



**EXPERIENCE:**  
Ian Ehrenreich appreciates life after overcoming a serious leg injury.  
page 8

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## CEC Members Look Toward May 3, 2001

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Zone and national leaders who gathered for the 47th Central Executive Conference, held in Los Angeles March 24–26, returned to the basics of leadership in the SGI. Symbolic of this, the CEC began at the Malibu Training Center, where SGI President Ikeda gave his historic guidance on leadership in 1990. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima encouraged the CEC to make a new start from Malibu toward May 3, 2001, with the same spirit to care for the members that the SGI president shows us.

SGI General Director Eiichi Wada, who was visiting from Japan, thanked everyone for their daimoku toward the Seattle Incident trial ruling. He reminded them, though, of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's guidance that "at times, even though you win, you create a cause for future defeat." Mr. Wada asked the leaders to turn the victory of the court's ruling into more victories—especially in awakening temple members to the truth of Nichiren Shoshu.

The CEC members discussed many organizational focuses for the coming months, beginning with our continuing propagation effort. Our official quarterly focus on propagation

has just ended, but Mr. Nagashima emphasized that we need to continue to share this practice with many others. Because the women's and youth meetings in February and March introduced thousands of people to SGI-USA, Mr. Nagashima asked the leaders to help members follow-up with their guests and encourage them to start practicing Buddhism and receiving benefit.

He also determined again to introduce one new member himself this year. A team of national leaders was appointed to spearhead propagation, with Cory Taylor, SGI-USA young men's leader, heading it up.

Later this month, the May Commemorative Contribution will begin (April 28–June 6), and SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck led a discussion on making this the most encouraging experience possible for all participants. As one important aspect of the basics of the practice, many members will be challenging themselves to give financial donations for the further advancement of our kosen-rufu movement. The leaders shared many experiences of members who had grown through challenging themselves in last year's commemorative contribution.

After the quarterly focus on contribution will come a three-month focus on publications promotion (June–August). A team of



(L-r) Women's Secretariat Leader Yoshiko Kadin and SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck attend the 47th Central Executive Conference held March 24–26.

national leaders led by Renu Jiandani, SGI-USA young women's leader, has already begun thinking of new ideas for encouraging people to renew their *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* subscriptions. Greg Martin, the SGI-USA Publications Center leader, explained various improvements the Subscriptions Department is making to serve readers better and apologized for recent problems resulting in many readers not receiving renewal notices on time. By the end of the year, Ms. Jiandani reminded everyone, our goal is to have every active member subscribe to the *World Tribune*.

Since sharing the greatness of our Buddhist philosophy through propagation and subscription promotion is so fundamental to our kosen-rufu movement, the CEC agreed that appointing district propagation and subscription promotion leaders would be a good idea.

All of our organizational goals are achievable, General Director Wada emphasized, if based on President Ikeda's message to the CEC (see box) the

### SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 47TH CEC

## Put Your Hearts and Minds Together

**'If all of you, as leaders of kosen-rufu, put your hearts and minds together with a sense of responsibility, you can accomplish anything,' says SGI President Ikeda in his message to the CEC.**

Express my deepest appreciation to all of you, the top leaders of SGI-USA, for coming from across the United States to participate in the 47th Central Executive Conference. As a result of the daimoku each of you has been chanting, we have just scored a tremendous victory. I thank you all very much.

I hope that you will continue to move forward from today, aiming to achieve a succession of victories.

The Soka Gakkai's eternal, ironclad principle for victory is having the unity of many in body, one in mind.

Nichiren Daishonin states, "If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but

different in mind, they will achieve nothing remarkable" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 618).

This means that if all of you, as leaders of kosen-rufu, put your hearts and minds together with a sense of responsibility, you can accomplish anything. Toward this, it is most important that you communicate thoroughly and regularly. Please center on your general director, Danny Nagashima, with unity as strong as iron. Build a castle of capable people for the sake of American kosen-rufu.

I am praying from the bottom of my heart for the health and personal victories of each of you. Please express my warmest regards to all your fellow members back home.

March 24  
Daisaku Ikeda



SGI General Director Eiichi Wada stresses unity and thorough communication to CEC members, March 24, at the Malibu Training Center.

PLEASE SEE CEC, 11

# What Is 'the Same Mind As Nichiren?'

**EDITORIAL**  
By **GREG MARTIN**  
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER



The fundamental spirit of the SGI—the Soka Spirit, as it were—can be understood in the passage from “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385). To practice in accord with Nichiren Daishonin’s word and spirit, to strive together with the intent to accomplish kosen-rufu, will always be our organization’s prime point.

As SGI President Ikeda teaches us in his Feb. 27 speech: “To bring hope to those suffering the most...is the Soka Gakkai’s prime point” (March 31 *World Tribune*, p. 6). When we say that Nichiren Shoshu is teaching a practice at odds with the Daishonin’s, thus leading people to a life of endless, painful sufferings, how do we back that up? Why do we say that Nichiren Shoshu’s teachings are slanderous, even evil?

As “Confirming Our Path of Faith” explains: “The definition of evil in Buddhism can be summarized as that which causes or leads people to misery, or that which blocks the way to enlightenment and happiness. Good or evil in Buddhism is defined in terms of whether something enhances and enriches life (good), or whether it kills the spirit and leads to misery or the destruction of life itself” (p. 1).

There are those who feel that it is too much to label Nichiren Shoshu as evil. The Holocaust, slavery, environmental destruction—these are evil. But a band of misguided priests who have never killed anyone? Wrongheaded, unfair, petty...words like these better describe the actions of Nichiren Shoshu, some feel.

But the Daishonin states that “a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more than mad elephants, vicious horses, fierce bulls, savage dogs, poisonous snakes, poisonous thorns, treacherous bluffs, steep cliffs, floods, evil men, evil countries, evil towns, evil dwellings, bad wives, wicked children and malicious retainers, the people of Japan today should fear those high-ranking priests who keep the precepts and yet hold distorted views!” (WND, 621).

Why is this so? Viewed from the perspective of the eternity of

life, the loss of one’s present life is a relatively minor suffering compared to the sufferings one must endure in lifetime after lifetime if one destroys one’s seed for attaining Buddhahood by becoming a slanderer of the Law.

There is little doubt, as this passage attests, that the Daishonin considered slander of the Law to be the greatest evil. The conclusion that Nichiren Shoshu, which is now spreading the erroneous understanding that a priestly intermediary is necessary between believers and the Gohonzon, is not evil betrays a misunderstanding to the Daishonin’s thinking and his life—how he spent his lifetime fighting this kind of evil.

Some suggest that, if he were alive today, the Daishonin would take a much different stance toward Nichiren Shoshu than the SGI has. In today’s America, for instance, a country that enjoys much greater freedom of religious expression than Japan did in the 13th century, the Daishonin would not feel the need to direct such strong words against those in error, some have argued. The Daishonin would simply have stated his position and left it at that, they say.

The Daishonin’s intent, however, was not to establish religious freedom; it was to establish this Buddhism. This is not to say that he was against religious freedom—the point is that his prime

focus was sinking the roots of this Buddhism in his followers’ hearts and in his society. An important part of this to him was differentiating correct Buddhist practice from erroneous forms of Buddhism and vigorously refuting those teachings. This is why he repeatedly called upon government officials to even outlaw those teachings. He was saying, “We need to correctly understand what Buddhism is in this country.”

If we are to be of “the same mind as Nichiren,” if we are to be Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we need to understand his intent and share it. At the very heart of the Daishonin’s Buddhism is the refutation of erroneous teachings. To save suffering people, to make this Buddhism accessible to the people, clarifying the truth is the only way.

