

World TRIBUNE

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EXPERIENCE:

Barbara Fox makes offerings from the heart.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 24 SPEECH — PART 1

THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

'To pray through every problem, to pray fully with all of your being — this is the secret to success,' says SGI President Ikeda.

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 44th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, March 24.

Nothing is as strong or as deep as the prayers of our women's division members. To pray until victory is achieved, to

pray with all one's might — this is the spirit of the women's division. The shining crown of victory adorns all who have such faith.

To pray through every problem, to pray fully with all of your being — this is the secret to success.

The question of what it means to be human will be an important focus in the 21st century.

In February this year, there was a written exam for an "Introduction to Buddhism" class at Harvard University. One of the essay questions on it was about my book *The Living Buddha*. The question was in



SGI President Ikeda speaks at the 44th Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, March 24.

two parts: first, students were asked why they thought the book was titled *The Living Buddha*. And second, they were asked to state their views on who the living Buddha is.

Dr. Charles Hallisey, the

associate professor who is teaching the course, used *The Living Buddha* as one of his textbooks and then made it the topic of the essay question for his students.

Masao Yokota, president of

the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, reported on this in detail, and I want to share his account with you:

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6

FROM JAMES HERRMANN, SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION LEADER

Toward July 3: Our Finest Hour

SGI-USA Youth Division Leader James Herrmann encourages all youth division to focus on propagation and publications promotion for the next three months toward July 3, Mentor and Disciple Day.



Congratulations to all the youth of SGI-USA who put their heart and soul into our March 16 Introductory Meetings. I participated in many of these meetings with you and can confidently say that it is because of each one of your efforts that many more youth division members gathered than last year, and we achieved a 20 percent increase in the number of guests from last year. The joy and enthusiasm with which these meetings were conducted has sparked new life in the American kosen-rufu movement. This is a victory

we have won together and can savor for all time.

And now we have entered another crucial phase of

our noble effort — encouraging these guests to become members.

Our purpose for having "introductory" meetings nationwide for March 16 this year was so that we could expand the core of youth in America who practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. By introducing a whole new group of people to Buddhism and SGI President Ikeda, we have created the opportunity for these individuals to achieve lasting happiness in their lives. In doing so, we have greatly changed the course of our own lives.

I wish to state clearly to the

youth of SGI-USA that these next two months will deeply impact our future. Let's pour our heart and soul into caring for these guests. By taking personal initiative, we can ensure that they have the best opportunity to start practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. In addition, we can realize our goal of welcoming one new member per district by July 3, just as General Director Danny Nagashima mentioned in his message in the April 21 *World Tribune*. With this success in propagation, together with our victory in promoting the *World Tribune*, we can contribute to changing the destiny of America. We will set the stage for our successful youth-sponsored 40th anniversary celebrations. We will set the stage for May 3, 2001.

We will truly open the new millennium!

President Ikeda recently sent a message to SGI-USA in which he said, "The Soka Gakkai's eternal ironclad principle for winning is the unity of *itai doshin*, of many in body, one in mind." Now is our opportunity as youth to unite the SGI-USA through prayer and action to realize our goal in propagation. Harvesting the seeds we planted in our March 16 effort is crucial to our victory.

Let's remember that in their historic February commemorative meetings, the women's division invited thousands of guests, many of whom were young people. Let's nurture these individuals as well.

Daimoku is the key. Therefore, the youth national leaders are initiating a simultaneous

daimoku campaign by time zones across the country. We will challenge one hour of daimoku, every morning, between the hours of 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. by time zone. Of course, many of you are probably doing this already, and some of you probably chant more in the morning! Still others have to be at work by 7:00 a.m. and are unable to participate physically, which is perfectly understandable. But let's participate in spirit! Let's unite in chanting daimoku to realize this daring new chapter in the history of American kosen-rufu.

I call out to all the youth of SGI-USA — let's really enjoy this dramatic and historic undertaking. The youth of America are opening the door to the new millennium. Let us seize the day. **WT**

ON THE MAY COMMEMORATIVE CONTRIBUTION ACTIVITY

SGI-USA, Let's Go For It!

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

SGI-USA, let's go for it! Let's live with pride. This is a life of victory, a Buddhist way of life."

I will never forget hearing those words from SGI President Ikeda last January — and especially seeing them for myself expressed with such an infectious sense of pride in America. It was electrifying, even liberating.

It is with this sense of reach-for-the-stars pride that I want to talk about our May Commemorative Contribution event. It's already under way, starting April 28, the anniversary of the day Nichiren Daishonin first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the world to hear. On May 3, we celebrated SGI Day, the anniversary of the inauguration of President Toda (in 1951) and President Ikeda (in 1960).

We honor these events by expressing our appreciation for our founders and renewing our determination to accomplish kosen-rufu. You can say that our appreciation and determination are our offerings for the sake of the people, for the sake of peace, for the sake of our own happiness.

We make such offerings — of time, of prayers, of effort to



Photo by STEPHANIE SYDNEY

encourage others — throughout the year. Such contributions are by far the most valuable — without them, without YOU, the organization would not exist.

Likewise, we could not support the activities of kosen-rufu without the financial contributions of the membership. Do you know that a typical community center costs \$15,000 a year to operate? And this doesn't include mortgage or rent or insurance or remodeling or any equipment such as photocopier machines. Multiply that by the number of community centers nationwide.

I can't speak for everyone, but I know I take a lot for granted when I walk into a brightly lit community center and hear the

phones ringing and the hum of the photocopier machine. It all takes cold, hard cash. Here is a general breakdown of how our contributions are used:

- ❖ Operations (community center leases, insurance, maintenance, mailings, utilities, photocopier machines, fax machine, telephones)
- ❖ Asset acquisition (the purchase of buildings, properties and equipment, as well as building improvements)
- ❖ Bookstore operations (purchasing, distribution costs and warehousing)
- ❖ Administrative (salaries, legal, accounting and administrative costs)

Other categories include such things as special events (like youth activities and culture performances) and support of disaster relief and local community projects.

Because of your great efforts, we sustain more than 65 community centers, and we support many activities to help spread the Daishonin's teachings. Our new general director, Danny Nagashima, has just announced the addition of three new community centers and 15 smaller activity centers for

members who live far from community centers.

I am overflowing with pride and the thrill of achievement at what we have accomplished. We should all take pride in making this kind of commitment. In fact, now is the time to think BIG, "to go for it," as President Ikeda said.

To live with pride is the benefit of living as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. The Daishonin spoke often of this: "It is better to live a single day with honor than to live to 120 and die in disgrace.... More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. From the time you read this letter, strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 851).

Nichiren Daishonin tells us it is the heart that matters most. If our heart desires to further kosen-rufu, to contribute, to leave a legacy of faith, then our fortune will definitely expand. Our contributions — of time, of effort, of prayer, of finances — benefit us, our organization and our society.

In concrete terms, there are two things we can do:

1) Make a united prayer that this May we will — as individuals and as an organization — break through to great abundance. Think BIG! Whatever

your heart desires, remember that only you can hold yourself back. The sky is the limit!

2) Make our contributions with pride and appreciation, no matter what the amount, and encourage at least one other member to do the same. How we reach out to our fellow members, sharing with them our sense of pride, our sense of commitment, and our sense of joy, affects everyone around us.

I am confident if we unite our hearts on these two points — prayer and action — we will have an unprecedented commemorative contribution this May.

On that same electrifying January evening, President Ikeda also talked about prayer, that when we pray resolutely to accomplish something for the sake of kosen-rufu, we can pierce the universe with our prayer and the Buddhist deities must respond.

More recently, he wrote about taking action: "Don't let your spirit rest! Give expression to the empathy and humanity you possess. Act! Break loose from the restraints of laziness and cowardice, and begin something new. Only in action is there growth of the spirit. Only in growth of the spirit does one find happiness" (April 28 *World Tribune*, p. 2).

