



**EXPERIENCE:**  
Briah Anson faces her greatest fear—dying in a plane crash.

page 5

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401 and at additional mailing offices  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SGI-USA Subscribers, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

No. 3283

\$2.00

MARCH 3, 2000

A REPORT FROM SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA

## Reaching Out in the Pacific

Since early January, I have been away from the mainland of the United States. First, I was in Japan participating in the SGI-USA National Leaders Training Course. Then I went to Guam for the 1st Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the SGI. I then traveled through the Pacific Islands, meeting with various Pacific Islands leaders, before going back to Japan to report on these activities to SGI President Ikeda. I returned to Los Angeles in early February. I'd like to share with you some of my experiences in the Pacific Islands.

### Guam

Guam is a beautiful island, and is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Twenty-five years ago, Guam was the location for the first conference of the International Buddhist League, which was the event that inaugurated the Soka Gakkai International.

To commemorate the found-



The Kingdom of Tonga is located just west of the International Dateline in Western Polynesia.

ing of the SGI, and to celebrate the great development of our movement for peace, culture and education, Soka University and the University of Guam worked together to host the 1st Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference. This conference brought together representative leaders from many Pacific Island States, including Guam, the Republic of Fiji, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the island states of Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap. To be honest, I did not know much about this region of the world, and these island



His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, of Tonga, and members of the royal family take a commemorative photo with SGI representatives. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima holds the Award of Honorary Citizenship to the Kingdom of Tonga, which was bestowed on SGI President Ikeda and his wife, Kaneko.

states were like exotic locations from the movies.

Not only was this the 1st Pacific Islands Peace Conference

of the new millennium, but I believe that it was the very first anywhere in the world in the new century! In addition to the

peace conference, many activities were held to commemo-

PLEASE SEE PACIFIC, 6

## Florida and Caribbean Leaders Discuss 'The Power of One'

By JIM DREISBACH  
FLORIDA BUREAU CHIEF

The theme "The Power of One" easily struck a chord with the 140 leaders from Florida and the Caribbean who gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in January to set their direction for the year 2000. In contrast to a large-scale general meeting, the activity took the format of a series of seminars that described how new attitudes and actions make leaders more effective.

Joy Relph Arnell from St. Maarten said that the gathering "reminded me that everything begins with me. Sometimes, we have a tendency to wait around for others to do something first.

While teamwork is important, "the power of one" means how each one of us will make an impact in creating kosen-rufu."

"In Antigua, we have to learn how to stand alone," said Patricia O'Grady, who is originally from the United Kingdom but moved to the island country of Antigua some years ago. "It took me four-and-a-half years just to get a telephone installed, simply because the infrastructure didn't exist. That's why I appreciate being able to read SGI President Ikeda's guidance. He inspires me as one who practices what he says. This gathering reinforced what I have always believed: One must become happy first, then when you have the success of

knowing you can break through your problems and deadlocks, sharing the practice with others becomes natural. To me, "the power of one" is the example I set in the community. Am I a good, valuable member of my society, in my relationships with my work partners and with other members? If I am not happy with my life, there is something I need to look at and change."

Ms. O'Grady's thoughts echoed the final words by Sheilah Edwards, SGI-USA vice general director, about the behavior and attitude of leaders. "We need to carefully listen and observe," she said. "This way we will understand what's going on in a person's life. The



A team-building exercise takes place in one of a series of seminars for effective leadership at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

most important thing to bring with you on home visits is your heart. As a leader, you can't solve another person's problem

for them. You don't have the power. What you can do as a leader is chant with them for the quickest solution." WT

# The Human Being Must Always Come First

## PERSPECTIVE

**DAVE McNEILL**  
LOS ANGELES



February 1990 was a special time. U.S. President Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev had just declared the cold war over. Communism was losing its grip in Europe. Perestroika and glasnost were in full swing, and we were beginning to see the Soviet Union as something other than the Evil Empire. The Berlin Wall had symbolically fallen and the actual dismantling would take place in a matter of months. On Feb. 11, Nelson Mandela stepped out of a South African prison after a 27-year incarceration. I, like so many others, felt great relief and renewed hope.

Closer to home, on Feb. 12, SGI President Ikeda began his unprecedented 17-day stay in Los Angeles, during which he fundamentally corrected the SGI-USA's path of faith and ushered in a new era for our organization. I, like so many others, felt great relief and renewed hope.

As a youth division leader at that time, I had the opportunity to attend several of these meetings, where President Ikeda set the record straight on so many basic issues of faith and the organization. I've cherished my copy of the March 1990 *Seikyo Times* that contains all this guidance. Ten years later, it's interesting to turn the pages and see which parts I highlighted back then. The various blue and yellow markings record my own changes and needs, as first one and then another passage of guidance struck a chord in my heart.

I attended these meetings with people who had over the previous several years become true comrades-in-arms. In those years, we had directed our youthful energies into culture festival after culture festival, general meeting after general meeting, propagation campaign after propagation campaign — all glorious memories and impressive accomplishments I do not regret a bit. Through the tough times and victories, we had created bonds of shared memories so strong that others may find it hard to understand; not unlike, I can only suppose, those shared by battle-weary soldiers. In fact, over the years many of us have shared our "war stories" with

great pride and humor ("When I was in the youth division..." the story always goes.)

These memories all came flooding back last week when more than 200 of these comrades reunited at Soka University of America in Calabasas, site of many of the 1990 events. A few more pounds, whiskers or gray hairs (what's left of them) graced the former young men's division members who attended. The former young women's division members all looked the same, even though many were carrying or running after their little contributions to the future division. My wife, Lynn, and I brought our own three little ones, Breana, 5, Colin, 3, and Andrew, 1. We saw a video from the 1990 meetings, recapped some of the guidance given at the time, hugged one another and caught up with those we hadn't seen in years.

In recalling the past, I thought the comment by General Director Danny Nagashima (who 10 years ago was the SGI-USA youth division leader) summed up many of our feelings well. He talked about the sense of relief he felt in 1990 and how he thought things would go smoothly from then on in the development of the organization. Little did he or the rest of us know how hard it would be, how many struggles — both personal and organizational — the ensuing decade would bring. But it is just these struggles that have given us all greater wisdom and deeper faith with which we can contribute to kosen-rufu all the better now.

And that, ultimately, was what this reunion was all about for me: the future. What can I do from now?

When I hugged one old comrade at the reunion — a fellow leader with whom I had campaigned for years — I felt deeply how much I loved the guy, even though our paths hadn't crossed in years. Ten years ago, too often I didn't appreciate him and other fellow leaders as the human beings they were but only as cogs in our greater kosen-rufu movement. Thanks to President Ikeda's continued guidance, though, I've come to learn that it is the human being that always must come first. This man and I might not be the best of friends, but the appreciation I feel for

him is genuine. I can't take back the past, but seeing him again made me resolve to somehow be better, to extend myself more — not only to him but to the many others who attended (or did not attend) that day, to whom I directly and indirectly owe so much. How? I'm not sure, but I'm starting by channeling my appreciation by adding him to my everyday prayers.

In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that stresses the idea of "from this moment on," looking backwards takes on its true value only when we can use those memories as fuel for today. It's fun to reminisce, and important, because to do so helps strengthen the friendship. But more than just a time to share stories of the past, this reunion was a time to recall now 10-year-old determinations, hopes and dreams and start fresh.

In 1990, we felt that it was the time we could advance, as individuals and as a precious organization. It was a watershed 17 days for us youth dedicated to our cause, a time every bit as momentous — though perhaps on a different level — as the end of communism in the Soviet Union or the rise of equal rights in South Africa. With our newfound "freedom," we've struggled forward for the past 10 years, each in our own way. It's been anything but easy. But now, in 2000, it is again time to

advance, tapping ever more of our wisdom that has matured over the years.

In one sense, this reunion was just another catalyst to renew my resolve, one of countless catalysts I've experienced over the years. But it was also special, because the people I shared it with are special to me, whether they know it or not. I want to say thank you to them and say how much I look forward to the next 10 struggling, vigorous, hope-filled years. **WT**

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The *World Tribune* (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; (310) 260-8900; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: [w t @ s g i - u s a . o r g](mailto:w t @ s g i - u s a . o r g) [SGISUBS@aol.com](mailto:SGISUBS@aol.com)

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years

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# All Things Are Interconnected

## PERSPECTIVE

**DIANNE MOODY**  
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.



For a long time I have believed that victory in our Buddhist practice often comes in different responses to ordinary moments. Something that happened recently made me realize this once more.