The Daishonin writes: “Even though one may resort to harsh words, if such words help the person to whom they are addressed, then they are worthy to be regarded as truthful words and gentle words. Similarly, though one may use gentle words, if they harm the person to whom they are addressed, they are in fact deceptive words, harsh words...” (WND, 178). Of course, we should not take this as license to be nasty or disrespectful in spreading this Buddhism. But with hearts of compassion and respect for others’ lives, we should say what needs to be said. This is practicing with “the same mind as Nichiren.” **WT**

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## BUDDHISM IN DAILY LIFE

# Desires and Enlightenment

People encountering Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for the first time are often surprised by the stance taken toward desire that seems to contradict prevailing images of Buddhism. For many, Buddhism is associated with asceticism, and indeed there are many schools and traditions that stress the need to eliminate desire and sever all attachments.

Needless to say, a life controlled by desires is miserable. In Buddhist scriptures, such a way of life is symbolized by "hungry demons" with giant heads and huge mouths, but narrow, constricted throats that make real satisfaction unattainable. The deliberate horror of these images grew from Shakyamuni Buddha's sense of the need to shock people from their attachment to things—including our physical existence—that will eventually change and be lost to us. Real happiness does not lie here, he sought to tell them.

The deeply ingrained tendencies of attachments and desire are often referred to by the English translation "earthly desires." However, since they also include hatred, arrogance, distrust and fear, the translation "deluded impulses" may in some cases be more appropriate.

But can such desires and attachments really be eliminated? Attachments are, after all, natural human feelings, and desires are a vital and necessary aspect of life. The desire, for example, to protect oneself and one's loved ones has been the inspiration for a wide range of advances—from the creation of supportive social groupings to the development of housing and heating. Likewise, the desire to understand humanity's place in the cosmos has driven the development of philosophy, literature and religious thought. Desires are integral to who we are and who we seek to become.

In this sense, the elimination of all desire is neither possible nor, in fact, desirable. Were we to completely rid ourselves of desire, we would end up undermining our individual and collective will to live.

The teachings of Nichiren Daishonin thus stress the transformation, rather than the elimination, of desire. Desires and attachments are seen as fueling the quest for enlightenment. As he is recorded as teaching: "Now Nichiren and others who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo...burn the firewood of earthly desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom...."

In the same vein, the Univer-

sally Worthy Sutra states: "Even without extinguishing their earthly desires or denying the five desires, they can purify all of their senses and eradicate all of their misdeeds."

Nichiren Daishonin's approach has the effect of popularizing, humanizing and democratizing Buddhism. In other words, by making the aspirations, dreams and frustrations of daily life the "fuel" for the process of enlightenment, the Daishonin opens the path of Buddhist practice to those who had traditionally been excluded by the demands of a meditative withdrawal from the world, those, for example, who wish to continue playing an active role in the world.

It is thus not a coincidence that this attitude toward desires should be central to the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, with its emphasis on the role of lay practitioners. For people living in the midst of ever-changing, stressful realities, those challenges are a far more effective spur to committed Buddhist practice than an abstract goal of "enlightenment" through severing of all desires and attachments.

Overcoming problems, realizing long-cherished goals and dreams—this is the stuff of daily life from which we de-

rive our sense of accomplishment and happiness. SGI President Ikeda has emphasized the importance not of severing our attachments, but of understanding and, ultimately, using them.

Often the faith experiences of SGI members describe events and changes that seem at first glance to be focused on the external, material side of life. But such "benefits" are only part of the story. Buddhism divides the benefits of practice into the "conspicuous" and the "inconspicuous." The new job, the conquest of illness, the successful marriage and so on are not separate from a deep, often painstaking process of self-reflection and inner-driven transformation. And the degree of motivation generated by desires can lend an intensity to our practice that ultimately reaps spiritual rewards. "Earthly desires are enlightenment" is a key tenet of Nichiren Buddhism. Through our Buddhist practice, even the most mundane, deluded impulse can be transformed into something broader and more noble, and our desires quite naturally develop from self-focused ones to broader ones concerning our families, friends, communities and, ultimately, the whole world.

*The teachings of Nichiren Daishonin thus stress the transformation, rather than the elimination, of desire. Desires and attachments are seen as fueling the quest for enlightenment.*

In this way, the nature of desire is steadily transformed—from material and physical desires to the more spiritually oriented desire to live the most fulfilling kind of life.

As SGI President Ikeda says: "I believe in the existence of another kind of human desire: I call it the basic desire, and I believe that it is the force that actively propels all other human desires in the direction of creativity. It is the source of all impelling energy inherent in life; it is also the longing to unite one's life with the life of the universe and to draw vital energy from the universe."

*Courtesy of SGI Quarterly*

## BUDDHISM IN DAILY LIFE

# The Concept of Dependent Origination

Buddhism teaches that all life is interrelated. Through the concept of dependent origination, it holds that nothing exists in isolation, independent of other life; all beings and phenomena exist or occur only because of their relationship with other beings or phenomena. Everything in the world comes into existence in response to causes and conditions. Nothing can exist in absolute independence of other things or arise of its own accord.

Shakyamuni used the image of two bundles of reeds leaning against each other to explain dependent origination. He described how the two bundles of reeds can remain standing as long as they lean against each other. In the same way, because this exists, that exists, and because that exists, this exists. If

one of the two bundles is removed, then the other will fall. Similarly, without this existence, that cannot exist, and without that existence, this cannot exist.

More specifically, Buddhism teaches that our lives are constantly developing in a dynamic way, in a synergy of the internal causes within our own life (our personality, experiences, outlook on life and so on) and the external conditions and relations around us. Each individual existence contributes to creating the environment that sustains all other existences. All things, mutually supportive and related, form a living cosmos, a single living whole.

When we realize the extent of the myriad interconnections that link us to all other life, we realize that our existence only becomes meaningful through

interaction with, and in relation to, others. By engaging ourselves with others, our identity is developed, established and enhanced. We then understand that it is impossible to build our own happiness on the unhappiness of others. We also see that our constructive actions affect the world around us. And, as Nichiren Daishonin wrote, that if you light a lamp for another, your own way will be lit.

There is an intimate mutual interconnection in the web of nature, in the relationship between humankind and its environment—and also between the individual and society, parents and children, husband and wife.

If as individuals we can embrace the view that "because of that, this exists," or, in other words, "because of that person, I can develop," then we

need never experience pointless conflicts in human relations. In the case of a young married woman, for instance, her present existence is in relation to her husband and mother-in-law, regardless of what sort of people they may be. Someone who realizes this can turn everything, both good and bad, into an impetus for personal growth.

Buddhism teaches that we "choose" the family and circumstances into which we are born in order to learn and grow and to be able to fulfill our unique role and respective mission in life.

On a deeper level, we are connected and related not just to those physically close to us, but to every living being. If we can realize this, feelings of loneliness and isolation, which cause so much suffering, begin

to vanish, as we realize that we are part of a dynamic, mutually interconnected whole.

As President of the Soka Gakkai International Daisaku Ikeda has written, an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life can lead to a more peaceful world: "We're all human beings who, through some mystic bond, were born to share the same limited life span on this planet, a small green oasis in the vast universe. Why do we quarrel and victimize one another? If we could all keep the image of the vast heavens in mind, I believe that it would go a long way toward resolving conflicts and disputes. If our eyes are fixed on eternity, we come to realize that the conflicts of our little egos are really sad and unimportant."

*Courtesy of SGI Quarterly*

## Q-AND-A SESSION WITH SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

## EFFORT DETERMINES YOUR FUTURE

**‘Effort is what determines whether or not your dreams come true,’ SGI President Ikeda tells Kansai Soka Senior High School students.**

*The afternoon of Feb. 28, at the Hyogo Culture Center in Kobe, SGI President Ikeda fielded questions from several seniors of the Kansai Soka Senior High School who were about to graduate.*

**SGI President Ikeda:** You have really worked hard during your time at school. Today, I want you to be completely at ease, as if in your own home. Please take off your jackets, sit comfortably and relax.

