, you cannot pull the strength from your life that guarantees triumph. Grudges weaken our lives. Again, if we focus on the tarnish of our own lives or of others, more than the potential, we weaken our prayer and our effort.

So every difficult situation, every difficult person or even our own "tarnish" should be

viewed as a catalyst to our victory. He said we must decide, "Because of this I will chant strongly, because of this I will make a greater effort." Developing this spirit as our response removes the feeling of being victimized from our prayer and self-image. It moves us from being reactive to proactive, as we bring forth meaning and power from what we experience in the course of our lives.

Especially in the area of human relationships, our experience of faith is transformed once we decide that every difficulty is in fact the answer to our prayer, the "polish" for the attainment of our dreams.

A stanza from President Ikeda's New Year's poem says: Even the macroscopic ideal of peace / Is actualized only when it connects with the life of each individual. / Peace is not found in some distant place; / It lies close at hand, in the vibrant sense of fulfillment felt / By each person taking earnest action / For the welfare of their community, society and fellow citizens. (Jan. 1 *World Tribune*, p. 3).

As President Ikeda illustrates, there is no peace found in self-centeredness or the separation between us and the people in our environment. Any victory achieved will lack a sense of fulfillment, with the feeling of rapture dying off quickly, unless this achievement occurred as a result of extending ourselves to others and working as hard for their victory as we did for our own. Fortune and happiness created this way is the most fulfilling.

In the "clear mirror" guidance, President Ikeda states: "Human relations also function as a kind of mirror. Nichiren Daishonin states in the 'Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings': 'When Bodhisattva Fukyo bowed in reverence to the four categories of people, the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back.' ... In the inner realm of life, cause and effect occur simultaneously. With the passage of time, this causal relationship becomes manifest in the phenomenal world of daily life" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*).

In closing, I believe absolute happiness is found in striving to honor our own lives and the lives of others regardless of circumstances. To always be delving deeper, seeking out the humanity in our lives and the lives of those around us gives us power. This is the key to trans-

MARCH 21—OUR TARGET DATE FOR VICTORY

One Woman Who's Made a Difference: Hiroe Clow

By MATILDA BUCK

SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER



Hiroe Clow

I recently reread the section in *The New Human Revolution* that describes Mrs. Hiroe Clow's early years in America—her name being Masako Clarke in the novel. She left Japan in 1959 with her American husband and baby daughter. Whatever city she lived in, she was active in trying to introduce Buddhism here in America. It must have been difficult speaking little English, taking care of her family in a foreign land. She worked hard to help the members living in Seattle.

In December 1962, she gave birth to a baby boy. Her joy was short-lived because within days of her son's birth, her husband died. Here she was in America, her home for only three years, a widow with a little girl and a brand new baby. But she was so determined not to succumb that she even traveled with her children to attend the second national leaders meeting ever to be held in America just 10 days after the death of her husband. She gave her determination at the meeting with Shin'ichi Yamamoto: "My husband gave me two beautiful children.... It is my responsibility as a mother to raise them to be fine young people who can contribute to kosen-rufu. Above all, I also have a mission to realize the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism in Seattle and throughout America.... I am determined to live with courage and strength, and to become a model of unsurpassed happiness" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 7, p. 72).

At that time Shin'ichi inscribed a book leaf for her: "Illuminated by the Mystic Law? / may you soar / like a queen" (*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 166). Until I read this account in *The New Human Revolution*, I didn't know the history behind the strong and spirited Mrs. Clow I had known for 20 years in Los Angeles. Because I knew her firm character, I had always known that all she revealed about Nikken in Seattle was truthful. It is important

ascending that nagging self-critical voice, or the voice that always blames the environment. As we do this, we move toward

to note that she spoke out after 29 years on 1 y when she clearly saw what Nikken was about.

He had excommunicated the Soka Gakkai in an attempt to destroy it and its president, Daisaku Ikeda. She saw the distorted doctrines that were being used to deceive members. Until then she kept silent about this incident with prostitutes to protect the priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu and the Gakkai members. But eventually the only way to protect the future of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was to expose the truth of the character of Nikken who was asserting his superiority and infallibility. It took courage to take on all that ensued.

Mrs. Clow died on March 23, 1996. I believe she lived up to all she determined at the meeting in 1962. And she has done something great for me.

I am focusing my daimoku on a victory for Mrs. Clow and the Soka Gakkai in the Tokyo court case that will be decided on March 21. This defamation suit may appear to be just a decision on who is telling the truth: Nikken, the High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu, or Hiroe Clow, a Japanese pioneer who helped establish Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in America. In the final analysis, the core issue for me is the importance of one person's action. I am reminded of guidance President Ikeda gave in 1990: "Freedom is something you must fight for and gain by and for yourself. It is not something that is handed over on a silver platter... rather by fighting against and pushing through what oppresses one, both internally and externally, one establishes a magnanimous self and a profound and happy state of life. This is the

purpose of faith" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, pp. 28-29).

The moment Mrs. Clow stood up for justice she had won. Through my prayer toward a victorious outcome, I am able to also stand up against those who would distort and eventually destroy Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This is, for me, the real victory. In that sense, whether the case is won or not is somewhat irrelevant. The question for me is, have I won or not.

Through my prayer toward a victorious outcome, I am able to also stand up against those who would distort and eventually destroy Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I ask myself sometimes "What am I really doing to insure the safety of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? What am I doing to prevent its corruption?" To chant focused daimoku for the next two months toward Mar. 21 is a powerful way to refute slander—the Daishonin's clear instruction to his disciples—and ensure that Nichiren Buddhism prevails.

Since Mrs. Clow took her stand here in America, and because President Ikeda has said America will be the center of kosen-rufu for the world, we have a stake in this outcome. There will be many challenges in our history, and each one is important. This Seattle Incident took place on American soil at the historic moment of the first Gohonzon conferral ceremony in the U.S. We own it. Mrs. Clow understood this. Her example is helping me understand how the power of one person can make a difference. We are living in a definitive time in the history of Buddhism. Mrs. Clow will remain an important figure in the history of Buddhism, remembered as a woman who took a stand to ensure the future of humanity. We can join in that legacy. I want to join in President Ikeda's wish for her: "Illuminated by the Mystic Law? / may you soar / like a queen." **WT**

living happily and positively affecting the lives of the people we touch.

I look forward to hearing

about each one of your powerful breakthroughs, and the difference you have been able to make in the lives of others. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — NEWELL FOGELBERG, BOULDER, COLO.

Transcending Differences at Work

Newell Fogelberg develops strength and happiness at his job while displaying true leadership.

How many of you have had some kind of conflict where you work? It's a great place to accomplish your human revolution, isn't it?

Although it's hard to admit, I've been in the printing trades for nearly 30 years. I started by cajoling my way into running a small offset press. But, in printing, if you know how to add and subtract, they immediately make you an estimator and, if they discover you can also multiply and divide, you go straight into management. About three years ago, there was a rumor that I could pronounce calculus, so I was appointed as the director of printing and copying services at the University of Colorado at Boulder, overseeing about 35 employees.

Seriously, I've always enjoyed my job as I've had to learn and grow every day. Over the past several years, most of those lessons have been in how to deal with people.

