



EXPERIENCE:
Neil Citrin achieves job stability by changing his self-centered tendencies.

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Victory in the Seattle Incident Trial

By **JEFF FARR**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Seattle Incident trial concluded on March 21 with a victory for the Soka Gakkai. The Tokyo District Court found the Soka Gakkai and SGI President Ikeda not guilty of libel, rejecting the defamation suit against them by High Priest Nikken Abe and Nichiren Shoshu. The suit, filed in December 1993, regarded coverage in Soka Gakkai publications of High Priest Nikken's March 1963 dispute with prostitutes over payment for services rendered and President Ikeda's references to the incident in speeches in 1992. The court ordered Nichiren Shoshu to pay for all of the trial's court costs.

The judge's decision not only exonerated the Soka Gakkai defense but clearly acknowledged



Hiroe Clow

that the Seattle Incident did occur. In a summary of his ruling, Chief Judge Fumio Shimoda wrote: "According to the evidence submitted in this case, the above-mentioned articles [published by the Soka Gakkai] refer to facts that are deemed to be in the public interest, and were written with the sole purpose of serving the public interest, and the

above-mentioned incident caused by Mr. Nikken Abe is recognized to be true. Therefore reports in the above-mentioned articles etc. do not contravene the law. No defendant is responsible for any illegal act."

The lengthy decision was devastating to High Priest Nikken's testimony, repeatedly calling his denials into question and concluding that the high priest did ask a prostitute if he could take nude pictures of her, did have sexual relations with her and did become involved in the disagreement over money. "After assessing four statements by Mr. Abe, we cannot trust his statements," the judge stated.

Thus ending the trial that came into being because the late Mrs. Hiroe Clow decided in 1992 to publish her account of the incident. She was called by Seattle police in the early morning

hours of March 20, 1963, to a downtown site where High Priest Nikken, then the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department leader, had been involved in the dispute. Mrs. Clow, an SGI-USA leader who had been assigned to assist the Study Department leader in the first-ever Gohonzon conferrals in that city, convinced the police to release him. Judge Shimoda described the statements of Mrs. Clow and three former police officers at the site of the incident as consistent and convincing.

After Mrs. Clow's story was published, High Priest Nikken publicly and in print called her a liar. In September 1992, she filed a libel suit against him in the Los Angeles Superior Court. It was eventually dismissed on jurisdictional grounds, never reaching the trial stage. Nichiren Shoshu then decided to sue the Soka

Gakkai and President Ikeda.

Although Nichiren Shoshu says it will appeal the March 21 decision, it may be difficult for High Priest Nikken to live down within the priesthood his August 1994 declaration that "if what Clow says is true, I will quit immediately. If that kind of thing is true, I can't be high priest."

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima commented on the trial's conclusion: "Finally, we have proven the truth of Mrs. Hiroe Clow's testimony and the justice of the SGI. This is all thanks to the members' sincere prayers." He expressed his hope that "with this precious opportunity, we further educate everyone about the truth of Nichiren Shoshu. I believe that now is the most important time to save people from the confusion that the priesthood is trying to create." **WT**

SGI-USA General Director Meets With Civil Rights Leaders in Atlanta

In the spirit of interfaith dialogue espoused by the SGI Charter, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima recently visited Atlanta to share the SGI-USA youth division's Victory Over Violence project with religious and civil rights leaders. On March 14, he met

with the Reverend G. H. Williams, a civil rights activist who fought alongside Martin Luther King Jr., at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King was co-pastor with his father. When asked how to eternalize the valuable lessons of the civil rights movement, the

Reverend Williams said that he never says the same thing twice to young people — teaching should be different from telling.

Later the same day, Mr. Nagashima met with Lawrence Edward Carter Sr., dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College,

King's alma mater. Dean Carter, who also fought alongside King, discussed for three hours with Mr. Nagashima how the mentor-and-disciple relationship has been integral to the entire history of nonviolence. Martin Luther King's mentor, Benjamin Elijah Mays, president of Morehouse

College when King was a student there, was the person who inspired King to study Mahatma Gandhi's movement for nonviolence, Dean Carter explained. Details of Dean Carter's talk with Mr. Nagashima will appear in the April 28 *World Tribune*. **WT**

Photo by YOSHI NAGAOKA



The Reverend G. H. Williams (center) meets with SGI-USA leaders (l-r) Phil Simpson, Cliff Sawyer, Richard Brown, Danny Nagashima, Ian McClraith and Yoshi Nagaoka at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. was co-pastor with his father, Martin Luther King Sr.



Lawrence Edward Carter Sr., dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College, with Atlanta Region Culture Department Leader Anne Ford.

SUA, Aliso Viejo Now Accepting Applications

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo has announced that it will accept its first applications beginning on May 3, 2000, for freshmen students entering in fall 2001. Applications and a new brochure may be obtained online at www.soka.edu; by email at admission@soka.edu; by phone at (949) 389-9500; by fax at (949) 362-3775; or by mail at Soka University, Aliso Viejo, 85 Argonaut, Suite 200, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656.

SUA, AV's beautiful 103-acre site in Southern California was purchased in 1995 and is located about halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego. (That is about 90 miles south of Soka University, Calabasas, SUA's first campus founded in 1987. SUA, Calabasas will continue to offer a

master's program in second and foreign language education and an intensive ESL program.)

Soka University, Aliso Viejo will open with only 100 freshmen students, with a majority expected to be from the United States and other Pacific Basin countries. SUA, AV will initially offer students a four-year Liberal Arts degree, with concentrations in Humanities, International Studies or Social and Behavioral Sciences. SUA will have a 5:1 student/faculty ratio the first year (changing to 9:1 as the campus grows), and most classes will be small, with an emphasis on dialogue. Eventually, Soka University, Aliso Viejo expects to grow to 1,200 students.

SUA, AV's Liberal Arts degree offers students the opportunity to explore and study

a broad range of subjects while developing critical thinking and writing skills. SUA's graduation requirements will include 14 courses in General Education, which include Writing Seminar, Methods of Inquiry Across Disciplines, Mathematics, Science (2), The American Experience, Introduction to the Pacific Basin, Creative Arts, World Art or World Literature, World Religions, World History, and Health and Physical Fitness (3). SUA, AV students will also take four Core Curriculum classes (one each year), including: Perspectives on an Individual Human Life, The Individual and the Natural Environment, The Individual and Society and Global Issues in Peace, Culture and Education.

Students will also take four

Learning Clusters, in which small interdisciplinary teams of students and faculty will work together to develop proposals and solutions addressing local, regional and world issues. This work will foster research, analytical and creative skills, while modeling community service in action. The specific subjects of these Clusters will vary with the interests and skills of the students and faculty involved.

In addition, all students will have a special emphasis in a foreign language, choices including Spanish, Chinese or Japanese initially. Students already proficient in one of these languages may choose a third language or a series of courses in advanced language and culture, including courses in English literature. Every student will then participate in a semester of intern-

ship/study abroad in a foreign country in which the chosen language of study is a principal language spoken. (Students from Japan may choose to do their internship/study in the United States to further their English studies.)

Upon opening, the Aliso Viejo campus will feature 18 buildings, including academic buildings, a library, residence halls (all students live on campus), a student center and recreation center with basketball, volleyball, racquetball, dance floor, weight training and exercise facilities. SUA will also have an Olympic-size swimming pool, athletic fields for soccer, baseball and softball, ceramic, painting and photography studios, music practice rooms and a two-story art gallery. **WT**

Frequently Asked Questions About SUA

1) When can I apply to SUA, Aliso Viejo for admission? What are the deadlines?

SUA's application for admission to the first class in 2001 will be ready this April 2, 2000! SUA will accept applications beginning May 3, 2000. Students can apply for either early admission or regular admission, and these are the deadlines:

May 3, 2000: Early admission applications accepted

Oct. 15, 2000: Last day to apply for early admission

Dec. 15, 2000: Early admission acceptances announced

Jan. 15, 2001: Last day to apply for regular admission

March 15, 2001: Regular admission acceptances announced

Students not accepted for early admission will automatically be considered for regular admission.

2) How can I get an application?

There are four ways to get an application:

a) Go to SUA's web page at www.soka.edu/av/admission

b) E-mail us at admission@soka.edu and request one.

c) Call SUA at (888) 600-SOKA or (949) 389-9500 or fax us at (949) 362-3775 and request one.

d) Write to Soka University,

Aliso Viejo, 85 Argonaut, Suite 200, Aliso Viejo, CA, 92656 and request one.