If any of you have a question you want to ask me, please feel free to do so. Just think of me as your dad. Does anyone have a question?

**Student:** I do. Thank you for taking a picture with us today. It was my wish to learn about the spirit of the joint struggle of mentor and disciple while I was in high school. With that in mind, I have spent a lot of time reading your essays and other writings. I know that I’m still young, but I am determined to try to match your spirit, even if only a little, and work for peace.

**President Ikeda:** Thank you! Actually, you don’t have to worry too much about such things right now. When I speak sternly about the importance of disciples striving with the same spirit as their mentor, I am addressing adults. I am particularly strict toward those who, having gained important positions through the support and assistance of many people, forget their debt of gratitude, grow arrogant and betray their benefactors, and do bad things.

You have your whole life ahead of you. I want you to concentrate on studying now. Think about getting better grades on your examinations. That is your personal joint struggle of mentor and disciple at this time in your life.

Study hard, so that your parents will say with pleasure: “Your grades are improving. That’s great. You’ve done well.” That

will make me the happiest of all.

Don’t worry about reading my writings—spend that time reading your textbooks instead! [Laughter.]

Have you decided where you’re going to college yet?

**Student:** Soka University.

**President Ikeda:** Is that so? That’s wonderful. Thank you for choosing the university that I founded!

You don’t need to have a deep understanding of the joint struggle of mentor and disciple just yet. Let’s talk about this some more when you’re a university student.

Please be true to yourself. That’s enough.

**Student:** Yes, I will. Thank you.

**President Ikeda:** All right, who’s next? You don’t have to stand up.

**A life without dreams is colorless.**

**Another Student:** President Ikeda, what is your dream?

**President Ikeda:** I’m so busy that I don’t have time to think about dreams! [Laughter.] I’m always thinking about the world.

Actually, dreams are the unique birthright of human beings. A life without dreams is gray and colorless. A person who has no dreams cannot accomplish anything great and often ends up as a loser.

Please have dreams! Have hopes and aspirations!

Effort is what determines whether or not your dreams come true. There are times, however, when social conditions are so bad that you can’t realize your dreams. Or there may be karmic elements, things you can’t see that still prevent you from achieving your goals.

Though not all your dreams may come true, I hope that you will still always live with some dream in your heart. This is what youth is all about. And having dreams is the sign of a person who will continue to grow throughout life. Any dream is fine. Please possess your own dream, one that matches your unique character.

My dream is to realize the dream of Mr. Toda. He is my mentor, a fact that will ab-



SGI President Ikeda, founder of the Soka schools, answers various questions from Kansai Soka Senior High School students at the Hyogo Culture Center in Kobe, Japan, Feb. 28.

solutely never change. The Buddhist Law is not a manmade thing, something that can be either proven or denied by reasoning alone. It is an absolute law, the unchanging law of the universe, something as inevitable as the rising of the sun and moon, the coming of day and night.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the essence of that universal law. The entire universe moves in the rhythm of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. My mentor and I are linked together by the rhythm of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And that is why I must realize his dream and ideals, why I must keep exerting myself.

Unless your dream is something that will truly contribute to your growth and self-improvement, it can end up simply being selfish and egoistic, an empty wish. A noble dream encompasses happiness, truth, altruism and peace. It is, in fact, in the pursuit of these goals—happiness, truth, altruism and peace—that we formulate dreams of genuine value and meaning.

**Student:** I understand.

**President Ikeda:** Take care of yourself. Its students determine the worth of a school, not its teachers or public opinion. It all depends on the students. This

was the profound insight of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, who were both educators—and it is the conclusion of leading thinkers the world over. People may say, “That school follows such-and-such a system, so it’s a great school,” but that’s not true.

**Another Student:** I throw the javelin on the track team. Thank you for your constant encouragement!

**President Ikeda:** No, thank you. Is your mother well?

**Student:** Yes. She has been delivering the Seikyo Shimbun [the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper] for 20 years now.

**President Ikeda:** That’s wonderful! Please thank her for me. Please be good to both your parents!

Does anyone else have a question?

**Another Student:** Yes. During my three years in high school, I was deeply impressed by the words “Difficulties and hopes coexist in our lives, and when you challenge yourself, new opportunities arise” [by Chinese poet Wang Po]. Do you have a quote or motto that is your favorite?

**President Ikeda:** I want to pre-

sent you with these words now: “Win in your endeavors!” Please do not let yourself be defeated, giving in to despair and feelings of insecurity. Everything in life is a struggle. If you win, life is wonderful, and you feel great. If you lose, you feel awful.

Any goal is fine. The important thing is to strive toward it, triumphing in each challenge along the way.

Winning doesn’t mean getting rich or becoming important. There are many rich and important people who succumb to negative influences and grow corrupt. Such people can’t be said to have won in life.

True victory is winning over your own mind. It is not determined by others’ opinions. Nor is there any need for you to compare yourself with others. A genuine victor in life is one who can declare: “I lived true to myself, and I have won! I am a spiritual victor!”

Please remember that.

**Sincerity is the most important quality that you can have.**

**Student:** I live in a dormitory. I am indebted to my dorm mom and dorm dad and many others for all they have done for me during my stay there. How do I convey my appreciation?

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

**President Ikeda:** I am also grateful to all who help run our school dormitories. Living in a dorm can be very educational, teaching you important lessons that will stand you in good stead in the future.

How can you express your gratitude to those in the dorm who have taken care of you in so many ways? The only answer is with sincerity. Sincerity is the most important quality that you can have. This is my personal belief. Nothing compares with sincerity.

Yesterday [Feb. 27], I met with Rector Adolfo Torres of Argentina's Universidad Nacional del Nordeste. He is a fine human being. These leading world thinkers and first-rate people are always completely honest. They never try to trick or manipulate others. They have shining characters and rich humanity. All of their actions are marked by sincerity. Those who are sincere are the most respectable people.

Our society is rife with jealousy and envy. The sincere may be deceived and taken advantage of. They may be maligned.

Or, when they try to explain the purity of their motives, no one may pay any heed to them. But there is a saying—a little old-fashioned, I know—"Sincerity is communicated to Heaven." This means that if you act with sincerity, your intent will reach the heavens, and you will have good results.

People who possess sincerity of conviction cannot be defeated. They will live without regrets.

Fun and games are ephemeral pleasures. And you cannot count on the opinions of others. It all comes down to you. You have to live with integrity and be honest to yourself.

Both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, incidentally, acknowledged the educational aspect of dormitory life. Almost all students in Japan's prewar high schools [corresponding to present-day universities] lived in dorms. In dorms, you experience living with other students, forming strong bonds of friendship and going through the trials and tests of friendship along the way.

In some cases, experiencing dorm life in one's youth can be more educational than classroom education. Of course, the things you learn in the classroom are important, but in a dormitory you can get an education about people.

Both Oxford and Cambridge universities in England have student dorms. In fact, I once visited Cambridge University in England with my wife [in May 1972]. While there, I asked to see the dormitories. The peo-

ple at Cambridge seemed a little surprised at my request, but they responded gladly. A professor guided us, and, when we entered the dormitory from the garden, we found two students hurriedly straightening their room for their unexpected visitors. They were fine young men. All of the students in the dormitory were talented people who would go on to be future leaders in their fields.

I also talked at some length with those who ran the dormitories about various aspects of the significance of dormitories in education.

I am of the opinion that if parents love their children, they will let them leave home and learn independence. Today in Japan, many children who are doted on by their parents and grow up in what seem to be very good families end up failing when they enter society. I think this is because they have been raised to be too dependent.

It may seem desirable to grow up at home, being spoiled and pampered by your parents. But in reality, it is not desirable. By contrast, a child that is "toughened up" a little by life in a dormitory tends to be strong and a success in society. That is why educational institutions that produce world leaders have them experience dormitory life.