In 1996 when SGI Vice Women's Leader Yumiko Hachiya visited Boulder, I received some guidance from her. At the time, I worked for a woman who directed publications and printing for the university and I was having a very hard time with my boss. She had to put together a business plan and was using the occasion to regularly browbeat me about some very bizarre things.

One evening at a district meeting, I told Mrs. Hachiya about my situation. Her response has always remained with me. She said: "This woman will make you strong. Her opposition to you will make you strong if you use it. View this as your opportunity to become a great leader and a strong business man." That wasn't what I wanted to hear. But, I considered what she said while I chanted.

I began to realize that my boss must have been hurting pretty bad to go so far out of her way to mess up my day. Then I remembered it was she who had hired me back in 1989 and there had been happier days working together with her. I started chanting for her and, fairly soon, I offered to help her write a business plan for the department. When

she had an outburst toward me, I tried to ignore it. I reminded myself that she was probably not so much angry with me as with the pressure she was receiving from the administration and that working through this opposition would make me stronger.

After we completed the business plan—about three months later—her contract was not renewed. I was put in charge and got a nice promotion, a raise and a good deal of praise for my part in the business plan. I also got a terrific new boss who was and is the most supportive person I've ever worked for.

I was overjoyed until I realized that one of the things that was assigned to my new department was about \$200,000 of the former department's debt. We started out \$200,000 in the hole. I recalled Mrs. Hachiya's words and decided this was a challenge. I needed to learn financial management very quickly.

I was in way over my head, but my boss supported me through it all. He's the head of the Office of Financial and Business Services at Colorado University. Over the past couple of years, he's taught me financial management and strategic planning. So I had exactly the right teacher at the right time and I started working on digging us out of our financial hole.

About two years ago, as we were poking our noses over the edge, my production manager went south on me. He had started his own printing business on the side with his wife. While both my assistant director and myself were on vacation, he and his wife went into one of our copy centers and told the employees that he was going to use one of the machines and that they couldn't charge him. Please understand that we're a government shop and it's illegal for us to use our equipment for private business. His wife broke the machine or I might never have known.

Because his actions were illegal, I could have fired the man at that point, but it was a first mistake so I gave him a letter of reprimand and warned him. He apparently interpreted this as weakness on my part and, over the next few months, he proceeded to execute his private business affairs from work, to the detriment of his job performance.

The state system is very restrictive about the steps you can take in reprimanding, correct-

ing and terminating employees. This man was also the union steward in the shop. I followed the prescribed steps and, in June 1998, corrective action was taken. Within one week of the corrective action, this man inspired seven of the employees in the printing section to file a collective grievance against me.

After about three months of the lawyers and the union discussing this grievance, it was dismissed. The union abandoned this group and their demands as irrational and I was vindicated. However, when I received notice of this grievance, it stung me. I woke up at 3:00 the next morning with my heart hammering and tiptoed downstairs so I wouldn't wake my wife. I was overwhelmed with fury. This kind of black inky rage filled my mind and I'm ashamed to say that I was so angry I wanted to hurt somebody. I was so angry I literally scared myself and I realized it was time to chant.

The first benefit I realized was tremendous support from my boss, most of my co-workers, my peer managers in the university, the vice chancellor, my friends, my wife, senior leaders and terrific support from Boulder District. This kept me going and made me feel as strong as, and I quote, "a demon armed with an iron staff."

Iwish I could say I immediately understood this karma, sorted it all out and knew what to do, but this took months. In the meantime, we had a sort of war in our department. There were memos and meetings and accusations and little side attacks against the people on my side, especially against my assistant director. This took the form of blatant sexism as they complained about a woman being the assistant director. During this time, there was even a physical confrontation when one of the original group "defected"—an older man in his 60s was knocked flat and almost injured when he brushed against one of the other group.

Because the guy who started this was doing a bad job, he quit just before I could fire him. As I said, the union abandoned this group at about this time. I had won. But it didn't feel like winning. It felt like a war. There was an atmosphere of tension. No one was sleeping well and, although the remainder of this group was



Newell Fogelberg with his wife, Matti, celebrating his birthday and his victory in Boulder, Colo.

obviously frightened to see what I'd do now that I'd won, they were defiant. You could still sense that there were two armed camps.

I thought about that guidance from Mrs. Hachiya and wondered how I could become happier and stronger through this experience. I read SGI President Ikeda's thoughts about authority and I thought about what it meant to create value. I realized that up until that point, my victory was basically selfish. A couple of years before, I'd confronted an irrational boss who was hung up on her authority. I did not want to be an authoritarian like that. I didn't want to be the boss thumping on my chest and saying, "I'm the boss. You must do as I say."

I realized that my challenge was to be a leader. Whoever was right or wrong, the whole department was suffering and I had the power to change the situation.

I reached out to the rest of the group. I assumed the dual role of director of the department and the production manager for the printing section. I worked with these people for about nine months before we identified and hired a new production manager last July.

Since then, we have expanded our business to include many more services and are establishing two new copy centers to add to our other six. Whereas we were \$200,000 in the red before, as of last month, we had realized a net of \$130,000. I've been personally praised by the vice chancellor for this turnaround and our department is held up as an example to both the university and the State of how an auxiliary department should be run. I also have a production manager

who, of all the printers I know, I would have handpicked for the job—a former mentor of mine.

Throughout this experience, my salary has increased more than 20 percent. Six months ago, a raise of more than 10 percent would have literally been impossible in the state system. My boss has done this as a reward for my efforts.

When I walked in the other day, after a good night's sleep, the presses were already clicking away. I am enjoying my job once again, in a happy shop, and I realize that I have indeed won a true victory.

In my study of Buddhism, I found the following quote from "Reply to Yasaburo" by Nichiren Daishonin to be very inspiring. I keep it hanging on my office wall: "You must be firmly resolved. Do not begrudge your fief; do not think of your wife and children. Do not endanger the Dharma by relying upon others. You must simply make up your mind. Look at the world this year as a mirror. The reason that you have survived until now when so many have died was so that you might meet with this affair. This is where you will cross the Uji River. This is where you will ford the Seta. This will determine whether you win honor or disgrace your name. This is what is meant when it is said that it is difficult to be born as a human being, and that it is difficult to believe in the Lotus Sutra. You should pray intently that Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will all gather and enter into your body to assist you" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 829). **WT**

Photo by JON FIEBIG

EXPERIENCE — ANGIE LEAD, SEATTLE

Being True to Myself

Angie Lead of Seattle says: 'I have always been a very shy person and was able to get through life without really dealing with my weakness until I went to SUA, Calabasas. It was there that I came out of my shell.'



Angie Lead, a 1999 graduate of Soka University of America, Calabasas.

I have always been a very shy person and was able to get through life without really dealing with my weakness until I attended graduate school at Soka University of America, Calabasas. It was there that I came out of my shell. But first I'd like to share a little bit about my background.

I was raised as an only child by my mother, a single parent, in Bellingham, Wash., a small city near the border between Washington State and Canada. When I was 6, my mother remarried and I gained a stepfather, two stepsisters and a stepbrother. Just a few years after that, my stepsisters and brother were kidnapped from our family by their birth mother. We did not see them for nearly six years. When they finally returned to us, our family began a long struggle of dealing with what they had experienced during the time with their alcoholic mother and her very abusive boyfriend.