We have the fortune of having a wonderful person named Maria to help us clean our house every two weeks. She loves to clean, is totally reliable and has great integrity. She taught me a lesson about life the other day when she came to me and said, "Your plants are very sad." I found it a little unusual that she attributed human emotions to my plants, yet I could feel her deep sense of compassion for them.

I felt an immediate pang of guilt. I had just returned from a business trip and noticed leaves all over the floor as well as several plants whose leaves had yellowed and others with leaves

turning brown around the edges. I told Maria that it was Roy's fault. Before I left on my trip I had asked him to keep an eye on the plants and water them if needed. He hadn't done it.

In this case I had a scapegoat. Even so, my general approach to our 40-odd houseplants is that I expect them to look beautiful and enhance our environment with minimal care on my part. My strategy is to wait until they are about to croak, and then throw a little water in their general direction. Misting, repotting and fertilizing are not part of my approach. In fact, my

general philosophy has been "no big deal." If I have a casualty now and then I can replace it for \$5.99 at the local nursery. I have been heard laughingly to say: "If plants survive in my house, they really have to have a strong will to live." For example, I have a plant that I brought with me when we moved here from Florida 23 years ago. It has managed to survive being watered twice monthly and was repotted for the first time one year ago.

Maria happens to be a person who "cares" for plants. She has scolded me in the past and has taken some of my plant cast-offs and nursed them back to health. On this occasion I muttered something to the effect that I can't always seem to remember to water the plants, but she didn't let me off the hook. She followed up with the simple question, "Why?" Wanting to defend myself, I asked her in return, "Don't you ever forget to water your plants?" Her reply, "No, they are just like us. They need food and water. I keep an eye on them all the time

to see what they need." She was right on. I knew that my approach to plant care was callous, to say the least.

The next morning I re-read President Ikeda's "New Year's Poem" and I came across these words: "All things are interconnected"— / This is an underlying principle of ecological thought / And also the insight of Buddhism. / All life on this blue planet of water — / No, the entire universe itself — is a single living entity. / Even the most microscopic being is an important part of the whole. / The world is in need of a deeply religious spirit (Jan. 1 *World Tribune*, p. 3).

At that moment, I realized that Maria, a devout Catholic from Mexico, was much more of a Buddhist than I. I also began to make comparisons between how I approached my plants and other aspects of my life, such as my role as a Buddhist leader. I realized that sometimes I wait until members are distressed (wilted, turning brown around the edges or losing their leaves) before I take

action to help them. Also, at times I don't continue "caring" for them by following through with ongoing supportive action. I can't say that I "always watch them to see what they need" like Maria does with her plants.

I was considering how I could replace my callous attitude toward my plants and other things in my life when I came across President Ikeda's later words in the same poem. He seemed to be speaking directly to me when he said: "Let us now, with renewed commitment, / Plant in people's hearts the seeds of trust and friendship, / The seeds of philosophy and happiness, / The seeds of peace! / In our immediate environments, / Let us spread gardens of peace, / Green and full of flowers, / With deep prayer and patience!" (Ibid., p. 3).

Thank you, Maria and President Ikeda, for your timely wisdom — and for reminding me that ordinary aspects of life are important. My new determination is to have a deeper understanding of the statement "All things are interconnected." **WT**

# Hanging On to My Faith

## PERSPECTIVE

**DONNA FEEHELEY**  
SAN DIEGO



In my 13 years of Buddhist practice, when I've had a problem in my life, I've always succeeded in breaking through by going back to the basics — improving my gongyo, study, helping others to practice and getting guidance.

This is about study.

In 1990, the opportunity for my first real experience with study presented itself with the priesthood and laity dispute. I was devastated initially by this event. The SGI had saved my life — such as my feeling toward this organization. Plus, I had never recovered from my parents' divorce when I was a teenager, and this split felt the same.

I read everything that was printed and went to all meetings on this issue. This experience deepened my faith by teaching me to "seek the profound and discard the shallow." I learned not to follow blindly

because people are not infallible, and to base my practice on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. I discovered I cannot follow people based on their position or status; I must look at their behavior. Also, I now know the Gohonzon exists inside me, and I can become enlightened without the piece of paper if I have to. Most importantly, I have the confidence to explain Buddhism to others.

My latest experience with study occurred last month. I had reached a low in my life-condition that actually scared me. I was struggling so much that I was doubting the power of the Gohonzon, something that had not happened in years. Obstacles in my finances, health and

relationship hit me all at once. My most trusted leader told me I was suffering because I had lost hope. She said to find any SGI Buddhist publication or study material, and read it with the determination that the answer has got to be in there somewhere. I had recently joined the women's Sophia Group and we are studying *The Human Revolution*. I discovered all the answers to deepen my faith are found in this novel. The more deeply I embraced the points of the guidance and chanted to apply them to my life, the more I saw every single person in my environment as a reflection of myself.

Without fail, once I quit focusing on the weaknesses in other people, I began to see those same weaknesses in myself. I faded in and out of feeling positive and negative. Sometimes I felt like I had sped up my karma and was excited to be getting on with that business. Within hours I would be in the depths of hell. This was the biggest test of my faith.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda says: "There are

no flaws whatsoever in the Daishonin's teachings. When he himself was facing his worst hardships, he wrote, 'Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubt in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood.'

"Don't doubt the Gohonzon, no matter what. As long as you keep practicing, you'll definitely reach enlightenment and enjoy absolute happiness. That's the Daishonin's teaching. I know how hard it is for you right now, but don't doubt. Hang on to your faith. That's what's going to decide victory or defeat in your lives. Win or lose, it's all up to your practice" (*The Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 152).

Mr. Toda's absolute conviction in the Gohonzon is contagious. I began chanting with more confidence and trust, to feel my Buddha nature. This eased the fear about my financial situation and my health. As the worry subsided, I let down my guard and solutions started to emerge. I became more open to seeing how I could change. I realized that I don't have to feel

bad about my rough edges. That this is human revolution and I don't have to be perfect. I don't have to beat myself up; I can feel excited that I'm overcoming my weaknesses.

For the first time in years, I am able to relax my body. I have been tense for years with insecurity and anger. I feel on a deep level, not on the surface yet, but on a very deep level that I am letting go of this. I am growing more confident every day that this will result in restored health and joy in my life.

Sometimes, when I'm suffering, I just can't get in front of the Gohonzon even though I know I need to chant. Reading *The Human Revolution* motivated me when I needed it most. I am learning that when I read a passage by Nichiren Daishonin or guidance by SGI President Ikeda or anything that encourages me, that's when I begin the process of elevating my life-condition, which gets me back in front of the Gohonzon! My determination is to keep growing and studying until my Buddhahood is shining at all times. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — BARBARA JAY, ORLANDO, FLA.

# Choosing My Future

**Barbara Jay revitalizes her Buddhist practice and discovers choices in her life through overcoming cancer.**

When 1999 began, I evaluated my life and my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. To my surprise, after 18 years of Buddhist practice, not only was I filled with discontent, I felt empty and barren. I loved the Gohonzon and the SGI members around me, but I distinctly knew something was lacking.

The trouble was I couldn't identify what it was or how to fix it. I didn't desire anything. I had no interest in anything. In hindsight, I was probably experiencing a mild depression because I felt trapped in my life. I felt I had no choice but to go on living the way I was, barely making ends meet and holding on to my job for dear life mainly because I needed it to survive.

I decided to plan for 1999 differently. For New Year's, I wrote out a list of affirmations and visualizations: I see myself thinner, healthier; I see myself happy, because I already possess it; I see myself with more money; I have enough money to live as I choose.

Then I made determinations toward my Buddhist practice to achieve the results that I wanted. I would devote myself to faith, practice and study, taking care of other members with my whole life. Based on "faith equals daily life," I would bring out my Buddhahood, challenging anything I thought was wrong or incorrect. I also chanted to become the best SGI member for the sake of society and the happiness of all SGI members in our area.

At my job I received an excellent yearly review. I got an "exceeds standards" — for my performance at a job that three years ago sent me to the doctor with an ulcer and my hair falling out.

Even though my review was a hard-earned victory, I excelled because I exerted myself in my Buddhist practice, not because I liked my job. I began to realize that no matter how hard I worked, I was not in a place where my work would bring me



Barbara Jay in Orlando.

personal fulfillment. So in July, I woke up in the middle of the night and said, "It's time to change my life."