SGI-USA, let's go for it! **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — BARBARA FOX, LOS ANGELES

Offerings From the Heart

**Barbara Fox
rediscovers the joy of
financial
contribution.**

I began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at age 17 in 1971. My best friend from my Jewish youth group had begun several years earlier and took painstaking efforts to explain everything she knew about Buddhism to me. Once, as a new member, I had just 25 cents to last for two days. I was in college and was accustomed to being low on funds. I bought two oranges to place on my altar in appreciation to the Gohonzon. The same night I was deluged with 25 pounds of steak, a dinner invitation and an unsolicited delivery of delicious Chinese food left on my doorstep by a friend. Needless to say, I was incredulous. I felt there were fundamental principles at play that I did not yet understand.

Of course, in my 29 years of practice, I've seen remarkable transformations in myself and others who practice Buddhism. A dear friend once told me that she wanted her life to be a radiant example of the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. It touched me deeply, and I determined to do the same. Much of the following came as a result of challenging myself to make that determination a reality.

Fast forward to 1981, when I became an esthetician. My 19-year career in skincare has been more than fulfilling. I've taught, traveled and lectured for work. I've set up spas, been on television and was named one of Los Angeles' top facialists by *Los Angeles Magazine*. Three years ago, I was invited to set up a "Spa Treatment" program at a highly respected massage institute in Santa Monica, Calif. I gained my Post Secondary and Graduate Vocational Instructor's Credential from the State of California and began teaching massage therapists to do spa treatments. I became a masseuse as well.

It was eight years earlier that I decided to work for myself. I thought this would give me the financial freedom I deserved. Let me tell you, I have never faced such hardship. Building a business from scratch was a challenge, but I

had become quite a risk taker. My many years of practice had given me the courage to go forward. Little did I know that working for myself had little to do with making money. The lessons I learned went far beyond my pocketbook.

I could no longer contribute financially monthly to the SGI, something I had begun when I was a new member. Yes, contributions can take many forms: time, energy, effort, etc. But it also takes money to keep our doors open, lights on and pay for basic organizational needs, such as paper and upkeep of our community centers. I made special efforts to participate in our annual May contribution activity, but a monthly contribution was out of the question. It seemed I was getting poorer and poorer. I loved working for myself, but I wasn't getting ahead financially. Still, I was determined to succeed. I loved my work and chanted for my clients' happiness on a regular basis.

Then suddenly, my father became deathly ill. He contracted a virus from a mosquito bite, which caused swelling in his brain, giving him instant dementia. He could no longer speak, and lost the use of most of his faculties. My family went

'Material possessions cannot be enjoyed after death. But millionaires rich in life force are able to freely make use of the treasures of the universe in lifetime after lifetime and enjoy a journey of eternal happiness.'

—SGI President Ikeda

into shock. It was overwhelming and caused unspeakable grief. It became a five-year saga of visiting my parents every three or four weeks in Arizona to lend whatever support I could, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, crying my eyes out, then starting again.

My parents are incredible — truly kind and pure-hearted people. They have fully supported my Buddhist practice throughout the years in every way imaginable. They've accumulated great blessings and fortune as a result of their kind hearts. I can't say enough about them.

The thought occurred to me that my father might die. A deep

pillar of determination rose up within me. The only way to truly repay my parents for their kindness and love was to become happy — absolutely happy and successful. This helped me traverse my grief.

The freedom of working for myself enabled me to visit my parents often. Had I worked for anyone else, I would have surely been fired. And you know what? I had the good fortune to do what I needed to do when I needed to do it.

Through the painstaking challenge of facing my father's illness, all of our hearts have opened. He is much better now. Although not completely cured by any means, he is in a much happier state of life than he has been for most of his life. He plays the piano now — his own

compositions — and laughs more than ever. He has regained the use of most of his faculties, and we've come through the darkness together — a harrowing journey to say the least.

Then, last May, the annual contribution activity brought another opportunity to challenge myself to make a hearty donation. While collecting for our chapter at the community center, a member handed over a large check — a very large check. I had given what felt like a sizable amount and was happy to do so. It was somewhat of a stretch, but not fully. When I saw her large check, I began to cry because I realized that she had

so much appreciation for the SGI that she gave her money freely, with an open heart. I had gotten so used to being "poor" that I couldn't imagine giving anyone that amount of money — ever. She gave it quietly, with no fanfare whatsoever.

In working for myself, I was so busy surviving and dealing with my grief over my father's illness that I had lost the momentum — or was too worn out — to become "wealthy for the sake of kosen-rufu" for myself. My true wish is to become so successful — so absolutely flourishing in body, mind and spirit — that I inspire all whom I meet to fulfill their blueprint mission. I pray this way every single day during the fourth silent prayer of gongyo.

Also, my resolve to expand my capacity to contribute financially had somehow waned. I owe everything I am to my parents and this wonderful Buddhist practice. I intensified my prayers to demonstrate the greatness of my life and the influence that Buddhism has had on me and contributed another check for half the amount of the first check. I needed to make an overriding cause to reassemble my karmic configuration. In other words, I wanted my life to explode with joy and abundance.

Then, suddenly, my parents surprised me with a check for a huge amount of money. I was astounded. It enabled me to pay

so much appreciation for the SGI that she gave her money freely, with an open heart. I had gotten so used to being "poor" that I couldn't imagine giving anyone that amount of money — ever. She gave it quietly, with no fanfare whatsoever.

My parents are truly kind and generous people — they're angels. A wonderful change in my work toward the end of last year brought about a sizable increase in my monthly income, enabling me to stabilize financially, become debt free and, for the first time, save money. I was able to follow through with my commitment to contribute a sizable monthly amount to the SGI in this year of 2000. Recently, I was able to secure a financial portfolio that will ensure my future.

I can honestly say that the principle of cause and effect is ultra-strict, and that our motivations give rise to all of our results. By praying with the staunch resolve "I am successful for the sake of kosen-rufu," "I am happy for the sake of kosen-rufu," I am overcoming any negative karmic residue and using it to create value. I truly believe that the purity and goodness we gain from practicing are our greatest rewards. The fruits of monetary success can only enhance our existence on this earth; our ability to inspire and uplift others.

As SGI President Ikeda has said: "Material possessions cannot be enjoyed after death. But millionaires rich in life force are able to freely make use of the treasures of the universe in lifetime after lifetime and enjoy a journey of eternal happiness. That is what constitutes proof of true victory in life" (*For Today and Tomorrow*, p. 117).

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, who spread this exquisite teaching of profound freedom and beauty. **W**

Photo by MARTIN COHEN



BUDDHISM IN DAILY LIFE

The Concept of Karma

Even within Asia, where the concept of karma has a long history and has been incorporated in a wide range of cultures, it is often misunderstood. Viewed from a negative, backward-looking perspective, karma has been used to encourage the disadvantage members of society to accept their situation in life as being of their own making. Present suffering is attributed to negative causes made in the past.

Considering themselves to blame for their situation, some people have fallen prey to a sense of powerlessness. This, however, a distortion of the original meaning of karma as it is used in the Buddhist tradition. To accept the idea of karma does not mean to live under a cloud of guilt and vague anxiety, not knowing what bad causes we may have made in the past. Rather, it means to be confident that our destiny is in our own hands and that we have

the power to transform it for the better at any moment.

In the simplest terms, karma, which means actions, indicates the universal operation of a principle of causation, similar to that upheld by modern science. Science assures us that everything in the universe exists within the framework of cause and effect. "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction," is a familiar principle. The difference between the materialistic causality of science and the Buddhist principle of karma is that the latter is not limited to most things that can be seen or measured. Rather, it includes the unseen or spiritual aspects of life, such as the sensation or experience of happiness or misery, kindness or cruelty. In an address delivered in 1993, SGI President Ikeda described these different approaches.