There were times when all my family did was fight and scream, at which point all I could do was escape. I tried to keep myself too busy to be at home. Most of my weekends were spent at my grandparents' house in Seattle, my safe haven.

When I was in the fifth grade, I joined the school orchestra and learned to play the violin. My time spent in orchestra activities gave me the satisfaction of hard work, wonderful friends and peace of mind. I constantly tried to be the perfect daughter and student so that no one would really know how my life was at home. My only true salvation was my consistent Buddhist practice which I started as a toddler with my mother in 1976, specifically chanting to the Gohonzon, receiving encouragement from SGI President

Ikeda's words and participating in SGI activities.

When I was 9, I joined the SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps in Seattle. It was through my experiences in the Fife and Drum Corps that I was able to build a strong foundation for my life. I began by learning to play the fife, a small flute, and later went on to be a flute section leader. In the Fife and Drum Corps, I learned the meaning of hard work, unity and challenging myself to the limit. What I remember most about being in the Fife and Drum Corps is the spirit to "never give up." No matter how hard it was to keep marching or playing the same song over and over, our drum major encouraged us to keep going. I really looked up to the drum majors — to me they were everything I wanted to be. They were independent, warm-hearted and strong. When I was 17, I auditioned for the position of drum major for our fife and drum corps, a responsibility I had for five years. I learned that perseverance was the key to success.

That same year, which was just before my senior year of high school, my mother was diagnosed with severe diabetes and she and my stepfather divorced. At this point, my mother and I moved from Bellingham to Seattle to live with my grandparents. This new change in my life became a turning point.

Throughout my youth so far, the one thing that had kept me going was my Buddhist practice within the SGI. This is my eternal home. No matter what happens in my life, I know that I have the potential to over-

come every obstacle and challenge any goal because I consistently practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to the best of my ability.

One such goal I had was attending Soka University of America (SUA) in Calabasas, Calif., founded by Daisaku Ikeda in 1987. I first heard of the SUA Graduate School's master of arts degree program in Second and Foreign Language Education with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Dr. Tomoko Takahashi, the dean of the SUA Graduate School, when she visited the Seattle Culture Center in 1997.

At that time, I was a few months away from receiving my bachelor's degree in American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do after graduation. I thought about getting a post graduate degree in public policy or law; like most people I changed my mind a million times. But then I came across something that helped me make up my mind.

President Ikeda always emphasizes the importance of education: "Passion comes from having a profound recognition of and commitment to one's mission. I, too, have resolved to dedicate my life to education, because I know that education determines the future and is the foundation for building peace and lasting value" (Sept. 18, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

When I received my acceptance letter from the SUA Graduate School, I was very happy and excited, and yet I also felt I was not ready. After chanting much sincere daimoku, I made the difficult decision to postpone my plans to attend the SUA Graduate School. I felt I was not ready to leave my life in Seattle.

From the time I made that decision, during 1997-98, I had experienced so much personal growth, and later realized that I needed that in order to take on the challenge of completing the master's program at the SUA Graduate School. During this time, I was living with my grandparents, who both became ill at different times. During this trying time, I was finishing my bachelor's degree,

working part-time at United Parcel Service, and trying my best to fulfill my leadership responsibilities for SGI-USA's Junior High and High School Division for the Pacific Northwest Region.

It was during this difficult time that a poem from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda that was written in Feb. 1998 became my life's challenge and goal. In the poem he says: Live with hope / Aspire for lofty ideals / Be true to yourself — / There your inner brilliance shines.

Despite my strong determination and persistent Buddhist practice, I was not able to live the words *Be true to yourself*. I was not challenging my weakness to become strong because I still had a lack of self-confidence. Most of all, I was still plagued by my fear to leave the safe environment I had in Seattle, my nest.

In 1998, a few months before applications were due for the SUA's master's program, I was encouraged by my mother and a member of our local SGI organization to apply once more to the SUA Graduate School. I still had the dream of attending SUA in my heart and decided to challenge myself. At this time, I chanted with all my might to make the best decision for me for my life. I knew that I really wanted to attend the SUA Graduate School, so I continued to chant to the Gohonzon and threw myself into studying Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and SGI activities. In weeks, I received the acceptance letter that I had been waiting for.

When I arrived at SUA, Calabasas, people told me that this experience would change my life, and it did. Completing SUA's master's program to teach English as a second and foreign language was by far my life's greatest struggle and victory. It was at the SUA Graduate School that I challenged myself to the fullest — where I came out of my shell.

At SUA, I was consistently able to battle my self-doubt and fear. Throughout our program, my classmates and I did many group assignments, in which I had to learn to speak up for myself. My tendency has always been to let people influence my opinions, which stemmed from self-doubt. There were many times that I just wanted to give in. However, every time I was

down and felt I couldn't go on, I would chant to the Gohonzon and read President Ikeda's guidance. Also, my classmates at the graduate school were always there for me. I can recall many times when we would confide in one another about our dreams and struggles. Because of the small class size, my classmates and I received so much attention from the faculty and the staff at SUA. My professors never once hesitated to offer me their utmost support whenever I needed help with a project or paper.

My family also encouraged me to keep going and not give up on my dreams. What ultimately enabled me to change was myself. I knew that I had overcome my shyness in order to become happy.

It wasn't until my third semester at the SUA Graduate School that I finally felt free. This was the most intense period of the program because I had three courses, I began student teaching and I was working on my master's project. It was at this time that I remembered the words from President Ikeda, "Be true to yourself.... There your inner brilliance shines."

I realized that being true to myself was my biggest struggle. I was always afraid of what people thought of me and most of all I was afraid that I was not good enough. In his poem "Become Strong," President Ikeda says: "Fear is hell; courage is joy." This is so true. I realized that the moment I let fear take over is the moment I lose. What I learned is that I did not need to be perfect. I just needed to be me.

At SUA I learned so much about life. I learned that being a good friend requires patience, trust and selflessness. I learned that our students are the greatest teachers. Most of all, I learned the meaning of Soka education. To me it represents the trust between teacher and student. To know that someone trusts you with their whole heart is the most profound connection between two people. This is what my professors gave me at the SUA Graduate School and what I hope to give my students as well. The experiences I had there are my priceless treasures because of what I learned and accomplished.

This coming March I will begin teaching English for Tokyo Soka High School in Japan. Being able to contribute my life to Soka education is truly an honor and a tremendous joy for me. My goal is to meet every expectation as an educator for the sake of my students, for the sake of Soka education. **W**

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Everything Begins With Dialogue

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Passing the State Guest House in Tokyo, SGI President Ikeda remembers the many dignitaries he has met there. 'Everything begins with dialogue,' he writes. 'But no matter how friendly a dialogue may be, it must not stop there....'

The golden shades of autumn have spread across the trees of Tokyo. Driving from the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi toward Yotsuya, the State Guest House comes into view behind its ornate gates.