Many of our Soka Junior and Senior High School students who live in dorms are wonderful students. Many people who have experienced dormitory life have gone on to be great men and women, shining and strong. In this regard, also, I have the highest respect for all those who run our dormitories. They are taking care of my "sons" and "daughters"—I am grateful to them.

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Addressing the students, President Ikeda went on to say: "I applaud those of you who have been active in school club activities and team sports. You have helped build our schools' tradition. I know you really challenged yourselves, and I wholeheartedly praise these efforts of your youth." He then presented the members of the baseball team with a box of new baseballs.

President Ikeda also presented candy necklaces to students who had lost their mothers or fathers. The other students warmly applauded as he did so. Praising students who had studied diligently in spite of struggling with various hardships, the Soka schools' founder said: "I will solemnly pray again for the deceased parents of all our students. Some of



SGI President Ikeda takes a commemorative photo with students about to graduate from the Kansai Soka schools at the Hyogo Culture Center in Kobe, Japan, Feb. 28.

you may have parents who are ill. I will pray for your parents' health and long life."

He told the students about the ceremony the previous day, in which he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Argentina's Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, saying that "a representative of the university proclaimed that the title of honorary doctorate is the jeweled crown of highest knowledge. I always regard any award I receive as the result of the activities of our Soka University and Soka schools graduates around the world. I hope that in the future, all of you will become fine scholars and leaders. That is my greatest personal dream."

**Youth is a struggle between problems and hopes.**

As he rose to go, President Ikeda continued to encourage the students as long as time would permit. To a student wearing glasses, he said: "Don't make your eyes any worse. If you cause lasting damage to your eyes, you will regret it later. Don't watch television too long. It will hurt your eyes. Spend that time reading instead."

To a student who has a long commute to school, President Ikeda said: "I know it's hard to travel so far to school, but everything in your life is part of your training and will make you stronger."

To all the students, he said: "Youth is a time when you worry and agonize over all kinds of problems. It is also a time when you can soar with

energy and enthusiasm—a time to burn with hopes and dreams. Youth is a struggle between problems and hopes.

"You mustn't let your problems defeat you and ruin your life. Please don't make your parents and your family sad. Those who triumph over their problems and advance in the direction of hope lead wonderful lives.

"No one is free from problems. Everyone has them, to a greater or lesser degree. Having problems is a natural part of life. The important thing is not to let them defeat you. And do not forget to do what you have to do now—whether it is to study or earn a degree or certificate—so that you do not put yourself at a disadvantage in the future." WT

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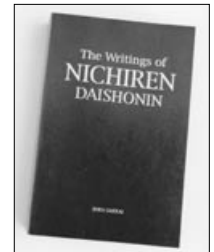
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EXPERIENCE — DENNIS MERIMSKY, ISRAEL

# 'Seeing' With His Heart

**Previously estranged from family and friends, Dennis Merimsky finds joy through Buddhist practice and mends his relationship with his son.**

I was brought up in England, and since 1973 I have been living in Israel. I have been a Buddhist in belief since I started to think about religion as an adolescent. But for years I provided an example of negative actual proof. In *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery, there is a very important line: "It is with the heart that one sees rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

My intuition seemed to work in reverse. In theory I had intellectual answers but you can't sell misery, and after two failed marriages I was estranged from family and parents. Then three years ago, I put an ad in the local newspaper's personal column and met Pnina.

With Pnina I got a really great package deal: the love of my life, five more lovely children (I have two lovely children of my own) and the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Bit by bit, I started to show actual proof in changing myself and my environment. Today I think I am the happiest person I know. It is written in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings": "Joy means delight shared by oneself and others. When both oneself and others have wisdom and compassion this is called joy." This is the story of how I tackled the biggest obstacle in my life: my relationship with my son.

For the last 21 years, I carried within me my own personal "Berlin Wall," a barrier of sadness and remorse, built from my failed attempts to maintain contact with my son, Rami. My only souvenir from this forbidden land was a large envelope of legal correspondence, Rabbinical court proceedings, and psychologist's reports collected 16 years ago in futile attempts to reach Rami, at the age of 5. These lines from Henley's poem express so aptly my feelings of despair after being turned away from Rami's

doorstep after meetings that lasted three or four minutes at most, consisting mostly of a monologue, in which I tried to induce some response from Rami: "Beyond this place of wrath and tears / Looms but the horror of the shade, / And yet the menace of the years / Finds and shall find me unafraid."

I had planned to approach Rami at the end of his military service, out several months ago. I decided not to wait another six months, because I wanted to make the breakthrough before my 50th birthday. I applied to the army liaison office for Rami's army postal address, which I was immediately given, and then spent some days chanting. I had to write a letter that would impel Rami to reply, so I chanted to be like an archer who has exactly one arrow to reach his target. This was the chance of my life, and I had to get it right the first time.

I wrote about how I had been waiting all these years to reach Rami as an adult. I wrote about the pain, the longing, and about wondering about Rami's appearance and personality. Then I spoke of my vision of adding Rami's photo to the 13 family photos hanging on the wall and of hearing his laughter echoing through the room at our family gathering, sitting at the octagonal table surrounded by his brothers and sisters. I likened the quest of acquainting father and son to two scouts groping in a dark tunnel, in search of one another and ended with Nichiren Daishonin's words that a lantern can light a place that has been dark for thousands of years.

Rami replied one day before Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement, because he has been brought up to think of me as the evil incarnate. I spent the whole day chanting about how to reply. Luckily I had kept all kinds of documents (like proof of alimony payments), but I had never before found the strength to eradicate real slander in my life. Before I wrote this letter, I had to chant about changing that part of me that saw my life as a script of victimization. Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "Bail the sea water of slander and disbelief out of the ship of your life, and solidify the embankments of your faith" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 626).

I "bailed" my "sea water" for

a number of weeks until I was ready to reply. It was, by far, the most difficult letter I have ever written. I so desperately wanted Rami to understand that both his divorced parents were real, loving, three-dimensional people, and that only by choosing this approach could he live in the real world.

Rami's reply astounded me. There was no stamp on the envelope. He had delivered the letter personally — so he must have considered the possibility of a chance encounter. The wall between us was starting to crumble. He asked me to send him family photos. I replied suggesting a meeting and leaving him my home and work phone numbers.

Weeks went by and nothing happened. Then one day I returned to my office at work to find that he had phoned. I waited for an hour, my heart pounding. I realized that in a short time I would hear a new sound in my life — my son's voice. When he phoned again we had a very functional conversation fixing a time and place to meet (in a cafe in a few days time).

I drove to the cafe, listening to a tape of Elgar's Enigma variations. This music seemed to epitomize the tide of my emotions. Elgar sought to make English music "broad, noble and chivalrous and healthy," and I yearned to fashion my life, and in particular my new relationship with Rami, in the same spirit.

I had no trouble picking out Rami in the cafe. We were the only two customers there. It was rather like a weird kind of blind date, except that we were kith and kin and so the implications of success and failure were far greater. There was a Peter Pan quality about Rami. Something in him had remained frozen at the age of 5, and was now beginning to thaw. I was immediately impressed by Rami's sin-



Dennis Merimsky with his wife, Pnina (center), and friends Edna Michaeli and Denise Golding at his home in Israel.

cerity, his total lack of bitterness and sarcasm. From his point of view, I had failed to be a father to him for 21 years. I gave him the only present I could — I promised that from now on I would always be there for him. I was starting a voyage to make amends not just for one lost child, Rami, but also for my own inner lost child as well. T.S. Elliot wrote in his poem, "Burnt Norton": "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present. / Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Toward the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden."

I wanted to find a point of contact with Rami for our second meeting, so I arrived at the cafe with a selection of poems, which I had reason to believe would appeal to him. However, Rami was not in the mood for poetry, so I put the books away. Then I had an idea. I told him how excited his sister Yonit was about the meeting and how she had chosen two poems for Rami to read. This caught his enthusiasm so he read the poems.