3) What are the requirements for admission to SUA, Aliso Viejo?

SUA, Aliso Viejo carefully considers a number of criteria without a rigid emphasis on any one factor in particular. Applicants are evaluated on the following:

- High school record
- Extracurricular activities or special talents
- Written personal statement
- Recommendations
- Telephone interview
- SAT I or ACT scores (optional for international students)
- TOEFL score (international students)

All applicants to SUA must have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. Students should have completed a college preparatory program. Applicants who graduate from high schools outside the United States or its territories should have completed a similar high school program that would also qualify them for college and university entrance in their own country. Fluency in English, including listening and speaking, is essential since SUA, Aliso Viejo offers no courses in English as

a Second Language (ESL).

4) What is the TOEFL score I must achieve before I can be admitted to SUA, Aliso Viejo?

If English is not your native language, you must submit official results of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The minimum TOEFL score for your application to be considered by SUA is 500 on the paper-based test or 173 on the new computer-based test. Applicants are recommended, but not required, to take the Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE). Both tests are administered by the Educational Testing Service, which also administers the TOEFL exam. An applicant may be granted admission to SUA, Aliso Viejo contingent upon satisfactorily increasing his/her proficiency in English in the year prior to actual enrollment on campus.

5) Does SUA, Aliso Viejo have an entrance exam like they do in Japan that you must pass before you can be accepted?

No.

6) How much does it cost to attend SUA, Aliso Viejo? Is there financial aid?

For the 2001-02 academic year, the cost will be \$24,000, which will include tuition, room and board. SUA is firmly com-

mitted to assisting students, both national and international, who could not otherwise afford to attend. SUA will provide financial assistance on the basis of need to admitted students. We do not consider your ability to pay in our admission selection process. The admission application contains details on how to apply for financial aid.

7) What majors and academic programs will SUA, Aliso Viejo offer?

With its first class of 100 freshmen, SUA will offer the Bachelor of Arts degree with a single major in Liberal Arts within which students will pick one of these three concentrations: Humanities, International Studies or Social and Behavioral Studies. In addition to these concentrations, students will find that their curriculum contains a broad range of general education courses, a language curriculum, our Core Curriculum and Learning Cluster courses, in which students learn to research global issues and to propose reasoned solutions to them. SUA's academic program includes an internship/study abroad, in which all students spend a semester in a country where the language they studied at SUA is a principal language spoken. More details can be found on our SUA web page at www.soka.edu.

8) What will a typical class be like at Soka University, Aliso Viejo?

SUA will open with a 5:1 student/faculty ratio. (This will grow to 9:1 as the university matures.) Most classes will be small, seminar-style classes centered on dialogue. Students will study both Western and Eastern perspectives across the curriculum.



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9) Will I be able to continue on to graduate school with the Bachelor in Liberal Arts I earn from SUA? Will SUA prepare me for medical school or graduate work in the sciences or other fields?

Yes. Some graduate programs (like medical school, science or math) require more courses in their discipline than you will be able to take at SUA. However, with academic counseling by SUA faculty advisors, students can identify these required extra courses and enroll in them at a nearby college. These additional classes may need to be taken in the summer or in the evening, but classes required for graduate school will be provided by SUA at no additional cost to students. Other graduate programs (such as in law, psychology, sociology) will not require any additional courses. Students interested in graduate study will work closely with a faculty advisor to ensure they meet the requirements to apply to graduate school.

10) Is SUA accredited? Will it be accredited by the time I graduate?

Soka University of America has received Institutional Approval from the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, permitting SUA to grant the Bachelor of Arts degree at the Aliso Viejo campus and the Master's degree at the Calabasas campus. SUA will seek accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in May, when it files its Application for Candidacy for Accreditation. The complete accreditation process takes several years. If Aliso Viejo students graduate before SUA is accredited and wish to pursue graduate study, they may do so by working closely with SUA faculty advisors to provide the necessary information to the chosen graduate school.

11) Will SUA, Aliso Viejo have required religion courses in its curriculum?

All SUA students will take one required course in comparative world religions in their



Construction on the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus is progressing steadily.

freshman year. SUA's curriculum is non-sectarian.

12) Do I need to be a Buddhist or an SGI member to attend SUA, Aliso Viejo?

No. SUA is open to students of all nationalities and beliefs.

13) Will the arts play a major role in SUA, Aliso Viejo student life? Will I have the opportunity to participate in fine and performing arts?

SUA will not offer a degree in the arts. All students will take one class in studio arts. SUA faculty will also support student desires to develop in these areas outside of class time through focused clubs and other student activities. SUA has facilities for ceramics, sculpture, photography, digital photography, computer graphics, printmaking, painting, drawing, individual music study, ensemble, chorus, band and electronic music. Our recreation center

has a wood, sprung-floor aerobics and dance room.

14) Will SUA have team sports? What kind of sports? Will there be athletic competition? Will you be an NCAA Division III team?

SUA will have both an intramural and an inter-collegiate competitive team sports program. Although SUA's sports offerings will be limited initially, we will determine which sports to support our first year by listening to our students' desires once they are accepted. SUA has recreation facilities and athletic fields that will support soccer, softball, baseball, tennis, volleyball, water polo, swimming, basketball, racquetball, aerobics, dancing, badminton and weight training. SUA also has exercise equipment and adjacent cross-country running trails.

Surrounding communities provide opportunities for ice skating, ice hockey, sailing, scuba diving, windsurfing, surfing, kayaking, rowing, fencing, golf and horseback riding. When SUA reaches an enrollment of 200-300, we will apply to join our Southern California NCAA division III conference. Until that time, SUA will remain independent and will compete with neighboring colleges and universities outside of a conference structure.

15) Are all the faculty and staff at SUA SGI members?

No. SUA's faculty and staff have been selected based upon their professional ability, their desire to put the development and happiness of students first, and upon their character and heart.

16) What kinds of jobs are open to students with a Lib-


eral Arts degree?

Liberal Arts graduates are employed in a wide variety of fields. Many educators have begun to recognize a trend in the United States in which corporations and other employers are increasingly looking toward hiring Liberal Arts graduates. Such graduates can absorb and use new information while working and communicating well within a teamwork environment. A Liberal Arts degree, such as SUA's, with a strong emphasis on breadth of learning, on written communication and on the ability to create value within a sea of change and diversity, is becoming the hallmark of a quality education.

17) I want to support Soka University of America. How can I do this?

SUA has started the SUA Millennium Scholarship Endowment to help qualified students attend both SUA campuses (Calabasas and Aliso Viejo). These scholarships will be awarded to admitted students on the basis of need. Contributions to this fund become a permanent legacy to future students, because only the interest from the endowment is used every year for student scholarships. Contributions may be sent to:

**Soka University Millennium Scholarship Endowment
85 Argonaut, Suite 200
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656**

Donors wishing to contribute to the SUA Operating Endowment (to assist with the operation and maintenance of the university) or to the SUA Capital Fund (to help build future academic, residential and performing arts buildings) may address their designated gifts to the same address. 



Eric Hauber, vice president of academic affairs at SUA, Aliso Viejo talks with students.

EXPERIENCE — NEIL CITRIN, LOS ANGELES

Victory Through Persistence

A former 'starving artist,' Neil Citrin changed his arrogant and self-centered tendencies through his Buddhist practice, and 'evolved into a capable professional, able to respect others.'

Until 1974, my senior year of high school, I didn't know what direction my life would take. That changed with one class. For one of my projects, I had the option of writing a story, and the experience hooked me. I knew I would devote my life to the arts.

Despite attaining a double bachelor's degree in journalism and English in 1980, my life steadily deteriorated. Maintaining a job and an apartment proved difficult. By the time I was introduced to the Daishonin's Buddhism in 1984, I was scraping by as a courier on the graveyard shift. Over the next six years, I hung onto my dream through a number of ups and downs.

In 1990, this began to change. In February of that year, SGI President Ikeda arrived in the United States for a historic visit that would dramatically transform our organization and my life.