The Buddhist concept of causal relations, he wrote:

"...differs fundamentally from the kind of mechanistic causation which, according to modern science, holds sway over the objective natural world—a world divorced from subjective human concerns. Causation, in the Buddhist view, spans a more broadly defined nature, one that embraces human existence. To illustrate, let us assume that an accident or disaster has occurred. A mechanistic theory of causation can be used to pursue and identify how the accident occurred, but is silent regarding the question of why certain individuals should find themselves caught up in the tragic event. Indeed, the mechanistic view of nature requires the deliberate forestalling of such existential questionings.

In contrast, the Buddhist understanding of causation seeks to directly address these poignant "whys?"

Originally, the Sanskrit word *karma* meant work or office,

and was related to verbs that mean simply "do" or "make." According to Buddhism, we create karma on three levels: through thoughts, words and actions. Acts of course have a greater impact than mere words. Likewise, when we verbalize our ideas, this creates more karma than merely thinking them. However, since both words and deeds originate in thoughts, the contents of our hearts—our thoughts—are also of crucial importance.

Karma can be thought of as our core personality, the profound tendencies that have been impressed into the deepest levels of our lives. The deepest cycles of cause and effect extend beyond the present existence; they shape the manner in which we start this life—our particular circumstances from the moment of birth—and will continue beyond our deaths. The purpose of Buddhist practice is to transform our basic life ten-

gency in order to realize our total human potential in this lifetime and beyond.

The important thing to recognize, however, is that cause and effect both exist within us at the present moment. As one of the ancient Buddhist texts states: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present."

Karma is thus, like everything, in constant flux. We create our own present and future by the choices we make in each moment. Understood in this light, the teaching of karma does not encourage resignation, but empowers us to become the protagonists in the unfolding drama of our lives.

Courtesy of SGI Quarterly

Defending the True Law

PERSPECTIVE

By MARK KORAL
LOS ANGELES



'In the same spirit with which King Possessor of Virtue rushed to the scene to defend Realization of Virtue, I believe we should unite in one voice with President Ikeda,' Mark Koral writes.

From the standpoint of Buddhism, all the phenomena that occur in our lives are for nothing other than our growth and happiness. To view them any other way is to miss their significance and to undervalue our own lives. If instead of dispassionately seeking the truth in this way, we are swayed by attachment to superficial appearances, we are opting for our lesser self. But when we abandon attachment to such self-defeating delusion, we open the path to the greater self—to unending growth.

Nichiren Daishonin's Bud-

dhism, from the most profound level of universal life, provides us with a clear mirror (faith in the Gohonzon) in which to continually elevate our responses to our inner motivations and external environment in a process of continuous growth and happiness.

In "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," Nichiren Daishonin gives us Buddhism's eternal prescription for attaining Buddhahood. He explains from the text of Shakyamuni's Nirvana Sutra that in past ages there was a monk named Realization of Virtue who observed the precepts and was protecting the correct teaching that was on the verge of extinction. It continues, "There were many monks who violated the precepts, and when they heard this monk preaching, they all conceived evil designs in their hearts and, arming themselves with swords and staves, approached this teacher of the Law" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 20).

Possessor of Virtue, the ruler

of the kingdom, received a report of what was happening and rushed to the scene to defend Realization of Virtue. As a result, this virtuous monk was able to escape grievous injury, but the king in defending him received so many sword wounds that his body had not a spot the size of a mustard seed that remained unharmed. Shakyamuni then goes on to explain the effect of protecting the correct Law in this way to his disciple. He says: "Kashyapa, the king who lived at that time was I myself, and the monk who preached was the Buddha Kashyapa. Kashyapa, those who defend the correct teaching enjoy this kind of boundless reward. As a consequence, I have been able to obtain the distinguishing characteristics that I possess today, to adorn myself with them, and to put on the Dharma body that can never be destroyed" (WND, 21).

Although the age he's living in is different, as the Daishonin explains here, this principle of Buddhism never changes. The fighting spirit to protect the Law is where the heart of the Buddha eternally dwells.

I believe it is because of the greatness of my mentor, SGI President Ikeda, that I have

been able to learn the heart of the Lotus Sutra and the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Truly my debt of gratitude is beyond measure. He has been continually emphasizing that the content of one's heart is what's important because it determines our future victory or defeat.

In this regard, I realize that by doing my best to pray and take action based on this spirit to defend the correct teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I'm accumulating indestructible good fortune in my life. I understand based on the law of cause and effect that the battle to defend the true Law is directly related to the deepest strata of my life. This is because the situation surrounding the temple is dealing with the most important matter of human life—the deepest level of cause and effect; causes which imperceptibly accrue in the depths of our lives and lead to either eternal happiness in lifetime after lifetime or uncountable lifetimes of suffering and loss.

In a recent speech he mentioned: "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!" (March 31 *World Tribune*, p. 6). In the same spirit with which King Possessor of Virtue rushed to the scene to defend Realization of Virtue, I believe we should unite in one voice with President Ikeda. And through our prayer and compassionate actions, relentlessly pursue and uproot the grave slander of the Law being committed by High Priest Nikken and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

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EXPERIENCE — KEVIN ONO, SEATTLE

Freedom From Debt: 'Icing on the Cake'

Kevin Ono, a pastry chef from Seattle, shares his recipe for financial responsibility.

AS TOLD TO KAY RYNERSON AND MARGIE STAULCUP

I started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1984, introduced by one of my best friends Jim Marinopoulos. At the time, I was working as a pastry chef at a French bakery at the famous Pike Place Market in Seattle. For years I had longed to open my own retail bakery, but I lacked the confidence to even chant for such an ambitious goal. I just didn't think I could do it.

Encouraged by my new friends in the SGI, I started doing a lot of activities for world peace as a youth member. I worked hard in the groups that function to assist and protect members during activities, and I helped to take care of the community center. I also played the clarinet in the Brass Band! During the large SGI events, I worked behind the scenes taking care of payments and statistics. From all of this effort, I gained tremendous confidence and learned invaluable life skills.

The result in my daily life was that in 1993 I was able to open my own wedding cake business, part time, at the restaurant I was working for. Their banquet department sent me many clients, it was successful and I loved it! I later expanded, renting a commercial kitchen space. By the end of two years, I was working full time for my own company, Consuming Passions, baking wedding cakes and desserts. And I bought my own beautiful condo.

While enjoying success, I was seriously sidetracked by a hard-sell woman who appealed to my greedy nature. She talked me into switching careers to the financial services industry, promising me that after five years of hard work I could retire. I kept my baking business going to pay the bills, but devoted so much time to learning financial services that I couldn't promote my business. Ironically, as I was attending classes to learn how to teach others how to manage their finances, I was becoming deeper and deeper in

debt. I realized I hated selling, but I very much wanted to succeed. I began living off of credit cards. When one maxed out I would open another, even paying my mortgage with plastic. When I had five credit cards charged to the limit, I decided to face reality and made a strong determination to get out of debt, no matter what.

My experience doing activities for world peace taught me the spirit to never give up, however hopeless my situation seemed. I had given up my baking business and was \$39,000 in debt. The job I took to start working my way out of debt paid only \$8.00 an hour, which didn't even cover my basic living expenses. I was too despondent and frustrated to chant very much at home, so I read the *World Tribune*, received encouragement from my leaders in the SGI and chanted at meetings. I sold my condo and got a better job at a law firm. They only offered \$9.00 an hour, but they offered overtime; I worked long, hard hours.

In May 1998, I started to seriously doubt my ability to pay off all of this debt. I couldn't sleep and was very stressed. I called two organizations that help people in this situation, but their time frame to complete it was 6.5 years! This was a very dark time for me. I was doubting myself and my ability to win.