I decided to move to Seattle where the climate suits me better, and go back to school. My job had given me stocks that I could live on until I got there and found work. I was beginning to feel like I had choices. For the first time in my adult life, I felt like I might be able to do what I wanted, not what I had to out of duty or obligation or survival. I might not have to settle anymore; I could seek personal fulfillment in my secular life as well as my spiritual.

Then the results of some biopsies I had done came back — malignant invasive squamous cell cancer. I would have to see an oncologist to determine the course necessary to take to treat it. My world reeled, not because I was afraid of cancer or even death, but my choices might be taken away. This first feeling of freedom I tasted — to move or stay in Orlando, to leave or stay at my job — might all be removed. The threat of chemotherapy loomed, and so did the thought of losing more control

over my life.

Our district had just started a wonderful phenomena — 10-hour chanting sessions — thanks to our district leader. I knew it was time for me to do one immediately before I visited the oncologist. Members came out to help me throughout the day, and it was the most amazing day of my life. I will never forget it.

I woke up to my alarm clock radio early that morning, and I heard an interview of a GYN oncologist who was describing the condition I had, the affect on my body, treatment and the perimenopausal woman. Most of the questions that were plaguing me were answered. I felt so relieved.

Members started arriving at my home and we began chanting. What a great morning!

After we had chanted four hours, I received a phone call from some members who just moved here from Los Angeles. They asked if they could come over to chant with me. As we talked, I discovered I was speaking to a cancer survivor who had been practicing for 13 years. This couple was chanting for the husband, who was to

have surgery to remove cancer on Tuesday. I was so encouraged by the joy and life-condition I felt from them.

As I continued chanting, I came to a realization: No matter what this disease held for me, and no matter if I lived another 40 years or only four months, I would live my life for my kosen-rufu mission and do it with utmost vigor.

Immediately I felt what I had been lacking all year. Joy! I felt so good and so happy, so unworried and so determined. I knew my only regret in life would be if I didn't fulfill my mission.

After five hours of chanting, I checked my email and I received a letter from a gentleman I had communicated with online a month prior. He was asking how I was. After five hours of chanting I felt no fear. I emailed my phone number and invited him to call and find out. When he called, we were still chanting, so I told him to call later because I was having an open house for a good cause! Later when he asked what the good cause was, I told him it was me and that we were chanting to fight cancer. I found out he too was a cancer survivor with a phenomenal experience, and also did extensive work in cancer support groups. He was interested in Buddhism because he had become familiar with it when he had a malignant melanoma removed. He thought it was interesting that I was chanting a mantra for my cancer.

This was the beginning of a friendship that has further enriched my life.

In one day, I received encouragement from three tremendous sources without even having to leave my home! I looked at that piece of paper I had written my affirmations on — they were all met — every one of them. The oncologist said I did not need to return, laser surgery was all I needed. I was healthy and I was happy.

I introduced my Internet friend to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and have brought several guests to meetings in the last few months. I was completely different at the end of 1999.

Instead of barren, I felt wealthy inside, as vast as an ocean that can absorb a big boulder that might fall in. I realized how much larger my heart and capacity are because of this practice, and that chant-

ing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will bring out forces in the universe exactly when you need them.

I have choices. I will be in Orlando at least until March, and then I will chant and choose my future. Today I can proudly say that cancer is the best thing that ever happened to me.

My favorite passage from Nichiren Daishonin is: "The road from Kyoto to Kamakura takes twelve days. If you travel for eleven but stop with only one day remaining, how can you admire the moon over the capital?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1027). I want to admire the moon over the capital all the time and will never give up. I have a five-year plan now — to get a master's degree. I have a future I am looking forward to. I am grateful to every SGI member I practice with and to Nichiren Daishonin and our SGI presidents for having the compassion for us all to use this wonderful key to achieve happiness. **BT**

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EXPERIENCE — BRIAH ANSON, ST. PAUL, MINN.

# A Crucial Moment

**Briah Anson faces her greatest fear: dying in a plane crash. She explains: 'Keenly aware of how I was facing possible death: I began to chant with my entire being... I chanted every Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as if it might be my last.'**

*"Practicing only the seven characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo may appear limited, but since they are the master of all the Buddhas of the three existences, the teacher of all the bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and the guide that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way, it is profound" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 317).*

**T**wenty-seven years ago, all I knew about this practice was the single phrase Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. From Morris, Minn., I moved to Kansas City, Mo., and built a wonderful life, expanding my Buddhist practice. As I review my journey, it's as if all the wheels of possible directions keep being oiled to take me in the direction of happiness, health and success, not only for myself, but also for others in my sphere of influence.

I would like to share an experience I had after two weeks of vacation in Italy. My partner Lorie and I had been chanting daimoku every day of our vacation and had introduced people to this practice. We were booked on a non-stop 747 flight from Amsterdam to Minneapolis.

I've always been comfortable flying. My father was a pilot and ran an airline, an airplane overhaul plant, and was president of an airclaims insurance-adjusting company. For some reason though, even though we were anxious to get back home, I just didn't want to board that plane. Meanwhile, Lorie went ahead and boarded with the more than 400 other passengers.

Finally, a gate agent told me it was time to board. Our seats were in the middle section of the wing area. After take-off, everything was going smoothly. I was having an interesting conversa-



Briah Anson

tion with the woman next to me, a U.N. nuclear arms inspector who lived in Vienna. Dinner would be served soon. We were about two hours from Amsterdam, well over the Atlantic Ocean, when there was an explosion. The plane dipped about 10 feet. I turned to Lorie and said, "This is serious, start chanting." Several seconds later, BOOM! The plane dipped again. No word came from the captain. The "Fasten Seat Belts" sign came on and flight attendants checked that our belts were indeed fastened.

There we were, over the Atlantic Ocean with still another five hours to our destination and I am facing my worst fear: dying in a fiery plane crash. Minutes later, another explosion and big dip. Finally, the captain says they are trying to figure out what is going on with one of the engines. In a state of panic, I notice that the captain is rapidly taking the plane down to a much lower altitude. To make it safer for an ocean crash landing? All the emergency lighting in the plane was out. We were descending so quickly that the pressure in my ears and the cabin seems distinctly different. Within the next minute, two more explosions followed.

Because my dad investigated major airplane crashes, I know the sequence of events of most major crashes. I am also keenly aware of how I was facing possible death: I began to chant with my entire being; every daimoku had the full power of my life in it. This was no time for panic. I chanted every Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as if it might be my last. Passages from Nichiren Daishonin and SGI President Ikeda filled my mind,

encouraging me to go deeper to that place of No Fear:

"Life is the most precious of all treasures" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 955)

"Nichiren Daishonin in the Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life says, 'For one who summons up his faith and chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the profound insight that now is the last moment of his life'—the Lotus Sutra proclaims: 'After his death, a thousand Buddhas will extend their hands to free him from all fear and keep him from falling into the evil paths.' How can we possibly hold back our tears and the inexpressible joy of knowing that not just one or two, nor only one or two hundred, but as many as a thousand Buddhas will come to greet me with open arms" (*Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death*, p. 94).

"The most important thing is our state of life at each moment. Our state of life from moment to moment determines the overall course our life takes."

These guidances that I had read welled forth like a deep geyser in my life.

Within minutes, the captain announced that we were turning back and would be in Amsterdam in two hours, adding that they would be dumping fuel over the ocean. That would be the last we heard from him for hours.

In a timeless vortex, I saw much of my life before me. I saw clearly what was most essential—my practice of Buddhism—my chanting for myself and others. I saw the faces of people I had introduced to this practice over the past 27 years. Feeling no regrets, only deep appreciation for what I felt was the sum total of my life: my relationship with my family; being with the person I truly loved the most; how I had contributed to my friends' welfare and that of countless others.

Suddenly, I no longer feared death. I found myself chanting for the absolute protection and enlightenment of every person on board, directing daimoku to each of the engines. To my left, a man looked out his window, a look of sheer terror shown on his face, and he put his head between his knees and cried. What I didn't know was that he was seeing 15-foot flames coming out of one of the engines!

I imagined President Ikeda driving the plane; then I imag-

ined Nichiren Daishonin there. I told Lorie how happy I was that we were together. That just made her cry. She wanted to see her dog again and didn't want her family to have to face any more tragedy. I found myself being strict with her, saying: "This is no time for fear. We must chant with complete confidence!" By now, I was realizing that my mission was not complete—much promise lay ahead.