Nevertheless, our conversation dried up. I imagined that it would take at least six months of meetings between the two of us before we could widen the scope, and I didn't fancy another meeting in the same place. Perhaps we could go to a cinema, but I wanted Rami to make a suggestion, so I asked him what he wanted to do. "Per-

haps I could try drawing to find out whether I have any family talent," he said. I had told him that both Yonit and I painted, but his responsiveness surprised me. "We could only do that at home," I said, pretty certain that he wasn't intending to venture into the "lion's den" in the next year or so. "I'll come over then," he replied. "I promised Yonit that she would be the first other person to meet you," I added. So I phoned Yonit from Rami's cellular phone and we arranged to meet the following week at my home.

At that meeting, the first ever between brother and sister, Yonit made a breakthrough. She had at long last gained the elder brother she had been waiting years to meet.

Since then, Yonit and Rami meet every week on their own. Rami and I have painted together and are breaking new ground in every meeting. One Saturday, Rami and his girlfriend joined the family gathering for lunch at the octagonal table. He hasn't yet laughed at my jokes...but I shall go on trying until I succeed.

As Robert Musil wrote: "In his potentialities, plans and emotions, man must first of all be hedged in by prejudices, traditions difficulties and limitations of every kind, like a lunatic in his strait-jacket, and only then will whatever he is capable of bringing forth perhaps have some value, solidity and permanence." ■

EXPERIENCE — JUDY WEBER, BRENTWOOD, CALIF.

# From Victim to Victor

**Judy Weber learns to take responsibility for her life, freeing herself from a 'victim' mentality.**

I grew up the youngest of four kids. I have a very vivid memory of being physically as well as emotionally abused at 4 years old. I went into shock. I became extremely untrusting, specifically of men, and walked around in a total haze. I lived most of the time in my head, trying to "figure it all" out, in fear and trapped inside myself.

I learned to survive by becoming a victim. I began to compulsively overeat. I was merely trying to keep some sense of order or control; not allowing myself to get close to anyone, including myself. I was told I was a burden and wasn't wanted. I became this chubby little girl and grew up with the belief that I wasn't loved because I was heavy and that there was fundamentally something wrong with me. All I wanted was to be loved, accepted and understood, but was always looking for these qualities from other people because I was taught I wasn't enough to matter.

The need to take control was so intense that by my senior year in high school, I began my journey into anorexia. And, by my freshman year of college, I discovered bulimia. My life became so obsessed and consumed with being thin that I lived in a mind-altered state. I honestly believed that if I were thin (which was never thin enough), I would be loved and accepted. The equation seemed that simple. Basically, I wanted to disappear.

As a victim, I learned to manipulate my circumstances and other people. Even with all that, I have always been a very responsible person with a good job, never living beyond my means, but through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I have awakened to the difference between "being responsible" and TAKING RESPONSIBILITY. Taking responsibility wasn't part of my plans. Guess what? Through my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, my plans changed.

I began practicing nearly eight years ago. I was really depressed, without direction and hopeless. I feel fortunate that I immediately connected with the practice. I tried so many different paths seeking happiness and growth, but something was still missing. Intuitively, it never felt "right" to me praying to something or someone outside myself. What I realized the first night I began to

chant was that everything I would ever need, want or was to believe, was already within me. But to truly know that you are responsible for making that happen, or bringing that out, I later found out takes a lot of persistence, strength and courage.

When I got laid off from my job during my second year of practice, it was my first "real" obstacle to overcome. I found myself actually relieved, whereas normally I would have been petrified that I'd never find another job. So, the question to face was "What do I do now?"

What else does someone do when they get laid off from their job? Go on vacation.

I had always loved Italy and had been there a few times, so within a week, I was on a plane. Sitting on the plane, as crazy as it was, I thought about living there. When I saw members and friends there, they all supported and encouraged my thinking. So, I came home, sold everything I owned, someone lent me a car, housed me for two months and I was off to Italy with two suitcases. It seemed perfect to me too. Then, I arrived.

It was as if a tidal wave hit me. It wasn't risk-taking that ran in my family; I was utterly clueless as to what I had done. I literally couldn't stop crying for two weeks. I didn't speak the language, didn't know how to get around. I was in a fog. I had to depend on this woman and her husband (who were both members) that I was staying with and was trying so hard not to be a burden. I was living in constant anxiety that I thought would never end. I felt trapped. I was afraid to stay and afraid to leave.

All I could do was chant as there was no one I could call. I started chanting about three hours a day until that too, became overwhelming for me.

Then one night when I just couldn't take it anymore, I walked to the nearest phone booth, called a fellow SGI friend in Rome because she spoke English. When I finished crying to her she said one thing to me: "Judy, you choose your life-condition. What do you want it to be?" Right then everything came to a screeching halt. I got off the phone, went back to my room, wrote down my goals and determinations about staying in Italy, and chanted with conviction that I wanted to make this work. That decision, that shift of attitude in front of the Gohonzon changed the next three years of my life.

Literally the next day, I got a job teaching English and decided it was time to connect to the SGI

in Italy. I went to the community center in Milan to engage in activities. Because I didn't speak Italian, they offered me the "opportunity" to be on the cleaning crew at the center once a month, which met on Sunday mornings at 7 a.m. It wasn't quite what I had in mind, nor did I ever imagine myself cleaning the center. But I said, "Judy, don't judge. Just do what's in front of you."

So when I was washing the floors with a rag and a bucket of water, I would tell myself that I was ringing out the dirt from my life, cleaning and polishing my life from the bottom up. I was already learning not to begrudge my struggles and to be 100 percent where I was. At the time, I have to say, it wasn't pretty, but it became a benefit because soon after, when I needed to find a new house within 10 days, I found an amazing house for free, in exchange for teaching English.

I began teaching English to the Byakuren and phone staff at the community center and chanting together with lots of members. It allowed me to see the value of communication and dialogue and as a result, I began to see more clearly the value of my own life, as well as our interrelationship to others, especially my family.

No matter how many times I had heard that in Buddhism we "choose" our parents, I didn't quite hear it until my friend Reno, in Milan, casually told me how he resolved his relationship with his parents. Until this time, as horrible as it seems, I had written my parents off, as if they didn't exist.

Basically, growing up I felt my parents were not in touch with their own feelings, so they couldn't handle any of the pain that I was going through, which made me suffer and feel more isolated. After hearing Reno's experience though, I knew I had to take full responsibility for them being in my life. If I stopped blaming them, I had no more excuses, no crutch anymore. It was time to confront me.

It was terrifying to let go of who I thought they were, and my eating disorder at the same time. I was really suffering. At the same time, I had a horrific outbreak of a skin condition known as eczema, coupled with candida, that covered major parts of my body in a rash. It's hard to describe the physical and emotional pain I was experiencing.

There were so many times I wanted to give up and was discouraged, but I knew deep in my life I had to continue to chant because I was changing my karma. This lasted almost a year. I had received guidance and started to focus on the so-



Judy Weber

lutions, not the problem and, sharing Buddhism. It was really my beginning to challenge the power of Buddhist practice.

So, I started chanting for my parent's happiness and to let go of this grudge. I know it sounds cliché, but it's true that the more I chanted for their happiness, my life started to feel more and more joy. And from that joy, I began to feel real compassion for them and gratitude that they brought me into the world. I chanted to be able to see their Buddha nature and not their negativity.

I wrote my parents a letter telling them about my appreciation for them and telling them, confidently what I was doing in Italy and how happy I was with the decision I had made. I felt such sincerity in my heart for them. It was bizarre how the emphasis of my feelings could just change, and I truly wanted them to have the happiness I had manifested. It was freeing and scary at the same time to feel comfortable in my own decisions and in my own life.

After several trips back to the States to visit them, and with continuous efforts, our relationship has come full circle; my parents and I have the deepest love and gratitude for one another. They have chanted with me many times. One day my mother called me in Italy to tell me her and my dad chanted on their own for a friend of theirs who was ill. The miracle is that my dad has several times commented on what a sincere and wonderful person I am.