Amid health problems and a precarious financial situation, I participated nonstop during those two weeks. At the end of that time, I returned to my daily life. Nothing had changed. I was several months behind rent and my utilities had been turned off, as had my phone. I knew that if I didn't change something in my attitude and develop a career, I would need to move to my folks' home in Phoenix. I considered that a defeat, but the thought of pursuing a regular job distressed me. After all, I was a writer, an artist. I believed society owed me a living.

Still, President Ikeda's encouragement in his recent visit rang in my thoughts like a warning bell: "Please advance steadily with the awareness that you are building a foundation for the next thousand years..."

and "...life is like a marathon, as is faith. Though you may lose the lead in the middle of the race, victory or defeat is decided at the finish line..." (*Seikyo Times*, March 1990, p. 9).

Tired of being a starving artist, I decided to find a profession in which I would feel comfortable. That weekend (the middle of March), I settled down to chant and I realized that, other than in front of my typewriter, I was most comfortable in a library. With that as my new focus, I continued to chant. On breaks I scoured the papers and laid out my plans.

The next day I phoned the companies I had selected. I went on seven interviews and, by the time I got home, I had four job offers. One was in the library field and, though it paid slightly less than a couple of the other positions, I chose it.

Despite that victory, I continued to struggle. Though I intellectually recognized my arrogance in supposing society owed me a living, changing that mindset proved far more difficult. Employers recognized my attitude, and I bounced from job to job. Living situations changed as well, though not as frequently as in the earlier years of my practice.

In the middle of this struggle, one of my friends in faith observed that I spent too much time dreaming of what I wanted to do. Cracks, potholes and other obstacles marred the path in front of me. If I only looked into the future and didn't pay attention to the path immediately in front of me, I would constantly trip and fall on my face.

At this point, I also focused on Nichiren Daishonin's writings, particularly this passage from "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime": "Unless one perceives the nature of one's life, one's practice will become an endless, painful austerity" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

It appeared my life was heading in this direction, so I took both pieces of advice and, in early 1992, renewed my determination to pursue both of my professions.

A few months later, I survived a near-death experience. I had developed gallstones that became infected, then gangrenous. Because I didn't have medical coverage, I had ig-

nored the warning signs—pain that often lasted for hours and completely incapacitated me. The final attack occurred in early August, one week after medical coverage for my customer service job went into effect. This convinced me that my SGI activities and chanting had saved my life, and that I was

steadily changing my fortune.

Even though I drifted through several more job changes, I continued to fight for my dreams. I entered San Jose State's School of Library and Information Science, Fullerton program, in 1993, then moved to San Jose in 1995 to finish the program there.

The two years in San Jose were difficult, but I persevered. When I returned to Los Angeles, master's in hand, I thought I now had it made. Once again, however, the universe decided I needed more challenges.

I spent a year living with a friend "crashing" on his couch, and bounced from temp job to temp job. Though I interviewed for a variety of library jobs, primarily at universities and colleges, I could never get the position.

Finally, after a talk with another friend, I began to chant for a position in my field without limiting myself to academia. After a few forays, I focused my search for librarian positions in Southern California.

One interview I set up in January 1999 was with the city of Los Angeles. This was a civil service position, with the interview weighted at 100 percent. The score determined where a person ranked on a hiring list; those who placed too far down rarely got a call. Two years earlier I had interviewed with them and scored 70 percent, the fourth level down.

In preparation for this second interview, I chanted a lot.

Chanting revealed to me, for the first time, my lack of confidence in myself and my ability to function in this position. I had failed at so many jobs, and I felt that I would fail here too. Contrary to my pretensions of artistic arrogance, I felt that I didn't deserve to win. But through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the days leading up to that interview, I changed. I knew that I did deserve this job.

To further prepare, I used the World Wide Web and found lists of questions asked at professional librarian interviews. I also decided to improve my wardrobe. Dressing for success had never been my strong point, but I needed to eliminate any reason for an interviewer to reject me. On the day of the interview, I decided to relax, be natural and inject humor.

I felt, after the interview, that I had done well, that I had improved on my previous score. When the result arrived a week later, I had to double-check the number: I had scored a 99! Not only did this put me in the top echelon, I was the top candidate.

Within a week I received a call from the head of library personnel. Normally, he said, they wait until they have all the paperwork together before they call a candidate with a job offer. They were so impressed with me that they didn't want me to get away and called early. I accepted the position of adult librarian at Venice Library, 15 minutes by car from where I live.

Since the day I started, April 12 of last year, my passion for this job has increased. Part of this is due to the varied intellectually stimulating environment. I have numerous responsibilities from helping to select items our branch will purchase, to arranging author readings. I also teach beginning Internet classes. Another reason is that I actually enjoy working in the public sphere—quite an admission from someone who started to chant as an arrogant, elitist, anarchist writer. Finally I work in an environment where my co-workers and boss respect me.

The writing continues, of course. In the last year, two of my poems were published in local journals. I've written four screenplays and I am currently at work on my second novel.

In the past I focused on my writing at the expense of my job. Now my two professions complement each other.

Reflecting on this experience, 10 years after President Ikeda's historic visit, I see clearly how my life has changed. From being a person who was arrogant and self-centered, yet lacking in confidence, I evolved into a capable professional able to respect others. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, with studying the writings of Nichiren Daishonin and President Ikeda's encouragement as support, I will continue along that path toward my future, one step at a time. **WT**

Photo by MARTIN COHEN



Neil Citrin's passion for his job as adult librarian is ever-increasing.

EXPERIENCE — DAVE GOODMAN, SICKLERVILLE, N.J.

Stepping Up to the Plate

By CLAUDE LOMDEN
PHILADELPHIA

If you've seen the hit movie The Sixth Sense, then you've seen SGI-USA Philadelphia Region's young men's leader. Dave Goodman appears briefly in the scene in which the boy with the sixth sense, Cole, played by Haley Joel Osment, takes his psychiatrist, played by Bruce Willis, to the home of a family in which one of two daughters has just died. Her father is given a videotape by the boy and the father watches the tape — in joy and then sudden horror — as he learns the truth about her death.

No doubt you are focused on the father, but Dave Goodman appears to the left of the father, and although he has no speaking lines, he is photographed at close distance so that he is easily recognizable. Dave has also acted in the movies Snake Eyes and Philadelphia Diary.

I talked to Dave about his practice of Nichiren Daisshonin's Buddhism, family and career.

In person, you notice Dave right away. He has an actor's charismatic, charming look. His face lights up when he smiles or laughs. But as I talked to him, I could not detect any of the typical vanity or egocentricity common to many actors.

WT: How long have you been practicing Nichiren Daisshonin's Buddhism? What is important to you about your practice?

Dave Goodman: When I look back on the past 23 years of my Buddhist practice, I truly see how fortunate I've been. My mother first told me about chanting in 1974 and I started practicing in 1976. Throughout my practice, the one message that men's and women's members have tried to make very clear was, "Faith equals daily life." All the meetings, all the activities, all the conventions meant nothing if we didn't show actual proof in our daily lives. I heard this many times, but didn't really put this concept into practice.

WT: What happened to change this? How does this relate to your career as an actor?

Goodman: After graduating from high school, I went from one job to another, and deep

down, I dreamed of being an actor but didn't have the courage to embrace this dream. In 1988, one of my women's leaders, realizing my struggles and sensing my frustrations, shared SGI President Ikeda's guidance that you have to give 100 percent wherever you are because you never know where that road will lead you. When I got a job at a telemarketing center, I determined that even though I didn't know where this job would lead me, I was going to make a stand and become the best employee there.

Every morning, during gongyo, I determined to win at my job and be a great employee. Within six months I was promoted to a trainer, then supervisor, then shift manager. Then the company offered me a significant raise to run a shift that was having serious production, attendance and discipline problems. Within two weeks of taking over this shift, it had made a total turnaround and was outperforming the other two shifts. Within two years I was promoted to call center manager.

Although I was having success, I was feeling empty inside. I received guidance, and began chanting to pursue my dream. As soon as I began taking acting classes, I realized that this is where I belong. I learned that basing my life on the Lotus Sutra and the Gohonzon can only lead to happiness. Performing at Freedom Theater, where I had enrolled, reawakened a dream I'd had inside for years, and it is also where I met my wonderful wife.

WT: Was this the beginning of your performing career?