I had moved back to Minnesota only a year before, with a new life partner and a new home. I was starting my business again, after being well established in Kansas City for 20 years. My private practice as a Rolfer [deep-tissue massage therapy] was thriving: I had a three-month waiting list. Days before leaving on vacation, I found a new business partner and new office space. I was making friends and professional contacts and starting to help people practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism—I was not going to perish here on this plane! I knew that I had a big future ahead and that if that future was only as long as the next minute or the next second, I would face it in the highest life-condition I could possibly muster.

As Lorie and I continued to chant, the woman from the U.N. continued reading her magazine, comforted by the sound. Many people on the plane seemed oblivious to the seriousness of the situation. The flight attendants were trying hard not to look distressed, yet you could see the stress on their faces.

After about an hour of chanting and experiencing a state of tremendous confidence and joy, I felt that we were out of imminent danger. Another hour later, the captain said we would be landing shortly and it would be an unusually hard one. I understood why. Having to land with two engines and a full load of passengers and cargo, the captain would have to put the plane down at the beginning of the runway to have enough room to stop. This was another crucial moment.

We did slam down on the runway but the plane came to a safe stop. You never heard so many happy people in your life! I was overcome with an incredible sense of appreciation... just to be alive! We would be spending the night in Amsterdam and re-boarding the same aircraft the next morning. Here

was another challenge!

The next morning, Lorie was nervous about the possibility of having to re-board the plane. I was feeling bonded and connected to the people in our plane and just couldn't imagine them being on that plane either. When we got to the airport, they announced that the plane could not be fixed. Another huge wave of relief came over everyone.

We were re-routed via Oslo. By the time we boarded though, we felt exhausted and re-traumatized. Once again, I was determined to seriously chant daimoku for each person on that flight, to erase any residue of trauma and have that flight be a totally safe, smooth and healing experience back to the U.S. I chanted for at least two hours and indeed it was a very peaceful, quiet and enjoyable flight. It was a sunny, clear, beautiful, blue-sky day.

I remember looking out the window over the East Coast. I could feel the peace of our land. It had a feeling of clarity, of lightness and I felt another surge of deep appreciation for my life. At a crucial moment, the accumulated benefit of my 27 years of practice had come charging out with a confidence that surprised even me. I renewed my determination to live a strong and healthy life so that I can encourage others to change their destiny. True or imagined, I knew after I got off that plane in Amsterdam that I had overcome some very deep fears which had liberated me at the very core of my life. It was such a joyful experience in the end. I realized how joyful it is not only to be alive, but to be able to touch other people's lives.

We've come into this world with our gifts, limitations, despair, hopes and dreams to learn that we can be truly victorious. This struggle and process is extremely difficult and cannot be done without the support, guidance and leadership of others. I want to thank each of you who, through your actual proof, continue to inspire me to take one more step toward my own happiness and that of other people.

And finally, from President Ikeda: "Faith is concerned with the revitalization of life itself. Whether what is happening is good or bad, only with faith can one find infinite meaning in each event" (*Ibid.*, p. 101). **W**

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Vibrant youth of Fiji.

## FROM PACIFIC, I

rate the founding of the SGI, which you read about in previous issues of the *World Tribune*. Among these events were two book donations, a conferral of honorary citizenship on President and Mrs. Ikeda, as well as a conferral of an honorary doctorate from the University of Guam, the dedication of a Friendship Pavilion and a peace monument, and a commemorative tree planting. It was truly an amazing few days, packed with exciting and meaningful events.

I strongly feel that the real seeds of this success were planted 25 years ago by SGI President Ikeda. We are a movement of common people, dedicated to improving our lives and communities based on our practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. A quarter-century later, we have gained the recognition, commendation and support from leaders of many cultures, and many different sectors of society. I also felt that this peace conference signified the future direction of our movement: We have the mission to bring people from various cultures and religions together. Our personal practice provides the soil from which we can influence society in a positive, humanistic direction.

I had the good fortune to

work with the members of Guam who had worked to organize these events behind the scenes for many months. The SGI-USA organization in Guam is a chapter, and is part of the Pacific Zone. I was so impressed with the amazing capacity that they showed. This comparatively small organization was able to coordinate an activity of international scale. What they accomplished would have challenged many larger SGI-USA organizations in the largest cities in the mainland United States. Yet, based on their sincere prayer and deep desire to make these activities a success on behalf of their mentor, SGI President Ikeda, the members of Guam united with the chapter leader, Bob Erlbeck, and worked very hard to accomplish an amazing victory. I'd also like to praise the youth division of Guam, a small but very capable core of people. The members of Guam Chapter showed me that based on sincere faith, a small group of committed people can accomplish the impossible.

In particular, I was moved by the experience of one local member, Judith Won Pat-Borjas. Her family has a long history of dedicated service to Guam; her father in fact served for a long time as Guam's representative to the U.S. Congress.

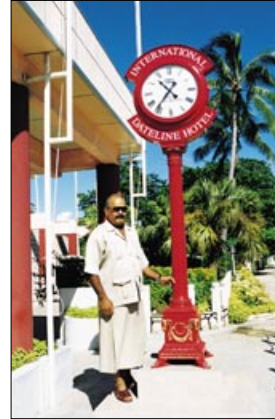
In 1975, when the SGI was formed on Guam, Judith had only been practicing for three months. She had graduated from college in the continental United States, and had just returned home. She didn't really understand much about our organization, but she was determined to participate in those events as much as she could. She said that at the time she was very impressed by how sincerely so many people were seeking President Ikeda, and she wondered how it was that these people could have such a deep feeling for one person. She determined that this relationship was something she wanted to understand for herself.

As you all know, at the conference in 1975, President Ikeda encouraged those people present to dedicate their lives to sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law. Rather than seeking to be blossoms themselves, he encouraged them to dedicate their lives to the happiness of their communities for the sake of the future. These words touched Judith deeply, and she rededicated herself to the spirit of public service. In the past 25 years, with the determination to forge a deeper relationship with her mentor, and with the spirit of service for the sake of her community, Judith has been active as an educator and principal, and served in the Guam legislature for two terms. She has recently retired from her work as a school principal, but continues to volunteer her time conducting training for new teachers. Currently, she is finishing her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership.

In the past 25 years, she has grown and accomplished so much, based on her Buddhist practice. At the occasion of the anniversary activities, Judith played a key role in organizing the various events. Because of the respect and trust she has gained through her contributions to Guamanian society, many government, educational and religious leaders of Guam were able to develop an appreciation for President Ikeda, our SGI movement, and the values we are promoting. In other words, based on her experience 25 years ago, she has made continuous and sincere efforts. Her accomplishments are nothing but actual proof of the power of one person's determination to reply to her mentor.

## Republic of Fiji

After leaving Guam, I was invited to the Republic of Fiji, to meet with their president, the Honorable Ratu Sir Kamisese T. Mara. I also met the Minister



Tonga's International Dateline Hotel.

of Tourism and Transport.

Fiji is located in Western Polynesia, and comprises 332 islands, but only about one-third of them are inhabited.

The president of Fiji is considered one of the great intellects of the region. In fact, in addition to his very long and distinguished career in government, he is also respected as a writer and political philosopher. He, in fact, coined the phrase The Pacific Way in a speech he delivered to the

United Nations. Drawing from the rich and diverse native traditions, President Kamisese T. Mara defined this Pacific Way as both a political and spiritual path; as the spirit to embrace and harmonize diversity, to value cooperation and consensus building among peoples, and to recognize the profound interdependence between humanity and the environment.

The president overwhelmed us with a warm and hospitable welcome. I was deeply impressed by his intelligence and leadership. I learned that in April, the ongoing Pacific Islands summit meeting will be held in Japan, and he will be chairing this meeting. In May of this year, President Kamisese T. Mara will turn 79 years old. But his vigor and commitment belie his advanced age. I sincerely hope that he will be able to share his vision and wisdom for many years to come.

## Kingdom of Tonga

After leaving Fiji, I went to the Kingdom of Tonga, a neighbor of Fiji. Tonga is one of the world's few constitutional monarchies, and its citizens are proud of the fact that they are the



The Ha'amonga Trilithon, one of Tonga's most intriguing monuments, was erected around 1200. The Trilithon, which is more than 16 feet high, is made of coral-lime stones each weighing more than 40 tons. It is preserved within the 23-acre National Historic Reserve.