Last year, I am told, marked the 90th anniversary of the construction of this imposing edifice in Moto-Akasaka. The land once belonged to the Tokugawa family of Kii (present-day Wakayama Prefecture) but after the Meiji Restoration was donated to the imperial house and called the Akasaka Detached Palace.

In June 1909, the present building was completed and served as the residence of the crown prince, who became Emperor Taisho (after the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912). It was the first Western-style palace built in Japan, executed in French neo-Baroque style, after such models as Versailles and the Louvre.

It was designed and constructed totally by Japanese. The architects of the Meiji period could at last proudly proclaim that they had reached the level of the West, and the palace drew lavish praise. It was so majestic that many Japanese exclaimed that it was like a castle or palace out of a fairy tale. Emperor Meiji apparently had only one remark: "It is too luxurious."

After World War II, the



The first dignitary SGI President Ikeda greeted at Japan's State Guest House was Madame Deng Yingchao, widow of the late Premier Zhou Enlai of the People's Republic of China, on April 12, 1979. He had met Madame Deng Yingchao in China the year before.

building was used for a time as the National Diet Library and for other functions. Later, in the spring of 1974, it was renovated and reborn as Japan's State Guest House.

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The State Guest House is less than five minutes by car from the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. On days when I'm based at the Headquarters and have appointments nearby, I regularly drive past the Guest House. Having paid visits there on several occasions, at the invitation of state guests from all around the world, I can't help thinking how mystic it is that it is so close. I am struck again by the realization that my mentor, Josei Toda, decided on this location for our Headquarters after the deepest consideration.

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The first dignitary I greeted at the State Guest House was Madame Deng Yingchao, widow of the late Premier Zhou Enlai of the People's Republic

of China. That was in April 1979. When I had met her in China the year before, she said to me, "I want to visit Japan next year, when the cherry trees are in full bloom, on behalf of my husband, who so loved cherry blossoms." And she was true to her word.

The fact is, I had once said to Premier Zhou, "Please come to visit Japan again, when the cherry trees are in bloom." And he had replied, "I would like that very much, but it is impossible." He knew that he didn't have much longer to live. This took place 25 years ago, at our first and last meeting, in December 1974.

When the reopening of diplomatic relations between China and Japan had been decided, a Japanese leader suggested that Premier Zhou should be the first guest to be welcomed at the new State Guest House, after renovations had been completed to the Akasaka Detached Palace. But Premier Zhou had again replied, "I probably won't be able to go." Realizing there was little likelihood of him crossing the bridge that he had helped build between China

and Japan, he worked tirelessly to consolidate its foundations until his death in January 1976.

Madame Deng carried the spirit of Premier Zhou with her when she came to Japan. In his stead, she visited these shores in the season of the cherry blossoms.

Unfortunately, that year the cherry trees had bloomed early in Tokyo, and the blossoms had been scattered by a spring storm. Wanting her to at least enjoy their fragrance, I had some branches of the later-blooming double-petaled cherry blossoms sent to the State Guest House. The blossoms were arranged in the Morning Sun Room, where our meeting took place, and Madame Deng was very happy.

As always, she wore a plain tunic suit. Smiling warmly, like a dear mother, she said to me: "We are family. If time had permitted, I would like to have met you not in a grand room such as this but in your home." This was a short time before I stepped down from the position of Soka Gakkai president. When I told her about this at the end of our friendly talk, she immediately replied: "You are

too young. You mustn't quit." Her determined voice still rings in my ears.

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After that, I received many more invitations to the State Guest House to welcome foreign dignitaries. These have included Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng (1980), U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1982), Brazilian President João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo (1984), Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1985), Argentine President Raul Alfonsín (1986), Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1986), President of the Council of State of Poland Wojciech Jaruzelski (1987), Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi (1988), Chinese Premier Li Peng (1989), Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (1991) and General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Jiang Zemin (1992). I met Jiang Zemin again at the State Guest House last year, when he came to Japan as China's head of state.

Others whom I have met at

the State Guest House include Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel (1992), His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Azlan Shah of Malaysia (1993), Polish President Lech Walesa (1994) and South African President Nelson Mandela (1995).



These are all important guests from around the world. Of course, it is my wish as a Japanese for them to return to their countries with good memories of their visit. It would be sad if the only fruits of their visits were political negotiations and economic discussions.

That is why I speak to them earnestly and sincerely about opening new roads of friendship, culture and peace, at the same time offering them a boisterous cheer of welcome from the people, from our 10 million members in Japan.

The people are like the ocean. Exchange among nations only on the political and economic levels—exchange that is not based on human interaction on the level of the people—will not endure. Only when there is deep exchange between peoples, like the deep-water currents of the ocean, will the voyage of friendship among nations be stable and sure.

There is an old Chinese saying: “When you communicate with a person, communicate with his or her heart. When you want to water a tree, water its roots.”



My mentor, Josei Toda, never judged people by their social status or position. He was concerned with what a person had achieved, what ideals a person had fought for and dedicated his or her lives to. This is what he looked at, and this is what he based his judgments on. He often shared his opinions of the great men and women of history with me, and his insights were always keen and profound.

There was one world leader of whom Mr. Toda said: “I want to meet him. I know that we’d understand each other right away.” That was the great Indian philosopher-statesman Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India.

Nehru made an official visit to Japan in October 1957, just six months before Mr. Toda died. While in Tokyo, he stayed at the old Asakanomiya Mansion (the residence of Prince



A second encounter takes place between President Ikeda and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the State Guest House, April 18, 1991.

Asaka) in Shirokanedai, Minato Ward—today the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum. Before the current State Guest House was completed, this beautiful Western-style building was used for a time as a state guest house.

It was also close to Mr. Toda’s home. I am sure that Mr. Toda, knowing that Prime Minister Nehru was only a short distance away at the State Guest House, carried on a spirited dialogue with the Indian leader in his heart.



In November 1985, I met Nehru’s grandson, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, at the present State Guest House in Moto-Akasaka. I was recovering from an illness at the time. I had been released from the hospital, but my strength still had not fully returned. When I received the invitation to meet the Indian premier, however, I knew I could not turn it down.

By meeting with the grandson of the man my mentor had wanted to meet, I would in a way be fulfilling my mentor’s wish. Also, as an ordinary Japanese citizen, I wanted to welcome Prime Minister Gandhi and express my gratitude to the leader of the nation that was the birthplace of Buddhism.

We met in the Rising Sun Room, which is so named for a painting on the ceiling of the room that shows a mythical goddess riding a chariot against the backdrop of the rising sun. When I entered the room, the prime minister greeted me genially. It was just a year since he had taken over the mantle of leadership from his mother, Indira Gandhi, at the young age of 40. He seemed like a shining prince sent down from the heavens.

I recall fondly how we spoke

of bringing peace to humanity through Shakyamuni’s spirit of compassion. Six years later, Rajiv Gandhi, who had devoted his whole being to India, became a victim of terrorism. I never had another opportunity to meet him.

Still, I am glad that our meeting grew, like a small sapling grows into a mighty tree, into a warm relationship with his family and an ongoing exchange with India in general.



Nor will I ever forget President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, a man who changed history. In April 1991, I received a sudden message that he wanted to meet me at the State Guest House. We met in the East Room, which is above the east entrance to the palace. When he came into the room, I noticed how tired Mr. Gorbachev seemed.

