



EXPERIENCE:
Fred Capel starts a foundation to provide for children with Down syndrome.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 16 MESSAGE

Let the Brilliant Sun Rise in Your Heart

In his Kosen-rufu Day message to youth division members, SGI President Ikeda says: "Whatever your circumstances now, you must let the brilliant sun rise in your heart. You must live out your youth without regret. You need not be impatient."

Beloved youth of the world—my sincere congratulations as you gather to commemorate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day! You have stood up with firm resolve to create a magnificent, victorious history of youth. To each of you, I send this message with my utmost respect and trust.

The privilege of youth is to progress, to expand. So I urge all of you never to retreat! Move forward resolutely along the path of life you have pledged to follow!

Happiness as well as the real proof of being alive lies in the will to challenge yourself continuously, unbroken and undefeated by anything. I ask that you hold fast to courageous faith, always striving to the very end in every field of endeavor.

Now, dark clouds menacing the dignity of life and the happiness of humanity are shrouding the world. Planet Earth is sending out her silent SOS. Where can humanity find hope? To respond decisively to this quandary there are you who embrace the philosophy of the Mystic Law. You are the beacon of hope illuminating the future of humanity.

Whatever your circumstances now, you must let the brilliant sun rise in your heart. You must live out your youth without regret. You need not be

impatient. Nichiren Daishonin states, "If a person cannot manage to cross a moat ten feet wide, how can he cross one that is a hundred or two hundred feet?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 766). What is important is to advance steadily, one step at a time. Only by challenging what is before us can we build a victorious life.

In the realm of faith, all people are free and equal. This realm is a "republic of humanism," in which people are joined together by solid bonds. We must not allow anyone to destroy this beautiful solidarity. I ask that for the victorious century of value-creation, all of you please advance with me in mutual love and respect and the unity of many in body, one in mind.

I sincerely hope that you will contribute to your community and society upon the stage of your respective missions and, as good citizens, show splendid actual proof.

May all of you, my beloved SGI youth, be healthy and victorious! This is my earnest prayer. I am praying that each of you, without a single exception, will live a life that is most enjoyable and fulfilling, basking in the supreme brilliance of fortune and benefit. Please take care.

For March 16, Kosen-rufu Day
Daisaku Ikeda



Photos by ERIC KIMURA

Copper Dome Completed at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, is quickly taking shape: Now, 3,750 pounds of copper decorate the double-dome gracing the Student and Community Services Building, which will be the first place students and community members stop on campus for information, admissions or financial aid. The double-dome is mounted atop a 10-story atrium and is similar in concept to the Florence Cathedral. The Student and Community Services Building is one of 18 buildings currently under construction on the campus, which will be completed by the end of 2000 and will welcome 100 freshmen in August 2001.

SUA, Aliso Viejo will begin accepting its first applications on May 3, 2000; applications will be available by mail or on the Web at www.soka.edu. The Student and Community Ser-

vices Building will house an 8,000-square foot, two-story art gallery along with offices for student admissions, financial aid, community relations and the university's finance operations. The university expects to

host a variety of rotating exhibitions in the gallery that will be open to the public. You can check out the construction's progress at www.soka.edu, which features a daily updated WebCam of the campus. **WT**



A copper dome graces the Student and Community Services Building.

SIGNIFICANT DATE: APRIL 28, 1253

The Founding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By GEOFF RONDE
SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

...tice leads many to underestimate its profundity and power. When I reflect on the "story behind the story," I am even more inspired by, and grateful for, the Daishonin's efforts.

Nichiren Daishonin began his education at Seicho-ji temple with motives not typical of 12-year-olds in any culture: "Since childhood, I, Nichiren have never prayed for the secular things of this life but have single-mindedly sought to become a Buddha" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 839). In response to his prayers to become the wisest person in Japan, he experienced a significant transformation sometime before his 16th birthday. He wrote that Bodhisattva Kokuzo bestowed upon him a "jewel of wisdom as bright as the morning star." His profound insight into the very essence of life al-

lowed him to discern the relative worth of the established Buddhist sects, as well as the new Zen and Pure Land schools.

It's one thing to be enlightened to the very essence of life. It is quite another to bring out that rarified condition in others successfully. To discover both literal and theoretical proof of his enlightenment, to discover the most effective way to explain it to others, and most importantly, to devise a practice that would enable any and all persons to discover the Buddha nature within, the Daishonin began the next phase of his education, one that would last another 15 years.

I was struck by the "normality" of the ages at which significant changes occurred in his early life. They're not much different than mine. Specifically, he left Seicho-ji "high school" at 18. So did I. He spent four "college" years in Kamakura. Mine were in Wisconsin. He began his "graduate" training when he was 21. I was 21. He spent the next

11 years studying at the many temples around Kyoto and Osaka. Eleven years is a long time...and a short, seven-syllable mantra is all he came up with? Think differently, please! Think how terribly difficult, frustrating and exasperating it must have been to pore over so many mutually contradictory sutras only to find that none of them described the truth of his enlightenment. Perhaps worse, none of them spelled out a practice powerful enough to transform the most vile heart, yet "user friendly" enough for any person to carry out. I feel tremendous awe when I picture the Daishonin pushing himself day and night for 11 long years, taxing every cell in his brain, and constantly refreshing his spirits by reminding himself of his pledge to enable all people to attain enlightenment.

A few months ago I read, "If lay believers and their teacher pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as try-

ing to kindle fire on water" (WND, 795).

Since then, I've been frequently asking myself, "How would Nichiren be chanting if he were in my situation?" What a sobering, change-inducing question! Anger and frustration melt away. Forbearance and enthusiasm take their place. Maybe this is what it means to "have faith" in the power of prayer and practice, to have total confidence that when the Buddha nature manifests itself from within, it will obtain protection from without. Maybe this is the happy frame of mind Nichiren wanted each of us to discover when he chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for the first time and when he wrote years later, "Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law?" (WND, 681). **WT**

On April 28, 1253, Nichiren Daishonin declared the founding of his Buddhism at Seicho-ji temple by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for the first time."

That's about all we read in our reference books. The Daishonin's letters provide few details regarding his many years of determined research, travel, prayer and effort that made this history-changing event possible.

Rest assured that Rencho did not wake up one morning and abruptly decide that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo was a great idea. Yet the simplicity and "transparency" (what you see is what you get) of our prac-

Sample Question References for the Entrance-level Exam

For those members planning to take the nationwide Entrance-level Exam on April 30, the study materials for the sample questions published in the Feb. 11 World Tribune are cross-referenced with the new one-volume *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (see below). *The Entrance-level Exam sample questions Q28, Q29, Q37 and Q40 have been deleted; please disregard them.*

"The Life of Nichiren Daishonin" (Dec. 1997 *Living Buddhism*)

Q1. LB, p. 15; WND, p. 26
Q2. LB pp. 17-18; WND, pp. 17-18
Q3. LB, pp. 18-19; WND, pp. 29-30
Q4. LB, pp. 18-19; WND, pp. 29-30
Q5. LB, p. 21; WND, p. 32
Q6. LB, p. 18; WND, p. 29
Q7. LB, p. 23; WND, p. 34
Q8. LB, p. 23; WND, p. 35
Q9. LB, p. 25; WND, p. 37
Q10. LB, pp. 24-27; WND, p. 38
Q11. LB, p. 29; WND, p. 40
Q12. LB, p. 27; WND, p. 39
Q13. LB, p. 32; WND, p. 45
Q14. LB, p. 34; WND, p. 47
Q15. LB, p. 34; WND, p. 47
Q16. LB, p. 34; WND, p. 47
Q17. LB, p. 35; WND, pp. 47-48

"On Attaining Buddhahood"

Q18. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 10; WND, pp. 4-5

Q19. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 21; WND, p. 6
Q20. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 21; WND, p. 6
Q21. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 23; WND, pp. 6-7
Q22. Entrance-level Booklet, pp. 22-23; WND, p. 6
Q23. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 23; WND, p. 7
Q24. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 22; WND, p. 6
Q25. Entrance-level Booklet, pp. 26-27; WND, p. 7
Q26. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 25; WND, pp. 7-8
Q27. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 25; WND, p. 7
Q30. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 21; WND, p. 5
Q31. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 20; WND, p. 5
Q32. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 23; WND, p. 7
Q33. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 29; WND, p. 9
Q34. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 9; WND, p. 4
Omit questions 28 and 29.

"The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon"

Q35. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 39; WND, p. 12
Q36. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 42; WND, p. 14
Q38. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 49; WND, p. 15

Q39. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 41; WND, p. 13
Q41. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 51; WND, p. 15
Q42. Entrance-level Booklet, pp. 51-52; WND, pp. 15-16
Q43. Entrance-level Booklet, pp. 51-52; WND, p. 16
Q44. Entrance-level Booklet, p. 38; WND, p. 12
Omit questions 37 and 40.