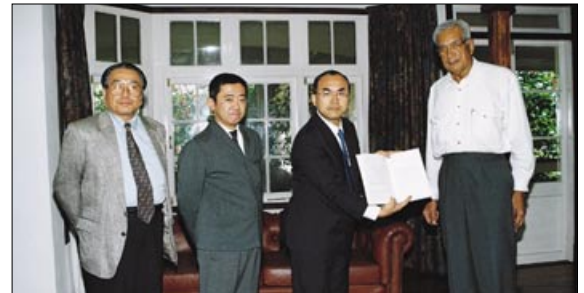
Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Fiji President Ratu Sir Kamisese T. Mara welcomes SGI delegates to his official residence in Suva, the capital of Fiji, Feb. 3.



The Right Honorable Ratu Sir Kapaiwai Kamisese Tuimacilai Mara, president of the Republic of Fiji, who took office on Jan. 18, 1994.



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima holds one of the gifts from President Mara to SGI President Ikeda, 'The Pacific Way, A Memoir,' in which Fiji's president wrote 'Dr. Ikeda, Yours sincerely in the Pacific Way K.K.T. Mara.'

only country in the South Pacific never to have been colonized by a foreign power. Therefore, they have pursued a path of modern development that is in keeping with the preservation of their cultural heritage. I visited Tonga at the invitation of their king, His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV.

Before leaving for my visit to these countries, President Ikeda gave me instructions not to stay very long — he suggested that I shouldn't take up too much of their busy schedules and keep my visit to about 30 minutes. I suspect he was concerned about my tendency to become excited, lose track of time and speak at length. I was determined to follow his compassionate guidance! However, the King of Tonga was such a warm person, and was so interested in learning more about our SGI activities and in hearing about President Ikeda's philosophy of peace that before I knew it, three hours had elapsed! We tried to leave on many occasions, but the King insisted that we stay and continue our dialogue. However, to be honest, the conversation was so interesting that it felt like only half an hour!

One person played a very crucial role in inviting the Kingdom of Tonga to participate in the New Millennium Peace Conference. This person is a longtime SGI-USA member, JD Bogdanoff, who is the chief financial advisor to His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV.

JD is a member from the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1993, President Ikeda visited San Francisco and stayed in the area for about a week. During that time, JD worked tirelessly behind the scenes doing everything from construction and maintenance work to organizing events behind the scenes. I

was amazed at how strenuously he exerted himself to do anything he could to support President Ikeda's activities at that time. Later he shared with me how inspired he was to meet President Ikeda for the first time, and he determined to lead a life of great actual proof.

At the time, JD worked for the Bank of America; however, he wasn't challenged by his work, and did not feel that his position with the bank was suited to his training or to his aspirations. However, based on his behind-the-scenes support for President Ikeda's activities, he wanted to demonstrate actual proof of the power of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. By showing this kind of proof, JD determined that he would open a way to introduce his mentor to the world. This was not simply based on a feeling of personal affection or loyalty; rather, it was based on an ideal — he wanted to share with others the greatness of a philosophy of peace and humanism that his mentor has demonstrated, a teaching that concretely shows us how to live profound ideals within our daily lives.

It's one thing to have such great ideals. It's another to make these ideals a reality. But JD believed that you take a stand wherever you are. In his case, it meant challenging himself on a daily basis to create value at his place of work. Through his commendable efforts, he was able to meet the King of Tonga, and gradually earn his trust, finally becoming the King's chief financial advisor. At the same time, because of the high quality of his work and the trust he was earning, he was promoted to vice president of the Bank of America.

More important to him than professional success, however,

was the fact that he was able to realize his determination. The great support of the King of Tonga and the entire island for the Pacific Islands Peace Conference and their tremendous support for the SGI and for President Ikeda clearly comes from the efforts of JD Bogdanoff. Through his efforts and the trust he gained, JD truly opened a path of understanding and cooperation.

#### What I Learned

I am so happy to be home in the mainland U.S., and happy once again to travel around the country to meet and talk with as many of you as I can. The reason is because when I meet the members, I learn so many things about the power of our Buddhist practice and the value of SGI President Ikeda's leadership.

The events in the Pacific Islands in late January were truly meaningful — for me, as one of the representative "common people" who constitute our SGI movement, I feel very strongly that the respect and support we are gaining from leaders around the world is nothing but the result of the efforts of sincere and dedicated individuals, proving that "if the people lead, the leaders will follow." Behind the great success of our many activities in the Pacific Islands was always a single individual who worked tirelessly and unnoticed for many years, establishing trust and respect through his or her work. Then, at a crucial moment, his or her accumulated effort and fortune resulted in an outburst of praise and respect for the SGI, and for the leadership of President Ikeda.

Since the end of last year, we have been talking about "the power of one," but in the thousands of miles I've traveled in the past few months, I am see-

ing over and over again the reality of this. Time and again, countless SGI members are showing that when one person makes a great determination and makes continuous efforts based on their prayer, they can open an amazing, literally unimaginable path of accom-

plishment. Each one of us has an amazing capacity and an unlimited potential for kosen-rufu. When we pledge to develop ourselves based on President Ikeda's vision for the future, our potential is tapped, and we can blossom fully in our chosen paths. **WT**



The pristine waters of Fiji.

# SGI-USA Culture Department Year 2000 Guidelines

## Mission Statement

### Our mission...

To nurture promising, capable people of faith and intellect who are vital to the development of the United States and who exemplify humanistic leadership, embracing wisdom, hope and compassion.

### We strive to...

**Foster a steady stream of capable CD members, beginning with ourselves.**

#### By...

- Continuing to develop our direct connection to SGI President Ikeda by applying his guidance and by corresponding with him directly.
- Studying Buddhism more deeply and seriously than ever before.
- Steadily engaging in dialogue leading to mutual growth and friendship through home visitations, meetings, outings, electronic media, etc.
- Striving for excellence in our respective fields of endeavor.
- Actively searching for prospective CD members from among new and current members, especially youth and graduate students.
- Doing our best to participate in district activities

**Contribute to the achievement of the goals of SGI-USA.**

#### By...

- Being a role model of faith equals daily life.
- Supporting discussion meetings through sharing experiences in faith and presenting topics of interest to the members.
- Engaging the youth division members in dialogue and study appropriate to their needs.
- Contributing to the organization's publications (*World Tribune*, *Living Buddhism*, books, pamphlets, etc.).
- Conducting regular communication meetings with appropriate line level leaders.

**Play an important and unique role in the SGI's mission to contribute to society.**

#### By...

- Conducting small-group dialogues in our homes where topics of concern can be discussed with professional colleagues, both member and non-member alike.
- Sponsoring community events which enhance society's understanding of the SGI movement of peace, culture, and education and the principles of the SGI Charter (i.e. seminars, symposia, exhibits, presentations, etc.).
- Applying the wisdom of Buddhism to the creation of a new, more humanistic approach to professionalism in our chosen fields.

By ERIC HAUBER

SGI-USA CULTURE DEPARTMENT LEADER

• Let's continue the emphasis on our small study gatherings, the opportunities these gatherings give us to share Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with others, especially to create friendships and joy.

• Let's develop activities that support the individual members of the Culture Department.

• Let's practice within our districts, within the heart of our organization, and have the Culture Department become recognized as a valuable and essential part of SGI-USA through our behavior.

As we rapidly approach the 10th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's founding of the Culture Department, we wish to focus our attention and activities in this celebratory year on our renewed determination to care for the individual Culture Department member. The heart of our guidelines for this year lies in our desire to help each member find joy in their practice, their life and in their professional responsibilities. The key element is joy. We began this process with our new mission statement composed following the direct guidance given to us by President Ikeda on Jan. 30, 1999. Our guidelines and activities for this year should continue to follow the three basic elements of the mission statement (see box on this page).

President Ikeda has often said that true friendships with fellow members of the Culture Department and with people in our professions are the key to

creating a new humanistic professional culture and, therefore, the beginnings of a new culture for humanity in this century. Toward that end, we began in 1999 to hold small study and dialogue gatherings in people's homes often times built around the study videotapes. In many areas, these small gatherings became places where members could find kindred spirits with whom to share their hopes and concerns, gatherings to which many brought their friends from work, places where members and non-members alike could discover the wisdom of Buddhism as it applied to their profession's crucial issues. In short, we began to breathe life into President Ikeda's reason for beginning the Culture Department. Consequently, Guideline #1, if you will, calls us to continue the emphasis on these small gatherings, their opportunity to introduce Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to others, and especially their opportunity to create friendships and joy. Of course, larger meetings of the Culture Department are encouraging to many and should be supported, but they become the support activity for the smaller gatherings.