Goodman: No. I worked at a consulting firm, which took up too much of my time — 12 to 15 hours a day and sometimes six or seven days a week. I did not know how I could earn a living with acting or modeling. So, I decided that I would become a teacher. After discussing this with my wife and chanting about it, I determined to get a college degree in education. I could then pursue the theater at night. My SGI training had taught me to do my best in everything. I was on the dean's list every semester.

My wife and I still needed extra money. She suggested that because I have "a certain look," I should send my picture to places that were doing videos

and that this would take less time than rehearsing in theater night after night. Eventually, my headshots made their way to local talent agencies, and an agent immediately began sending me on auditions for corporate videos and local TV commercial work.

Of course, all the while, I continued doing activities for kosen-rufu, including Soka Group and participating in district activities. So much work came in that during my second year of college, I knew I had to make a decision: either finish college or begin taking all of these jobs and throw myself into this new career.

I chanted a lot, searching for an answer inside of myself that I knew must be there. I didn't have the courage to acknowledge it. Then I read a line from the writings of Nichiren Daisshonin that struck me in a way it never had before. It summed up everything: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward." My wife said, "You've always wanted to be an actor." Well, here was the opportunity, and I just needed to step up to the plate and at least take a swing at it.

So I did. I've been a professionally paid actor for the past three years and plan to keep swinging at it. Sometimes I strike out, sometimes I hit a single. I might even make it to second base. I know one thing, I'll keep on swinging until I start smacking home runs every time I step up to the plate.

WT: How do you balance everything? If your Buddhist practice is the foundation for everything, and you're happily married, and you have a 3-year-old daughter, and you're the region young men's leader, which means a lot of SGI activities, how do you do everything without shortchanging anything?

Goodman: I sought guidance from a young men's leader before I got married as to how to be a good husband. He encouraged me to always strive to earn the respect of my wife. Based on this, I've always tried to balance out everything in my life, because that is the only way she would respect me! I've always tried, no matter how hectic my schedule is, to spend time with my wife and daughter.

Even though my wife knows how important work and the SGI

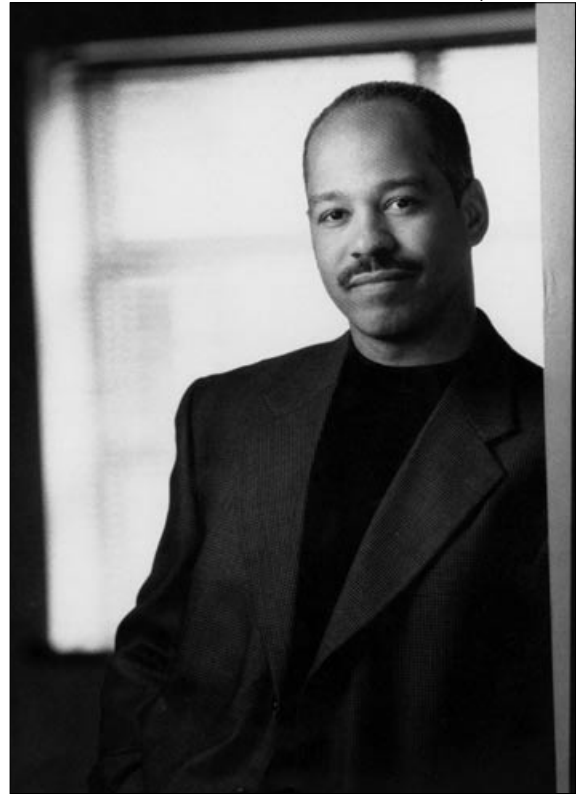


Photo by PAUL SIROCHMAN

Dave Goodman strives to achieve balance in every realm of his life.

are to me, she also knows how important my family is as well. I have always tried to put President Ikeda's guidance that faith manifests in daily life into practice.

WT: How much do you think your Buddhist practice has affected all of these areas of your life — your marriage, your daughter, your career — your sense of well-being?

Goodman: When I look at my life, I see how fortunate I am, and my fortune is a direct result of my Buddhist practice. I am convinced of this. I also feel that I have a deeper mission than just being a successful actor. Helping others to overcome their sufferings becomes more and more important to me as time goes on. Sometimes it is hard to reach out to others, and sometimes it's easy, but this is the way to achieve kosen-rufu. I know that my training during my youth has been a time for me to "build a solid foundation of faith," as President Ikeda says. From this solid foundation, I can accomplish my dreams.

At the age of 33, I am deter-

mined to continue to embrace the few years I have left in the youth division so that when I graduate, I can be one of the pilots, as all the SGI members are, of kosen-rufu. **WT**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 27 SPEECH — PART 2

OUR PRIME POINT IS HELPING OTHERS

'To bring hope to those suffering the most, to devote oneself to helping those experiencing the greatest hardship, to thoroughly fight against injustices that trample on the sincerity of good, honest, decent people — this, I want to reconfirm, is the Soka Gakkai's prime point,' SGI President Ikeda says.

Part 2 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.

My mentor in life, Josei Toda, often used to say: "Becoming happy ourselves is nothing. It's easy. The essence of faith, however, is to help others become happy as well."

He also said, with great conviction: "I will die only after I have accomplished everything I have to do. What is that? To help those who are poor and sick and suffering. That is why I continue to loudly proclaim the validity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism."

To bring hope to those suffering the most, to devote oneself to helping those experiencing the greatest hardship, to thoroughly fight against injustices that trample on the sincerity of good, honest, decent people — this, I want to reconfirm, is the Soka Gakkai's prime point. It must be transmitted without deviation into the 21st century.

Fight with the spirit that Kansai is No. 1! The Kansai spirit is the Gakkai spirit. I want Kansai to burn brightly with this spirit and set an example for all our members in Japan and around the world!

A person who speaks out is a messenger of the Buddha.

I want to share another wonderful statement by General José de San Martín, one of the great leaders of Latin American independence: "Ten men

who cry out make more noise than a hundred thousand who are silent." As we say in Buddhism, "The voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zen-shu*, p. 708).

A person who speaks out is a messenger of the Buddha. The Buddhist law of cause and effect is strict. If we don't speak out for truth and justice now, Buddhism teaches that we may be reborn in a lowly, intimidated state of life — like that of a frog transfixed before a snake, a small bird preyed upon by a hawk, a mouse hunted by a cat. So let us fight against the enemies of Buddhism! Let us speak out for justice and truth!

I have fought and spoken out alone, not depending on anyone. And while bearing the full brunt of all attacks and slander, I have rigorously protected the Soka Gakkai.

If we let evil people triumph, we will be enslaved.

San Martín also says, "Divided we will be enslaved; united, our victory is assured." This is similar to a statement made by the Daishonin. [The Daishonin writes: "Even an individual at cross purposes with himself is certain to end in failure. Yet a hundred or even a thousand people can definitely attain their goal, if they are of one mind" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 618).] Mr. Toda often said the same thing. If we let evil people triumph, we will be enslaved.

There are those who have gained recognition and comfortable lives thanks to the Soka Gakkai and have then become arrogant and corrupt, finally leaving the organization and stirring up trouble for it. We can never forgive their treachery, nor can we ever let ourselves be defeated by their schemes. We must triumph in this fight for right.

Let us rise above those who have joined Nikken in committing grave slander of the Law and, as a great force of compassion, advance boldly into the future.

Great people are invariably envied and attacked.

Women are strong. Juana Manso, a 19th-century Argentine teacher and educator, stood up and fought bravely against the dictatorship of her day. She campaigned for the spread and reform of education. She made



SGI President Ikeda receives an honorary doctorate from Universidad Nacional del Nordeste Rector Adolfo Torres, Feb. 27.

a special effort to expose the Argentinean people to good books and good writing. [In addition to founding a school, Manso established a library to which she donated her entire collection. She traveled around Argentina giving lectures encouraging people to read. From her youth, she also wrote novels and is known as the "Argentine George Sand."]

Manso cried out: "The people must be freed from the shameful chains of ignorance, the most disgraceful form of slavery of all, for it harms our humanity and perverts the destiny of humankind." This is absolutely true. Nevertheless, unscrupulous, envious forces insulted, attacked and defamed this noble woman.

How did she react? She only raised her voice louder and continued to call for truth and justice undeterred.

Great people are invariably envied and attacked. We must always be aware of this. People are persecuted precisely because of their justness and integrity. We could perhaps call this unvarying formula the inescapable destiny of humanity.