So, after my two years in Italy and many activities, I finally had the courage to take action based on listening to my wisdom. A year ago, I knew that I was ready to come back to the States.

Among many goals, the real challenge was to face my life as a 38-year-old woman that was choosing not to run anymore. Prior to my leaving, I was given

the opportunity to do an activity at Taplow Court in England where I was in charge of all the activities that transpired there for a week with a team of eight members. I was so afraid to take on the responsibility but knew I wanted to break through this fear.

During that week, I chanted about four hours a day and determined to trust. That experience completely prepared my life-condition to return because coming back to the States was way more courageous than going to Italy. I made a decision that I was not going to live in my old patterns anymore or feel trapped in any situation. Even though I was afraid, I had the confidence that I would not be victimized by the fear. I knew that although I suffered greatly and challenged my anorexia and bulimia, I had the faith that I would have ultimate freedom and health. I'm starting to believe in the things I used to think were impossible or that I never bothered chanting about.

I am challenging my life to go beyond what I once accepted as my limitations. Not only my attitude, but also my actions, have genuinely become about giving rather than the victim of "give me." I see my life expanding and how incredible it is to encourage other people.

Through all of this, I developed such trust and a deeper sense of who I am. I know now I have the power within my life to change. I have worked hard to honor and respect myself without judgment. I have abused and denied my life for so many years and I am now freeing myself in every thought I think and every action I take. This freedom has allowed me to accept my innocence instead of resisting my humanness. My goal is to share my life with those who don't believe that there is hope, happiness and the absolute possibility of change. **WJ**

EXPERIENCE — IAN EHRENREICH, STANFORD, CALIF.

# There Are No Accidents in Buddhism

**Ian Ehrenreich finds a new appreciation for life after overcoming a traumatic leg injury.**

A year ago, I suffered an unexpected injury that threatened to permanently change my life as I knew it. I had returned home from my first freshman quarter at Stanford University for winter break. Undecided in my major, I had spent that first quarter searching for my field of study and wound up frustrated as I had spent precious time taking courses which I might not need. Nevertheless, I was excited about going home and looking forward to being with my mother and brothers in Sacramento.

There was a problem at home. The manager of the mobile home park my family had moved into a few months earlier had given us a seven-day notice. We had to finish the skirting around the base of our mobile home to get the home up to park standards. When I arrived there were only a few days left on the notice. Although my brother helped with the skirting on the weekend, the high school he was going to wouldn't go on break for another week. So it was up to me along with my neighbor, who was helping for a small fee, to finish the project before the next weekend.

On Dec. 21, 1998, my neighbor and I began working early in the morning while my mother was at work. My little brother, Kevan, watched from inside as it was 30 degrees outside. It was so cold you could see your breath and my hands were numb. While cutting a panel with a power circular saw, somehow the blade of the saw caught onto my jeans and consequently got sucked into my leg. I felt weak and decided to sit down. My neighbor told me later that he saw blood spreading over my pants. He ran off to his house yelling, "Call an ambulance!" His wife called the ambulance and I was taken to the hospital.

At the hospital, I was told the blade had cut through 60 percent of my quadriceps muscles and tendons. From that instant, I realized the magnitude of this injury, but I had faith that I had been and would continue to be protected due to my

eight-year practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This fact became more apparent as the situation progressed.

I began to chant along with my family. I was told that there would be a lengthy wait to get into the operating room, but also that they would try their best to get me in before the tissue began to deteriorate I had about five hours. We called a few SGI-USA members and asked them to chant. They called other members who also chanted; I got into the operating room in nearly four hours. I knew this was due to the prayers of the members who were chanting for me.

My doctor really saved my leg. He stitched together the different layers of tissue and reattached a portion of my tendons to my kneecap. When I awoke from the operation, I was told that I was very fortunate; that I could possibly have never walked again had the saw cut one millimeter deeper. The saw had just missed my kneecap and since there are no major arteries on the front of the leg, I did not require reconstructive surgery.

The compassion and skill of my surgeon inspired such trust and admiration in me that I thought seriously about making medicine my field of study. My injury was critical, but it could have been significantly worse. I sincerely thanked the Gohonzon and was so appreciative to all the members for their support.

With the support of my family, SGI friends and the helpful people from my dorm, I rapidly recovered. The wound entirely healed within six weeks. Much of this was due to the skill of my surgeon whom I got to know during the many office visits. Through my strong Buddhist practice and determination, I progressed through rehabilitation in a little over a month.

I enrolled in courses needed for premed and realized I had found my field of study! I will be a doctor of medicine. My recovery spanned one quarter of school and in retrospect, it was probably the most difficult, but extremely rewarding period of my life. I had to use a wheelchair. Because my room was on the third floor of an all-fresh residence dorm that had no elevators, I had to move into a first-floor room in an upper class dorm. This required me leaving my friends at the all-



Ian Ehrenreich (far right), 20, a sophomore at Stanford University with his mother, Veronica, and two brothers, Ryan, 19, and Kevan, 11, outside Wilbur Hall dormitory at Stanford.

fresh dorm. I felt really alone.

It was during this time that certain SGI-USA members and college friends helped me maintain a positive outlook on life. Every day, I would wheel myself to class, but individuals from my previous residence dorm oftentimes helped me by pushing me to class. Also, friends would take me to dinner with them and that really helped me to not feel too separated from the environment that had become my new home during my first quarter at school.

Many SGI friends would come over to chant with me and would take me out to dinner or to meetings. These individuals really helped me to maintain my practice and faith, and connection to the SGI.

By the end of the winter quarter, I had finished rehabilitation and had full functionality of my leg. It was still weaker than my other leg, but I had regained a level of mobility that I had not had since before my injury. I remember fondly a time early in the spring when I jokingly chased

after one of my friends, running at a very fast pace. While doing this, I realized that I could run and I felt deeply appreciative to be alive and to have recovered fully from my injury.

I believe that this accident happened as a sign that I needed to strengthen my Buddhist practice. It helped me to realize the very human arrogance that had become entrenched in my life. This injury helped me to see that I was living in a manner that was blind and unappreciative.

Indeed, this experience helped me to appreciate many things. It made me appreciate my youth and the opportunities that are present in my life and the fact that I can take advantage of these opportunities. It made me appreciate my family and the strong support of the SGI-USA. It made me appreciate my doctor whose skills made it possible for me to walk again and gave me a firm direction in my field of study. But above all, the accident made me appreciate the

wonder of this practice and the power of prayer to the Gohonzon. My Buddhist practice protected me and knowing this fact has truly deepened my faith.

Last year I was chosen as the representative from our area and I was able to attend the SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival in Los Angeles. The spirit of the festival was so awesome. I had the great benefit of being able to reconnect with other youth whom I had met in 1997 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center during the Junior High and High School Conference.

My brother, Ryan, is now a freshman at Stanford and I'm a sophomore. Our New Year's determination is to start a Buddhist Club at Stanford to share this philosophy with other students. Above all, this accident made me realize the great fortune that I have and has deepened my resolve to live a life filled with compassion, not only through my field of study, but through sharing this Buddhism with others, which is the greatest act of compassion. **WT**

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# The Issue of Language, the Spirit of Reform

## PERSPECTIVE

By WENDY DESOUZA  
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.



All words have a history, all languages adopt words and terms from foreign cultures. Moreover, all religions borrow from the culture of that religion's origins. To my knowledge, there has never been a successful religious movement that erased its roots—linguistic or otherwise—in order to gain a wider audience.

Dave Baldschun's article "Advocating the Universality of Buddhism" (March 17 *World Tribune*, p. 10), however, seems to argue that the erasure of foreign influence—specifically Japanese influence—is not only possible, but desirable. I would like to draw attention to the issue of language and the spirit of reform that this article, I feel, misrepresents.