He had a packed schedule, and after our meeting he was to rush off to his fifth meeting with the Japanese prime minister.

“Welcome to Japan. Land of the Cherry Blossoms!” I said, and he replied: “At last we meet. I’ve been wanting to see you again for a long time.” The famous Gorbachev smile shone on his face.

This was the first time a Russian head of state had ever visited Japan, including during the days of the old Russian Empire.

During a meeting I had with Mr. Gorbachev in Moscow the previous year, he announced his planned spring visit to Japan. He kept his word, though there had been many obstacles to overcome.

While our time together was brief, as a friend, I wanted to give President Gorbachev a big welcome. I presented him with the poem that I had promised to write him (“Song of the Noble Spirit”), and I also presented



President Ikeda pays a courtesy call on President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, at the State Guest House, July 5, 1995.

him with these words: “For those who walk the great, untrodden paths of pioneers, there will always be tortuous mountains.” “It is always darkest before dawn.”

As we spoke, the color came back into his face. His eyes began to sparkle with life and energy once more. So intent was I on encouraging him that I apparently reached out both hands to hold him by the arms. Both of us were so engrossed in our exchange that we parted without a handshake. His happy words of thanks rang in my ears long afterward.

The Soviet Union broke up, and Mr. Gorbachev stepped down as president. But our friendship survives. Just the other day, Mr. Gorbachev attended a celebration commemorating the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. I was relieved to see that he had bravely risen above his grief at the death of his wife, Raisa, and become active again.



My second meeting with President Nelson Mandela of South Africa also took place at the State Guest House. It was in July 1995. His smile, bright and clear as a summer’s day, was that of one who had fought and triumphed in the struggle for justice. It was our first meeting since we had met at the offices of the *Seikyo Shimbun* in 1990, a short time after he had been released from his ordeal of 10,000 days in prison.

In the intervening years, apartheid had been abolished and South Africa had been reborn, with the aim of becoming a “rainbow land,” where people of all races could live together in harmony. President Mandela was a symbol of that rebirth.

“I have been looking forward to this meeting,” he said. “I

clearly remember our meeting five years ago.”

When I asked what his plans were for a successor, he smiled and noted that I had asked him that at our first meeting. Our second meeting unfolded as a continuation of the first.

Now I know what he was smiling about. Mr. Mandela had a dazzling array of talented leaders that he was cultivating, starting with Thabo Mbeki, who succeeded him and was inaugurated as South Africa’s new president in June last year.



Everything begins with dialogue. But no matter how friendly a dialogue may be, it must not stop there. Unless you keep up the contact, it remains an isolated incident instead of a first step toward a lasting connection.

I am a person of action. I have made it my mission to extend that first step toward friendship into a solid road, a great road that links people to people.

This, too, I believe, is an expression of gratitude toward Japan’s guests. If there is a road, we can all use it with confidence and assurance. If there is a road, we can connect our hearts to those of people around the world and extend our ties of friendship far into the future.

Let us blaze a trail of friendship and trust! Let us build a rainbow bridge of peace and culture! A new century of hope is opening boldly before us. **WT**

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*” series in the Nov. 17 and 18, 1999, *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

The School of My Youth

'The school of my youth was the private instruction I received from a master in the study of humanity, Josei Toda,' President Ikeda writes. 'I studied at "Toda University.''

More than 50 years ago, in the spring of 1949, Mr. Toda was 49, and I was 21. It was then that he declared to us, as if it were his heartfelt last will and testament:

Be disciples who share your mentor's fate!

Be disciples who share your mentor's joys and sorrows!

Be disciples who share your mentor's goals!

Be disciples who share your mentor's triumphs!

Be disciples who share your mentor's life and death!

His heart-rending plea still rings in my ears. It was a time when the Soka Gakkai was threatened with destruction. A storm of persecution by the three powerful enemies was brewing. Mr. Toda made his declaration to two or three of his direct disciples, of which I was one, in the old, wooden Soka Gakkai Headquarters, which I remember so well, in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo.

The sad truth, unfortunately, is that when Mr. Toda and the Gakkai were in the direst of circumstances, many of his disciples abandoned him. If they did not desert him in body, they deserted him in spirit.

I, however, refused to leave him. I did not even quaver. From the beginning, I fought alongside Mr. Toda with the spirit to lay down my life if need be, and so I was fearless.

I have absolutely no regrets. Not now, nor will I ever, for the rest of my life.

The school of my youth was the private instruction I received from a master in the

study of humanity, Josei Toda. He gave me a thorough, complete grounding in an encyclopedic range of subjects, including politics, economics, law, Chinese classics, chemistry and physics.

I studied at Toda University.

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Mr. Toda often asked me: "What book have you read today?" "What are you reading now?" He then would demand that I summarize the book's contents, really putting me on the spot.

Sometimes it was so tough that I was deeply mortified that I hadn't studied harder. Sometimes my summaries would come out in a confused, jumbled manner.

But his reply was always the same simple words: "All right. I see." That was all.

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Once, during our study of Chinese classics, he asked me, "Who are the famous poets of the Tang dynasty?"

"Tu Fu and Li Po," I replied.

"Any others?" he asked.

"Po Chü-i, Wang Wei..."

"Any others?" he pressed further.

My face grew pale, then red. There was a long silence.

"I thought you said you were a poet," he chided.

After racking my brains, I thought of another. "I think there was also a poet named Wang Po."

"All right," he said, "do you know his most famous poem?"

I was desperate now. But finally, I squeezed these lines out of my brain: "If you have close friends throughout the country / Even the remotest parts are just like next door."

And Mr. Toda smiled.

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Another day, also during our study of the Chinese classics, he suddenly said: "There is a famous Chinese saying 'Show sincerity, and lay a just path.' Explain the meaning of that to me."

I wasn't sure I understood it fully, but I said I thought it meant

to behave sincerely toward others and promote a path of integrity and fairness in the world.

"That's close enough, I suppose," he answered. He smiled, and without missing a beat asked, "And where is it from?"

"I think it's from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," I replied.

He said nothing, turned his head to the side, and nodded slightly.

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Another time, he said: "You're a poet, so I'm sure you're familiar with Walt Whitman. Let me ask you a few questions about him."

"I don't really know..." I stammered, but nothing else came out.

Mr. Toda continued: "Tell me about Whitman. When did he live?"

"I think he was born in 1819," I replied.

"Is that so? What are some of his best-known poems?"

"Well there are 'Song of the Open Road' and 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!' And 'One's-Self I Sing' is also well known."

"Recite me a few of your favorite lines."

Beads of cold sweat rolled down my back. I recited a few lines of "Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

*For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we
must bear the brunt of danger*

Mr. Toda listened intently and then said with a keen expression: "That's right. Whatever happens, we must march forward! I will march onward, and you do so, too! Onward, forever!" His words were strict and filled with fire.

I will write about my Toda University in greater detail on some other occasion, for the sake of posterity. **W**

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the Nov. 26, 1999, *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.



Josei Toda (center) and Daisaku Ikeda at his left, with members in the Fuji-Lake district, Yamanashi Prefecture, June 12, 1955.