For we live in a realm governed by the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. That is why we must protect and fight for the persecuted. Despite this being the case, there are those afraid of being persecuted, who cunningly try to hide in the shadows of great people. You must absolutely not become that sort

of cowardly person.

Manso was not afraid. She did not despair. She was prepared to fight and die for her beliefs. She won an immensely profound spiritual victory and was a towering champion of the spirit.

Speaking out with a lion's roar — this is the Gakkai spirit.

An international floral exhibition will be held on the island of Awajishima — the center of the Great Hanshin Earthquake — starting in March. What a wonderful idea this is! I am sure it will be a highlight of spring 2000. [At the request of the exhibition's planning committee, selected photographs from the exhibition "Dialogue with Nature — Photographs by Daisaku Ikeda" will be displayed.] Are there any members here from Awajishima? Thank you for coming!

The earthquake was a terrible, terrible disaster. I have heard in detail the great hardships all of you have gone through.

Speaking of flowers, José Ingenieros of Argentina says, "Through the power of artistic education, let us bring to beautiful and luxuriant bloom the most wonderful flower in the universe: humankind." Ingenieros was active at about the same time as the Soka Gakkai's founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. A renowned doctor and educator, Ingenieros loved young people. Mr. Makiguchi's value-creating education was also designed to

bring the precious life of each individual into full bloom.

When my wife was a child, she had an opportunity to meet Mr. Makiguchi. He once even spoke at a discussion meeting at her house. Though Mr. Makiguchi was being observed by the Special Higher Police — Japan's wartime thought police — he was unafraid and continued to speak out with a powerful lion's roar, boldly refuting the erroneous and revealing the true.

The seed of warm encouragement that Mr. Makiguchi planted in a young girl's heart those many years ago has bloomed into a radiant flower today.

Speaking out with a lion's roar — this is the Gakkai spirit. You must all confront injustice with this same lion's roar!

In his famous speech on March 16, 1958, when he passed on the baton of kosen-rufu to the youth, Mr. Toda proclaimed, "The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world!"

On another occasion, he declared: "When I die, I have to go to work for kosen-rufu on some other planet in this vast universe. I will leave the kosen-rufu of the Earth to my disciples."

Buddhist philosophy expounds an infinite, unbounded view of life and the universe that embraces all space and time.

All the Buddha's words are true. The Daishonin's Buddhism allows us to attain a vast state of life that embraces the entire universe. Buddhism

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Indestructible Happiness

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism allows us to attain a vast state of life that embraces the entire universe. Buddhism teaches that a life-moment encompasses 3,000 realms. Therefore, at any given moment, we can be in the world of Hell or the world of Buddhahood, experience a life-state of suffering or one of immense happiness and joy, depending on our mind, our determination in faith. Faith is the foundation for establishing our lives on an eternal course to happiness. Everything that has form is eventually destroyed, but faith is never destroyed. And if faith is never destroyed, neither is happiness. These are indestructible.

- 1) "A vast state of life that embraces the entire universe" — what does this mean to you? Do you think that you have experienced it?
- 2) Have you experienced how your life-state can change? When have you experienced Hell? How did you get out of it? And when have you experienced Buddhahood?
- 3) Do you think you have a tendency toward one of the Ten Worlds? When you get stuck in it, do you recognize it immediately? How do you get out of it?
- 4) SGI President Ikeda suggests that even when we die, our faith and happiness cannot be destroyed. What do you think of this? Why do you think he's emphasizing this point?

SGI President Ikeda's March 16 Poems

SGI President Ikeda composed the following poems in commemoration of March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, and dedicated them to all members with this message: "I am praying for the development and energetic endeavors of my noble disciples who will carry on the work of kosen-rufu."

*Gazing up at a snow-cloaked Mt. Fuji,
Courageous youth gathered spiritedly
Around their mentor.*



*On this auspicious date —
March 16 —
We eternally remember
The history of the Soka Gakkai.*



*Leaders of mission and firm resolve!
Demonstrate brilliant leadership
For kosen-rufu!*

—In celebration of March 16



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teaches that a life-moment encompasses 3,000 realms. Therefore, at any given moment, we can be in the world of Hell or the world of Buddhahood, experience a life-state of suffering or one of immense happiness and joy, depending on our mind, our determination in faith. Faith is the foundation for establishing our lives on an eternal course to happiness. Everything that has form is eventually destroyed, but faith is never destroyed. And if faith is never destroyed, neither is happiness. These are indestructible.

For example, though you may be suffering financially right now, if you open the door to good fortune, you can achieve a state of life in which you never need want for anything. Through exerting yourself in faith, each day you are accumulating eternal good fortune in the "bank" in the inner depths of your life.

Let us make the suns of our lives rise afresh each day.

Let us form an exciting alliance of communication and exchange with the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste as part of our great alliance of like minds encircling our green Earth! [The Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Argentina, conferred an honorary doctorate on SGI President Ikeda at this meeting.]

The symbol of the Argentine university is a bright, shining

sun. As comrades of this esteemed school, let us make the suns of our lives, brimming with boundless wisdom and energy, rise afresh each day. And let us determine together today that, as we shine our light on friends everywhere, we will cause "human flowers" fragrant with happiness, fulfillment and victory to bloom in profusion

the world over!

I hope the members of Kobe and all of Hyogo Prefecture will continue to advance with the awareness and sense of responsibility that they are the center of Japan.

In closing, I pray for the continued successful endeavors and good health of Universidad Nacional del Nordeste Rector

Aldolfo Torres and Mrs. Torres, and the other distinguished guests present today. I also pray for the lasting peace, security and prosperity of Northeastern Argentina, home of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, as well as of the respective regions in which each of you is nobly carrying out your mission.

Muchas gracias! WT

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 3-4

Members of Nagaoka Chapter rush to the aid of their fellow members stranded in a train in the snow with hundreds of rice balls and miso soup.

As night fell on Jan. 24, the 900 Niigata and Uetsu members stranded in a train in the snow grew increasingly anxious. Hunger began to overtake them. They had no water to drink either. Some went outside and ate snow to quench their thirst. The train cars were heated, but the cold still cut to the bone. Though they tried, no one could really sleep. Thinking of their work or their young children or sick family members waiting at home kept them awake with worry.

Many of the leaders, however, rather than dwell on their own situations, were more concerned about those members in their groups whose families were not practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. They worried what those family members would now think if the return of their loved ones from a trip to the head temple was delayed for several days.

Every once in a while, an infant's cry would pierce the silence and echo through the car, making everyone feel even more helpless. Mothers had already exhausted their supplies of diapers, and they tried to comfort their babies in muffled voices.

At the same time, Nagaoka Chapter members were franti-

cally preparing food for the stranded passengers. When Nagaoka Chapter Leader Masashi Takekawa asked them that evening to make rice balls for the 900 nine members stuck at Miyauchi Station without food, some 50 local members quickly got to work.

Actually, more than 500 Nagaoka Chapter members had visited the head temple at the same time as the Niigata and Uetsu members. They had left a day later, however, so that when they reached Ueno Station in Tokyo on their return trip, their chartered train to Nagaoka had already been suspended. They were put up in Soka Gakkai facilities and other lodgings throughout Tokyo until trains began running again.

Because of this, the majority of the active members of Nagaoka Chapter weren't back yet; and those who had returned had pressing matters of their own to attend to, such as clearing snow from their roofs and around their homes. When these remaining members thought of their fellow members being stuck on a train in the snow, though, they set their own problems aside. Grabbing a quick bite to eat, they busily got to work cooking as



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

much rice as they could and making rice balls. All the members participated in preparing the food. They were in such a hurry that they didn't even let the rice cool. With their palms turning red from the heat, they just kept making more rice balls, cooling their hands with water as they went.

When they finished, they placed the rice balls in whatever containers they could find, wrapped them in cloth for carrying, and made their way on foot through the blizzard night to Miyauchi Station.

With close to 7 feet of snowfall, neither automobiles nor bicycles could be used. The Nagaoka members put on high boots, tying the tops tightly with chords or strings to keep the snow out, and then carried their loads of rice balls in their arms or on their backs. Wading through snow up to their chests, their breath making white puffs in the cold night air, they pressed forward as if swimming. In some places, the snow was so high that it reached the tops of telephone poles, and they had to climb over the wires as they made their way. Some of them slipped and fell. But all were careful to protect their precious cargo of rice balls.