"Happiness in This World" (Dec. 1997 *Living Buddhism*)

Q45. LB, p. 7; WND, p. 18
Q46. LB, pp. 7-8; WND, p. 18
Q47. LB, pp. 7-8; WND, p. 17
Q48. LB, pp. 8-9; WND, p. 18
Q49. LB, pp. 8-9; WND, p. 18
Q50. LB, p. 9; WND, p. 18
Q51. LB, pp. 8-9; WND, pp. 18-19
Q52. LB, p. 9; WND, p. 19
Q53. LB, p. 10; WND, p. 19
Q54. LB, p. 11; WND, p. 20
Q55. LB, pp. 12-13; WND, p. 20-21
Q56. LB, p. 13; WND, p. 22
Q57. LB, p. 12; WND, p. 21
Q58. LB, p. 7; WND, p. 17

"Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue" (Dec. 1997 *Living Buddhism*)

Q59. LB, p. 36; WND, p. 53
Q60. LB, p. 36; WND, p. 53
Q61. LB, p. 37; WND, p. 54
Q62. LB, pp. 36-37; WND, p. 54
Q63. LB, pp. 37-38; WND, p. 55

Q64. LB, p. 38; WND, p. 55
Q65. LB, p. 38; WND, p. 56
Q66. LB, p. 38; WND, p. 55
Q67. LB, p. 39; WND, p. 57
Q68. LB, p. 40; WND, p. 58
Q69. LB, pp. 40-41; WND, pp. 58-59
Q70. LB, p. 41; WND, pp. 59-60

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EXPERIENCE — FRED CAPEL, MINNEAPOLIS

Prioritizing Children's Rights

In his struggle to care for his son who was born with Down syndrome, Fred Capel discovered a tragic truth — few states have services available for disabled children. So he started a foundation to provide for children with Down syndrome across the nation.

I was born and raised in New York City. As a kid, I always wanted to play professional baseball.

When I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in May 1984 by a family friend, I was told that I could "get anything I wanted." My lifelong dream reemerged. I started practicing Buddhism, and began a career playing semi-professional baseball with the Indianapolis Storm for more than 12 years.

I met a young woman in 1991 from a Central Park community activity and found out that we had a lot in common — going to the theater, sporting events and traveling. Believe it or not, the main thing we had in common was that we were both SGI-USA members.

We married in 1992. Both my wife and I wanted a family and chanted that our children would be healthy and happy. My son, Travis, was born in 1995 with Down syndrome.

Named after its discoverer, J. Langdon Down, in 1866, Down syndrome results when a person inherits all or part of an extra copy of chromosome 21. Trisomy 21, the inheritance of an entire third copy of this chromosome, accounts for 95 percent of Down syndrome cases. This extra genetic material leads to too many enzymes and proteins. This, in turn, distorts normal metabolism and development.

We both were devastated with the news. My wife couldn't handle the stress of having a child with Down syndrome, so she left Travis and me soon after his

birth. My own family disapproved of my Buddhist practice and they felt that it "was the reason Travis was born the way he was." I also found out that Travis, at the age of 5 months, would need to have heart surgery. I had to face all of this alone.

Turning to my Buddhist practice for direction, I determined to chant 5 million Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that his surgery would be an absolute success — I did, and it was! During this difficult time, I had applied to New York State for services for Travis. I received a letter explaining that services for children with disabilities were being severely cut. Two days after I received that letter, I watched the world champion New York Yankees baseball team get a ticker-tape parade in their honor. I was angry that the monies spent on that parade could have funded services several times over for children like Travis.

Since I had full custody of Travis, I determined to move to a place that would be better for the both of us. I received funds and decided to move to Arizona. Again, I had registered for services for Travis. I received a letter stating that under Arizona law, there is no entitlement for developmentally disabled children to receive services. I made many phone calls to private and public agencies. No one could help my son and me. I felt like the government wanted me to give up on Travis — to put him away in a facility.

Travis is a very sweet and kind child, who loves music, Barney the dinosaur and watching sports, especially football. I could never let Travis go somewhere where people would not care for and about him as I did.

I then knew what my mission had to be — to provide services for every child with Down syndrome across the nation. Physical therapy, speech therapy, special education and Independent Living Skills would be provided right in the child's home rather than having to go to an impersonal clinic setting. For older children and young adults, I would find a way to provide services through the creative arts, job placement and paid vocational training. I also wanted to provide a helping hand to parents so that no one would ever



Photo by NANCY DUNLAVY
Fred Capel with his son, Travis, 5, in Minneapolis.

go through what I did. I chanted for the wisdom to do something. The result was that I started The Foundation for Children with Down Syndrome.

In the beginning, I had no money or support from anyone. I was on welfare and was angry and upset with everybody's misplaced priorities again.

When I would have these bouts of anger, I would chant a lot and read Nichiren Daishonin's writings and SGI President Ikeda's guidance. One day, I read these words from President Ikeda and they are with me still: "In the journey of kosen-rufu, things will not always proceed smoothly, but we are eternal comrades. People who come together in good times, but desert one another when the going gets rough are not comrades. Turning a blind eye to the suffering of others using the rationale that 'it has nothing to do with me,' is not the spirit of comrades. True comrades share both suffering and joy!" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 219).

I chanted a tremendous amount for the foundation to become a recognized nonprofit, tax-exempt organization and it did, on Aug. 21, 1997. During my journey to make the organization strong, I supported Travis by becoming a contractor. There were times that we were homeless and had no food for some time. I determined again to succeed.

So Travis and I moved to Minneapolis. Upon my arrival, I chanted intensely. I called my senior in faith in New York for encouragement. He said to just follow President Ikeda's guidance by getting involved in the community. I did just that. I became the leader of my block club, and was elected to the

Mrs. Toda Dies at 89

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Mrs. Iku Toda, wife of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, died in Tokyo on March 6 from pneumonia. She was 89.

Upon hearing the news of her death, SGI President Ikeda and senior Soka Gakkai leaders performed a memorial gongyo service for her at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. The evening of March 7, President Ikeda and his wife, Kaneko, visited the Toda home and prayed together with the family for the peace and happiness of Mrs. Toda. While expressing his deepest condolences, President Ikeda shared for an hour and a half many memories of his mentor, Mr. Toda, and his wife.

Taking into consideration the long friendship between President Toda and the family of 66th Nichiren Shoshu high priest Nittatsu, the Todas' eldest son, Takahisa, decided to have Mrs. Toda's funeral conducted by Nittatsu's eldest son, Keido Hosoi. Mr. Hosoi is the chief priest of Jozai-ji Nichiren Shoshu temple in Tokyo, where President Toda's funeral was held in 1958.

The March 13 funeral was not held at Jozai-ji but at a funeral home in Shinagawa, Tokyo, where 20 senior Soka

Gakkai leaders, including SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya and SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda, five Soka University representatives and several Nichiren Shoshu priests closely associated with High Priest Nittatsu attended.

The Soka Gakkai leaders expressed their deep respect and loyalty to the Toda family. They also clarified that their attendance did not signify any change in relations between the Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shoshu. Mrs. Toda was a Soka Gakkai member until her death; Takahisa Toda is also a member, as are his three children, including a son who teaches ocean biology at Soka University.

In his speech at the funeral, Takahisa Toda told the mourners that "my mother owes many people a great deal. Among those to whom we owe the most gratitude is Daisaku Ikeda-Sensei. During her lifetime, he looked after my mother well. I appreciate very much his long condolence call and express my gratitude to Ikeda Sensei."

Iku Toda was President Toda's second wife. His first wife died in 1926. He married Iku in 1935 and spent the last 23 years of his life, in which he rebuilt the Soka Gakkai and became the second president, with her. **WT**

board of directors of my neighborhood association. I began to receive a salary from the foundation as I had organized a regional office (which still exists) in Arizona before my move.

When the "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition came to Minneapolis, I made sure that I supported that event with all my might. As I became more involved, I began to understand why President Ikeda had supported this exhibit. It was shocking to me that there were two countries that do not have a Children's Rights Bill — Somalia and the United States. To me, it was clear that there was a link between children who have various needs (disability, poverty, hunger and access to education) not being able to get the services they deserve and the fact that there is no Children's Rights Bill in the U.S.

Through many efforts over the past three years, the foundation is now a nongovernmental organization with the United Nations. My goal with this NGO designation is to fight to provide services for people with Down syndrome, as well as for a Children's Rights

Bill for the United States.

I recently met with the mayor of Minneapolis, Sharon Sayles Belton, to talk about the foundation and how it can help parents and children with Down syndrome in Minneapolis. Ms. Belton was one of the dignitaries that attended the opening of the "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition and was very familiar with SGI-USA through a practicing family member. With Mayor Belton's assistance, I now have a person who is putting together a solid business plan for the foundation, which includes a building for it and seed money to run it. Services are planned to start in Minneapolis this summer.