SGI-USA Members Accomplish 10 Billion Daimoku Target

Like leaves falling from late autumn trees, thousands of multicolored daimoku cards floated into collection boxes in the United States and the Caribbean toward Nov. 18 last year. The result of the yearend harvest? Extraordinary success — Nam-myohorenge-kyo was chanted more than 10 billion times.

The "Victorious America: 10 Billion Daimoku for Justice & Victory" campaign, sponsored by SGI-USA's youth division, was first announced in the Feb. 26 issue of *Seize the Day*. "Members are frequently asking what they can do regarding the temple issue," the announcement read. "Praying for the justice of the SGI and praying for all to see and understand the grave errors of Nichiren Shoshu is action we can all take."

Not just a numerical victory, exceeding 10 billion daimoku fueled wave after wave of victories in the real world:

commitment to chanting, studying and taking action in the Soka Spirit movement. Efforts to locate and talk with temple members dramatically increased.

- Many U.S. temple members decided to disconnect from Nichiren Shoshu in the last few months. This number is equivalent to that of a well-attended meeting at some of the U.S. temples.

- Recently, more than 10,000 temple members decided to leave Nichiren Shoshu in Japan. Last Nov. 30, as we were tabulating our victory 1999's chanting efforts, Renshu-ji temple in Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan seceded — the fourth temple to do so last year.

Many areas are now discussing their own daimoku campaigns for 2000. One goal we can all focus on is the Tokyo District Court's final verdict in the Seattle Incident trial, which is expected on March 21, 2000.

- Many areas deepened their

—ROB WEINSTEIN

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 31-32

Shin'ichi Yamamoto arrives in Lebanon. There are no Soka Gakkai members there, but he wants to 'see for himself the religious situation of the country, which British historian Arnold Toynbee had so aptly described as a museum of living religious history.'

Jan. 21, the day after Shin'ichi Yamamoto and his party visited Pompeii, the group went sightseeing in Rome, visiting the city's ancient ruins and sites like St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. Shin'ichi especially wanted to show Eisuke Akizuki and Yoshihiko Ohya, both in Europe for the first time, the famous sights of Rome, hoping it might serve them well in the future.

A light rain fell in the morning but gradually lifted. As Shin'ichi stood in front of St. Peter's, the sun's rays started to break through the clouds.

That night, a discussion meeting was held at Mr. and Mrs. Yamagishi's home. It was an informal, relaxed gathering. As it wound to a close, Shin'ichi asked Mrs. Yamagishi to play a record he had brought with him that featured music from the first-ever Soka Gakkai culture festival, which had been held in October 1962.

The room resounded with the strains of classical compositions, Japanese folk songs and energetic Gakkai songs, all performed by the Brass Band and Fife and Drum Corps. The eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Yamagishi and Sumiko Kojima lit up as they listened.

Shin'ichi said: "Soka Gakkai songs really cheer one up, don't they? When you're having a dif-

ficult time, try playing this record after you do gongyo. It's sure to give you courage.

"There won't always be other members around to encourage you. That's what's so hard about practicing abroad. Nichiren Daishonin elucidates the path we must take as practitioners of Buddhism—but without others around us to support and guide us in faith, it's easy to give in to our personal weaknesses, emotions and desires.

"Faith means struggling against those weaknesses. Nichiren Daishonin cites the teaching 'to become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 486). Only when we can control our minds can we become true champions of faith.

"I am always chanting for your happiness. I will support you as long as I live. If there's ever anything you want to tell me, please don't hesitate to write. We're Soka family, after all."

Compared with West Germany and France, there were few members in Italy. But Shin'ichi knew that if he fostered these key members, the organization in Italy would one day, too, develop greatly. He earnestly strove to plant the seeds for wonderful personal growth in the lives of these Ital-



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

ian members.

When Shin'ichi returned to his hotel room, a telegram from Katsu Kiyohara in the United States was waiting for him. She reported the formation of Seattle Chapter on Jan. 19. In both Europe and the United States, the wheels of kosen-rufu had begun to turn with vigorous momentum.

Just after 11:30 a.m. on the 22nd, Shin'ichi and his party left Rome for Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. For about two-and-a-half hours, they flew over a sea of clouds. Finally, descending through the fluffy white barrier, they saw the blue Mediterranean Sea and in the distance the snowcapped peaks of the Lebanon Mountains. The name *Lebanon* derives from a word meaning white, the country being named for its snowy white mountains.

Located on the Mediterranean, Lebanon has put its fine harbors to good use. Thousands of years ago, it was home to the Phoenicians, a great trading and seafaring people.

Down through the centuries, it has flourished as a center of trade, linking Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. But its role as an important crossroads also led to its repeated invasion and rule by outside powers, including the Persian Empire, the Umayyad Islamic Dynasty, the Christian Crusaders, the Mamluk state of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire.

In modern times, the influence of European powers has dominated. Lebanon came under French mandate for more than 20 years before achieving its independence in the mid-20th century. Given this historical backdrop, several Christ-

ian and Islamic schools spread throughout the country, and it became an area of considerable religious conflict.

As yet, there was not a single Soka Gakkai member in Lebanon. Shin'ichi Yamamoto decided to visit Beirut to see for himself the religious situation of the country, which British historian Arnold Toynbee had so aptly described as a museum of living religious history.

At the time of Shin'ichi's visit, Lebanon was the only nation in the Middle East in which Islam and Christianity existed side by side with Christians being slightly in the majority. But the situation among the Christians was rather complex, since they were split among various denominations and factions.

The largest of these were the Maronites, followed by the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Armenian Orthodox churches. There were, in addition, some Armenian Catholics and followers of Protestant denominations as well as other minor groups.

Islam in Lebanon, meanwhile, was similarly split. There were three main factions: the Sunnite and the Shiite Muslims—the two largest Islamic schools in the world—and the Druze, which had a large following in Lebanon and neighboring Syria. Lebanon also had a small Jewish population.

There were more than 10 officially recognized religious groups, and each had its own social institution as well. Together, they formed the complex, intricately patterned mosaic that made up Lebanese society.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.

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Historian Arnold Toynbee studied the religious diversity of Lebanon.

Having Faith While Parenting Alone

PERSPECTIVE

By BRIDGET BORER
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

"I would like to request that, no matter how busy you may be, you find the time to get together to talk with your children. The length of time is not important. What matters is that parents use their wisdom."

—Daisaku Ikeda (*Faith into Action*, p. 57)

Last night I watched my son play basketball for an hour and a half. I attended his practice not because I had nothing better to do—there's always plenty to do—but because I enjoyed it. As a single parent of two adolescent



boys, it is a rare opportunity spending time with singular attention on one of my boys.

I watched Philip and his lithe, wiry body sprint at full speed, jump with all his might, pass hard and precise and shoot from the heart aiming only for the basket and those two little points. My heart takes a small leap every time he makes it. I can tell that he

loves what he is doing. He seems eager to learn and play. He is determined and focused.

I wonder to myself where this boy gets his confidence and determination. I don't recall having that when I was his age. Maybe it's because he is a boy—they say that adolescent boys are generally more confident than adolescent girls—but I feel it is more than that, it is something deeper.