Most of the Nagaoka Chapter members lived near Na-

gaoka Station. Miyauchi Station was about 1.8 miles away, a trip that under normal circumstances would have taken 40 or 50 minutes on foot—at night in this blizzard, it took from 90 minutes to two hours.

The arrangement was that everyone would bring the rice balls they had made to the home of a member who lived near Miyauchi Station. This member owned a fish shop and also did catering, so there was a fair supply of large pots and pans, and bowls there. Some 20 members had gathered there and were making miso soup.

When all the rice balls had been collected, the Nagaoka members carried them to the train that sat immobile at the station. By now it was around 11:00 at night.

In the train car where Niigata Chapter Leader Kinji Eda was seated, the enthusiastic voice of a young men's division member in the Traffic Control Group rang out: "Everyone, members from Nagaoka Chapter have brought us some rice balls. There is also hot miso soup. We're going to start passing the food out now!"

The members' faces, until now glum with exhaustion and hunger, suddenly brightened. They broke into cheers and applause.

A Nagaoka Chapter women's division member entered the car

and began doling out rice balls and soup. Snow had accumulated on her head and shoulders, and the palms of her hands were red, no doubt from making rice balls with the hot rice.

The delicious aroma of the piping hot miso soup filled the car.

"Please eat the soup while it's still hot!" she urged. The members blew on their soup to cool it and sipped it slowly from the bowl.

When the food had all been distributed, the woman from Nagaoka said: "I know how hard this must be for all of you, but please hang in there. We will do everything we can to support you. If there's anything you need, please don't hesitate to ask!"

The eyes of the members were moist with tears. They knew that, in such a heavy snowfall, these people had their hands full just trying to protect their homes. Yet the Nagaoka members were caring for them, people from other chapters, making not only rice balls but also miso soup—and delivering this food in the midst of a blizzard. Their tremendous kindness deeply touched the hearts of the snowbound Niigata and Uetsu members.



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

EXPERIENCE — RUTH GALLOGLY, NEW YORK

Finding the Power To Direct Her Life

Ruth Gallogly faces her fears and suffering through her Buddhist practice and finds her voice as a writer.

I would like to dedicate this experience to Lydia Fort, who spent three years introducing me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and another eight months after that supporting me on the journey from sporadic chanter to fully practicing member. And, for all her encouragement ever since.

I began practicing this Buddhism in March 1998. At that time, I was working for a demanding and difficult boss while attending graduate school for creative writing part time at New York University. Since my job required lots of overtime and was emotionally demanding, I was not left with much time or energy to concentrate on my studies. I decided that I'd need to leave my job and take out student loans in order to really concentrate on my degree.

At the same time I came to this decision, I attended the March World Peace Prayer meeting with my good friend and then co-worker Lydia Fort. I'd gone to Buddhist meetings with her for years and enjoyed myself, but had never expressed a desire to chant. The truth was, I was afraid of it. However, the experiences at this meeting really hit home for me, and I decided that I should try chanting myself.

That September I left my job and started school full time. While I did chant, I chanted sporadically, basically when I needed something, had a free minute or felt I needed a little extra support from the environment. I was enrolled in a yearlong novel-writing workshop, and spent most of the fall semester in a depression, trying to work through my fears of writing.

On Jan. 1, after an amazing meeting, I decided to really commit to the practice. I began chanting and writing every day.

My work would be critiqued in class at the beginning of the spring semester. I hadn't been sleeping well for weeks due to stress, and was physically exhausted and emotionally wiped out. Before class, I went to the

culture center to chant for a helpful, educational critique from my peers. Instead, a classmate really tore into my prose, going so far as to crack jokes about the way that I'd phrased things. Her comments really hit at the heart of my fears. I'd always thought I'd had good ideas, but awful prose. And here she was making fun of it. I was devastated. Another classmate ripped into my novel, too, condemning it on many levels. It seemed all my fears were coming true; I was really a horrible writer; I should never have left my job to go to school full time. And I should have listened when people told me my writing should be a hobby, not a career.

I called Lydia for encouragement, and as always she came through for me, telling me that every obstacle is an opportunity for growth. She told me I needed to chant to find the benefit that was lying behind this event.

So, I started chanting for that. I also joined a district and I kept chanting for my students' and my classmates' happiness.

My novel, however, was going nowhere. I kept rewriting the same chapters, very rarely moving forward. The belief that my writing was horrible grew stronger and stronger each day.

Now to graduate with an M.F.A. in creative writing, I would have to write a 70-75 page creative thesis. It was due by the end of April. As March was approaching, I had about 35 pages done and I wasn't getting far fast.

Also, my novel workshop had changed. By the middle of the spring semester, the class was full of tension. Everyone seemed to have a problem with someone else. It was getting harder and harder to go to class, and I was constantly griping to friends about why it made me so miserable to be there. But the hardest part was watching the other students uncover their "voice." I was happy for them, but it only highlighted the fact that I didn't have a voice in my own work.

In early March, my young women's leaders brought me a passage from SGI President Ikeda that really resonated with me: "Faith enables us to receive the eternal joy derived from the Law. So let us engrave in our hearts this point: We ourselves

receive this joy. Because we receive it ourselves, our happiness does not depend on others. No one else can make us happy. Only by our own efforts can we become happy. Therefore, there is no need to feel envious of others. There is no need to bear a grudge against someone or depend on another person for our happiness. Everything comes down to our state of life.

It is within our power to take our lives in any direction we wish" ("SGI-USA Study Department Entrance Exam Study Material" booklet, p. 18).

I realized that I'd been letting my environment rule me, and began chanting to find out why I was miserable. Not why so-and-so made me miserable, not why my class made me miserable, but why I was miserable. After all, if no one but me could make me happy, than no one but me could make me miserable.

Things started coming together for me. I saw that I wasn't writing about what was truest to me, but what I thought I was supposed to write. I was hiding my true voice because I was scared of letting that which was deepest in me free, of letting it be visible to others. What I needed to do, as difficult as it seemed six weeks before deadline, was throw out what I was working on and start fresh.

I was scheduled to hand in work for class critique in two weeks' time and I decided to hand in the first 20 pages of my new novel in progress. It was the only work I had ever done that had felt somehow true to me. And for that exact reason, it scared the hell out of me. Sharing it seemed an impossible task.

The night my work was discussed, I went to the culture



Ruth Gallogly

center to chant for a good critique. When I finished chanting, I realized that no matter what happened, I'd made the right choice and that I wouldn't let my classmates sway me. I was enjoying my writing for the first time, and felt I was finally finding my voice in my work. I had discovered the opportunity that lay behind the obstacle. And the truth was, if that January critique hadn't made me so miserable, hadn't made me face up to my fears, I probably wouldn't have changed my thesis and discovered a new way of working.

That night, I received the best critique I ever had in the program. My class really supported the new work. The girl who had made fun of my prose actually said good things about it, complimenting me on the voice of the piece. And the other student, who had commented negatively on my earlier work, wrote me three pages of notes outlining why he thought the work was so good.

Of course, this was only the beginning of my obstacles to

actually finishing my thesis. I wasn't able to complete it by the April deadline, but worked on it throughout the summer while moving apartments, working full time and administering a trip to Ireland. I handed it in on time to graduate this past September. And by the end of October, I was hired to work as a writer/editor for a Web site. I now write for a living.

I committed to this practice exactly one year ago on New Year's Day. While the last line from President Ikeda's guidance, "It is within our power to take our lives in any direction we wish," is truly the hardest thing for me to believe with all my being, I know that when I do, doors just open for me. So this coming year, in addition to finishing my novel, finding an agent and selling my novel, I'm determined to believe this phrase with my whole being and to really fight for everything I want. But not only that, I'm determined to encourage everyone I know to believe it with their whole beings, too. If I do both these things with my whole heart, there's nothing I won't be able to achieve. **W**

Living a Complaint-Free Life

PERSPECTIVE

By STEVE DOTY
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Have you ever been inspired and made a strong determination, and in the same moment asked yourself: "Am I crazy? Do I really want to challenge this? Is this really a weakness?" I have done this very thing on more than one occasion.

On a quiet evening in December 1997, I was home reading SGI President Ikeda's article on "Happiness in This World," which was part of the SGI-USA Entrance Exam material in the *Living Buddhism* magazine. So, I was happily digesting his guidance about not being dragged around by other people or the environment, and that this is not the way of life the Lotus Sutra teaches. President Ikeda also said, "Rather, overcoming the tendency to blame our sufferings on others or on the environment enables us to greatly expand our state of life" (December 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 9).