In "The Opening of the Eyes," one of the major writings by Nichiren Daishonin, he states: "Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not harbor doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith. Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 283).

With this spirit to never give up, and in spite of what I was facing, I always subscribed to the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* and made monthly financial contributions to the SGI without fail. And at the

time of the May 3 Commemorative Contribution, I received a special bank hand-made by a friend who encouraged me to put all of my spare change in it and offer it for the sake of world peace. Now this may seem counter to common sense in the society we live in, but I sincerely believe it was these financial offerings that were made when it was so difficult for me, that gave me the hope and impetus to totally change my situation.

After all, this is the Buddhism of the true cause.

With my new spirit of hope, I was able to follow a very strict budget. I allowed myself \$15 per month for all social activities, including meals out, movie rentals and outings with friends. I scouted out sales, went without new clothes and always took the bus to work. I felt lonely but strong. I ignored suggestions of declaring bankruptcy — I felt it was too easy in light of the law of cause and effect. I turned down offers of financial support from my wonderful parents and an aunt. These debts were a result of my mistakes and I was determined to turn it around myself.

Since my law office support job started in January 1998, I have received two promotions with higher pay, four bonuses and three end-of-the-year raises. My supervisors, as well as the owners, have commented that I have excellent organizational skills, good follow-through and attention to detail.

My goal was to pay off my debt by May 3. I sent my last credit card payment in on February 14 — two and one-half months ahead of schedule! I paid the \$29,000 on credit



cards, a \$10,000 loan on my condo and \$6,000 in finance charges, for a grand total of \$45,000. It took me 28 months!

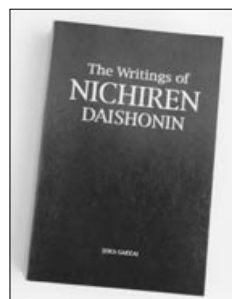
My practice has strengthened. I am determined to be consistent with my personal practice at home and have confidence I can overcome anything.

Now that my debts are paid and my Buddhist practice is stronger than ever, my greatest dreams have reawakened. Heart-to-heart talks with my Buddhist friend Myron Ho made me realize how much I miss baking. After volunteering for the second time as a chef at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, my dream solidified: I want to be a

pastry chef at one of the best resorts in Hawaii. An interview has already been scheduled for me in June!

SGI President Ikeda says: "As long as you wholeheartedly continue to take action toward your goal, even though you may not immediately produce clear results, you will definitely see the fruits of your efforts in the long run. This must be a fundamental principle of life. Therefore, the important thing is for you to continue to run and struggle toward your ultimate goal until the last moment of your life, without being swayed by temporary results along the way" (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 4, p. 159). **WT**

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FROM SPEECH, I

Why did Dr. Hallisey choose *The Living Buddha* as a subject of study for his class? He said that he appreciated the way in which I look at the events of Shakyamuni's life from a human, personal perspective. The question of what it means to be a human being, he observed, will be an important focus in the 21st century. *The Living Buddha* attempts to apprehend Buddhist philosophy from the perspective of Shakyamuni as a humanist and, in so doing, according to Professor Hallisey, offers a guide to the values that should direct us in the future.

Dr. Hallisey also stated that the personal approach President Ikeda adopts in the biography of Shakyamuni—in which the SGI leader tries to understand the inner life of Shakyamuni through identification with his own life—serves to illuminate the more profound aspects of Shakyamuni's life. Moreover, through this approach,

President Ikeda pursues the question of what it means to be human. According to Dr. Hallisey, this type of Buddhist study, rooted firmly in humanism, is very valuable.

Dr. Hallisey said that the students' essays revealed a richly nuanced, enlightened understanding of the Buddha. Some recognized, for instance, that the Buddha, rather than existing as some supernatural being, is to be found in the effort of self-transformation and self-development.

Neither Dr. Hallisey nor his students are SGI members, yet they have an accurate appreciation of our guiding philosophy and ideals. They are pursuing the same humanism that is the SGI's goal. This is the age we are living in. The humanistic ideals of the SGI will continue to spread far and wide in the new century.

To pray through every problem, to pray fully with all of your being—this is the secret to success.

President Ikeda has been invited to lecture at Harvard University on two occasions: In 1991, he delivered a lecture entitled "The Age of 'Soft Power' and Inner-Motivated Philosophy." And in 1993, he spoke on the subject of "Mahayana Buddhism and 21st Century Civilization."

Another Harvard professor, Dr. Christopher Queen, dean of students and lecturer of religion at Harvard's Division of Continuing Education, introduced the latter address at an American Academy of Religion conference in December 1993. Dr. Queen is also using the booklet Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter, published by the Boston Research Center, in a seminar he teaches, "Buddhism and Social Change."

The SGI's philosophy resonates strongly with basic American ideas about the individual.

According to Mr. Yokota, Dr. Hallisey said that he appreciated my efforts and accomplishments in terms of my presenting Buddhism as a teaching for the here and now, and my emphasis on the inner transformation of the individual as a key ingredient for social change and human happiness. Dr. Hallisey found in my thought the kind of religious teaching that people have been increasingly seeking in the 20th and 21st centuries. I am honored by this evaluation.

People outside Japan have a genuine, undistorted appreciation of what is positive and valuable. They understand the SGI. They are not swayed by the vagaries of public opinion. Such is the stance of people of intelligence and integrity around the world.

Too many Japanese, on the other hand, can't see things for what they are. They are concerned about appearances, and they are cowardly. They are always preoccupied with others' opinions of them, forever fretting, "If I say something, what will others think, what will they say about me?" They don't live according to principle.

In regard to the SGI's popular movement, Dr. Hallisey

said that, by emphasizing the inner transformation of the individual as it does, the SGI offers a philosophy that resonates strongly with

"basic ideas in American culture of the importance of the individual." He also found it extremely noteworthy that the SGI stresses that self-transformation and self-development are accomplished not in isolation, independent of others, but through people supporting and encouraging one another. The way in which the potential of a student or disciple is developed through the inspiration and guidance of a mentor is a good example of this, he said.

The world is now the stage for the SGI's endeavors.

Harvard, as we all know, is one of the world's great centers of learning. Mr. Yokota reports that, in addition to Dr. Hallisey's class, another Harvard class investigating contemporary Buddhism plans to study the SGI and its activities in greater depth. Next month [April 2000], lecturers and students of that department will visit a nearby SGI culture center for that purpose.

People around the world are looking with great interest toward the SGI. The world is the stage for our endeavors.

I remember once saying to my wife—I think it was in the early '70s when the Soka Gakkai was being attacked from all sides in Japan—"From now on, we must turn to the world. The world will be our stage." She commented with an understanding smile, "You really are committed to the world, aren't you?"

For this reason, I treasure and encourage with all my heart my dear fellow members around the world, who are fighting so hard amid the most challenging circumstances. I want to talk with them all through the night about the future and life. This is my genuine, heartfelt desire.

Be that as it may, we are saying farewell to the dark 20th century and welcoming the 21st. The time has arrived for our talented youth across the globe to inherit the Soka Gakkai tradition and march forth, spreading the humanistic values of our movement. We have entered that

wonderful age.

Nichiren Daishonin is also rejoicing, I am certain, declaring that the SGI is the true representative of this Buddhism, an organization dedicated to truth and justice. I assert here and now that the SGI is the sole legitimate heir to the living essence of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Those who live in the future are true leaders of humanism.

The British historian Arnold Toynbee shared some words with me that I will never forget at the end of our dialogue. First, he cited a quote from the noted philosopher Bertrand Russell, made at age 84, to the effect that it is important for us think about what will happen after our death. Dr. Toynbee said that we should plan our lives with the farthest possible future in mind. He also told me that the reason he had wanted to meet me was because I had been actively pursuing that course and putting it into practice from a young age.