SGI President Ikeda says: "Even if it's only a brief meeting, give your children a hug when you see them. Touch them and talk to them. Try to make time to listen to what they have to say. As long as you have love and compassion, you will find the wisdom to make this work. The desire to save others becomes merely an abstract goal

if those who practice faith cannot communicate with their own children nor build strong and happy families" (Ibid.).

I am Philip's sole custodial parent. Since he and his brother, Jordan, were in preschool (almost nine years ago), I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. During this time I have spent countless hours listening and supporting them while meeting all their physical needs. It has been a challenge beyond my expectations. Looking back, I can see that raising them with this faith has not only brought forth my human revolution but theirs as well. It is evident in the most inconspicuous ways that my faith and practice are influencing their ability to live out their adolescence with the self-assurance and a single-

minded attitude needed to survive in this chaotic world.

The tensions and struggles in today's society can make being an adolescent a traumatic experience for any young person. Without this practice, I feel my sons would be bending to an inordinate amount of pressure creating low self-esteem, lack of focus, emotional disturbances and apathy. So far, they have avoided these cracks in the adolescent paradigm.

After Philip's basketball practice, I introduced myself to the head coach. When I told him I was Philip's mom, he gave me an affirming nod and said, "He's a good kid." I felt pleased and proud. I am reassured to know that my faith is being reflected back to me through my son. **WT**

Disciples Are Successors

PERSPECTIVE

By ED HORAN
SAN FRANCISCO

"This is the era of youth. Youth do not depend on anyone. Nor do they hang on someone else's coattails. 'I will open the way forward myself. I will advance kosen-rufu. I will see to it that the SGI is victorious. This is the spirit of youth and the attitude of true successors who love and cherish the SGI.'"

—Daisaku Ikeda (*Faith into Action*, pp. 69–70)

I believe we could substitute the word *successors* for the word *disciple* since historically, all the mentors at one time were disciples. Additionally, I feel *successor* is probably a better word to use than *disciple*, because the word *disciple* often implies a subservient role and usually refers to people who in this lifetime will never attain the status of mentor.

For example, there are the disciples of Christ (usually the first or second definition of disciple in dictionaries) or the disciples of a Zen master, or the disciples of Nikken, a master who must be blindly obeyed and worshipped.

In SGI, the disciples never prostrate themselves before the mentor. Instead we wave to SGI President Ikeda and he waves back. He chants for our health



and well-being, and we chant for his. It is a very human bond.

President Ikeda points out in *Learning from the Goshu*: "Ultimately, Buddhism comes down to the person. I did not wait to place my trust in President Toda until after I had learned about the Daishonin's teachings. Rather, I came to trust Buddhism because I first believed in the person, Josei Toda" (p. 34).

I have always been impressed by the very human interaction between Nichiren Daishonin and his followers. As we see from "The Gift of the Unlined Robe," the Daishonin talks very openly about his poor health and living conditions. We know that at times he was reduced to eating snow, grass or tree bark to survive, and that one winter his hut on Mount Minobu collapsed and his kimono was frozen solid like the wings of some poor bird.

The mentor, Nichiren Daishonin, shares his life so that we will develop the same determination to strive for kosen-rufu

that he has. Nichiren Daishonin is constantly pointing to his humanity, so that we will understand that we share the same potential to become a Buddha that he does. He has no pretense.

Nichiren Daishonin was willing to struggle alongside his disciples. In the letter "The Supremacy of the Law," to Nichimyo he says, "If anything at all happens, please come over here [to Mount Minobu]. I will welcome you. Let us die of starvation together among the mountains" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 612).

The idea that disciples are somehow subservient is a bit misleading. The disciple/successor puts forth full effort alongside the mentor in his or her own way, fiercely seeking the truth, fighting the internal and external devils every step of the way. Nikko was propagating the Law in Kamakura while Nichiren encouraged individual disciples through letters, dialogue and lectures on Mount Minobu.

While first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi gave lectures, Josei Toda, the disciple/successor, sat in the back of the lectures often joking or playing Go to offset Makiguchi's strictness with warmth, thus in his own way balancing out Makiguchi.

Similarly, Daisaku Ikeda established the brass band, went to outlying areas like Kansai and Kamata chapters and in general

supported second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, in his own unique way, breaking new kosen-rufu ground every step of the way.

And now we, as disciples/successors, are encouraged by President Ikeda to strive for kosen-rufu in our own unique arena, in the way the best suits us, but with a burning resolve.

I think determination is one of the most important aspects of the mentor-successor relationship. I often fall victim to the thoughts of, "What will people think? Is this okay? How do I know I won't lead people astray?" Then I end up retreating and second-guessing myself. But I know when I chant with the same spirit of Nichiren Daishonin—for the happiness of others—I have the courage and focus to follow through.

What other people think is irrelevant in the end. What matters is whether I have the passion of heart to make kosen-rufu a matter of course. Am I really racking my brains to open a path for others' happiness?

Recently, Norimasa Saito, SGI North America Bureau director, pointed out that being from America makes us uniquely suited not only for understanding both the Soka Spirit movement but the mentor-successor relationship. America was founded by people who fought against religious authority—people who believed that everyone has an equal right to life, lib-

erty and the pursuit of happiness. This is exactly what we are fighting for in the Soka Spirit movement; everyone has the same Buddha nature.

Americans have a natural spirit of independence and also an incredible concern and compassion for those who are suffering. No big surprise since President Ikeda says you have to be strong to be compassionate. **WT**

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Thanks, Steve Doty

I read the article by Steve Doty about his time spent with Mr. Zaitu (Dec. 3, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 11). It was well written and easy to follow. It was funny to hear Steve say he was somewhat paranoid that he was not acting appropriately throughout the journey. I go through the same feelings.

He also added some simple solutions for a fuller life. I learned that I should spend some more time to get to know members more deeply. That leaders at any level are normal people. And mostly how faith is the most "open" state of mind of all.

This article prompted me to write my first letter to the *World Tribune*. I am glad I had the opportunity to read this.

—DAVE HERRERA,
Glendale, Calif.

Authoritarianism

I would like to thank Dave Evangelista for writing (Nov. 26, 1999, *World Tribune*) in response to the Oct. 8, 1999, *World Tribune* article by Jeff Farr. I understand what Mr. Farr was trying to say about leaders being human and making mistakes and in most instances this is probably the case. However, I felt exactly as Dave Evangelista did upon reading the article. We cannot ignore the fact that we may have equally authoritarian leader within the SGI as there are within the priesthood. The "we're all good and they're all bad" attitude will only serve to destroy this wonderful organization from within.

What needs to be addressed now, once we acknowledge this problem, is what do we do to fight passionately against evil and injustice in terms of dealing with it from within the SGI? Do we have the courage of the lion to deal with it?

Please address this issue further in the future. Thank you.

—LILLIAN WILNER,
Spring Green, Wis.