Because of my efforts, I was nominated for a prestigious honor, The Minneapolis Award, and (former) Senator Bill Bradley has recognized me for my accomplishments on behalf of Children with Down Syndrome. Because of my faith, I can look into Travis' beautiful brown eyes, see his smile, and know that people with Down syndrome across the United States will become self-sufficient in the 21st century. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — MARKUS PARILLO, TORONTO, CANADA

Our Story: Markus and Angela

It was June 16, 1997, around 9 p.m. when I parked my car in a small public parking lot overlooking a ballpark close to my home. I had been there many times before, not wanting to go home. But tonight was different. Tonight my wife, Angela would confront me with the issue of what had become of our marriage of nearly a quarter century. My intention was to drop the proverbial nuclear bomb: I would inform her that I had found another woman and was intending to continue seeing her.

One last time I weighed in my mind every aspect of our long relationship, from its love-at-first-sight initial encounter to the personal hell it had become. Tonight the courage to finally confront my longest-standing suffering head on was with me. Beyond this coming storm, I felt a new life awaited me. The opening lines of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* aptly described my feelings at this moment: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..." (p. 5, M.A. Donohue & Co., Chicago).

Passion is the single word that best describes our early years together, both in love and in the discord between us. There were some good years early on in our relationship, but as time passed a marital cold war set in. The good times began appearing in smaller increments and passionate love was nearing extinction. Despite the arrival of this "ice age" in our relationship, we both remained dedicated to raising our daughter, Trizana. Other bright rays of sunshine came with the hosting of SGI district meetings in our home. We both had challenging careers, Angela with the airlines and myself in the entertainment industry. Those aspects that were missing at home I sought to fulfill outside my marriage.

There were many attempts to revive our relationship, but the wall between us grew insurmountable year by year. The solution, I thought, was to defuse Angela's anger, which lingered like volcanic lava just beneath the surface at all times. Was there a medical solution to this anger? Was there deep emotional baggage that needed to be off-loaded? Or, I asked myself, was

this just the way our life together would be, "till death do us part"?

In the early '80s, I went on a pilgrimage to the original Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin, in a quest to accomplish my own personal evolution as a human being in hopes that my home life would finally improve. I made, on this trip, a promise of marital fidelity that lasted for more than a decade and a half.

Upon my return, the ice age of our marriage began in earnest for me. By the end of that time, every aspect of a separation from my wife had passed through my mind hundreds of times. Our growing daughter was an ongoing deterrent to setting a final "zero" day for separation. At this point in her life, it would have turned her whole world upside down.

Life was filled with numerous sad memories: the lovely purple flowers sprawled on the kitchen floor on Mother's Day, the family dinner turned fiasco on our daughter's birthday, the Christmas that never was and the countless days of silence between us at home. I promised myself I would not spend my 40s living this way.

As Trizana reached her 20s, she was maturing and becoming more independent. I began to feel that she could finally endure the devastating effects of the separation of her parents. In "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 1000-01), Nichiren Daishonin makes three admonishments: to have faith, prudence and courage. I thought that it was just a matter of employing courage to implement a final separation in order to live a happy life from here on.

Flashing back to Angela's

earliest days of practicing Buddhism, the most prominent determination in her heart then was to locate and re-connect with all her close relatives who were scattered over the Western Hemisphere. Within a few years, Angela had introduced her sister Annie to the practice, enabling her to completely overcome some horrifying hardships in her life. Annie lived in the same building as we did at that time. Other close family members visited from Jamaica, including Angela's mother, whom she had not seen in many years. Increasingly, Angela became her family's global focal point. She supported them in their times of suffering and rejoiced in their successes. But her two brothers and father remained long lost.

From the time Angela was a little girl, she never had the benefit of a father in her life. She had neither heard from him nor seen him for more than 40 years. Then one day he called her on the telephone. It had been more than 20 years since she first determined in her prayers to reconnect with her father. Angela's reaction was one of vastly mixed emotions.

I saw this as an opportunity to put to the test the theory that Angela's deeply seated anger stemmed from this issue. Her father's words over the phone rung in tones of reconciliation after his more than 40-years' absence. I made every possible effort to facilitate a father-daughter reunion for two years, but my persistence eventually withered. During this time, Angela would occasionally talk on the phone with her father, but the thousand-mile distance between them remained, both geographically and emotionally.

Two years later, in a casual conversation on an unrelated subject, Angela expressed a willingness to finally see her father. Within days, in a very brief, cordial visit, for the first time in her entire life, Angela was able to experience love from her father. In the weeks that followed, a great new hope arose in me. The great glacier of our marital ice age seemed to hesitate for a moment in time. Would it now recede, I wondered, and allow our lives to flourish together once again?

Although the sharp edge of her anger had dulled significantly, in time I became resigned



Photo by LAURIEN JONES

Angela and Markus Parillo

to the fact that life between us would go on as it had. I decided I must summon the courage to radically change the course of my life by leaving Angela.

This is the frame of mind I had reached on that night in my parked car, overlooking the ballpark. I sat in my car for nearly an hour. Then I went home with the resolve to terminate our relationship.

To this day, and for the rest of my life, I will never forget the agonizing sounds of that evening. My world turned from a frigid ice age to a blazing hell in the blink of an eye. For many months there were tears and endless conversations leading nowhere, fanning the flames of anger all the more. There were numerous late night domestic dispute calls by the police to our home. At times I would call; at other times Angela did. Angela would often cry long into the night. Her overall health deteriorated. She frequently booked off from flights, which aroused the attention of her employer.

Now I was the one who became filled with anger. In the ensuing upheaval of my life, I stepped down from my responsibilities within SGI. My greatest apprehension was that those whom I had been practicing among would feel as though I was walking out on them.

Finally the season arrived to

list our house on the market to sell. I assumed we would sell our house quickly, separate and establish new lives, and some day we would be able to develop some rapport again between us. To Angela, however, I was still her husband and she was adamant that this was all a passing nightmare. She had been receiving support from some of her seniors in faith. SGI Canada Chairperson Mrs. Izumi encouraged Angela to never give up. Angela's long morning chanting sessions became an irritation to me. I assumed she was hopeful she could re-establish our marriage, but I was convinced that lay firmly in the realm of the impossible.

Throughout this time, Angela's father was calling and writing her frequently and being on call at all hours of the day and night whenever she needed him to talk to. Then Angela received news, weeks after the fact, that one of her two brothers had passed away. Her dear brother whom she hadn't seen in years was gone.

At the same time Angela had finally located her closest sibling, her oldest brother, but it was a bittersweet victory. She discovered he had terminal cancer. She made hasty plans to visit him in England and they quickly re-established their close ties. He even became cu-

rious about her Buddhist practice and learned to chant. Just days after she returned from this visit, he quietly passed away.

Angela was facing one devastating disaster after another. Before she returned to England for her brother's funeral, I chanted with her for her brother. My tears flowed and I could barely chant. They were tears not so much for her brother, but for Angela and all her suffering, much of it my own doing.

In the spring of 1998, our house was achieving the status of the house that would never sell, despite the fact that houses of lesser quality were selling all around us. My work was slowing to a halt. The long-time tenant of our basement apartment gave us notice that he was vacating by midsummer. At the same time, a long-time friend of mine passed away after a long battle with cancer.

Amidst these circumstances a great opportunity to participate in the SGI Friendship Festival arose. I had no formal responsibilities within the SGI and this became my opportunity to once again contribute in a broad capacity. In my lifelong career in entertainment, I had never functioned as a production manager. To assume that role in the festival was challenging indeed. I was overjoyed to jump into something intense with all four paws and totally immerse myself.

Then I received an acting contract for a wonderful role that was to shoot for three weeks in Romania. My plate of endeavors was beginning to overflow. I felt whole-hearted support from Angela in these challenges. As I departed for Romania, I noticed tears welling up in her eyes. As my taxi drove away, she was still waving good-bye to me from the door and when I unpacked my belongings in Romania, I discovered a very supportive and encouraging letter she had written to me.

Upon my return, I was faced with the question of what I should do with our vacant basement apartment. Inspired by the need to find affordable short-term accommodations for myself on a business trip to Vancouver, I decided to attempt to turn our basement apartment into a fully equipped short-term rental unit. Despite the oncoming crunch of activity with the Festival, I found time to refurbish and equip the unit and research the short-term rental market. It was during this time that I realized my extra-marital relationship was in a state of gradual demise. I quietly pulled

the house off the market and after three days of advertising, booked my new rental unit for seven months for nearly double the rent it used to bring in.