I remember Dr. Toynbee with great fondness. I spoke of many things with him. During our dialogue, we were joined by Mrs. Toynbee, my wife and our interpreters. We spoke from morning to night.

The Lotus Sutra expounded by Shakyamuni and the writings of Nichiren Daishonin both constitute "prophecies of the Buddha." Their words are based on what they foresee will happen in the far distant future. They are pervaded with the profound wish of the Buddha to leave behind a message for those of us living in the Latter Day of the Law.

The future—our focus is not on the present but on the future. Those who live in the future, who point to the future, who build the future are true leaders of humanism. They are youth in the best sense of the word. Youth possess incredible potential, a future that is rich in infinite possibilities.

Buddhism, too, has flowed from the Former Day of the Law to the Middle Day of the Law and into the Latter Day of the Law. All things move and advance toward the future. It is my fervent wish now, as we head into the 21st century, that we will open the way for the eternal future of the SGI.

(To be continued in the May 12 issue)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The Importance of the Individual

From This Speech:

In regard to the SGI's popular movement, Dr. Charles Hallisey of Harvard University said that, by emphasizing the inner transformation of the individual as it does, the SGI offers a philosophy that resonates strongly with "basic ideas in American culture of the importance of the individual." He also found it extremely noteworthy that the SGI stresses that self-transformation and self-development are accomplished not in isolation, independent of others, but through people supporting and encouraging one another. The way in which the potential of a student or disciple is developed through the inspiration and guidance of a mentor is a good example of this, he said.

- 1) Where do you think Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and American individualism meet? What do they hold in common?
- 2) Do you see drawbacks to American individualism that the Daishonin's Buddhism can help us to change?
- 3) Why can't self-transformation happen in isolation? Why do we need to be around other people to grow?
- 4) Do you think that the idea of mentor and student or mentor and disciple fits with American culture? If so, how?

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE STUDY DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

An Unprecedented Era Is Upon Us

'Because all of you have been thoroughly pursuing these two ways of practice and study,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'this Buddhism is spreading throughout the entire world, and an unprecedented era in the history of kosen-rufu is now upon us.'

only a single sentence or phrase" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 386).

To "exert ourselves in the two ways of practice and study" is the correct course to follow for those who wish to maintain a direct connection to Nichiren Daishonin. And it is we of the SGI who have been acting exactly as this Gosho passage teaches. Because all of you have been thoroughly pursuing these two ways of practice and study, this Buddhism is spreading throughout the entire world, and an unprecedented era in the history of kosen-rufu is now upon us.

The Study Department Conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, April 20-23.

My Dear SGI-USA Study Department Conference participants,

Thank you very much for attending this conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Taking time amid your busy schedules to travel such a long distance could not have been easy. You are each a precious friend to whom I want to express my heartfelt respect.

In "The True Aspect of All Phenomena" is the famous passage "Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is

You who have dedicated yourselves to study know the standard for determining true and false, right and wrong in the realm of Buddhism. Based on this knowledge, please persist in proclaiming the truth and defeating falsehood by thoroughly engaging in "study for the sake of practice" and "study for the sake of the struggle." I hope that, in this way, you will guide and encourage all of your fellow members.

How praiseworthy are all of you who, in this evil age of the Latter Day of the Law, are spreading the True Law! How limitless and boundless your benefit will be!

I am praying earnestly each day for the growth and success of all of you, my precious, precious friends. Please convey my warm regards to your families and your fellow members when you return home.

*April 20, 2000
Daisaku Ikeda*

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

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An aerial view of progress at the campus.



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SUA, Aliso Viejo Staff and Faculty To Visit SGI-USA Community Centers This Month

San Antonio
Dallas

Washington, D.C.
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May 13, 2000

San Diego
Santa Ana
Long Beach
East Los Angeles
Riverside
Santa Monica
L.A. Friendship Center
Las Vegas

South

Northern Virginia
Raleigh
Columbia
New Orleans
Memphis
Atlanta
Louisville

May 19-21, 2000

West

Honolulu
Sacramento
East Bay
San Jose
San Francisco
Salt Lake City
Colorado Springs
Denver

Northwest

Portland
Spokane
Seattle

Midwest

Omaha
Kansas City
St. Louis
Columbus
Cleveland
Indianapolis
Chicago
Detroit

Southwest

El Paso
Albuquerque
Phoenix

East

Boston
New Jersey
New York
Buffalo

May 11-13, 2000
Oklahoma City
Houston

*For dates and times, contact your local organization. Meetings at the Valley/North Hollywood and Santa Barbara community centers will be held next month.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Making the Goshō Part of Our Lives

‘Leaders who are genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu will read the Goshō every day,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘even if only a line or a paragraph, and make it a living part of themselves. I also hope that the youth division members, in particular, will study the Goshō thoroughly, as they strive to achieve their goals.’

The majestic sun of a new millennium has begun to appear on the horizon. Today, the humanistic light of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism has spread to 148 countries and territories. And a realm of indestructible, everlasting peace — of the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law throughout the entire world — is, through the darkness and confusion, coming into view. The stars of hope and glory shine brightly in the heavens.

We are indeed approaching the dawn of an Age of Soka. The living breath of the music of the Mystic Law, playing a melody of eternal harmony, will infuse fresh life into all things and give rise to a new world of creativity. How wonderful and exciting this is!

From the far-reaching, penetrating view of Buddhism, a thousand years is not a long time. Nichiren Daishonin writes, “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 736).

Even if lightning should crash and thunder roar, the great movement of the SGI will not be daunted in the least. Ours is a momentous journey to realize lasting peace and happiness. We advance with joy and boisterous good cheer.

As we stand on the threshold of a new century, I want to reconfirm the basic path of the Soka Gakkai. That is, the Soka Gakkai will always advance in complete accord with the Lotus

Sutra and the Daishonin’s writings. It has been the Soka Gakkai’s firm, unchanging position, since the time of its first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, to practice in accord with the Buddha’s teachings, just as the Daishonin instructs.

And that is precisely why, as the Sutra warns, the three powerful enemies and the three obstacles and four devils have appeared.

It is also why we were able to crush the plot to destroy the SGI hatched by the Nikken sect priests, those “animals dressed in priestly robes” (WND, 760). It is why, as proof of its commitment to upholding the Buddha’s will and decree, the SGI today enjoys infinite good fortune.

The Daishonin stresses the importance of faith, practice and study. Without study, without a firm understanding of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, we are likely to be swept away by our emotions or circumstances when some crisis arises and waver in faith.

We saw this happen during World War II, when the majority of the Soka Gakkai leaders abandoned their faith, bowing to pressure from the military authorities. This was because they didn’t have a solid grounding in Buddhist study to draw on.

When Mr. Makiguchi was moved to what was to be his place of death, the Tokyo Detention House in Sugamo, the very first thing he asked his family to bring him was the Goshō. He specifically asked for a clean copy, one that he hadn’t already made notations in. He wanted to take a fresh look at the Daishonin’s writings during his stay in prison. This was an expression of his profound commitment.

In his letters from prison, Mr. Makiguchi wrote many times that his imprisonment constituted persecution on account of his efforts to uphold the Lotus Sutra, the Mystic Law — a fact, he said, that the Sutra and the Goshō confirm.

A month before he died, in what was to be his last letter, he observed that, by connecting his theory of value to faith in the Mystic Law, several thousand people [the members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, forerunner of the Soka Gakkai] had shown ac-



tual proof in the form of benefit. He declared: “Because of this, it is quite natural that the three obstacles and four devils will vie to attack us. It is just as the Sutra states.” Such was the unshakable conviction of the Soka Gakkai’s noble founder.

Mr. Toda, Mr. Makiguchi’s successor, awakened to his mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth while in prison, and he rose to begin his struggle, basing himself on the Lotus Sutra and the Goshō, to widely propagate the Mystic Law.