I'm thinking, "I would like to greatly expand my state of life, but I don't think I really place blame or complain." I read on. Further in the article, President Ikeda states, "Everything is for our growth; everything contributes to the development of our state of life and the establishment of Buddhahood in our

lives. When we practice with this determination, all complaints vanish. The world

of Buddhahood that had been covered by the dust of complaints begins to shine, and we can freely and fully savor the joy deriving from the Law" (*Ibid.*, p. 9).

"What is it with this strange recurrence about complaining?" After I finished the rest of the article, the thought came to me that I would make a determination to lead a life free of complaint! This will be my New Year's determination for 1998, I decided!

While I felt this must be the "joy deriving from the Law," I also immediately said to myself, "I don't really complain much, so maybe I should have a different determination, something stronger and more appropriate, something more challenging." I then remembered hearing the voice of one of my leaders saying somewhat sarcastically: "Go ahead and complain Steve. You always get results when you complain." Well, the fact I remembered that at this point was scary and I realized that I had complained more than once and perhaps on a regular basis!

I reported to my wife and

began my new campaign, a life free of complaint. Of course, I had to share my determination with everyone. I included it in my words at every meeting I attended. I shared it at the different New Year's Day meetings we had. Pretty soon, everyone knew that Steve would be living a life free of complaint.

What an undertaking! Suddenly I was surrounded by complaining people! The phrase "Birds of a feather flock together" came to mind.

I placed this determination on our family altar to keep it fresh in my mind. I continued to chant and study, and determined not to complain. Rather, I would become a part of the solution to problems. I found it was good to publicly share my determination because everywhere I went people were asking, "Are you complaining?" To which of course I replied, "No!"

I had a real turning point in April 1998. I attended the first conference on the study of the Lotus Sutra at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I was excited about this conference and was determined to be a sponge and absorb as much as I possibly could.

SGI-USA Vice General Director Masao Yokota lectured on "The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra." Two of the several types of wisdom of the Lotus Sutra that he discussed really stuck with me: wisdom of transformation and wisdom of alternative choice.

With the wisdom of transformation, the key is to see things from a different—a positive instead of negative viewpoint. When we view things positively, we are able to create more value. Viewing things positively also brings us one step closer to our human revolution. The wisdom of alternative choices is just that, the wisdom to discover alternative ways to accomplish a goal. But, while this sounds really nice in theory, how does one apply this practically?

As soon as the Q & A session started, every hand went up with the same question: "What is the process of transformation?"

Mr. Yokota's response was brief and to the point. "It takes daimoku and effort." He went on to say: "Perhaps effort should come first. Daimoku provides life force and wisdom, but you must also make the effort. You find the answer."

I realized that while I had been chanting, I really was doing nothing more than that. I was still lacking in the action department. I would still chant for wisdom, but I would also begin to take action and lead a life free of complaint.

At the same conference, I discussed how to live a life free of complaint over lunch with SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin. We talked about how our complaints really express a pessimist's view of life. Mr. Martin talked about transforming these complaints

into appreciation and then taking it further by transforming that appreciation into encouragement and praise for others who may have that same struggle. Our dialogue reminded me of President Ikeda's article from that December *Living Buddhism*. I learned many valuable lessons since reading that article. Namely, that I need to listen to others, reflect on myself and take action.

Of course, I'm still learning, but now I realize I have a choice. I can complain and do nothing, which really robs me of my life force, or I can see things as an opportunity and be a catalyst for change. Is it easy? No. Do I still complain? Yes...sometimes. But, I catch myself earlier than before and can more quickly begin to look for solutions.

This has been a truly empowering experience. Through my efforts to lead a life free of complaint and see everything as an opportunity to grow, I have become happier. I actually enjoy my struggles because I realize the value they have toward my growth. I have also determined to deepen my understanding of the Daishonin's Buddhism so that I can display the spirit of his teachings and teach others thoroughly and clearly. While I may not yet be living a life completely free of complaint, I have seen the brochure and now know that it is a terrific place to visit. Someday, I'd like to live there! **WT**

Corrected Sample Question References for the Entrance-level Exam

For those 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 "SGI-USA Study Department Entrance Exam Study Material" booklet. **Please disregard the "Sample Question References for the Entrance-level Exam" published in the March 24 issue. We deeply apologize for the confusion it caused.**

Page numbers shown below are from the new study material booklet.

"The Life of Nichiren Daishonin" (new booklet, pp. 25-49)

Q1. p. 26
Q2. pp. 28-29

Q3. pp. 29-30
Q4. pp. 29-30
Q5. p. 32
Q6. p. 29
Q7. p. 34
Q8. p. 35
Q9. p. 37
Q10. p. 38
Q11. p. 40
Q12. p. 39
Q13. p. 45
Q14. p. 47
Q15. p. 47
Q16. p. 47
Q17. pp. 47-48

"On Attaining Buddhahood" (new booklet, pp. 3-9)

Q18. pp. 4-5
Q19. p. 6
Q20. p. 6
Q21. p. 6-7
Q22. p. 6
Q23. p. 7

Q24. p. 6
Q25. p. 7
Q26. pp. 7-8
Q27. p. 7
Q30. p. 5
Q31. p. 5
Q32. p. 7
Q33. p. 9
Q34. p. 4
Omit questions 28 and 29.

"The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" (new booklet, pp. 10-16)

Q35. p. 12
Q36. p. 14
Q38. p. 15
Q39. p. 13
Q41. p. 15
Q42. pp. 15-16
Q43. p. 16
Q44. p. 12

Omit questions 37 and 40.

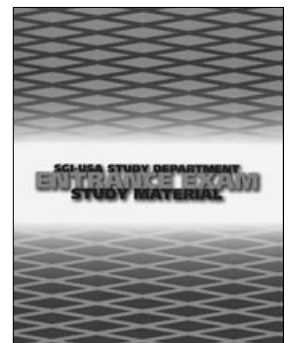
"Happiness in This World" (new booklet, pp. 17-22)

Q45. p. 18
Q46. p. 18
Q47. p. 17
Q48. p. 18
Q49. p. 18
Q50. p. 18
Q51. pp. 18-19
Q52. p. 19
Q53. p. 19
Q54. p. 20
Q55. pp. 20-21
Q56. p. 22
Q57. p. 21
Q58. p. 17

"Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue" (new booklet, pp. 53-60)

Q59. p. 53
Q60. p. 53
Q61. p. 54
Q62. p. 54

Q63. p. 55
Q64. p. 55
Q65. p. 56
Q66. p. 55
Q67. p. 57
Q68. p. 58
Q69. pp. 58-59
Q70. pp. 59-60



Ideas for Successful Meetings

It would be nice to hear some creative ideas from other members and leaders about planning/preparing for successful meetings. I don't know about other people who live in remote areas, but it can be hard to come up with fresh ideas, especially throughout the long winter months when people are not able to travel as much as in the summer. I was wondering how other members set up their meetings, how they prepare for study meetings, finding ways for all the members to be able to contribute to the meeting, etc. It might be helpful to all SGI members if the *World Tribune* ran some sort of series on this or even an article.

—MELINDA KELLEY,
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Thanks to Reformist Priest

I deeply appreciate your article from a reformist priest admonishing Nikken (Dec. 17, 1999, *World Tribune*). In part of his letter several weeks ago, he expressed disappointment that he had been in France, trying to spread Buddhism in a predominantly Christian country, and feeling discouraged that his efforts had been wasted.

I spent the holidays in Paris, in 1998, and did one of the most invigorating, joyous gongyos in their culture center on Rue des Cappucines. All around me were signs that these people are seeking other philosophies. Even the music stores had a section called "Buddhisme." Whether this represents new age music or some other art form, the change is in process, no doubt because of your efforts. Thank you.

—BARBARA McBEE,
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About the Environment

I am responding to a letter from Mr. James Ryan (March 17 *World Tribune*) and strongly feel that the debate over Hotchkiss' article (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*) got out of control. I simply think that Hotchkiss' article has a malicious intent to confuse *World Tribune* readers about important environmental issues with sophisticated tactics using statistics and scientists' names. As an environmental scientist for over 20 years, I must say that human contribution to global warming and unsustainability due to rapid population growth are the textbook facts that are common knowledge to anyone.