As part of the refreshed emphasis on the individual member and President Ikeda's encouragement to focus on our mission in society, we wish to re-assert our general director's 1999 guidance that the Culture Department's mission is to encourage the individual members of the Culture Department to be professionals of great character, trustworthiness and wisdom, and to then put this beautiful life-condition into our working environment. The wis-

dom of Buddhism then shines forth because of who we are and how we conduct ourselves. In so saying, the general director reaffirmed that the Culture Department is not an activity group. By this he meant that our mission does not lie in providing activities for the general membership of SGI-USA, nor in rendering service to the organization as a Culture Department activity. In other words, Guideline #2, then, encourages us to develop activities to support the individual members of the Culture Department. Should the Culture Department come up with a tremendous idea for an activity or event from which all members of SGI-USA could benefit, i.e., a seminar on nonviolence or a workshop on alternative healthcare, please take that proposal to the region or area leaders and make it happen as a region activity. In other words, this new region activity is not sponsored by the Culture Department, but is wholly supported by individual members of the Culture Department.

This step will not only support Guideline #2, but will guarantee Guideline #3, calling for each of us to practice within our districts, within the heart of our organization, and to have the Culture Department become recognized as a valuable and essential part of SGI-USA through its members' behavior.

President Ikeda's recent encouragement calls for each of us to first and foremost be a person of great and abiding joy. And to then help at least one other person to do the same. We put forward our three guidelines for the year 2000 with this prayer in mind. **WT**

Photo by CHERYL UTLEY



Culture Department participants at their conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, July 1999.

# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 43-44

*How Chow Chi Kong, one of the pioneer leaders of Hong Kong, was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by a Japanese business acquaintance and encouraged his entire family to start practicing.*

Government officials visited Chow Chi Kong's home repeatedly, asking whether there were any Japanese there. Whenever this happened, his mother-in-law would come to the door and declare firmly, "There are no demonic Japanese in this house!" His neighbors had great trust and respect for Chow, and they protected him. No one informed the authorities on him.

But after the Japanese left Guangzhou, there was no more business for him. In addition, civil war broke out in China. There was nothing to do but to move on, so Chow, his wife and his mother-in-law went to Hong Kong, where he started an import-export business between Hong Kong and Okinawa. He hoped that through his work he could serve as a bridge of peace linking the two regions. Deter-

mined to continue passing as a Chinese even after coming to Hong Kong, he never spoke Japanese at home or told his children that he was Japanese.

Introduced by a Japanese business acquaintance, Chow received the Gohonzon and began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in October 1961. Even though the acquaintance didn't provide him with a thorough explanation of the practice — beyond saying how wonderful it was — Chow took his words to heart and joined the Soka Gakkai. He received letters from his friend with instructions on how to do gongyo, which he followed exactly to keep faith with his friend. Mrs. Chow started practicing the

Daishonin's Buddhism along with her husband, but only because she trusted his judgment.

Ikuyo Oka, Kimie Hirata and Koji Sagawa, who was married to a Chinese woman, began to visit the couple's house regularly to encourage them in their

years disappeared. This was his first benefit of taking faith. Observing her husband's experience, Mrs. Chow began to have confidence in the Daishonin's Buddhism, too. The entire family started to practice in earnest.

In fact, the young boy wearing

copy of the Goshō and, writing Chow's name in it, said, "I give this to you as a memento of our visit today."

Beaming with joy, Chow accepted the gift. "I will exert myself in study," he promised.

"Next time," said Shin'ichi, "let's meet in Japan. That's when we'll appoint you chapter leader." Chow's eyes shone with determination.

Shin'ichi felt that the Hong Kong organization was set for the foreseeable future. When he left the hall, it was already past 10:00 p.m. The next day, Jan. 27, he would finally return to Japan. Since leaving on Jan. 8, he had exerted himself completely. His efforts left him feeling pleasantly tired and satisfied.

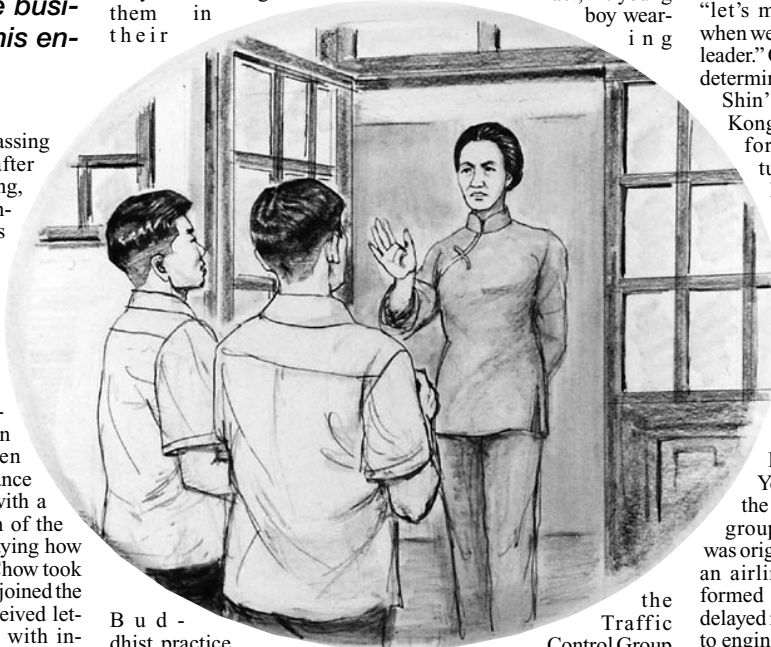
Early the next morning, Yoshihiko Ohya called the airport to confirm the group's flight to Japan. It was originating in London, and an airline representative informed Ohya that it would be delayed more than 20 hours due to engine trouble. Ohya immediately notified Kiyoshi Jujo.

"Is that so? That puts us in a bind!" Jujo said. "I'm going to the airport to see if there's anything we can do."

Jujo contacted Chow, who met him at the hotel, and they went to the airport together. Because of President Yamamoto's commitments in Japan, it was crucial that he get back to Tokyo that day. Jujo changed their flight to Japan Airlines Flight 702, on which there happened to be some empty seats. They would arrive in Tokyo at 8:40 p.m. Jujo did not notice, however, that the flight made a stop in Taipei, Taiwan.

Jujo returned to the hotel and informed Shin'ichi of the flight change. "These planes are always having trouble," Jujo grumbled, unable to hide his irritation.

"I'm sure there's some deep meaning in this change," Shin'ichi said.



Buddhist practice. As he exerted himself earnestly in Soka Gakkai activities, the chronic gastric ulcer that had bothered Chow for

the Traffic Control Group armband who had been assisting the event staff was Chow's son.

Chow ordered Soka Gakkai publications from Japan and began to study Buddhist doctrine. He also poured his energies into propagation. It was Chow who introduced Chan Chai Man, the newly appointed Kowloon District leader, to the Daishonin's teachings.

Addressing Chow in Japanese, Shin'ichi Yamamoto said: "I'm glad that I could meet your wife today. I am happy to see that you are married to such a wonderful person. Her mother is also an outstanding individual, isn't she? Please take good care of her."

"After hearing your story, I now have a clear picture of your character. For the happiness of the people of Hong Kong, I hope you'll join me to work wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu for the rest of your life."

"I will!" Chow replied enthusiastically, as Shin'ichi reached out and shook his hand. Shin'ichi took out a new



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

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

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AT THE FLORIDA NATURE AND CULTURE CENTER

# Making a Difference in the World

By JERI LOVE  
PASADENA, CALIF.

Close to 200 women from across the United States attended the first women's conference of this year at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, Feb. 10-13, where they participated in seminars and small group discussions about how to use their Buddhist practice to make a difference in the world. It was also the first women's conference since the SGI-USA began its new departure under the leadership of General Director Danny Nagashima and Women's Leader Matilda Buck. Mr. Nagashima sent long-stemmed, pink roses to all of the conferees as an early Valentine's Day tribute.

"This conference is an opportunity for you to be recharged, rejuvenated and inspired," said Mrs. Buck during her opening remarks. "When the conference is over, I sincerely hope you will feel empowered to take on the challenges that await you at home."