Before Mr. Toda became Soka Gakkai president, starting from the time his business was in dire financial straits, he made a supreme effort to instruct me on the Goshō, not caring what it might cost his physical health.

When I look at my diary entries from that time, I see that he lectured me on such writings as “The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” “The Enlightenment of Plants,” “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” “On the Three Great Secret Laws,” “On the Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas throughout the Three Existences,” “On the Buddha’s Prophecy” and “Remonstrations with Bodhisattva Hachiman.”

His home and the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishikanda were the main classrooms for his Goshō lectures. But when we were traveling, the train quickly filled that role.

Mr. Toda also lectured me on “The One Hundred and Six Comparisons” [an important teaching that the Daishonin entrusted to his successor,

Nikko Shonin].

One day, when he was lying down resting, my mentor suddenly said: “All right! Let’s start!” And he happily gave me a Goshō lecture right then and there.

If I were ever less than attentive, he promptly rebuked me: “That’s

enough! I’m not a machine.”

In any event, he transmitted to me the essence of the Daishonin’s Buddhism — from mentor to disciple, from one life to another — with intense passion and wholehearted commitment. I am profoundly grateful to have had such a mentor.

At that time, I was working single-handedly against great odds to support and protect Mr. Toda. Yet every night, I forced my tired body and mind to open the Goshō and study.

One day I was encouraged by the passage “For more than 20 years, I, Nichiren, have been confronting him [the devil king of the sixth heaven], mustering a vast force, and I never once felt inclined to retreat” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1224). Another day I etched into my heart the passage “Each and every one of you should be certain deep in your heart that sacrificing your life for the Lotus Sutra is like exchanging rocks for gold or dung for rice” (WND, 764).

The harder the times I faced, the more eagerly I sought the Daishonin’s words. And each time that I did, I found new courage. An inextinguishable sun rose in my heart, breaking through the darkness.

During the great campaigns that I waged in Osaka — the golden struggle of my youth — I always based myself on the Goshō while earnestly fighting on the front lines. This my comrades in Osaka know very well.

The Daishonin exhorts us, “Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other” (WND, 1001). This is the key to victory — a point that we must never forget. For Buddhism is about winning.

The human race is earnestly seeking a source of light to illuminate the next millennium.

Buddhism is the sun of hope that will save humankind. It is the spiritual lighthouse that can guide all humankind to bravely weather and triumph over the rough waves of life.

The Goshō shines with this great light of wisdom and compassion. It is an inexhaustible wellspring of the courage we need to live our lives and a sword to refute the erroneous and reveal the true in our fierce battle with the forces of evil.

As long as we advance, firmly embracing in our hearts this scripture of the Latter Day of the Law, the Goshō, the road of ever-victorious champions of life — stretching on into the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law — will open before us.

We have at last entered a new era, in which those who continue to boldly proclaim the correctness and validity of Buddhism, speaking out with youthful passion and conviction, will win.

When the Soka Gakkai published the *Goshō Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) in 1952, Mr. Toda composed a poem:

*If you uphold the Goshō
Overflowing with the power of
the Buddha
The strength to surmount every
obstacle
Will arise within you.*

Leaders who are genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu will read the Goshō every day, even if only a line or a paragraph, and make it a living part of themselves. I also hope that the youth division members, in particular, will study the Goshō thoroughly, as they strive to achieve their goals. I have found that those who don’t tend to be shallow and frivolous.

Study is the marrow of the SGI. Unless we are armed with compassion and an understanding of the principles of Buddhism, we cannot carry out kosen-rufu.

My dear, courageous comrades! Let’s do our best! Let’s stride with energy and enthusiasm on the vast open road leading into the 21st century.

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the Jan. 6 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 11-12

Shin'ichi Yamamoto prepares for a planned meeting with John F. Kennedy. What he most wanted to communicate to the American president was the spirit and content of his late mentor Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, which Toda had left as his foremost, final guideline to his successors.'

The members of Niigata and Uetsu chapters who had not participated in the pilgrimage to the head temple were engaged in their own struggle back home.

As soon as the call came through that the train carrying their fellow members was stranded at Miyauchi Station, many of the leaders got to work letting family members know. Only a few households in the area had telephones at the time, so the leaders made their way from house to house in the blizzard. They explained the situation to each family, sometimes offering words of encouragement, sometimes having to soothe irate non-practicing family members.

One man who was not a member but whose wife had gone on the pilgrimage exploded angrily at the woman who came to tell him about his wife's delay: "So much for that benefit you're always talking about! If your faith is as great as you say it is, surely the train carrying your members wouldn't be blocked—even if other trains were. My wife kept going on and on about wanting to visit the head temple, so I let her go. But when she comes back, I'm going to make her quit the Gakkai."

The woman apologized deeply. "I'm terribly sorry that this has happened," she said. "The Gakkai is doing everything possible to make sure that everyone returns home safe and sound, so please don't worry."

"Don't worry?! If my wife gets sick, what will you do

then?! How can you possibly understand how I feel?"

"I do understand," she replied. "My husband is on the train."

"Your husband, too!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know. And in spite of that, you're walking around like this to inform each family. Well, I suppose the blizzard is not your fault."

Recognizing this member's sincerity, he started to calm down and become more pleasant. As the woman left, he even thanked her for taking the trouble to come over in the snow.

The Niigata and Uetsu members' efforts bore fruit, and when the stranded members finally returned home, they all received warm welcomes, in-

cluding from their non-practicing family members. Not only that, when those families heard word of the devoted efforts of the Nagaoka Chapter members, they were astonished and moved.

Many who had been skeptical or critical of the Soka Gakkai became extremely supportive of its activities and ideals. In addition, the Niigata and Uetsu members who had not participated in the pilgrimage had chanted daimoku in earnest for the safety of their stranded comrades. Some leaders had placed the names of those who had gone to the head temple in front of their Gohonzon and chanted daimoku through the nights. This trial, wrought by the heavy snowfall, further strengthened the unity of the Niigata and Uetsu members.

Twenty-six trains were stopped in Niigata Prefecture on Jan. 23 due to the snowstorm, and six of them remained at a standstill until Jan. 27. On many of the trains, panic ensued. Anxious and impatient, people grew angry. Quarrels broke out. When



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Koshiji express train from Niigata to Ueno, which had stopped at Oshikiri Station on the Shin'etsu main line. Charcoal burners were brought on the train to keep the passengers warm, but the acrid fumes made some people sick.

At another station, stranded passengers on local trains rushed the stationmaster's office in anger, when they saw the express and special express trains moving out before their own. It is worth noting that the Soka Gakkai members on their chartered train, facing the same circumstances, behaved in a civilized, orderly manner—to the very end of the crisis. This, as well as the valiant relief efforts of the Nagaoka members, was without a doubt a testimony to the strength of their faith.

On Jan. 28, the day after returning from his overseas trip, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the first Study Department professors meeting of the year. The next day, he attended the monthly Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

At the same time, he was busy preparing for his upcoming meeting with John F. Kennedy, which was scheduled for February. There was much he wanted to discuss with President Kennedy, but their time together would be

limited. He had to organize what he was going to talk about. What he most wanted to communicate to the American president was the spirit and content of his late mentor Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, which Toda had left as his foremost, final guideline to his successors.

Shin'ichi could still hear Toda's resounding appeal at the Mitsu-suzawa Track and Field Stadium: "Although a movement to ban the testing of nuclear weapons is now under way around the world, it is my wish to attack the problem at its root, that is, to rip out the claws that are hidden in the very depths of this issue. Thus I advocate that those who venture to use nuclear weapons, irrespective of where they are from or whether their country is victorious or defeated, be sentenced to death without exception."

"Why do I say this? Because we, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live. Anyone who tries to jeopardize this right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster!"