World Tribune MAILBOX

Therefore, these are NOT topics for debate among *World Tribune* readers. Also, I noticed a distorted view among Mr. Hotchkiss and Mr. Ryan that they discredited marine biologist, Rachel Carson. Without Rachel Carson, our country's environment would be far worse than that before because highly toxic chemicals, DDT and PCB, would not have been banned without her efforts. Therefore, she is not just a credible scientist, but also a woman with courage and a sense of justice, standing up against the chemical industry and even the American Medical Association.

What lesson do we need to learn from six months of debate?

1) The *World Tribune* editorial office should have a scientific advisor. Human contribution to global warming is NOT a debatable issue. It is happening.

2) *World Tribune* readers may not agree on every point in President Ikeda's peace proposal. However, we should not underestimate his knowledge and insight over global environmental issues. His view is extremely insightful and refreshing for an environmental scientist like me. It's really up to us to think about what the SGI-USA can do about these issues, not discussing whether such problems exist or not.

3) Americans' general knowledge of environmental issues is low and ranked eighth among 20 industrial countries according to the survey done by the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago. We are heavily influenced by the mass media, the survey showed. Therefore, we need to continue to study environmental issues. I highly recommend you to read *Living Downstream* by Sandra Steingraber.

—TOMO KAWAGUCHI, Ph.D.,
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About Depression

It is with great interest I have been reading the latest articles regarding depression, having myself experienced three clinical depressions in the late 1980s and having the fortune to be able to practice through them and overcome them.

Ted Morino's article is absolutely on target as far as my own experience is concerned. Also, having a grown son (now

a medical student) with a degree in psychology, I would go so far as to say from a mundane standpoint, that the formula for battling what is called the "crabgrass of mental afflictions" in medical society is inherent in the practice of Buddhism.

When I went through my own depression and subsequent breakdown (in 1982), I was simply paralyzed, I couldn't eat, walked the floors at night, cried and chanted for hours on end, and there seemed to be no "logical" reason for what was happening.

But, through this practice, excellent medical care (at that time there were no antidepressants such as Prozac—I was put on tranquilizers to be able to sleep at night), and having the great fortune to have a senior women's leader who was also a psychiatric nurse, I was able to pull out of it. It didn't happen suddenly, but rather, was a gradual process of healing body, mind and spirit, using common sense and the dynamics of Buddhism.

Also, at that time, and the two other times I experienced it, I also utilized a special *Seikyo Times* issue on illness as my constant encouragement. There was a particular article by a young woman (whose name I can't recall) who had been diagnosed as bi-polar depressive (at that time called manic), a serious chronic depression characterized by cycles of high mood swings and crushing suicidal depressions, treatable only by lithium, a drug she would have to take all of her life. As I recall she went for oral surgery and since lithium causes excessive bleeding, she had to come off of it in order to have this dental procedure done, and was mortified that the control it gave her over her bi-polarity would be lost. It was at this point she disclosed to her supportive leaders her affliction, opted to stop the lithium for her surgery and realized that she had actually overcome her illness at its core, an illness that in the mundane world is only treatable, not curable. This experience sustained me through my own battle with depression, and I utilize, as she did, my own experience to encourage others. Yes, it is true, "the lighting of this lamp" whether it is depression, relationship, job problems, financial—we overcome the impossible through our practice.

I am happy to say since that time I have never gone through

another clinical depression. And although I obviously have a propensity for it (given my emotional and physical makeup and family's karmic tendency), have enjoyed a depression-free existence for many years now. I absolutely endorse Mr. Morino's formula and say to all who may be going through it now—it will definitely change and become a great treasure by which to encourage others.

Society as a whole is experiencing depression, hopelessness, despair, anger—many of the symptoms of depression (clinical or otherwise), the darkness which is, effectively, an illness. I feel so fortunate to have had this experience and overcome it through my practice. It is the treasure of the heart that enables me to see (as painful as it was) any illness can change through this practice.

Thanks for all your good work and encouragement.

—NANCY HALL,
Seattle, Wash.

Authoritarian Leadership

Thank you for your editorials and Mailbox discussions on the subject of authoritarian leadership. It was a relief to know that I'm not alone in my concern about this issue after experiencing two leaders in my home telling me that our organization is not democratic, that ideas of members cannot possibly be discussed, and that I do not have the right to express my opinions openly with leaders or members. Moreover, my efforts to help in representing other members' opinions and assist in district communication (which is generally poor) were seen as some sort of devious behavior on my part.

One leader has officially directed chapter and district leaders that it is unnecessary for them to discuss activity changes and other directives with members. A chapter leader has told me on more than one occasion that unfortunate events suffered by some members was due to their inconsistent attendance at meetings. A district leader scolded me and told me I did not practice correctly when I suggested that members be encouraged to read the Lotus Sutra—yes, the exact one sold in SGI bookstores nationwide. All of these events occurred while I was recuperating from serious health problems and trying to move forward in my life during the 15th year of my practice.

How does one effectively respond to all of this negativity? I can tell you that I have suffered and anguished tremendously

over what sounds to me more like a very reactionary belief in an angry and redemptive god rather than Buddhism, which is firmly based on equality and compassion. I have been told to speak out and fight against these incorrect belief systems, just as Kevin Higgins addresses in his recent letter (March 10 *World Tribune*). However, I do not care to perpetuate angry feelings or be at odds with people. So, instead I have turned to my practice and my own Buddha nature.

One thing that has struck me about these events is the importance of individuality. Everything in Buddhism begins and ends with the self. If we all are the Buddha, then we all are inherently equal. If we all are the Buddha, then we can trust our own innate wisdom. If we all are the Buddha, then we can count on the strength of our life when chanting. And this is the time to unleash tremendous power to change these unfortunate circumstances and thoughts of authoritarianism to an opportunity for unprecedented growth and development within our organization. Because we are all equal, we are equally capable of saying and doing the same things we see in authoritarian leaders. So, we actually cannot step outside of ourselves and point an accusatory finger at others, but rather learn firsthand the harm that's done when we ourselves become fixated on titles, wealth and other superficial ways we represent ourselves in society.

I would ask that as many people as possible chant with me for a peaceful, joyful organization where we can see one another as equal and worthy of respect. Where each of us can develop such a strong self-identity that we can listen to what others have to say, even if we don't agree, and take the time for open dialogue. Where the organization functions in a free, respectful manner and honors the individual attributes of each participating member. Moreover, we can have an organization where people who take organizational responsibility are really committed to the task at hand and step aside when other life duties need more attention. No one has to suffer or pay repentance to be respected, listened to, or to feel appreciated. This should be the spirit of the SGI if it is to flourish in the 21st century. Unquestionably, this is the wish and determination of President Ikeda for us in the United States.

—LISA E. MELILLI,
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New Jersey Raises Its Curtain

By DIANA ANGIONE
NETCONG, N.J.

I never heard anything so exciting. What a perfect beginning!" said one of the 1,500 participants in the New Jersey Region Kick-off Meeting toward "Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—the Year of Youth."

The event at Montclair High School in Montclair, N.J., which illuminated the region's diversity, opened with the exhilarating bang of the African Drum and Dance Ensemble, some of whose non-members have decided to join the SGI-USA. The Drum and Dance Ensemble was followed by smiling boys and girls waving banners and singing "We've got high hopes" to teary-eyed family members and friends in the audience.

The New Jersey youth division took the lead in planning and organizing this meeting from start to finish. "It was a history we created with our prayer and sweat," said one young woman. Artwork created by youth members floated beneath the colorful specks of helium balloons, giving the auditorium an almost ethereal atmosphere.

The meeting closed with the entire audience singing "Ode to Joy" in German from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—in a first rehearsal toward next year's target of 100,000 SGI-USA members and friends singing this song at



Photo by RAMON RODRIGUEZ

Boys and Girls Group members sing 'High Hopes' at the New Jersey Region Kick-off Meeting held in Montclair, N.J.

gatherings by zone. The day after, the New Jersey Region meeting was covered in the *Star-Ledger*, New Jersey's largest newspaper. **WT**

Photo by WILLIAM FUERNES



The African Drum and Dance Ensemble opens the meeting with 'Majani'



Photo by WILLIAM FUERNES

Youth enjoy themselves at the New Jersey Region kickoff.