"Advocating" takes a questionable position on the use of Japanese language in our organization. Take this article's example of the term *shakubuku*. Many have tried to find an English equivalent to this Buddhist term, all to no avail. For exam-

ple, calling *shakubuku* something like "propagation" is incorrect because that's not what it means. Literally, *shakubuku* means to "break and subdue," which most would agree sounds quite awkward if not off-putting in English. To the best of my knowledge, the word *propagation* itself belongs to the same linguistic origin as "propaganda," which refers to the committee of cardinals within the Roman Catholic Church entitled "Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith" in charge of spreading Christianity through foreign missions. If I had my choice, I would rather use the Japanese term, as "foreign" as it might seem.

The question is not whether we should eliminate "foreign words," for that seems to give the impression that we become

more "American" in doing so. Rather, how to reform, how to proceed in a manner befitting America and the diverse American membership based on President Ikeda's vision, is the key question.

Achieving consensus on this topic is not easy. Perhaps that is precisely what makes us uniquely American: The recognition that what is American is too broad to be defined. Being true to ourselves, caring for each person and relating Buddhism to each individual's circumstances is, I feel, the best way to proceed as an organization. We must always self-reflect on substance vs. formality. Yet we cannot invent an "authentic" American identity that divorces itself from all things foreign. Even if these so-called foreign things—overtly Japanese in origin—are removed, we have not necessarily come closer to SGI President Ikeda's vision of an organization that would serve as a "model for the rest of the world" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 7).

All issues about culture and language aside, I was quite disturbed by the suggestion that members should cease using the name *Sensei* to refer to President Ikeda. On April 24, 1979, President Ikeda was forced to resign as Soka Gakkai presi-

dent during a time when Nichiren Shoshu, much like today, was embroiled in an internal battle for position and profit. Though I am not afforded a lengthy explanation of this episode, one of the demands ordered by Nichiren Shoshu was that members were forbidden to refer to President Ikeda as "Sensei." Top-level Soka Gakkai leaders acquiesced to this demand because they feared disobeying the priests. It is telling that a few women's division members who saw President Ikeda at a meeting and exclaimed, "Sensei!" did so because they couldn't accept the bogus dictate of the priests.

No one is required to use the affectionate name *Sensei*, yet I believe the name carries a tremendous amount of sincerity and genuine feeling from the members. That we should in some way suppress that feeling because we might be perceived as so-called "followers of a cult" is objectionable to me. That reduces the spirit of appreciation, respect, warmth and love the name *Sensei* invokes. It is necessary to delineate between that which opens our movement to a wider audience, giving it a more universal appeal, and that which tries to suppress

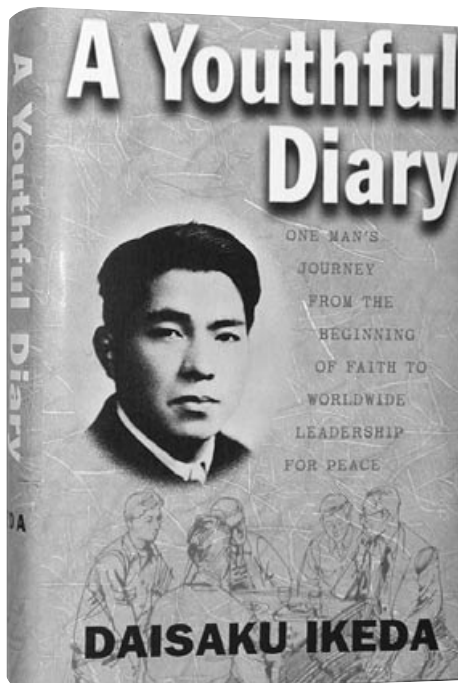
what is in people's hearts and their natural expression of joy.

In closing, I believe it is important to rely on the spirit of reform and not on cosmetic changes. Language is important, but what is more important is to seek the true meaning of President Ikeda's expectations, know our history, and constantly seek to understand our mentor's broad vision for the future.

### Editor's note:

*There has been a strong reaction—pro and con—to Dave Baldschun's perspective titled "Advocating the Universality of Buddhism" (March 17 World Tribune, p. 10). We regret that we omitted the disclaimer at the end of the article that reads "Perspectives printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA, or the World Tribune."*

*We wish to stress that perspectives do not reflect official organizational policy; therefore, the March 17 perspective should not be used as a dictate among the membership; we are not advocating that people stop using the word Sensei. The article was intended to foster dialogue on the subject of the use of language throughout the SGI-USA.*



## Youthful Inspiration for All of Us.

Through the tale of the ever-deepening relationship between the young Daisaku Ikeda and his mentor-in-life, Josei Toda, *A Youthful Diary* is a compelling account of both triumphs and setbacks on the road to establishing the foundation of today's Soka Gakkai.



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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 5-6

*Niigata members trapped in a train in the snow encourage themselves by singing Soka Gakkai songs as the situation becomes life threatening.*

It took three hours before all the 900 train passengers from Niigata and Uetsu had eaten. The Nagaoka members didn't head for home until 2:00 in the morning.

The rice balls and miso soup had heartened the stranded members tremendously. A single bowl of soup, made with such loving care by their comrades in faith, reawakened in the passengers their pride as Soka Gakkai members and gave them the courage that they needed to endure the continuing hardship. They all renewed their determination not to be beaten. The atmosphere in the train became bright and lighthearted again. Some even joked, saying things like "That hot miso soup was great—better than guidance from 10 leaders!"

When the Nagaoka members arrived home, they immediately began to prepare breakfast for those in the train. They worked almost all night.

The next morning, Jan. 25, rice balls were delivered to the train again. There were more

rice balls and miso soup for lunch and rice balls and pork soup in the evening.

The Nagaoka members also sent fresh diapers and milk for the infants, sweets for the children, as well as tangerines, tea, toilet paper, medical supplies and gauze masks for those with colds. The people in the train hadn't asked for these; they were an expression of the Nagaoka members' thoughtfulness, born of their deep concern.

Through all of this, the snow continued to fall. The train's roof was piled with about 3 feet of snow, and icicles fringed the edges. Some of the train's toilets had stopped up, and an unpleasant odor began to waft through the cars. Members of the Traffic Control Group worked valiantly with sticks and other makeshift tools to clear the obstructed toilets.

These young men outdid themselves, carrying out their duties around the clock with almost no rest or sleep. One of the TCG members, as he was running up and down the plat-

form delivering messages between cars, slipped and fell into an open drain alongside the platform. Water for melting the snow was running into the drain, and he got completely soaked.

But he didn't let that deter him in the least from his duties. Determined to support and assist his fellow passengers, he kept working energetically, with a smile on his face. Everyone was moved by his sense of responsibility. His was a shining example of the truth that a person's real worth becomes apparent in times of adversity.

The train's heating had cut off in the early morning hours of Jan. 25, apparently because the fuel for the heating system had run out. In a flash, the temperature in the cars plummeted. Without heat in heavy snowfall, the situation was fast becoming life threatening.

Niigata Chapter Leader Kinji Eda and the TCG leader consulted with the stationmaster to find a solution to this crisis. The stationmaster, contacting everyone available, finally secured more fuel and got the heating up and going again.

Jan. 25 darkened into evening. It would be the third night since the group left the head temple. Though the warm support and encouragement of the Nagaoka Chapter members had inspired them, they were worn-out. Forced to sleep night after night sitting up,

unable to lie down and stretch out, their legs were swollen and stiff.

But they were more exhausted mentally than physically. In the 40-odd hours that they had been stranded at Miyauchi Station, they had not had a moment's ease. As the hours crept past, people began to grow anxious, impatient and irritated, and found themselves becoming short-tempered with one another.

Eda chanted daimoku silently as he tried in earnest to think of some way to handle the situation. Then he had an idea. He called out to the members in his car: "Everyone, let's have a discussion meeting! Let's start with some Soka Gakkai songs!"