As a Buddhist, Mr. Toda was staunchly opposed to the death penalty, but his condemnation of nuclear weapons as an absolute evil made him go this far—to call for such punishment for anyone who would use them.



boxed meals were distributed, many scrambled to get to them first, and insults and curses were exchanged. Passengers fell ill one after another. The heating system failed on the

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

Learning What It Means To Be Human

PERSPECTIVE

By LAVORA PERRY
EAST CLEVELAND, OHIO



My oldest brother, Rudolph Perry Jr. of Akron, Ohio, died on the morning of March 19, at the age of 49 in an accident involving his private plane. There were no other human casualties. In 1991, my brother was preceded in death by his 16-year-old son, Rudy III, who was killed by a drunk driver as he and his father were attempting to help a stranded motorist. Rudy Jr.'s wife, three adult daughters, parents, sisters, brothers and many other loved ones survive.

The words of condolences from my SGI family, co-workers, neighbors, friends and others have meant so much to me. Even when the person offering the words was only a casual acquaintance, the acknowledgment of my brother's life and of our family's loss touched me in the most profound way. I can't express how deeply I was moved when SGI members who never knew my brother came to his funeral in support. I would never have thought that just showing up or saying "I care" could mean so much. I've learned a real lesson in what it means to be human. It's a lesson I want to build upon and never forget.

The following is a sharing of the words I offered at my brother's memorial service along with some additional reflections on my brother's death: "When your...deceased [loved one] hears the sound of your voice chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, he will delight in his Buddhahood" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p.1066). For days after my brother passed away, I've recited the Lotus Sutra and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo before my altar and quietly while walking through parks, listened to birds' morning songs and looked up at the bright, shining moon on clear evenings.

In those moments, my tears flowed freely as Rudy's face came smiling back at me, and the words in this Northwest Indian memorial poem by an unknown author express the feelings I had in my heart: "Do not stand at my grave and weep. / I am not there. / I do not sleep. / I am a thousand winds that blow. / I am the diamond glint on snow. / I am the sunlight on ripened grain. / I am the autumn

rain. / When you awake in the morning hush, / I am the swift uplifting rush / Of birds circling in flight. / I am the stars that shine at night. / Do not stand at my grave and weep. / I am not there. / I do not sleep."

When I heard that my brother Rudy had died, after experiencing the initial shock, one of my first thoughts was of Mrs. Green (not her real name), a neighbor that has lived across the street from my parents since before I was born. Mr. and Mrs. Green had two sons, now grown. Mr. Green had died suddenly and unexpectedly of heart failure only a month before my brother died. Although I offered prayers for Mr. Green's life, I had not given any condolences to the Green family. I had to work on the day of the funeral, so I hadn't attended. I bought a card, but never mailed it. I planned to telephone, but as days went on, I felt awkward about doing so, because I hadn't done it so far. So I continued to offer prayers whenever I thought about Mr. Green, but did nothing else.

Then on the evening of my brother Rudy's death, I walked across the street from my parent's house to speak to Mrs. Green. Standing in her driveway that chilly, starlit night, I deeply apologized for my insensitivity. "Oh, I understand. You've got your children to take care of, and everything," she assured me. "That's no excuse," I told her. "I am so very sorry for being so thoughtless."

We two women stood in Mrs. Green's yard reminiscing, crying, hugging, sharing, and laughing. She told me that my brother, Rudy, had called her when he learned of Mr. Green's death, and that he had come to the funeral. Later, one of my nieces, Rudy's daughter, told me, "Daddy would go to anybody's funeral." She said he would go even if his schedule only allowed him to drop in to say, "I'm sorry."

After Mrs. Green and I had talked for about a half an hour in her yard that evening, I asked her to come across the street to talk to my parents, especially my mother who was taking my brother's death hard. "Oh, I don't know what to say, and I look a mess!" protested Mrs. Green. I remembered the story that SGI President Ikeda relayed about how Shakyamuni

Buddha once consoled a mother grieving over the loss of her child by simply sitting quietly by her side until the woman gained the courage to continue. It was in the spirit of just being there for another conveyed in that story that I'd finally made my way to Mrs. Green's house. As we talked, I knew that if she would only accompany me to my parents' house, her own burden would seem a little lighter, just as mine did because I was supporting her. Finally, Mrs. Green agreed to go. Once she was in my parent's kitchen, Mrs. Green and my mother cried and hugged, shared and laughed, until I felt that it was alright for me to say "Goodnight," and return home to my husband and children. Later, my mother told me that she, my father and Mrs. Green were up talking until two o'clock in the morning that night.

"What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha...lies in his behavior as a human being. The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals" (WND, p. 852).

Although my brother was a devout Christian and I am a devout Buddhist, he said something to me not too long ago that makes me think deeply about what it means to be a person of faith. He said that many people claim to believe in this or that, but don't live up to what they say they believe in. He said that what matters more than what a person calls her or himself is how that person acts.

Now that my brother has passed away, I can't help but think about the way he acted. Sure, we had plenty of disagreements. With him being the oldest brother and I the youngest sister, we butted heads on more than a few occasions. He once told me in frustration over something I'd done that he didn't like: "LaVora, you always just go on and do whatever you want to do!" And I replied: "That's right. It's my life. I can't live it the way somebody else thinks I should."

Come to think of it, Rudy and I were a lot like in that regard. He did what he wanted to do too. He was just usually a lot more respectful about it than I was; he didn't give my parents nearly as much "back talk" as I did. But whether he was flying his airplane, sailing his boat or traveling overseas, my brother lived life on his own terms. He

also did something that I am just now learning to do. He was a master at letting the other person's shortcomings slide. He was a master at letting go for forgiveness, at seeing the good in a person or a situation. He was a master at holding human relationships as the most precious treasure of all.

An example of how my brother sincerely valued people in general and his family in particular was how, starting last year, he had made a habit of coming by my house to see my husband, Cedric, and I and our three children once a month before attending church in Cleveland. My children, Nia, Jarod and Jahci had so much fun with him on those Sunday mornings filled with video camera shots and good conversation. Just before his last visit, when I told my oldest, Nia, that Uncle Rudy was on his way, she said with excitement, "He's going to bring juice boxes!" My sister-in-law told me that before his visits, Rudy would ask her to make sure to buy just the right kind of juice—the one the kids liked best. The one with the most real fruit juice in it. My mother told me that Rudy said he came on those mornings so that he could get to know the kids better. He wanted to make sure they knew who he was. That's the kind of man I was blessed to have as a brother. A man who truly cared about people, from the youngest to the oldest.

As a Nichiren Buddhist, I believe that in the depths of his life my brother was a Buddha and that in beginningless time he and I promised to be born as brother and sister in this lifetime so we could help one another bring forth Buddhahood, or enlightenment, from within our lives.

In the days following Rudy's death, the following translation of a passage from the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which Nichiren Buddhists recite daily during our morning and evening prayers, filled my mind constantly: "In order to save living beings / as an expedient means I appear to enter Nirvana / but in truth I do not pass into ex-



LaVora and her brother Rudy in 1991.

inction. / I am always here, preaching the Law. / I am always here, / but through my transcendental powers / I make it so that human beings in their befuddlement / do not see me even when close by" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 229).

To me, seeing the Buddha "when close by" means not only realizing that the essence of my deceased brother's life is ever present, but for me to constantly strive to manifest my own Buddha nature and to strive to see the Buddha in the lives of others, too.