With the festival nearly upon us, Trizana was to receive her own Gohonzon in Ottawa. Due to an airline strike, Angela and I could not fly but would have to drive the five hours to Ottawa and back. It was a tense prospect for me. On the way, we stopped for a sandwich and as I went to and from the wash-room, I overheard a conversation Angela was having with the gas attendant. I was moved by the optimism in Angela's voice. The atmosphere on the return trip was actually peaceful and harmonious, with both of us marveling at this milestone for our daughter.

Angela was also participating in the Friendship Festival and the momentum leading up to the festival was energizing and revitalizing both our lives. During the festival, there was an accident back stage. I rushed to bring the SGI volunteer doctor to the underground dressing rooms. The injured dancer was bleeding from a head wound. She had sustained a rather serious gash, yet she had gone on stage immediately afterwards and performed flawlessly. I was deeply moved by this and in this state, was returning to my station at the back of the theater.

On my way back, Angela and her performance group were filing through a backstage corridor, heading for their performance on stage. I took her hand and we held on for a moment and looked into each other's eyes. Something between us was vastly different.

Long after the show, a few people lingered outside the main doors of the theater. Mrs. Izumi was among them. "Are you and Angela back together?" she asked me. I told her that seemed to be the case. It was a significant moment for me, to acknowledge this for the first time.

Since then, a new age for Angela and me has dawned and given new life to our whole family. The glacier has receded, the wall between us has crumbled to fine beach sand. Our



home feels bountiful and bright. We go out together like we used to, decades ago. Eating dinner together has become one of our mutual daily joys in life. I sometimes find myself talking casually with her at times and realizing that she has put whatever she was doing aside and is listening intently. I would like to achieve the same attentiveness to Angela when we talk together. In fact conversation together itself has become a joy in life. She is my wife, my lover and my friend.

In a wonderfully profound visit, we took Trizana to Florida to meet her maternal grandfather for the first time. We have recently bought a brand new condominium that, once completed in the summer of the year 2000, will overlook Toronto Harbor. Planning and organizing this has provided endless excitement for both of us. We are making travel plans months in advance.

This is the Angela I fell in love with when I first set eyes on her a quarter century ago. This victory of a long-fought battle for harmony between us has shed a brilliant light and given profound meaning to all that we have endured in the past together. **WT**

FNCC IMPRESSION — CRAIG TACHIBANA, HONOLULU

Impression of the Soka Spirit Conference

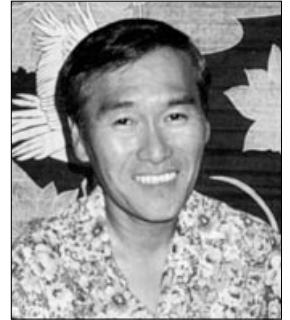
The recent Soka Spirit Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center was fabulous! A group diverse in both body and mind came from around the country seeking the Law; we immersed ourselves in Soka Spirit.

As I listened to the speakers, who all did an excellent job, the general concept that our mercy should extend beyond our organization and even into the depths of the hell of Nichiren Shoshu came to mind. I understood that our SGI members who left for the temple were, from the standpoint of mercy, still our SGI members!

As I sat reciting gongyo, I recalled the ceremony at Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Japan where we chanted to the Gohonzon, which second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda requested for the sake of worldwide kosen-rufu. At that leadership conference devoted entirely to the temple issue in 1994, I was inspired to take action to share this spirit with the SGI members of Hawaii. And here I am in 2000, once again determined to be Soka Spirit!

As I chanted at the FNCC, I remembered Mr. Harry Hiram, SGI-USA's vice general director and first appointed district chief in Hawaii. He often said, "There is no such thing as going *taiten* (member who regresses in faith). Sooner or later they return to the organization." This conference helped me understand what he truly meant. Mr. Hiram embraced all people. He was truly, a "down to earth" Bodhisattva of the Earth. I realize now that it was his mercy and determination that allowed him to powerfully and confidently make such a statement.

One day at the community center in Honolulu, Mr. Hiram surprised me. He said, "Craig!



Do your best!" I nodded in agreement. That was the last time I saw him. Mr. Hiram died in 1982 on the mainland carrying out his SGI duties — away from his beloved islands and those he embraced. The islands wept! I believe that Mr. Hiram embodied Soka Spirit long before this temple issue ever arose.

While at the FNCC, I realized that the Lotus Sutra contained the tears of all disciples. Tears of painful struggle! Tears of joyous celebration! Tears for the sake of the Law exude from each letter of the Lotus Sutra. Tears that were shed to guard, protect, uphold and propagate the Law. Now we would shed tears of Soka Spirit! I immediately wrote my determination to President Ikeda in a poem titled "Tears for a New Millennium": Makiguchi .../Toda.../ the tears of the Lotus Sutra, / tears of all members, /Gush into the lake at FNCC / Tears of amrita / the tears of joyful struggle, / from FNCC / tears of Soka Spirit, / like a tsunami, deluge Nikken Sect, / to purify our land!

Four days after returning to Hawaii, I ran into my former SGI member. We had not met for nearly 15 years. He joined the temple. He was my member then and in chanting, remains my member still. I am determined to bring him back! **WT**

**Join the Class
of 2001 at Soka
University of
America,
Calabasas**

Now in its sixth year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education. Individuals seeking admission to the master's program must hold a baccalaureate or bachelor's degree with a minimum grade-point average of 2.7 (B-) on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native lan-

guage is not English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600. Applications for the 2000-01 academic year are due by April 30, 2000. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Hwy., Calabasas, CA 91302. Telephone: (818) 878-3717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 27 SPEECH — PART 1

Our Destination Is Eternal Joy

'All the sufferings and hardships we undergo in the course of working for kosen-rufu will be transformed into joys thousands of times greater than any worldly pleasure,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'They will lead us to eternal joy.'

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 43rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Hyogo Culture Center in Kobe, Japan, Feb. 27.

Congratulations on the holding of this month's Headquarters Leaders Meeting here in sunny Hyogo Prefecture! [Hyogo Prefecture is located in the Kansai region of Japan.]

Winter is over, and spring has come. The sunshine is bright!

I am so happy to have this opportunity to see all of you again for the first time in several years. I see you've all aged a bit! But remember, people who have faith in the Mystic Law are always vibrantly alive and filled with youthful energy. As Nichiren Daishonin assures us, "You will grow younger" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 464).

Our life is eternal — it continues after death.

Let me begin by sharing these words of the Daishonin with you: "The hell of the crimson lotus is so called because the intense cold of this hell makes one double over until one's back splits open and the bloody flesh emerges like a crimson lotus flower. And the hell of the great crimson lotus is even more horrible. When one falls into such an evil place, the fact that one was a ruler or a general means nothing. Tormented by the wardens of hell, one is no different than a monkey on a string. What use are fame and fortune then? Can one still be arrogant and persist in false beliefs?" (WND, 1026)

When one's life is filled with the suffering of hell, social position and success are of no use. No one can be arrogant or smug

in such a situation. And since life and death are one, inseparable, the same is true after death. Such worries as not having enough money are indeed small, petty concerns when compared with the sufferings of hell after death.

In another passage, the Daishonin says: "There is nothing to lament when we consider that we will surely become Buddhas. Even if one were to become an emperor's consort, of what use would it be? Even if one were to be reborn in heaven, what end would it serve?" (WND, 657).

None of these achievements is important from the larger perspective of Buddhism. Our life is eternal, continuing on after death. It stretches on ahead of us infinitely into the future. Accordingly, whether we live in a nice house or enjoy comfortable circumstances in the brief time we are here on this planet is of little import.

The existence we are born into in our next lifetime will be defined by our inner state of life at the time of our death. That is where the importance of our Buddhist practice comes in.

How foolish it is to lose ourselves in worldly pleasures.

The Daishonin also writes: "At times we may be born as human beings and enjoy such high positions as the ruler of a country, a high-ranking minister, a court noble, or a lord. We may congratulate ourselves, thinking that there can be no greater pleasure and contenting ourselves with the small reward we have received. However, the Buddha teaches that such prosperity is but that of dreams: it is an illusory pleasure. Therefore, one should embrace the Lotus Sutra, and quickly attain enlightenment" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 386).

According to Buddhism, we may be born as an animal or even a tree. Thus, since we have had the good fortune to be born as human beings in this lifetime, it is foolish to lose ourselves in worldly pleasures. They are nothing but an illusion.

Take, for example, people who fall head over heels in love, get married and a short time later call marriage a tomb!

By contrast, all the sufferings and hardships we undergo in the course of working for kosen-



SGI President Ikeda meets with Universidad Nacional del Nordeste Rector Adolfo D. Torres and his wife, Elena Páparo de Torres, at the Kansai International Culture Center, Feb. 27.

rufu will be transformed into joys thousands of times greater than any worldly pleasure. They will lead us to eternal joy. All we have to do is uphold the Lotus Sutra — to believe in the Mystic Law and chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo. When we do so, we become entities of supreme nobility, possessing a true view of society, life and the universe. We can attain true happiness, the true life-state of a Buddha.