Immediately, a young TCG member said: "All right. I'll sing 'The Traffic Control Group Song.'" He, too, wanted to cheer everyone up. Closing his right hand into a fist, he began to lead the song, moving his arm to the beat as others clapped in time.

*In our boldly advancing Soka Gakkai Young lions now stand resolute.*

His voice was powerful and clear, and it was filled with the determination never to be defeated. Those who knew the song joined in, and the clapping grew louder as animation returned to the members' faces. The young man's energetic performance had roused every-

one's spirits.

When the song came to an end, Eda said, "Let's sing some more!"

"I'll lead you in 'Song of Indomitable Dignity,'" responded the youth again, and he started them off by vigorously singing the opening line:

*Into this defiled and evil world Go we of the Gakkai....*

This time, everyone in the car sang in unison.

*We advance unperturbed By obstacles blocking our way Upholding our faith and practice*

*With indomitable dignity— Here lies our confidence....*

As they sang passionately, the joy and hope of dedicating themselves to their mission to realize kosen-rufu surged in their heart. They were filled with fresh resolve to make it through this ordeal. They sang one Soka Gakkai song after another, until finally everyone's eyes were wet with emotion.

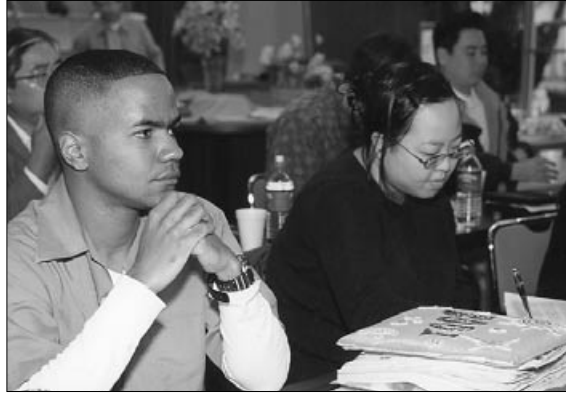
When the people in the next car heard the singing, they began to sing Soka Gakkai songs, too. It spread from car to car, until everyone on the train was singing, their joyful voices echoing out into the blizzard night.

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

Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA



Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



(Left) CEC participants at the Malibu Training Center on March 24, and (right) at the SGI Plaza, March 25.

FROM CEC, I leaders truly unite. "In order to unite," he said, "each of you needs to stand up with the same sense of responsibility that Mr. Nagashima has. Whether it's in dialogue with temple members, introducing new members to the practice, encouraging people to contribute financially or promoting the publications, you should feel totally responsible for SGI-USA's success. If each leader feels this way, you will have

greater unity in the SGI-USA and, thus, greater victories." Mr. Wada also encouraged the leaders to improve organizational communication. The three components of this, he explained, are communicating, reporting and discussing. "When we communicate with one another, we can create unity," he said. "By reporting, we are able to know the reality of things—how our organization is moving, and if we are moving in the right

direction. And in discussing after collecting correct information, we can talk about it together and, based on this, plan the next strategy for our next victory and take action." At the close of the CEC, Mr. Nagashima again encouraged the leaders to exert themselves toward the milestone of May 3, 2001, when Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo will open. "There are just about 400 days until then," he said. "And about

100 days from now will be July 3, the Day of Mentor and Discipline. About 100 days after that will be Oct. 13, the day of Nichiren Daishonin's death. About 100 days after that will be Jan. 26, SGI Day. Then, 100 days later, comes May 3, 2001, the day that President Ikeda has been inspiring us to work toward for many years. Let's win in each of these 100-day periods toward that day! Let's not have even one regret!" **WT**

Photo by YO BELLAS



## Akron District Women Meet

"The Power of One Woman to Make a Difference" was the theme of the Akron, Ohio District Women's Meeting held Feb. 27 at the home of Patty Bernard. To commemorate the 10th anniversary of SGI-USA Women's Day, the group shared experiences in faith and reminisced about individuals who had contributed significantly to society as a whole or to their own lives. We also enjoyed a great potluck dinner. Highlights of the program included an overview of SGI President Ikeda's "clear mirror" guidance presented by Keiko Shibahara and a moving narrative of personal triumph by Mi-tsuko Mianowsky. Among extraordinary females honored were pioneering Akron educator Edith Delaney, who was praised by Gail

McWilliams for inspiring a generation of students to "reach for the stars." Margaret Moore shared her respect and awe of her older sister Charlotte Martinez, who sacrificed to help raise her 11 younger siblings after the untimely death of their mother. Mitsuko Mianowsky told about 12th-century Japanese author Murasaki Shikibu, who is remembered even today for her masterpiece *The Tale of Genji*. Former Akron-Canton Chapter leader Yoshiko Burgen was commended by Ann Perry for her compassion and leadership. Every participant received a copy of the booklet "Buddhism Is the Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives" and a handmade mirrored memento proclaiming each a Bodhisattva of the Earth. —ANN PERRY

## World Tribune MAILBOX

### About Depression

In a letter that I wrote for the March 17 *World Tribune*, I said: "I began taking SAM-e (a metabolic intermediate compound called S-adenosylmethionine), and my deep-seated depression is completely gone, while I have experienced NO side effects from the supplement."

I have since received several letters from members, reporting that they have begun taking SAM-e. One person even wrote to me, explaining that the supplement was bringing out more anxiety.

I would like to caution members to please consult a psychiatrist and receive a diagnosis that you believe is valid before taking any kind of anti-depressant, including SAM-e. If a person has a chemical imbalance that is not true depression, an anti-depressant can exacerbate, rather than relieve the symptoms. In fact, one member that I know was diagnosed with depression and put on an anti-depressant, and discovered that it worked for a short period of time. Then she felt worse. She is now exploring the possibility that she is manic-depressive.

Psychiatry is a wonderful, altruistic field. But unfortunately, many people are misdiagnosed. In Danielle Steel's book, *His*

*Bright Light*, the author explains that her son saw many psychiatrists who either would not diagnose her son, or misdiagnosed him. After several years and a half-dozen psychiatrists, he was finally diagnosed with manic-depression and treated with the correct medication.

I believe, however, that with a sincere practice and prayer to the Gohonzon, a person can find the best treatment and correct diagnosis.

—LIZ GOLDNER,  
Costa Mesa, Calif.  
Lgoldner@earthlink.net

## Fine Print

The Court verdict validation is such a victory for the youth division! You have fought so valiantly for so many years to help make this happen. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your energy, enthusiasm, sincerity and dedication. Especially to the youth of the Santa Rosa area and Portland, my two homes, may your lives explode with well-earned joy and good fortune! —Elaine Cronin Lindberg, Portland, Ore., elindberg@netzero.net

I've just returned from the most inspiring stay at the FNCC for the Stage Crew Conference. Like most of us, others helped make this truly extraordinary trip possible—sort of the people behind the scenes of the people behind the scenes. I would like to thank my brother Matthew and my friend Annie for helping me get there. May my benefits from this conference extend to you. I'd also like to thank my fellow stage crew members Andy and John B. for calling my attention to an aspect of this trip I might have otherwise been oblivious to. —Elizabeth Perez, Los Angeles (323) 666-5452

## The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

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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.

# JOY IN THE CARIBBEAN



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima (left) accepts an honorary citizenship on behalf of SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda from representatives of the governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands.



St. Croix Chapter members meet on Feb. 27.



St. Thomas Bay



St. Thomas Chapter holds a meeting March 1 with Mr. Nagashima.



Members of St. Maarten Chapter gather on March 3 for a meeting.



Local TV covered the occasion of St. Maarten's Commissioner of Culture and Education Sarah Wescott-Williams presenting a certificate of commendation to Kaneko Ikeda, SGI President Ikeda's wife, in commemoration of Feb. 27, SGI-USA Women's Day.