President Ikeda said in a special message read at the opening session:

"So long as you are steadfast and live resolutely in accord with the Mystic Law, you need fear nothing. No matter what may happen, you need not despair. Please be convinced that you are walking a solid path toward happiness." He also encouraged the women to become "stout-hearted queens of the Mystic Law."

Citing the life of Eleanor Roosevelt as a historical example of the conference's theme, "The Power of One Woman To Make a Difference," Yoshiko Kadin, SGI-USA women's Secretariat leader, said that the key to activating one's power is determination, prayer and action. "Everything starts with a single step," she added.



Photo by HARRY SAKURAI

Conferees attended four sessions: The Power of Prayer, Creating a Winning Environment, The Most Compassionate Action — Shakubuku, and Soka Spirit — The Ultimate Human Revolution, after which they participated in small group dialogue sessions or an open question-and-answer sessions.

There were also open guidance sessions with Mrs. Buck; Linda Johnson, SGI-USA vice women's leader, and Sheila Edwards, vice general director and vice senior women's advisor. The recurring message throughout each session was that daimoku is the key to activating one's limitless and inherent power.

In closing the conference, Mrs. Buck read an excerpt from the novel *The Human Revolution*: "Anyone would think that

victory is impossible and that's probably how you feel right now. But don't forget this marvelous Gohonzon we have. It has the power to transform what you'd normally think impossible into something possible. Those who give up before they try, thinking it's impossible, don't really know the power of the Mystic Law. Only people who can bring forth the Mystic Law's power can succeed at anything they try. Therefore, when we sincerely pray to the Gohonzon, we can tap power that we never imagined available to us, transforming the impossible into the possible."

SGI-USA member and Latin jazz artist Nestor Torres provided a closing session surprise, with a performance of several numbers from his *Treasures of the Heart CD*. **WT**



## A Sharing of Lives

(Left to right) "Hi, I'm Sidney Swann, and I received the Gohonzon on Oct. 12, 1975. I live in Englewood, N.J., and I introduced Debbie Brown to the practice."

"Hi, I'm Debbie Brown of Montclair, N.J. I received the Gohonzon Feb. 29, 1976, and I introduced Sheila Taylor to the practice."

"Hi, I'm Sheila Taylor and I received the Gohonzon on June 17, 1978, and I introduced Isabel Angelica to the practice."

"Hi, I'm Isabel Angelica of Samsota, Fla., and I received the Gohonzon on Feb. 29, 1984."

To get here to the conference, each of us overcame multiple obstacles. We each had to apply tremendous determination to unite at this conference. We knew the conference would be something special, but we didn't know that it would inject new life into the way we were practicing. It gave us beautiful realizations, a different perspective of things and tools to challenge and win over obstacles in every area of our lives. The leaders were fantastic. They shared their lives and souls with us and showed us how to have a deeper understanding of how to view obstacles, challenging them and creating through them. For us, our plane won't land fast enough. We can't wait to share this wonderful "power of one woman" conference with all of our members. **WT**



Nestor Torres entertains.



## New Year's Poem

I greatly enjoyed reading President Ikeda's New Year's poem in the *World Tribune*. As a man I was forced to reflect on what he meant by saying that the "culture of peace" means "Moving from patriarchy to an age of women." Throughout human history the male dominated social order has created war, violence, oppression, greed, poverty and discrimination. Men often have and do mistake aggression and domination for courage and what it means "to be a man." Women on the other hand have a deeper kind of courage, one that is tempered with a compassion far deeper than THAT OF most men. I think what this line means to me is not just that women will need to increasingly take leading roles in society toward creating a peaceful and just world, as they do in the SGI, but that men need to learn so much from women how to redefine and develop such things as "true courage," "interdependence," "dialogue" and "compassion."

—RAY GUTOSKI,  
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## Use of the Passive Voice

Thank you to David McGirr for his letter (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*) regarding use of the passive voice. I spent the first eight years of my practice waiting for my prayers to be answered. Equating "mystical" with "magical," I waited to "have my wishes fulfilled." The culture festival in New York City in 1996 shattered this belief. I have spent the past four years rebuilding my practice, piece by piece. My daimoku is truly becoming the wind that fills the sails of the boat of my life—the boat that I have built with my own two hands.

—PATRICK SMITH,  
New York City  
patricksmith@mail.com

In response to the insightful letter of David McGirr, "Use of the passive voice" (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*), I wish to share one interpretation of encultured behavioral patterns that could create the mistaken notion that Buddhism is promulgating magical formulas that supersede individual initiative.

In his essay "Japanese Buddhism and the American Renaissance," (*The Journal of Oriental Studies*, 1993), David Norton cites Frederick Nietzsche in his criticism of Western religious dualism as a "betrayal of one's species," whereby the

fullest expression of creation is found in a supernatural world that is the antithesis of the human being (p. 22). To accept the supernatural entails the rejection of the natural propensities to be responsible for recognizing and actualizing possibilities of value within oneself (p. 22). The outcome of this deep-seated ambivalence of human beings toward themselves is the foothold for the self-hatred and self-doubt that plague our culture in general.

In our search for greater clarity and effective action, I believe it is fitting to repudiate the role that Nichiren Shoshu played in the obfuscation of "healthy growth" ideals by their arcane, unintelligible lectures and precepts of abject discipleship that suppressed inquiry and dialogue. They exploited our cultural failings for their own self-serving interests and continue to do so.

—STEVE MOON,  
Studio City, Calif.

## Chinese Adoptions

Thank you for printing such an encouraging experience about Pat Keating and Lynda Martinez and their Chinese adoptions (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*). My husband and I are also adopting from China. I'd love to hear some of their guidance on how to get through the horrible, long, seemingly endless months of waiting. I have been practicing 13 years, and trying to become a "mom" for 15 years at least. Any help you could give me in contacting these ladies would be appreciated.

—KATHRYN McQUAID,  
Ipswich, Mass.  
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## Thanks, Michael Lisagor

I just finished reading Michael Lisagor's excellent (though the title reads "Good") explanation of the five silent prayers (Feb. 4 *World Tribune*). Thank you! It is the best explanation I have received since being introduced to this Buddhism in 1994. I have not received my own Gohonzon yet, largely due to my own doubt and questions of its necessity. My friend who introduced me to this practice had given me a gift subscription to the *World Tribune* for my birthday last October and faithfully encourages me to continue my studies (and my own human revolution). The article helped answer some of my questions and I felt compelled to thank

## World Tribune MAILBOX

Michael Lisagor personally by e-mailing him for sharing it. Isn't e-mail wonderful? It really reflects the small, interconnected world in which we live. Sincerely,  
—CARLA CANNINGTON,  
Palmdale, Calif.  
c.cannington@worldnet.att.net

Enjoyed Michael Lisagor's long overdue article (Feb. 4 *World Tribune*) on the five silent prayers. Been a member for more than 25 years and have been stumped by its meaning or even uneasy reading it perhaps because of its language sounding almost heretical in nature. Also liked his humorous style of presenting it. Do write more such articles.

—FRANK from Hawaii,  
Fych3123@aol.com

## About Depression

It was good to see the Perspective by Lori McDaniel, "Using Common Sense in Facing Depression" (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*). Lori and I used to work hard together on the Internet to refute slanderous postings by temple supporters.

Thank you, Lori, but I must tell you that your article triggers defensiveness in me. You seem to be telling the likes of me that I have to use a certain type of therapy and medication to treat what has in the past been inappropriately labeled "depression" in my life and likewise misdiagnosed and mistreated as such. It is an act which I consider emotionally violent to suggest that I return to the horrors of psychiatric treatment.

Let me just ask some questions: Is there a drug that can stop me from committing *onshitsu* (harboring ill feelings toward fellow believers)? Is there a drug that can enable me to accept that I have no control over what other people do? One which enables me to, as Ozzy Osborne's song, "Crazy Train," says, "...learn how to love / and forget how to hate?" A medicine that enables me to chant for the happiness of those who have done me wrong, rather than feeling so angry and frustrated because I cannot do so? Is there a drug that can prevent me from being discouraged by the criticisms I am sure to draw in response to this letter?