Please do not confuse good and evil, right and wrong.

Great places give birth to great people. Talented people dedicated to creating value burst forth, like the brilliant light of the morning sun, in those places that have weathered the fiercest storms of disaster and endured the long night of adversity.

Northeastern Argentina, where the campuses of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste are located, is an area heading into the 21st century with boundless energy. [The Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Argentina, conferred an honorary doctorate on SGI President Ikeda at this meeting.]

Let me say here and now that the same is true of our beloved Hyogo Prefecture, which refused to succumb to the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995.

General José de San Martín

was one of the great leaders of Latin American independence, famous for his triumphant crossing of the Andes. And where was this great hero born? I am sure that some of our Hyogo members, renowned for their keen intellect, know the answer to that question. It was in the Argentine province of Corrientes, home to the main campus of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste and also the birthplace of the university's rector, Dr. Alfred Torres, who is here with us today.

San Martín was born 222 years ago, on Feb. 25, 1778. He writes: "Education is the master key that opens the door to prosperity and leads to people's happiness." This was his conviction and his dream.

San Martín's heroic ideal has now been revived in his heroic birthplace, and his great dream of education has been realized steadily but surely by Rector Torres and his wife, Elena Páparo de Torres, also with us today. They are the first international guests we have received at the new Kansai International Culture Center, located next door. Rector and Mrs. Torres have specially traveled to Japan for this occasion in this cold winter season, all the way from Argentina on the other side of the globe, where it is now summer. I thank them both most sincerely. This is also my

first visit to the new center.

What was San Martín's most heartfelt wish? "I have no greater ambition than to be despised by ingrates and appreciated by virtuous men," he declared. One is bound, he said, to be envied, defamed and hated by evil and foolish ingrates — but that is actually an honor. This is the conclusion the courageous liberator arrived at. It is also the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Those who refuse to take ingrates to task, just wanting to stay in everyone's good graces, wanting to not make any waves, are pitiful. You are all wise individuals. It is vital that you do not confuse good and evil, right and wrong.

What is important is to be trusted and respected by people of foremost character and integrity around the globe. The SGI has reached out and formed an ever-expanding network of friends among the world's thinking people. This honor from the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste is one sign of that friendship. I accept it with the greatest pride today, together with my dear Kansai family. I am overjoyed to celebrate the start of our journey into the 21st century in this way with the members of the foremost area of Kobe and all of Hyogo.

What a wonderful recovery Hyogo has made in just five

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Soka Gakkai President Einosuke Akiya meets victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kansai, January 1995.

years from the earthquake! It is outstanding. The new drama of the 21st century has begun. The past is past. Let us begin anew from Kansai!

My spirit is always with Kansai. Kansai is home to the Gakkai spirit. May Kansai, a model for all, continue striving in solid unity for kosen-rufu. And may each of you, the Kansai members, write a new history in your lives.

Great people work to help and benefit others.

The citadel of learning that is the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, with its mission of education, creativity and social contribution, was founded in 1956. That year in Kansai, together with my fellow members, I built an indestructible organization for kosen-rufu that became a pivotal center of our movement for justice and peace.

Dr. Torres is the first graduate of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste to become the university's rector, and he was re-elected to the position with overwhelming support. His energy and passion have made the university the heart of development in Argentina's northeast. The Universidad Nacional del Nordeste has been a driving force for limitless progress.

Kansai, similarly, is the heart of the Soka Gakkai. And Kobe is Kansai's driving force. When Kansai advances, all Japan advances.

The beautiful Mrs. Torres is well known for her unrenumerated services to the university, specifically in improving and enhancing its extension program over many years. She has achieved a great deal in linking the university to the community, making available language courses, adult education courses and vocational counseling, and organizing art and cultural exhibitions.

Both Rector and Mrs. Torres

are to be highly commended for their involvement in a variety of volunteer activities that assist the university and the community. Great people work to help and benefit others. Self-serving individuals who care only about personal fame and fortune, who stoop to lying and cheating, can never be truly great, no matter how they may strut about.

Intellectual leaders must work for the people in times of crisis.

In 1998, the province of Corrientes experienced a terrible flood that triggered a worldwide outpouring of concern for the victims. [The flood occurred in mid-April 1998, affecting more than 400,000 people.] The Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, under the leadership of Dr. Torres, mobilized its top scholars in each field — physi-

cians, architects, psychologists and sociologists — to assist in the flood relief operations. This wonderful relief effort is well known, and I want to praise Dr. Torres for his firm belief that intellectual leaders must rise up and work for the people in times of crisis.

I know that our SGI-Argentina members also threw themselves energetically into assisting in the flood relief efforts. Today, three representatives of SGI-Argentina have joined us. *Muchas gracias!*

During the Great Hanshin Earthquake, this Hyogo Culture Center and all the Soka Gakkai community centers in the region were undamaged. Nine of our centers became refuges for more than 5,000 earthquake victims, contributing enormously to the relief effort. Though many of you were victims yourselves of the earthquake, you rose up courageously to help your fellow victims. People around the world, observing your noble actions, praised you as true bodhisattvas and Buddhas.

I take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the members of the Kansai 21st Century Symphony Orchestra, who performed so beautifully for us earlier. This orchestra was formed five years ago, just one day before the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck. After the earthquake, its members traveled all around the disaster area and, like Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, brought melodies of hope and sounds of courage to many victims. Their admirable

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Soka Gakkai's medical volunteers offer their help in the aftermath of the Hanshin Earthquake.

contribution is known to all, and my wife and I are deeply grateful for their efforts in that difficult time. Their performance today was perfect! Let's

all give a warm round of applause to the Kansai 21st Century Symphony Orchestra! *(To be continued in the March 31 issue)*

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE MEN'S DIVISION CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

The Power of Courage

'Always, it is the power of one's courage that opens the way ahead,' SGI President Ikeda says to the men's division members. 'Faith is another name for the utmost courage.'

The latest Men's Division Conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, March 9-12.

To the men's division members, who are great trees of kosen-rufu:

My heartfelt congratulations on your conference! I truly appreciate your daily efforts for kosen-rufu. I am convinced that Nichiren Daishonin has been watching your steady, assiduous and respectable devotion to your communities throughout American society.

In "Letter from Sado," the Daishonin states, "Those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 301). A cowardly mind can do nothing to help the sun of hope arise from within. Nor can it raise the curtain on a new stage.

Always, it is the power of one's courage that opens the way ahead. Faith is another name for the utmost courage. Once a man has stood up, kosen-rufu in his environment will greatly progress. Those who now brace their courage and fight for kosen-rufu and justice with the spirit of a lion king will surely enjoy ever-greater vitality. They will obtain a life-condition as free as the Buddha's.

Please take leadership majestically and dauntlessly. Live the greatest life, powerfully, together with me. You all are important to me. I pray for your good health and happiness. I also pray for the good health and happiness of your family members and friends. Please stay in good health and high spirits forever.

*Daisaku Ikeda
March 2000*

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Possessing a True View

From This Speech:

All the sufferings and hardships we undergo in the course of working for kosen-rufu will be transformed into joys thousands of times greater than any worldly pleasure. They will lead us to eternal joy. All we have to do is uphold the Lotus Sutra — to believe in the Mystic Law and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. When we do so, we become entities of supreme nobility, possessing a true view of society, life and the universe. We can attain true happiness, the true life-state of a Buddha.

- 1) SGI President Ikeda says that "all the sufferings and hardships we undergo...for kosen-rufu will be transformed into joys." How do you think this process works?
- 2) President Ikeda is warning us not to be fooled by worldly pleasures. What do you think of when you hear "worldly pleasures"? What do you think that he means by the term?
- 3) What does it mean to you to "uphold the Lotus Sutra"? How do you try to uphold the Lotus Sutra in your own life?
- 4) What does it mean to you to possess "a true view of society, life and the universe"? How do you get to that true view? How does how we perceive society, life and the universe affect the quality of our lives?

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

The Determination To Win

‘The determination to win is the true revolutionary spirit,’ SGI President Ikeda writes. ‘It is the fundamental spirit of faith.’

Planting a cherry tree,
Commemorating the centennial
Of my mentor’s birth.

I planted a cherry tree at our Okinawa Training Center to commemorate the centennial of Josei Toda’s birth.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

One day, as a gentle spring breeze blew, Mr. Toda and I walked near Hibiya Park in Central Tokyo, close to the imperial palace. Concerned for my delicate health, Mr. Toda admonished: “Daisaku, you mustn’t die young. You can’t achieve great things if you don’t live long. Don’t forget to get sufficient rest. That’s the source of vitality and the strength to keep on fighting.”