Using English Names

I am glad to see we are calling the temple issue something else, since the issue is really much broader than that title would indicate, but Soka Spirit movement? Is there some reason why we can't have English names for things? (e.g. Byakuren, Soka Group, Gajokai, etc.). The organization was established here almost 40 years ago and English is, after all, the primary language in the United States. We have kept some Japanese terminology for the sake of tradition and/or convenience, but neither is at stake

**World Tribune
MAILBOX**

here. I believe the decision to rename the "temple issue" using a Japanese word betrays a mindset prevalent in our organization that makes it difficult for our organization and thus Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy to be widely shared, accepted and understood in this country.

—EILEEN McGRUDER,
Los Angeles

About the Environment

I must say I was one of the many who found Frank Hotchkiss' now-famous perspective appalling, if well-meaning (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*). As volunteers in an environmental media group (ECO) that produces public service announcements about our many ecological challenges, my husband and I are committed to doing all we can to help protect and heal our true "mother" Earth.

My deepest thanks go to all (Mr. Biggs and Mr. Peterson, Mr. Sanders, Mr. Mani in the Nov. 19 and Dec. 10, 1999, *World Tribune*) who wrote such eloquent and well-informed rebuttals. I believe I speak for many like myself who feel the same passion but lack the statistics or ability to reply so clearly.

In his favor, however, Mr. Hotchkiss certainly sparked a valuable dialogue and prompted many to re-examine this profoundly important issue.

P.S. Thanks, *World Tribune*, for making such exchanges possible!

—LYNN SACHNOFF,
Culver City, Calif.

I have been enjoying the lively dialogue about the environment engendered by the Hotchkiss article. It's great to see the "Mailbox" full of a variety of opinions. I also appreciate a wide range of

viewpoints within the body of the paper. Beverly Bagan's article (Nov. 10, 1999, *World Tribune*) added another perspective and more hard data to the environmental issues faced by contemporary cultures. I hope the paper will continue to support an exploration of issues from any and all of the voices within the human community.

—ESTHER BARATH,
La Jolla, Calif.

You just couldn't leave well enough alone, could you. Frank Hotchkiss writes the first article that brings light to the environmental hysteria this organization has propounded since President Ikeda's 1990 thesis on environmental issues. Then in the next issue, you feel like you have to have a response from Beverly Bagans (Nov. 12, 1999, *World Tribune*). While I admire her attitude and efforts, what she writes in no way diminishes the truth of Mr. Hotchkiss. And to top it all off, in the Nov. 26 issue, another long letter by Dixon Hamby. His anecdotes are interesting, but not scientific, and in no way a reflection of the global condition.

At least you included a small letter by Andy Hanlen in support of Mr. Hotchkiss. However, just look at the column inches that have been devoted to bad environmental science over the last decade as compared to the one truthful account given by Mr. Hotchkiss.

—JAMES RYAN,
Indianapolis, Ind.
JamesTRyan@aol.com

For the Toddlers

The New York Culture Center has designated room 307 as a "Toddler's Room." It will be equipped with a video monitor

connected to the main Gohonzon room during general meetings, such as Kosen-rufu Gongyo. Here, Gakkai mothers, fathers and care givers may participate in meetings: chant, receive encouragement in faith, and network with other parents — while supervising their energetic toddlers. How wonderful for parents and children alike! We would like to thank the New York regional leaders for their compassion and conviction in creating the "Toddler's Room."

Respectfully submitted by,
—THE NEW YORK CITY
MOTHER'S GROUP

Thanks, WT E-mail Express

I want to express my gratitude for your on-line service, the WT E-mail Express. I live in Istanbul, Turkey, and a *World Tribune* subscription is frightfully expensive. By the time I would receive the *World Tribune*, it would be at the very least two weeks old.

This year, the world peace prayer meeting will be held in my home, and I am pleased to say that I will share the *World Tribune* with the members here. I've been out of New York for almost 10 years now.

The New Year's issue of the *World Tribune* was also my favorite one of the year, eagerly looked forward to. Thanks so much for bringing back the thrill!

—DIANE CONTI-TUNCAY,
Istanbul, Turkey

Thanks, Jorge Silverio

Enjoyed so much the experience by Jorge Silverio in the Jan. 1 issue. I practiced for many years in Puerto Rico and will again in the future, so I would appreciate his e-mail address if you have it, as I still know Cuban members in Puerto Rico and would love to hook up with him for kosen-rufu of Cuba.

—DAN NASH, Denver
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Meetings Held in Trinidad and in St. Maarten's Rainbow Chapter

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Some 70 St. Maarten members welcomed SGI North America Bureau Director Norimasa Saito to their general meeting on Dec. 11, 1999. It was the first visit ever made by an SGI leader to the island.

The meeting was held at the residence of Humphrey and Valerie Gitterson, who serve as leaders of St. Maarten's lone chapter, Rainbow Chapter. Their house has been used as the local community center for many years.

In his words, Mr. Saito, expressing his excitement over the fact he was able to visit St. Maarten on behalf of the SGI Headquarters, warmly encouraged those present in faith.

Some of the points made by Mr. Saito are as follows:

- The greatness of Buddhism manifests itself in human behavior. How we behave in our daily lives is the theme of Buddhism. In this regard, Nichiren Daishonin states, "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). Human revolution means to polish our actions for others — our behavior as Buddhists — ceaselessly.

- SGI President Ikeda is a mentor of action, who is an expert at breaking through human barriers. Once he met at Soka University in Japan with



St. Maarten members enjoy an impromptu culture festival after their general meeting on Dec. 12, 1999. Norimasa Saito, SGI Headquarters North America Bureau director, attended the event.



General meetings were held first in Trinidad (above), then in St. Maarten.

South Florida Members Meet New General Director

South Florida SGI-USA members gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center on Dec. 12, 1999, to meet the new SGI-USA general director, Danny Nagashima.

"Let's create a new great America together," Mr. Nagashima told the audience. "My determination is to be a leader who serves the members. Josei Toda said that a true leader is one who is determined to sacrifice himself or herself for the sake of the members. I want to serve in any way possible. I

want to be the first to do shakubuku. I want to be the first to promote the *World Tribune*. And I want to be the first to home visit members."

He added: "I really believe that SGI President Ikeda's expectation is that each one of us will become the happiest person. Our determination is to invite President Ikeda back to America. The best way to prepare is to create the happiest Florida SGI-USA family!"

—JIM DREISBACH

a dignitary of the Soviet Union. Representative students present at this meeting observed the process in which President Ikeda created a friendship with this man. His bold, broad-minded and compassionate approach made an impression on the dignitary — to the point where their dialogue flowed so smoothly that a friendship was naturally established on the spot. This is just one example out of many such episodes that distinguishes President Ikeda's behavior as a Buddhist.

- Buddhism guides us to find solutions to our problems within us. Awakening ourselves to the absolute greatness that exists within is the first

step to solving whatever problems we may have in life. As long as we try to find solutions outside ourselves, we will never be satisfied or happy. "I am an entity of happiness." "I am happiness itself." This awareness or conviction is the essence of Buddhism.

Before his visit to St. Maarten, Mr. Saito visited Trinidad, where he shared many similar points in faith with the members there. Another point he made there was that "fighting against evil forces within and without is the source of benefit and good fortune, as Nichiren Daishonin stresses in 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.'" **WT**



South Florida members gather at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, Dec. 12, 1999.