Is there a drug that can enable me to forgive? One that enables me to have the patience with therapists that you insist I need to have, when I have problems that I need so desperately to settle

now? Can treatment prevent people from committing suicide in spite of the fact that Ernest Hemingway and many others have taken their own lives even though they were undergoing therapy? Are there effective treatments that are inexpensive enough that low-income and homeless people who need them the most can afford them? Can a prescription substance enable me to better focus on the Gohonzon and pronounce gongyo more clearly? Can one elevate my life-condition so that these things do not irritate me and consequently upset me so bad? Can a drug bring me joy? Change my deeply rooted negative karma? Can a psychiatrist enable Buddhahood to emerge within my life?

These questions could go on forever. Either the answer to every last one of them is "yes" or else it is pretty obvious that there are a lot of problems in my life that no drug can alleviate.

—STU CLARKE,  
Taos, N.M.

## Challenging Anti-Environmental Myths

Although *World Tribune* readers enjoyed the debate on Frank Hotchkiss' perspective about the environment (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 2) the past several months, I must point out that there is an important fact missing. I found that the majority of his quotes, statistics and logic came from the book, *A Moment on the Earth—The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism*, by an environmental journalist, Gregg Easterbrook, who writes for *Newsweek*.

The basic premise of this book is that most environmental problems either don't exist or would soon disappear if environmentalists would just stop exaggerating. This philosophical mindset is very destructive. Easterbrook calls this new way of thinking Ecorealism. However, if you read this book, you would find many frustrating, false statements denying the environmental problems we face. Denying human contribution to global warming in Hotchkiss' article is just one example of Easterbrook's false statements.

For complete refutation of his book, please refer to the book, *Betrayal of Science and Reason—How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future*, by Dr. Paul R. Ehrlich, of Stanford University.

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# Buddhist Scholars Launch Books at New England Culture Center

By NANCY SIMMS

SGI-USA PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF

Two new books on Buddhism in America were introduced by their authors at a dinner meeting held Nov. 19, 1999, at the SGI-USA New England Culture Center in Boston. Members of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, a group of scholars and practitioners attending the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religions, were guests at the book launching. Boston Culture Department representatives hosted the guests, who enjoyed an international cuisine prepared by local SGI-USA members.

Christopher S. Queen of Harvard University, editor of *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, published by Wisdom Publica-

tions, introduced this collection of 20 essays about socially engaged Buddhism. Among the essays in Professor Queen's book is "Racial Diversity in the Soka Gakkai," by David W. Chappell of the University of Hawaii.

In this essay, Professor Chappell reports on the findings of his study of the SGI-USA membership during the spring and summer of 1997. He states that the SGI-USA has attracted many people "through its attention and care to the needs of members, its concrete practices, and visionary purposes that reach across color barriers to support those who are seeking to improve themselves and change the world" (Queen, p. 197).

Richard Seager's book, *Buddhism in America* (Columbia University Press) succinctly addresses the split between the

Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shoshu from the standpoint of the Three Great Secret Laws.

Responding to both speakers was Father Roger Jacques of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, next-door neighbor to the recently opened New England Culture Center. Introduced by Vice General Director Rob Eppsteiner as a man who has "dedicated himself to the welfare of the community," Father Jacques expressed his desire to learn more about engaged Buddhism. "Dialogue is so important," he said, "and there just isn't enough of it."

Also enjoying the program and discussions with the guests was SGI-USA Executive Advisor Fred M. Zaitzu.

As these and other scholars have noted, the SGI-USA's remarkable growth is a clear in-



Richard Seager (left) and Christopher Queen (right) with Father Roger Jacques of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, next-door neighbor to the recently opened New England Culture Center.

dicator of the infinite potential that exists, both within the lives of the members and within the organization itself. We enter the new millennium with great hope and anticipation of becoming an organization that

continues to greatly benefit and enhance both local and global communities.

These books are available through local and on-line bookstores. **W**

## Richard Seager

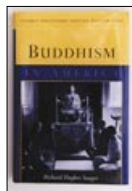
In a recent interview in Boston during the American Academy of Religions, Professor Richard Seager commented that "the experience of SGI-USA in the 1990s reminds me somewhat of what happened among Catholics after Vatican II," he said. "Suddenly they faced new possibilities. One challenge was to sustain that sense of newness while finding abiding values in tradition." "As a new religious movement that experienced explosive growth, SGI-USA must also plan for the future. Other new movements in American history, such as the spiritualist in the 1840s and '50s, were not successful in doing that. Eventually, they disappeared from the scene."

Much of Richard Seager's chapter on the SGI in his new book, *Buddhism in America*, is devoted to two hallmark events that have reshaped and revitalized the SGI-USA organization during the last decade:

"New initiatives inaugurated by Daisaku Ikeda continue to lead SGI-USA in progressive directions. Beginning in the 1990s, he acted as a catalyst for a thorough rethinking of the SGI-USA organization, urging across-the-board democratization in an effort to dismantle a hierarchical mentality inherited from an earlier era. Sacramental roles are now played by volunteers in non paying ministe-



Richard Seager



rial offices that are filled on a rotating basis.

"New initiatives have been put in place to enhance the ethnic and racial diversity of SGI-USA and to give women, who have always played a critical role, a higher profile at the top of the national leadership. Religious dialogue, both inter-religious and inter-Buddhist, is now on the SGI agenda, which would not have been the case under the sectarian leadership of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood....

"The innovations in SGI since the schism have had different impacts in different countries, but in the United States have helped to transform SGI-USA into a form of lay Buddhism quite in keeping with the tenor and values of a moderate moral and religious current in the American mainstream" (Seager, p. 86).

"As the dust settles from the break between NST and SGI-USA, the latter appears to be in a very good position to play an important, ongoing role in the creation of American Buddhism. The Nichiren tradition provides a rich foundation for philosophical reflection and practice. The tenor and tone of

the movement are very much in keeping with mainstream American values, while its varied membership gives it a multicultural and multiracial dimension that ought to be an asset in the next century" (Seager, p. 88).

—NANCY SIMMS

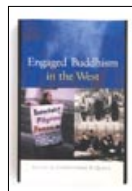
*Buddhism in America*  
by Richard Hughes Seager  
Columbia University Press  
New York  
ISBN 0-231-10868-0  
Suggested list price: \$35.00  
www.columbia.edu/cu/cup

## Christopher Queen

Socially engaged religious communities have been a source of inspiration to Christopher S. Queen, Ph.D., of Harvard University. His third book, *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, follows an earlier collection of essays, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996), which he co-edited with Sallie King, a professor of philosophy and religion at James Madison University. Professor Queen notes that religious communities of every faith have turned to address crises of human rights and economic injustice throughout the world. Engaged Buddhism, no stranger to this trend, is perhaps best known through the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh. Of particular interest perhaps to SGI-USA mem-



Christopher Queen



bers is a chapter written by Professor David W. Chappell of the University of Hawaii, titled, "Racial Diversity in the Soka Gakkai." This essay was written by Professor Chappell following his two-month visit to nine cities across the United States in which he interviewed many SGI-USA members.

In his conclusion, Professor Chappell states: "Racial diversity has never been a goal of Soka Gakkai, and Ikeda has attacked the very concept of race as a false social construct. Instead, Soka Gakkai affirms the value of everyone just as they are, and the capacity of each individual to improve, as well as the joy and responsibility everyone has for the happiness of others" (Queen, p. 206).

"It is fair to say in 1998, however, that with its large diversity of local leaders, its emphasis on dialogue by its national director, Fred Zaitzu, and the socially engaged educational institutions established by its international leader, Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai in America has committed more resources, has impacted more lives, and has created more substantial institutions to implement programs

for social and cultural improvement than any other American Buddhist organization" (Queen, pp. 206-07).

Queen said in a recent interview that internationalism is not something that comes naturally to most people. Rather, tribal thinking is much more natural to people throughout the world, including people living in advanced or developed countries — helping our own group, protecting our own group and keeping the others out — this is even reflected in the gated communities today. "So the idea for the next century that we all have to work hard toward is creating a sense of humanity, a sense of family within the global community," he said.

"The founders of the Soka Gakkai movement have had a larger vision of the world," he said. "Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, for example, is sometimes called the John Dewey of Japanese education. His vision of what the educational system should be doing, that is, opening the minds of young people to a broader world, a world of not only material and intellectual capability but spiritual fullness and generosity, prefigured the kind of philosophy of Soka Gakkai Buddhism today."

—NANCY SIMMS

*Engaged Buddhism in the West*  
Edited by Christopher S. Queen  
Wisdom Publications  
Boston  
ISBN 0-86171-159-9  
Suggested list price: \$24.95  
www.wisdompubs.org