As we walked, rain began to fall, so we waited for a taxi by the imperial palace moat. Looking across the road at the imposing building that was serving as General MacArthur’s General Headquarters, I said, “Someday I will build a magnificent palace of kosen-rufu that is just as grand as that building.” My mentor smiled warmly.

We had a hard time finding a taxi in the rain. “Sensei,” I said, “sometime I am going to buy you a car so that you can be driven wherever you have to go. I’m so sorry that you have to wait like this in the cold.” Mr. Toda nodded happily at my promise.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I spent my youth proudly and without regret, working alongside my mentor. Those were days of constant difficulty and struggle. That profound, undying spirit to walk the path of mentor and disciple will never change in the slightest, for as long as I live.

One day, Mr. Toda said to me: “Only through victory can justice be upheld. We must never let justice be defeated.”

The determination to win is the true revolutionary spirit. It is the fundamental spirit of faith. Nichiren Daishonin declares,

“Buddhism primarily concerns itself with victory or defeat” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 835). As his disciples, we must always bare these words deeply in mind.

While walking together, Mr. Toda told me strictly: “Our lives are short, but what we achieve for kosen-rufu endures. Be a person who, in the short time allotted to him, joyfully writes, through valiant actions, a magnificent history that will live on forever, a history won through the workings of cause and effect of the Mystic Law!”

Some people may be destined to fight while filled with a sense of isolation and loneliness. Some may strive in tears, confronting bitter challenges. But the vital thing is that we fight through to the very last step of the journey! That is the secret to a noble life crowned in glory and triumph.

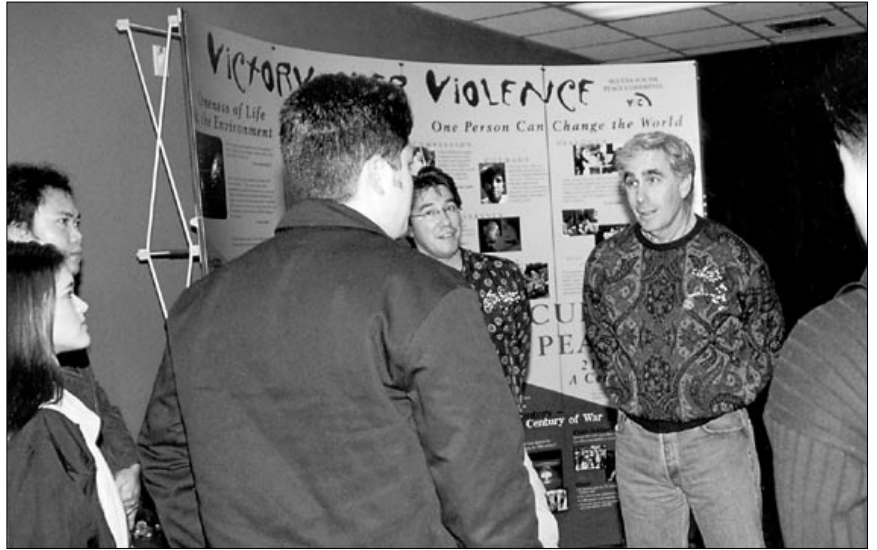
♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

When I was talking with officials of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on Feb. 14, the person next to me made a remark that shone with luminous wisdom: “Good people always have enemies. You can tell the greatness of such people by the number of foes attacking them.” There is not a single great person in the world who has not suffered persecution.

This is clearly articulated in the Daishonin’s writings, which tell us that those who uphold the Lotus Sutra and widely propagate the correct teaching will be slandered and defamed, and that the three powerful enemies will arise without fail. For this reason, the Lotus Sutra’s practitioners will be showered with slander and abuse by the likes of what the Sutra describes as “evil devils, the devils’ people and yakshas,” who are driven insane by envy. This is in complete accord with the Daishonin’s teachings. When it happens to us, we should regard it as a proud honor. In fact, it is a sign that we are on the way to attaining Buddhahood.

Do not fear the criticism of others! You must not be afraid of such abuse.

The Daishonin was exiled twice and even condemned to death because of completely groundless slander and criticism. All sorts of false reports, such as “Nichiren’s followers have set fires in Kamakura,” were spread far and wide by the



Dr. David Krieger talks with students at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles, Feb. 16.

Daishonin’s enemies.

We see the same thing today. All kinds of false, baseless reports are written about our organization in the media, and we are persecuted and oppressed just as the Daishonin warns we will be.

This is what demonstrates the SGI’s qualification to carry out the great undertaking of kosen-rufu. And there is no more noble and glorious endeavor in the world than kosen-rufu.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The joy-filled grounds of our Okinawa Training Center in Onnason were abloom with sunflowers, whose golden faces seemed literally to beam with sunny smiles.

We started planting these sunflowers when President David Krieger of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation presented some sunflower seeds as a symbol of peace to the members of Okinawa in July 1997.

How did sunflowers become a symbol of peace?

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the third largest arsenal of nuclear warheads in the world, totaling some 1,600, remained in Ukraine. The new Ukraine republic decided to send all these nuclear warheads back to Russia, where they were to be dismantled. Ukraine wanted to be a nuclear weapon-free state.

The weapons were all shipped back to Russia by June 1996. On the site of a former Ukrainian underground missile silo, the defense ministers of

Russia, the United States and Ukraine planted sunflower seeds. The U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry said: “Sunflowers instead of missiles in the soil would insure peace for future generations.”

From a passionate desire to put an end to an age of self-deception, in which demonic weapons are falsely touted as the guarantee of peace—sunflowers became a new symbol of peace.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Two years ago, I met President Krieger and his wife, Carolee, at the Okinawa Training Center. President Krieger and his wife have worked ceaselessly to promote Abolition 2000, a global movement to eliminate nuclear weapons, based on the dream of replacing missiles with sunflowers. The Soka Gakkai youth division members rose to the call of this noble peace movement and collected an astounding 13 million signatures across Japan for a petition in support of Abolition 2000.

Youth is another name for action. Youth is the torch of hope. Youth is the banner of victory.

President Krieger was moved by the youth division’s effort and said, “They have given courage and hope to people around the world.” Nothing makes me happier than to hear words of praise for the youth division.

The SGI will be blessed with an endless stream of talented young people who have firm conviction and a commitment

to justice and truth. That is why we have nothing to fear, ever.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

It was in Okinawa that I first began to write *The Human Revolution*. The first installment appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun* on New Year’s Day 1965, 35 years ago.

The theme of my book is that world peace starts with the human revolution—the inner transformation—of the individual. A single large sunflower blossom contains the seeds for more than a thousand new plants. Similarly, when one brave warrior for peace stands up, his or her resolve spreads out in a thousand, 10,000 waves. Courage always stirs a response.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

In July, the G-8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit Meeting will be held. As one who loves Okinawa, I pray for its great success.

Recently, in my SGI Day Peace Proposal, I talked about a “culture of peace.” I hope that everyone around the world will look to Okinawa, a pioneer in this area.

May my beloved Okinawa become a sphere of happiness and peace unsurpassed anywhere!

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

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 1-2

The 'At the Helm' chapter begins with the noble efforts of a chapter leader to care for and encourage 900 members trapped on a train in a blizzard.

The blizzard buffeted the train's windows like an onslaught of white demons appearing from the darkness. Exhaustion etched the faces of the passengers on that night, Jan. 24, 1963. Though they were hungry, all they could do was sit and wait. The train showed no sign of moving.

Sixteen or 17 hours had already passed since the train stopped at Miyauchi Station in Niigata Prefecture [in central Honshu, Japan's main island]. It had been chartered to carry some 900 members of the Soka Gakkai's Niigata and Uetsu chapters back home after their visit to the Nichiren Shoshu head temple in Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Prefecture. The group had left the head temple at about 3:00 p.m. on Jan. 23. At around 8:00 p.m., at Ueno Station in Tokyo, they had boarded the chartered train that would take them to Niigata.

At Ueno there was an announcement that trains were experiencing major delays due to heavy snow to the north, but the group's train nevertheless made its way smoothly for a while. They were scheduled to arrive at their destination, Niigata Station, on the morning of Jan. 24.

Just when most passengers had drifted off to sleep, the train stopped at Koide Station on the Joetsu Line, a small station seven stops before Nagaoka, a city in central Niigata Prefecture. This was still a considerable distance from Niigata City. When the train didn't move for some time, everyone began to grow concerned. Many of the members on board had to be at work the next morning.

After an hour, to the passengers' great relief, the train lurched forward with a loud clunk and began moving again. But it proceeded at a laboriously slow pace. An hour later it stopped again — at Miyauchi Station, one stop before Nagaoka. It was 3:30 in the morning, and outside a fierce blizzard raged. The passengers waited and waited, but the train just sat on the tracks, motionless.