I pray that Rudy is quickly reborn into good circumstances in his next life, so that he can wholeheartedly embrace the Mystic Law and continue fulfilling his mission. As I pray this way I am profoundly aware of how, through his death, my big brother challenges me to really learn from his example. To respect everyone no matter who they are or what they've done. To be able to disagree with someone without holding a grudge. To realize that during difficult times, along with the prayers I offer for them, people, including people of strong faith, need to be told that I care or may need me to simply be there. My brother Rudy challenges me to act like he did, and truly be the best person I can be toward everybody. Taking up this challenge causes me to deepen my prayers like I've never done before. I now chant to show true compassion for all people. Because I am compelled to pray in this new way, and the act of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is in itself enlightenment, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my brother Rudy for helping me attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Perspectives printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

Millennium Service

I enjoyed the article on President Ikeda's message and coverage of the Millennium Service 2000 at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta (April 28 *World Tribune*). It was nice to see the SGI there in support of their humanistic service, even though it was of another faith. By the SGI having dialogue and reaching out to the community, we can bring peace and understanding among all.

—PHILIP RAY,
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Use of Language

Bravo to Ross Dreibratt and thanks to the *World Tribune* staff for printing his humorous perspective (March 25 *World Tribune*) in response to Dave Baldschun's perspective (March 17 *World Tribune*). I appreciate Mr. Dreibratt's well-articulated argument—even though he used numerous non-English words, all of which I understood—to make his point about the main point of Buddhism, which is the happiness of all people. It made me laugh. It made me happy to be a member of the SGI-USA, where people can voice their opinions and have such fun doing so!

—DEBORAH MULLIS,
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Personally, I want to commend Ross Dreibratt for his perspective (March 25 *World Tribune*). I am much of the same mind as he is. I have been involved in

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this organization since April of 1974 when I attended my first activity. It has grown and evolved, as has the members within it. We have become a more diverse membership, and reflect that in many ways.

As is pointed out in Mr. Dreibratt's perspective, we are a diverse population in this country. We cling to parts of our individual culture, yet in many instances, embrace additions from other cultures. I honestly feel that it is to our advantage to retain the "Japanese roots" without losing the hardy individuality we each cherish. I see no problem with the "vocabulary" of Buddhism remaining as it is. We will lose much if we continue to homogenize and create a blander element of Buddhism. Just an observation...as I said, I attended my first meeting in 1974 when we reflected even more of the Japanese culture than we do know. The members around me were kind, considerate, and helped me learn about this new and exciting thing...i.e. Buddhism, and I did not feel that I had lost anything in the bargain. The focus should be on our practice of this Buddhism, rather than a continual rehash of the vocabulary. Believe it or not, this discussion has been going on (off and on as it were) for the last 26 years that I am aware of. Yet, I still go to Kosen-rufu Gongyo, chant daimoku and do gongyo. Let's keep to the basics!!!!

—CYNDY SHUBERT-JETT,
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It is obvious the use of the word *Sensei* stirs up strong emotions for many—my husband included. He is born American of Japanese descent and second-generation SGI member. He never learned to speak Japanese, so while in college he enrolled in a Japanese-language course. On the first day of class, the teacher asked to be referred to as Sensei. My husband was so distraught over the fact he would have to call his Japanese-language teacher Sensei that he dropped out of the course. In his mind at the time, only President Ikeda could be called Sensei. For that reason, my husband lost out on an opportunity to learn something new.

In my opinion, Dave Baldschun (March 17 *World Tribune*) has valid points we should seriously consider if we want to make this Buddhism universal and not limited, as in this instance, to a parochial mentality.

—PAMELA SELEY,
San Marcos, Calif.

Keeping Connected

I have always appreciated your paper and find it to be very valuable in keeping me connected with the SGI. In the latest edition, the experience of Mr. Frank Castanheira (April 21 *World Tribune*) really hit home with me. There are so many similarities in his background and mine and I applaud him for the efforts and success he has made. I am also in the

San Francisco area, fairly new and not well connected with anyone here except for my work, and would like to know if there is any way to correspond with Mr. Castanheira. Or if there is some way to find which chapter he attends that maybe I could get myself there. Without the *World Tribune*, I think I would drift too far from the organization, and I owe much to all of the dedicated people who make this paper available. With gratitude and appreciation,

—RON IRWIN,
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Greetings

To the East Bay Capital Area Youth Division: The March 16th packet you put together was fantastic! Thank you so much. We learned so much and were so inspired by your efforts. With deepest admiration and respect from the Washington Area Youth Division.

Lost and Found

I am seeking two members who moved away from the Westchester area (Los Angeles County). The daughter's name is Grina, and the mother's name is Lorraine. Grina is 10 years old, and was in the Boys and Girls Group in the L.A. area. My name is Allie. I'm 11, and my e-mail is alicat4d@aol.com or phone me at (310) 670-0660. PS: Gina, I miss you so much!

I would love to find out the e-mail address for the experience (about Pat Keating and Lynda Martinez) in the Feb 11 *World Tribune* or their phone numbers as I have the same sort of life and I would like to connect with them. Thank you so much.
—smcango@excelonline.com

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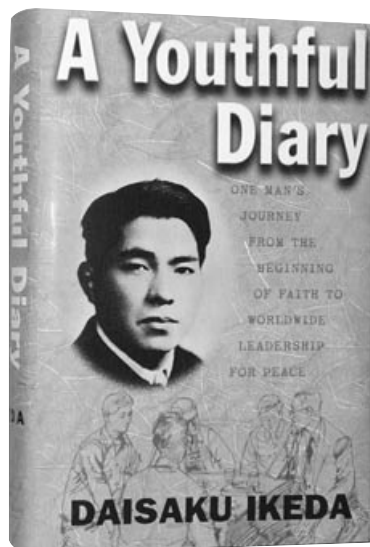
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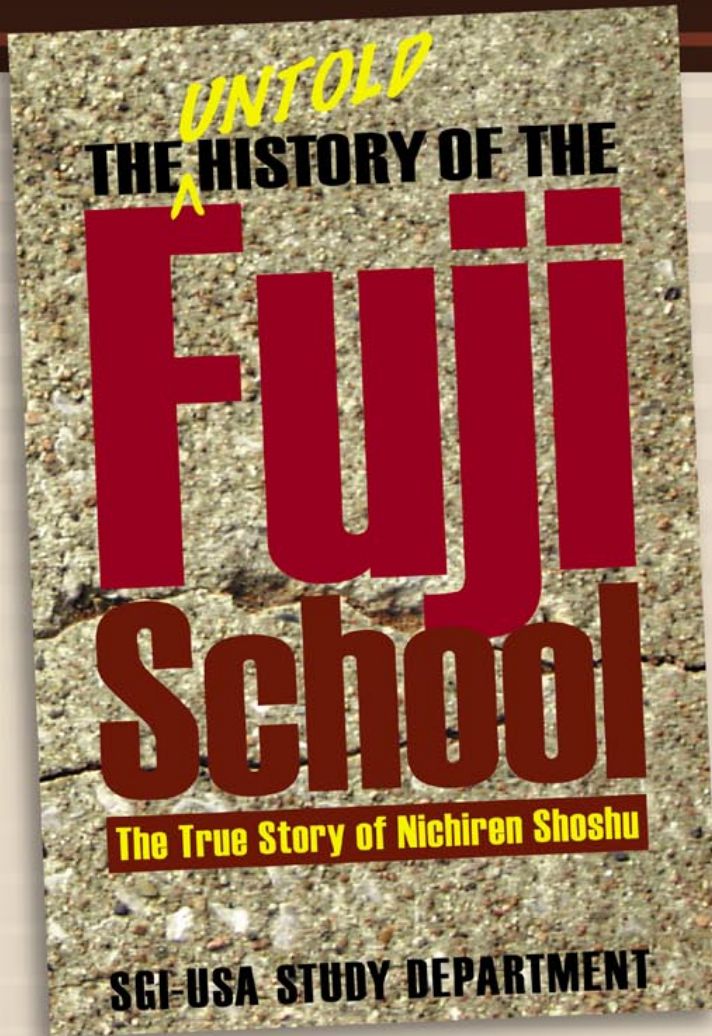
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