Niigata Chapter Leader Kinji Eda, who was responsible for the group's transportation, went to the stationmaster's office with the young men's division member in charge of the Traffic Control Group. The stationmaster told them that heavy snow had blocked trains at several points on the Hokuriku, Joetsu and Shin'etsu lines, and that there was no telling when normal op-



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

erations would resume.

Eda asked the stationmaster if he could arrange some meals for the passengers and, if it looked like the delay would be a long one, find lodging for the elderly and those with small children. Though the stationmaster said he would organize some boxed meals, all the lodgings in the area were full. Eda then assembled the leaders responsible for each car and explained the situation. He urged them to work closely and in unity to address any problems that might arise, thus ensuring that the return trip from their pilgrimage would end without any accidents.

When morning came, Eda suggested that the members use the public telephones in and around the station to call their families and places of work to let them know where they were and what was happening. They all did gongyo together on the train, and then the boxed meals that had been arranged by the stationmaster arrived. After doing gongyo and eating, everyone felt much better.

To the members' enthusiastic response, Eda proposed that Goshu study sessions be conducted in each car. "Why, I feel as if I were at a summer train-

ing course, being able to study the Goshu from early in the morning!" "I think winter training course is the term you are looking for! But if it's really a training course, we're looking at three days and two nights!" Everyone bantered cheerfully.

The snow showed no signs of letting up. It buried all the houses within view.

More boxed meals were distributed at lunchtime, but they would be the last. The heavy snows had disrupted all transportation, cutting off deliveries of food and other supplies. The stationmaster later managed to find some pastries for them, but these were quite stale — some of the jam and other fillings had already spoiled. There was really nothing more he could do.

Eda was determined at all costs to ensure that the members would not go hungry. He phoned Masashi Takekawa, the leader of Nagaoka Chapter, which covered the area around Nagaoka and neighboring Miyauchi, where the train was stranded. Eda asked Takekawa, knowing what an imposition it was, if he could somehow arrange to have food delivered to the members. Preparing meals for some 900 members was not something one could do at a moment's notice. But without hesitation, Takekawa

said he would.

The blizzard grew fiercer. Later it was known as the Blizzard of '63. It caused record damage in the Hokuriku and Shin'etsu regions [central northeastern Honshu], including Niigata Prefecture. According to a report compiled by the Niigata Prefecture Storm Damage Task Force on Jan. 30, some 37 inches of snow fell in Nagaoka City and 56 inches in Irihiro Village on Jan. 25. The snow kept falling, and by Jan. 30, it had reached a height of 148 inches at Nagaoka Station and a staggering 204 inches at Irihiro Station.

By the evening of Jan. 23, 144 trains in Niigata Prefecture were canceled, and 26 were stranded in the snow. By Jan. 30, nine people were dead in the prefecture, and one was missing. Ninety-eight homes and buildings were completely destroyed and another 95 heavily damaged. Snow-blocked rivers and frozen water pipes had flooded 193 homes and offices. Not only were crops severely damaged, but the disruption of transportation caused great loss to businesses.

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



The Bodhisattva Spirit Refreshes

PERSPECTIVE

By KATHY RUBY
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Soka Spirit is not the new name for the temple issue. Soka Spirit is the basis of Buddhist thought. It is the spirit of the bodhisattva, the spirit of the founder of this Buddhism, Nichiren Daishonin and the legacy of the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai. It is the single directive proclaimed by Shakyamuni Buddha at the end of the "Life Span" chapter in the Lotus Sutra: "Mai ji sa ze nen. / I ga ryo shujo. / Toku nyu mu-jo do. / Soku joju busshin."

"At all times I think to myself: / How can I cause living beings / to gain entry into the unsurpassed way / and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 232).

We recite that every day when we do gongyo; so every day, we vow that we will think at all times about causing other people to become Buddhas. Yet, in my own life, I know that that was usually the furthest thing from my mind!

Tell me if it sounds familiar: The alarm goes off a few times. Get ready for work, do a quick gongyo, five minutes daimoku and out the door. Race for the Metro, get to work, then work, work, work. Lunch. More work. Head home, get in the door exhausted. Do a quick gongyo, eat, relax...and then to bed.

Talk to members? Please don't bother me tonight—I'm exhausted. Getting out the district schedule? Can't I just send an e-mail? My leader's on the phone? What does that guy want? Compassion for others? Who has the energy?

The truth is that we've forgotten that the bodhisattva spirit is refreshing and energizing. Some of you old-timers may remember the era when we did bodhisattva activities 24/7—didn't we get great benefits? When we think about those times, we think, "I had the energy of youth!" What we really had was the energy of the bodhisattva!

Here's a story of how important this compassion for others can be: A group of people, (10 or so), escaped from a Siberian prison camp. There were all different kinds—healthy strong men, young people, older folks, etc. In the brutal environment,

all died except two. Who were the two who survived? A young mother and her baby. Why

did they make it? The mother survived because she had to, for the sake of the baby. The baby survived because of the mother. THAT is how powerful caring for other people can be. It can be the strongest thing in Nature.

The Daishonin had this spirit. He began chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in 1253. He had studied the Buddhist texts for many years, and when he realized that this phrase was the essence of those teachings, HIS FIRST ACT was to go back to his home temple and convince his family, friends and fellow monks of this great new practice. He could have gone to a mountaintop or cave or remote temple somewhere and happily chanted for the rest of his life. But he knew that an essential part of this practice is telling others about it.

As his life went on, the Daishonin got in lots of trouble because of this practice. He upset many of the other sects of Buddhism. The priests who ran those sects did not appreciate their followers leaving them. The Daishonin could have just said: "Live and let live. I won't bother your followers, if you don't bother mine." He could have said: "It's a free country—people can believe whatever they want. No skin off my nose." But he didn't.

He never stopped debating other priests, refuting other sects and remonstrating with the government about its support for these other sects. He was offered a fine temple if he would lay off the other sects—he refused. He was sent into exile twice and they tried to behead him, but couldn't, all because the Daishonin could not compromise his spirit of compassion—the spirit of the bodhisattva.

All this is recorded in the Daishonin's writings. Again and again, he persuades, cajoles, and argues, all for the sake of spreading this form of Buddhism to people everywhere. He told his followers, "Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase" (*The Writings of*

Nichiren Daishonin, p. 386).

After the Daishonin's death, this spirit wavered, flickered and nearly went out. During the next seven centuries, this Buddhism was layered over with ceremonies, customs and traditions. But in the 20th century, a Japanese educator named Tsunesaburo Makiguchi converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism and immediately saw benefit through his sincere practice. Grasping the spirit of the bodhisattva, Mr. Makiguchi began propagating this Buddhism to everyone he knew. Soon, he and his friend Josei Toda had a vigorous lay organization practicing this Buddhism.

Then the restrictions of the Japanese military mentality began to be enforced—all Japanese citizens had to practice Shinto, the state religion. They had to accept and enshrine the Shinto talisman. Even though the priests of their own sect demanded that they accept the talisman, Makiguchi and Toda refused, because they could never compromise this Buddhism, no matter what the inducement. This was exactly the spirit of the Daishonin.

Toda and Makiguchi were banned from the head temple and then arrested by the authorities. The 70-year-old Makiguchi died in prison, and Toda emerged with his health damaged but his spirit unbroken. Imbued with the spirit of compassion for others, he determined to rebuild the lay organization.

Today, our organization is the result of these selfless efforts. But in Buddhism, we can never be satisfied with our efforts so far—we have to be always building for the future, or else no one will have one. We must never lose the fundamental spirit on which our organization is based.

How can we start to rekindle the Gakkai spirit—this Soka Spirit—in our lives again? Well, it's just basic practice but with a different attitude. It begins with chanting for others. For me personally, this was a difficult thing to do. I always have so many things in my own life to chant about. It was as if I was closed up in the little box of my own life and couldn't be concerned about anything outside it. Anyway, what difference could it make?

I found out that it makes a

BIG difference. The mindset you have when you chant makes a powerful difference in your results. For example, many sects chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Some chant it to a Gohonzon similar to ours. So why are the benefits different? The mind one has makes all the difference.

The Daishonin says that "if you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (WND, 385). The mind of Nichiren is "Mai ji sa ze nen"—opening one's heart to others. So, beginning with prayer, we start to do just that. The Soka Spirit group is meeting every Saturday morning at the Washington, D.C., Community Center and chanting sincerely for others—the people in our lives: family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, other members (the ones you see all the time and the ones you don't), members who have been gone for six months, those who have been gone for six years. And for those members, those brothers and sisters of ours, who are being deluded at the temple—we are chanting for their happiness as well. The Daishonin would do the same.

Today, in the year 2000, we

can no longer say that we are unaffected by the temple's actions. Due to current technology, information—and MISinformation—is readily available on the Internet. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard that SGI members' friends, relatives, neighbors and co-workers have become negative about the SGI because of some lies they read on the Internet.

In addition, the area in which I practice has the distinction of being the location of one of the six temples in the United States. Many of us pass it on our way to and from activities. I'm not writing this to say how wrong the temple is but to ask for your compassion—the spirit of the bodhisattva—toward the temple members. They have been deceived into a practice that lacks the spirit I have described. They are deluded and suffering. Let's send sincere prayers for their swift awakening.

And let's refresh our own practices and awaken our own hearts to live the lives of bodhisattvas. Let's resolve to take action, as the Daishonin did, in reaching out to our members and friends, practicing for ourselves and especially for others. **WV**

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The Justice Chronicle is a free, weekly e-mailer for *World Tribune* subscribers about the Soka Spirit movement. Its purpose is to support SGI-USA's ongoing education campaign about this subject in the timeliest fashion possible.

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On Speaking Out

In response to Kevin Higgins' letter (Feb. 29 *World Tribune*) on speaking out, sure, speaking out is fine, to a point. But what happens when you have spoken out several times and that leader still doesn't get the point? You can speak out till you are blue in the face, but if that leader doesn't hear, what is the point? I think the leaders that I have had in my organizations were never trained in speaking to members. Just recently I heard a song from Tina Turner's latest CD titled "Twenty Four Seven"—one song title that talks to my heart and that's the attitude we should have, whether a leader or not.

—LYNN MARTIN,
Kansas City
MartinChuck8720@aol.com

Chinese Adoptions

Thank you for the article on the adoption of two beautiful children. Congratulations to both families. Pat, it was especially exciting to see your picture after all these years. I wonder if you remember Manhattan, upper Westside, 75th Street, Empire Chapter and your roommates Pauline Sklar and me. Love to hear from you!

—JESSICA SHORT,
(Carol Duffy)
San Francisco
talisgoddess@yahoo.com

Aloha

Aloha from Honolulu! I've been practicing in SGI since 1966! I have to say that everyone involved with SGI publications should be very proud of the tremendous strides that have been made over the past three decades! It is an honor and joy to read your publications and I am constantly encouraged by all of our magazines, newspapers and now the WT E-mail Express! Please keep up your awesome mission to spread the Mystic Law all across the U.S. through pen and computer and I will do the same through voice and smile! Looking forward to many more encouraging articles! Best wishes to all!

—SHAREN L. TRUEX
NAKASHIMA,
Honolulu
sharen@lava.net

On Depression

Lori McDaniel's article in the Jan. 28 issue and Stu Clarke's reply in the March 3 *World Tribune* are part of a continuing debate on the absolute merits of Buddhist practice versus the

very relative merits of psychotherapy and medication. There comes a point, I believe, in a person's treatment when the question that needs to be addressed is: Am I depending more on my practice or on my treatment? Am I using my treatment as a comfort zone?

I have many experiences with depression and other illnesses, as well as a vast experience with medication and psychotherapy. I spent a year without medication (1994) and wound up in the hospital and back on it. This in no way implies that I did the wrong thing. I consider that year to be one of the most significant of my life because I observed the full extent of my disorder. I even found it fascinating at times. We should try not to approach any situation with dread. Everything is a chance to learn.

What I have found is that a strong Buddhist practice will make any treatment more successful. At the same time, it behooves us to seek out alternate therapies if we believe them to be more effective.

Simply being on medication is no cure for anything. I would have to say that the only difference between myself and the other psychiatric patients I know is my practice of Buddhism. I believe I have made progress that would have been unfeasible had I totally relied on hospital treatments.

Don't whip yourselves. Medication and therapy can be helpful. The old idea that "Buddhists don't need medication" is not only impractical but dangerous. Being on medication has helped me to maintain my practice, especially since 1994-95, when it was slipping. I have no qualms about saying that. At the same time, by symbiosis, my practice has enabled me to maintain everything positive in my life and has kept me from sinking into a tiny circumscribed existence that so many medication patients, unfortunately, are too apt to do.

Although it is desirable to find out truly whether or not one indeed needs medication, it is just as desirable to maintain one's regimen. Abuse or misuse, or sporadic use of these medications creates no value either. If the side effects are considerable and the benefits few, however, it is best to seek other remedies.

To tell someone "It's your karma to be on medication" is

over simplistic and lacking in mercy. It can be just as bad to have the kind of karma where you can't get the medical help you need. Getting what we "need," as we know, is a big part of our practice.

As far as correct diagnosis is concerned, there is obviously no substitute for that. It makes no sense to take medicine for a condition one doesn't have, or the wrong medicine for the wrong condition, and so on. Perhaps if our powers of diagnosis are enhanced through Buddhist practice, we can avoid some of the more egregious practices of our psychiatrists and mental hospitals, e.g., the knee-jerk reaction of "medication for everything." In this regard, Mr. Stu Clarke's points are well taken.

—STEVEN STONE,
New York City

About the Environment

I have followed with interest the readers' comments on Frank Hotchkiss' perspective about the environment (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 2). Although Hotchkiss' perspective may be an extremist's view, it contains elements of truth and was of value in presenting another side to help balance the environmentally extremist view.

Focusing on the debate of global warming, caution is needed on both sides before claiming a consensus of opinion or lashing out about "false statements." This is a complex issue requiring a multidisciplinary approach to search for and hopefully find ourselves closer to the truth. I will risk saying that there appears to be a consensus or at least a majority opinion that the burning of fossil fuels and human production of carbon dioxide has contributed to global warming. But whether that activity is the single cause or even a major contributor is still being debated. There is still too much controversy and too few facts on the subject to say that there is a consensus regarding a single causal relationship. For example, geologists know that global warming has occurred in the distant past and that the warming was not related to human activity. If these events happened earlier in our Earth's history, such an event could be happening again.

Global warming was the

topic in a recent issue of *Geotimes*, a magazine published by the American Geological Institute (AGI). Seeking to bridge the gap between the science and policy of climate change, AGI issued a policy statement on the subject. The statement began by saying that policy decisions must be based on the best available scientific information and that education is a key element. One of the main points is the importance of realizing that uncertainty is inherent to our understanding of complex natural systems and the need for further research. The policy statement does not say that uncertainty justifies action in the mitigation of our production of greenhouse gases and possible human influences.

This awareness of inherent uncertainty should result in a more balanced approach and help avoid the temptation to side with extremists' viewpoints. I agree with Mikhail Gorbachev that all extremes are the same.

—KENNETH C. SCHULTE,
Barstow, Calif.

Use of the Passive Voice

In response to David McGirr's criticism of Ted Morino's use of the passive voice (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*): David, before you criticize Mr. Morino, you need to learn the difference between "inference" and "implication."

In response to Eileen McGruder (Jan. 21 *World Tribune*): English is full of words adopted from other languages (in lieu of, blase, salsa, oy vey, to cite a few examples). This enriches a language and the minds of the people who speak that language. Many people find Japanese words and terminology delightful and appealing. Just remember, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is practiced in lots of countries, not just English-speaking ones! Sharing words is a good thing, not a bad thing.

—ELIZABETH COELLO,
New York City

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Weekly
Newspaper

General Director
Daniel Nagashima

Publisher
Fred M. Zaitsu
Assistant Publisher
Greg Martin
Editor in Chief
Ted Morino

Managing Editor
Margie Hall
mhall@sgi-usa.org

Associate Editor
Jeff Farr
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

Staff Writer
Stephanie Celano
scelano@sgi-usa.org

Contributing Writer
Terry Ellis

Contributing Artist
Stephanie Sydney
ssydney@sgi-usa.org

Staff Translators
Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi

Contributing Photographers
Gregory Nakasuiji
Kirk Condyles
Jonathan Wilson
Dixon Hamby

Photo Editor

Lisa Hollis
lisahollis@earthlink.net

Bureau Chiefs

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READERS COMMENTS

Send to:
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606 Wilshire Blvd. PO Box 1427
Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427
or e-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS
1-800-835-4558
or e-mail: SGISUBS@aol.com

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

Puerto Rico Rocks



Puerto Rico members enjoy the first SGI-USA Puerto Rico General Meeting at the community center in the capital city of San Juan, Feb. 26.



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima receives an honorary citizenship on behalf of SGI President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda from Mayor Carlos A López Rivera, at Dorado City Hall, Feb. 29.



Pioneer member Don Andres Noval receives flowers from General Director Nagashima for his dedication to Puerto Rican kosen-ruffi, Feb. 26.



Evelyn Rivera receives a certificate of appreciation from Mr. Nagashima, Feb. 26.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI

