



EXPERIENCE:

Kelly Yi shares her founding of a mothers support group in her community.

page 10

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

No. 3293

\$2.00

MAY 12, 2000

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 3 MESSAGE

America, Lead the Way!

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

'With the sound of construction reverberating far and wide,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'I ask that America lead the way in raising the curtain on another new phase in the worldwide kosen-rufu movement.'

and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well. Does this not signify 'emerging from the earth'?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385).

This year, it is 25 years since the SGI was founded. In this short time, we have spread the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world—with SGI members now active in a total of 156 countries and territories. And through these efforts, we have created a powerful tide toward peace. As a brilliant sun of hope, the SGI has illuminated humanity with its light, breaking through the profound darkness of the age.

My dear, dear friends: I am so happy to be able to greet this glorious, triumphant dawn of May 3, on the brink of the new millennium, together with all of you, my fellow SGI members throughout the world.

All of the SGI's achievements are your victory! They are the great triumph of each one of you! I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

I say to you with all my heart: "Congratulations on May 3!" "Congratulations to all of you!"

What a truly victorious May 3 this is!

I am particularly overjoyed to see the magnificent number of capable people who have "emerged from the earth" to work for kosen-rufu in North America.

In the Goshu, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three,



A digital rendering of what the SUA, Aliso Viejo, campus will look like.

It was from the United States that I took my first step for worldwide kosen-rufu, in the year of my appointment as third president of the Soka Gakkai. It

was also from the U.S. that I embarked on the second chapter of worldwide kosen-rufu to open a new phase in the development of our movement, after becoming honorary president of the Soka Gakkai.

It was also from the U.S. that I embarked on the second chapter of worldwide kosen-rufu to open a new phase in the development of our movement, after becoming honorary president of the Soka Gakkai.

PLEASE SEE MESSAGE, 2



The dedication ceremony for the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus will be held on May 3, 2001.

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

It has been my unchanging conviction that the pioneering continent of North America, brimming with the dynamic spirit of freedom and democracy, has a natural destiny to lead the propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the globe.

Today, in various fields, exchange and unity among ordi-

The new campus of Soka University of America, now under construction in Orange County, Calif., is steadily taking shape. It will be a haven of water, greenery and sunshine. I am confident that the university's presence will be a great source of hope for the entire world.

With the sound of construction reverberating far and wide, I ask that America lead the way in raising the curtain on another new phase in the worldwide kosen-rufu movement.

We must make the 21st century an age

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



FROM SPEECH, 1

nary citizens, transcending national borders, are beginning to find a place on the center stage of history. As one of the world's foremost people's movements, the SGI is in the vanguard of such efforts. Our movement is now attracting increasing attention around the globe as a shining hope of the people.

Humankind today is grappling desperately with questions of survival and what it means to lead a valuable existence. A new system of global values to replace the outmoded values of the 20th century is urgently needed. Buddhism can provide a philosophical framework and an inexhaustible source of wisdom for that purpose.

Let us work on a global scale to forge a harmonious solidarity among various philosophies, with the humanism of Buddhism serving as a connecting bridge.

Buddhism exists for the self-realization of the individual. And the SGI organization, too, exists first and foremost to help each person become happy. Its purpose is to enable individuals to shine in their own unique way and manifest their greatest and highest potential.

A Buddhist scripture states that all good teachings and good actions in the secular world comprise, in and of themselves, the truth of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, the validity of Buddhism is proven through the positive actions undertaken by each person in society. All of you, my friends of the SGI, have striven to be exemplary citizens, actively con-

The Source of Benefit

Back to the Basics

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Nichiren Daishonin teaches that "benefit is happiness" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). The ultimate benefit of our Buddhist practice is the state of life that we can achieve—the happiness that we can find inside ourselves, the Buddhahood that

cannot be thwarted by anything that happens outside ourselves.

Buddhahood is a much bigger benefit than a new job or a free vacation. Why? Because it lasts forever.

Since the Daishonin's Buddhism emphasizes that the source of benefit is us, it follows that the only way we can achieve this happiness is through our efforts. As we try to accomplish our human revolution, as we contribute to *kosen-rufu*, we construct our happiness.

No Supreme Being, god or priest can do this for us. The last thing that we need, actually, is someone interceding between

us and the Law. That would be like having someone between us and our happiness. And that wouldn't be Buddhism.

The Law is already in our lives, so we connect to the Law directly through our faith. In "Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigon," the Daishonin thus explains, "Whether or not your prayer is answered will depend on your faith; [if it is not] I will in no way be to blame" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1079).

Knowing that we are the source of our benefit doesn't mean, though, that our prayers are automatically answered—

we have to have patience. We have to continue to pray, to revolutionize our lives and to help other people revolutionize theirs. The Daishonin teaches in "The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith" that "to 'continue' means to cherish Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the most important principle for all the Buddhas of the three existences" (WND, 471).

If we continue, our happiness ripens. But if we try to pick this fruit too early, it tastes bad.

Keeping this view of benefit in mind helps us to enjoy our practice more and leads us to more benefit—to solidifying our Buddhahood. **WT**

tributing to the prosperity of your countries and communities and becoming a driving force for social revitalization. Your integrity of character and the sincerity of your words and conduct have won the widespread support and trust of many people. This is clear proof of the validity of Buddhism.

Buddhism does not impose one single way of life or cultural tradition. It teaches tolerance and respect for all cultures. The Buddhist way of life is to follow the culture—the customs and traditions—of the particular country and society in which we reside. It calls for us to undertake our activities with wisdom and common sense and to become a sun-like presence illuminating all around us, thereby winning trust in society

and setting an inspiring example for others.

Another Buddhist scripture states, "Though one defeats a million men in battle, one who overcomes the self alone is in fact the highest victor" (*The Dhammapada: Sayings of Buddha*, p. 39). It is important that we triumph over ourselves. This is the purpose of Buddhism.

No matter what stormy seas you may encounter in the journey of life, please keep sailing forward bravely, convinced that you can definitely show actual proof of "transforming earthly desires into enlightenment"—the Buddhist teaching of achieving true happiness. Also, please value good friends and fellow members, doing your utmost to strengthen and further expand the network of people

united in shared purpose—in the spirit of "many in body, one in mind."

My fellow members of the SGI! This May 3 marks a new departure for the SGI. Everything starts anew from today. With a fresh pledge in our hearts, let us take the first step in the final approach to the 21st century, on the great path of the propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism for the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law.

For my part, I will continue to build a glorious network of friendship and philosophy that crisscrosses the globe like so many colorful rainbows spanning the world's skies.

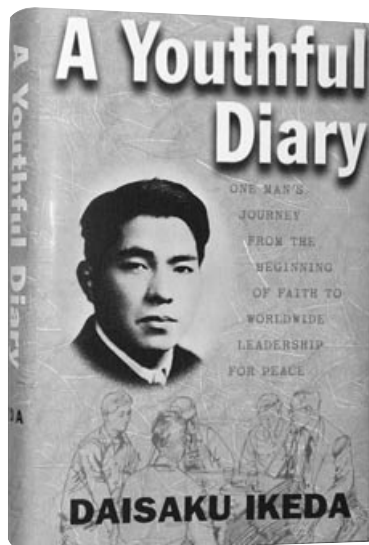
Let us set off on our joyous, hope-filled journey, advancing together in friendship, harmony and good cheer! To eliminate

war, misery and unhappiness from the face of the earth! To rid the world of all evil and injustice! To enable all people to change their karma and enjoy healthy and fulfilled lives! To realize lasting peace for humanity!

And I will continue to offer this, my unceasing prayer:


*My precious fellow members of the SGI!
May you be champions of happiness!
May you be champions of the people!
May you be champions of justice!
May you be champions of hope!*

May 3, 2000
Daisaku Ikeda
SGI President



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.

ON SALE NOW  M/O #4 101 \$23.95

SGI-USA Bookstore or SGI-USA Mail Order Center
By phone: (800) 626-1313 By email: sgiusamoc@aol.com

(Plus shipping & handling if purchased via mail order. Please call for amounts.)

World TRIBUNE The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

The *World Tribune* (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; (310) 260-8900; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org SGIUSUBS@aol.com

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

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$125 for Three Years

Printed on 100% recycled paper
Copyright © 2000 by SGI-USA.
All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

EXPERIENCE — KAY RYNERSON, SEATTLE

Savoring the Present Moment

Challenging Illness

Kay RynerSON challenges breast cancer with the awareness that 'this moment is all we truly have.'

Early last year, I began taking hormones at the suggestion of my doctor to control perimenopausal symptoms. That summer, I noticed a lump in my breast that grew quickly. By the fall, my left breast was nearly twice the size of the other one. In late November, I found myself sitting in the surgeon's sterile, windowless examination room as he shared the diagnosis: breast cancer. I felt exactly like a convicted criminal sentenced to death. What did I do to deserve this?

"This is not a death sentence," the doctor said. "We have many ways to fight this disease." But no matter what any medical professional said, I was convinced I was going to die a slow, agonizing death. I could see myself pale and bald, lying in a hospital bed hooked up to all kinds of machines, smiling tearfully as I bid my loved ones goodbye, just like in the movies. I felt my life begin to ebb away — my days dissolving into endless hospital visits and debilitating pain.

Testing revealed an aggressive form of breast cancer, and two weeks later the left breast was surgically removed, along with 27 lymph nodes. I had ignored the lump for months, knowing somewhere inside me that it was going to be trouble.

My family couldn't believe the diagnosis — with my healthy, mostly vegetarian diet, my devotion to exercise and my low-stress career as a massage therapist, I was the last person anyone expected to become ill. I had no risk factors for cancer other than being a female — although after talking to many breast cancer survivors, I am convinced that a woman should do some hard thinking and extensive research before submitting to hormone replacement therapy.

At the incision site following the mastectomy, a small red

rash appeared. The doctor said he thought it might be an allergic reaction to the surgical tape.

A month after the surgery, when the incision healed, I began chemotherapy using the most powerful and toxic drugs in use today. Chemotherapy targets the whole body, mopping up cancer cells that may linger anywhere. Any case in which 10 or more lymph nodes test positive for cancer calls for the heavy ammunition. I had 12 positive nodes.

The way chemotherapy works is by killing off the cancer cells while they are in the process of dividing and multiplying. The drugs incidentally kill off other dividing cells, such as those in the hair follicles, which is why I lost my hair. They also shut down the ovaries, sending the body into menopause, which has some very interesting side effects.

Six weeks into the chemo treatment, the red rash had grown larger and when biopsied was found to be cancerous. Leftover tumor cells had seeped through the skin and were spreading, despite the aggressive drugs. I then realized I really had to start fighting.

I thought back to the early days of my practice, when I was manic depressive with suicidal tendencies, exhibiting many disturbing tendencies, which led me to Buddhism. By the end of a six-year battle, the depression was gone and has not recurred — not even for a single day — in the last 24 years. Nevertheless, the day of the diagnosis, I began looking death in the face, and to tell the truth, it looked like a very comfortable alternative to the medical interventions that lay ahead of me. It was a dark feeling from the depths of my consciousness that yearned toward a quick, painless death — perhaps an exhilarating jump off a bridge or a simple drug overdose.

I then had the opportunity to receive guidance from SGI North America Bureau Director Norimasa Saito. He told me that life as a Buddhist is a process of overcoming one hurdle after another after another, just like an athlete, becoming stronger and stronger with each one. He also said that we choose roles in life, like actors, to display the power of this great philosophy. So, why not choose to be a Katherine Hepburn, with truly chal-

lenging roles that allow me to reveal my true power?

The doctors decided the chemo wasn't working, since the tumor spread on the skin despite the drugs, so I then started radiation, which targeted the left chest directly in daily treatments for two months. "If the skin can't tolerate the maximum dose," said the oncologist, "the cancer cells can't either." The targeted area tanned, then burned, getting papery and hypersensitive to the touch, then peeled, then went through many other changes. The pain, oddly enough, was worse while I was chanting, as if the universe was saying: "Sit up straight and chant harder! Harder! You need a lot more life force to beat this one!" My friend Shigeko Groshell brought me soothing yam paste compresses, which helped the pain subside slowly.

I then began a different chemotherapy cocktail following radiation in hopes that the cancer would respond to this one.

Before the diagnosis, I had started a daily chanting session with another member who is facing some major challenges. Once I got the diagnosis, we invited any and all to come — so many members asked to chant with us that I finally began to put the weekly schedule on the outgoing announcement on my phone. Now two other members also sponsor chanting sessions once or twice a week.

Shortly after the word got out, I was sitting in front of my altar one morning reading *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and my body began to pulsate. It was the same rhythm as my arterial pulse, but my entire body was vibrating. I felt instinctively that all the prayers of my friends were rocking my body with positive energy. It was the first time I have ever felt keenly the prayers of others reaching the depths of my life.

Another time, surrounded by a room full of people chanting, I felt a great, warm light permeate me like a giant energy x-ray illuminating every single cell in my body. I felt at that moment that I was going to win.

As a result of the chanting, I



Kay RynerSON says her illness 'brings the important things in life into such clear focus.'

actually have more energy than before I was diagnosed. I'm working more hours than ever and enjoying it more and more. Every day seems so precious now. I ride my bicycle to treatments — five miles — which includes a killer hill, so I'm getting stronger and stronger. I continue to use my bike for most of my transportation needs.

I've witnessed an overwhelming outpouring of care and concern from people around me, as if being surrounded by an incredible embrace. Friends of mine who have long since given up their Buddhist practice are showing up now and then for the chanting sessions. I have a partner, Dennis, who is right beside me to offer any kind of support, even bringing offerings of greens and fruit to set on the altar. He calls me Hippolyta, after the queen of the Amazons, a [mythological] tribe of women who cut off their left breasts in order to be better archers.

In my heart I am happy. SGI President Ikeda said: "People who have not experienced painful struggles or suffering cannot understand the hearts of others. Only if one has tasted life's bitterness can one lead people to happiness."

"To simply view your sufferings as 'karma' is backward-looking. We should have the attitude: 'These are the sufferings I took on for the sake of my mission. I vowed to overcome these problems through faith.'

"When we understand this principle of 'deliberately creat-

ing the appropriate karma,' our frame of mind is transformed; what we had previously viewed as destiny, we come to see as mission. There is absolutely no way we cannot overcome sufferings that are the result of a vow that we ourselves made" (February 1997 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 36-37).

I have a cancer buddy who is six months ahead of me in her diagnosis, with the same type of tumor in the same location in the same breast. She is also a massage therapist. Her tumor has metastasized to her liver, but she is active and fighting hard. We both agreed recently that we have no regrets about going through this ordeal because it brings the important things in life into such clear focus. You shed negative influences, you prioritize time spent with loved ones (I have two self-motivated, well-adjusted teenagers of whom I am very proud) and you feel some days that you have such a clear view of eternity that your life expands into an awareness that we are all dying. You have to live each day with the understanding that yesterday is gone, tomorrow will never come, and the present moment is to be savored with a hearty appetite. That this moment is all we truly have.

I am determined to beat this illness and live a long life. I can't wait to meet my grandchildren, attend the opening of an SGI community center in my neighborhood, perfect the tango, publish a massage textbook and continue to help my SGI district grow and support this great Buddhist movement for peace. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — KEITH WASHINGTON, BRONX, N.Y.

A Medical Mystery

Challenging Illness

Keith Washington says: 'As of March 5, the HIV is still undetectable; my T-cell count is back up to 200.'

I have had many great experiences since I began chanting. I'd like to share one of my most profound experiences with you.

Feb. 20, 1986, has become a day that will never be forgotten. It opened up the door to my mission in life today. On the evening of Feb. 20, I was on my way home from work when I stopped to pick up some sake to celebrate my third year of Buddhist practice with my aunt, who was preparing dinner.

As I left the store, I was mugged by two thugs. They stabbed me twice in the thigh and demanded money. In the struggle, I gave up the last five dollars I had. One of them said: "No wallet! Kill him anyway!" As the other began to stab me a third time in the neck, with what I realized was a needle, I began to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo out loud. The needle missed my neck and they took off running! Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo saved my life!

I was taken to the hospital where doctors encouraged me to take care of my health and get regular checkups. Since I was stabbed with a needle, the potential for HIV infection was possible. I never feared this possibility. SGI President Ikeda says in his poem, "To My Young American Friends," "Faith is to fear nothing." My thought was to bring hope to millions of people if I was infected through showing actual proof of overcoming such an illness based on my Buddhist practice.

In *The Human Revolution*, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said, "What medicine can't cure, the Gohonzon will." Having read *My Recollections*, I knew that President Ikeda also suffered illness during his youth. The fact that both Josei Toda and President Ikeda overcame tuberculosis based on faith and taking care of themselves encouraged me to fight and win.

Thirteen years later in February 1999, HIV showed up in my blood. When the doctors told me this, I wondered if I could handle the disease. Could I take medication and deal with the side effects, and what would the result be from taking the medication? The main question was how long would I live?

I began to reread *My Recollections*. President Ikeda says: "When I became a father, I prayed that the child would grow up healthy. This suggests, naturally, that I was more concerned about physical well-being than anything else; apparently my prayers have been answered." This encouraged me to pray for my physical health and well-being as well. When he wrote the following in his diary entry "April 5, state of health terribly poor; severe pains continue.... But my situation just wouldn't allow me to give in to my condition," this gave me the courage to never give up. I determined to live long. I determined to transform poison into medicine and show great actual proof for kosen-rufu.

By May, I was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS. I said to myself, "Because I have the Gohonzon, I will chant a lot, share Buddhism with others and overcome this illness." I was living in Dallas with my partner, Reggie, when this all came about, and so we started a campaign. We wanted no less than one hour a day, attended every meeting and studied *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* every evening after gongyo. I spent five days in the hospital in May. What was at first thought to be pneumonia turned out to be bronchitis; my weight dropped from 160 lbs. to 119 lbs.

In June, Reggie and I communicated with family and friends and I contacted SGI friends in New York and Hawaii. One of the members in Dallas contacted the Kansai members in Japan. Everyone was chanting for me!

Reggie and I prepared to return to New York to be close to family.

My doctor started me on three medications. I also continued to eat healthily and drink various herb teas. This kept me from having any side effects. I told my doctor that my goal was to gain my weight back to 140 lbs. and for my viral load (which shows how much HIV

virus is in the body) to become undetectable within two months. According to the doctors, it would take six to eight months if I lived that long.

The Dallas members' support was incredible! Our home was like a mini SGI culture center, as we performed evening gongyo and daimoku regularly with members. Together we studied "On Curing Karmic Disease," along with President Ikeda's guidance from the *World Tribune*.

Every morning and evening, I read the following passage: "Your boils have resulted from only one offense — slandering the correct teaching. The Mystic Law you now embrace surpasses the moon-loving meditation. How could your boils possibly not be healed and your life span not extended? If these words of mine prove untrue, you should shout: "The Buddha, the eye of the entire world, is a great liar, and the Lotus, the wonderful sutra of the single vehicle, is a scripture of clever flourishes. The World-Honored One should give me proof if he cares about his good name! All the saints and worthies should come to protect me, if they do not want to be false to their vows!" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 634).

By the end of June, my strength was back. I completed a two-and-a-half-day drive from Texas to New York.

On July 6, 1999, I took another blood test. I'm happy to report that in three weeks, my viral load went from the highest 750,000 to undetectable! I weighed in at 140 lbs. and as of March 5, my status is still undetectable and I weigh 163 lbs. My T-cell count is back up to 200. I was told by doctors from three hospitals that this is medically impossible. I'm called a mystery to the medical profession.

I have introduced this Buddhism to doctors, nurses, patients, priests, nuns, family and friends. In one case, a hospital nun chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with me. The name given to me by her is Sunshine; she said I always look so bright.

I now write for the Saint Vincent Hospital newsletter, called "The Lamp," dedicated to supporting HIV patients. I have shared my experience and written other encouraging articles.

Photo by TROY MURRAIN



Keith Washington, at his friend Troy Murrain's home in Dallas.

I have written to President Ikeda regularly for the past 11 years. His most recent response in December 1999 was "Please accept my warm regards. I received your message in regard to your health. I am chanting daimoku for you. I'm sending daimoku to you."

Throughout my 16 years of Buddhist practice, all my prayers have been answered. I'm so thankful for this wonderful organization, the support of my partner, friends and family and President Ikeda. I determine to continue doing my best for kosen-rufu. **WT**

Subscribe to the Justice Chronicle

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.

The Justice Chronicle will feature the latest Soka Spirit movement news, SGI President Ikeda's recent guidance about it and study articles explaining the difference between Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and what the temple is teaching.

To subscribe to the Justice Chronicle, just follow these three easy steps:

- 1) Open a new e-mail message
- 2) Enter to: ListManager@sgi-usa.org
- 3) Enter message text (first line): SUBSCRIBE chronicle

You'll receive a confirmation message and then a new issue every week!

EXPERIENCE — GREGORY PIERSON, SAN DIEGO

Against All Odds

Challenging Illness

Gregory Pierson supports his wife, Elizabeth, through her life-threatening heart surgery and strengthens his relationship with her in the process.

As 1999 ended, challenges and obstacles came close to undoing my marriage. In July of that year, I was diagnosed with type II diabetes. In August, the dream I held of obtaining a master's degree in social work was dashed when the school refused to allow me to reenroll. We also struggled financially. Since my wife, Elizabeth, and I are both hypertensive, it made the pressures upon us worse.

In spite of all the problems, we had bright moments. In August, I was hired by a local courier company, which stabilized our financial situation. That same month I joined the SGI-USA San Diego's Men's Chorus. Elizabeth gained a promotion to supervisor in the housekeeping department of the Hyatt Islandia Hotel on Mission Bay where she's worked since March 1994. On Nov. 9, 1999, Elizabeth, originally from the Philippines, passed a comprehensive oral and written U.S. Citizenship exam in spite of the increased levels of stress.

However, our happiness over that accomplishment was short-lived.

While on break the night of Nov. 12, my wife suffered a sudden series of major ruptures of her ascending and descending aorta, the main blood passages that direct blood through her body. I was asleep, and word did not reach me until 1:00 the next morning. I rushed to be at her side.

When I saw Elizabeth hooked up to life support at Mission Bay Hospital, I began chanting. It was a situation I was not even prepared to face or accept. One of the attending doctors informed me that of all the cases like this she had treated, no one had survived.

This was not what I wanted to hear, not even from a trained professional.

Elizabeth was transported to another hospital. I followed the ambulance to Scripps Hospital in La Jolla where her emergency aortic reconstruction surgery was performed. Before she even entered the ER's main hallway, a crowd of medical professionals swirled around her. Her chest was prepped and cut open as the cardiac surgeon explained to me what they were attempting to do. Seconds later, she was rushed into the cardiac operating suite.

As I said, Elizabeth was not given much chance of surviving the surgery, and a slimmer chance of recovery. The doctor told me that there would be complications regardless of the outcome. There was real concern voiced by the surgeon that Elizabeth may have suffered damage to her brain and other vital organs due to the lack of blood flow.

With the support of SGI-USA members and leaders, a determined chanting campaign was waged.

As Elizabeth fought for her life after the surgery, I chanted over her in the cardiac care unit with the encouragement of the doctors and nursing staff while she was in a drug-induced coma. As I watched her, it dawned on me that we had never had a real chance to share a life as husband and wife—our lives were in constant conflict and familial strife. I was determined that we would change this once and for all.

Elizabeth awoke from her coma on Nov. 24. She was disoriented and could not speak. She gestured for a pen and paper. With her weak arms and hands, she wrote her first words: "What happened?" She was told. Her next written words were: "I want to go home."

When her breathing tubes were removed she could only whisper, but she was able to chant and recite part of the sutra.

Days later she was moved to a private room. We continued to chant. Members continued to chant and visit her. The results were impressive.

By Dec. 11, she was walking on her own and eating solid food. I slept on the floor of her room refusing to leave her side. We were told she could be home by Christmas—she came

home on Dec. 17. She was able to attend the New Year's Day World Peace Gongyo meeting.

But things took a turn for the worse. At home one day she began to vomit, and doubled over in severe pain; her blood pressure was in the high 180s. On Jan. 3, she was back in the hospital diagnosed with a circulation problem to her kidneys.

At the advice of my leaders during a home visit, I put all of my personal pains and fears and need for change before the Gohonzon. It was so hard to do because I was now so tired and feeling depressed; focusing was becoming difficult. But I knew if something had to change in my environment to make things right, it had to begin with me.

It was discovered that Elizabeth's left kidney had decreased blood flow. Yet in spite of her intense pain, we were assured that it was functioning normally. More medication was prescribed and Elizabeth was allowed to come home a week later.

From that moment on, I was determined to attend to her every need without complaint. As my wife gained weight from my cooking, I knew that we could overcome our problems if we chanted.

As the month of February dawned, Elizabeth was very excited about her upcoming citizenship ceremony on the 24th—a date she was determined not to miss. It was a very happy moment for us—the day she would become a United States Citizen.

However, on Feb. 25 she suffered another setback. Overnight her blood pressure had skyrocketed to an alarmingly high 205 over 85; she was having problems breathing. Even though she was on new medication, the pressure would not drop as it had in the past. She was back in the ICU.

After a quick examination, it was disclosed that her left kidney was close to failure and she had retained over two liters of fluid in her right lung cavity. Her pressure was 187 over 94; she was suffocating. One liter of fluid was drained. She was put on medication that brought her pressure under control. Her doctors conferred.

I began to chant in earnest. "How much more could she take?" I asked. There must be a reason for all of this turmoil. We had to overcome it. We had

to fight. We had to win!!

The next morning a catheter was introduced into a vein in her thigh and guided toward her repaired aorta. Another catheterization procedure was performed to introduce a stainless steel wire mesh shunt into the left kidney's repaired artery to open it from the two millimeters it was to the four millimeters it had to be to promote proper blood flow.

That procedure was successful. The kidney began to produce urine immediately and her pressure began to decrease.

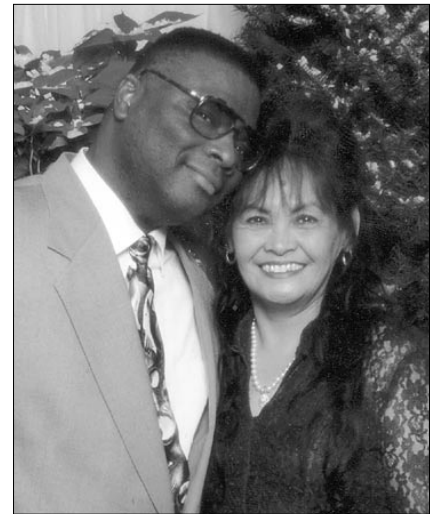
My wife is now home and her blood pressure is still being controlled, but the amount of medication used is down by 94 percent.

As for my health, I was given a physical on March 3 at the VA Hospital. My blood pressure was high, so my medications were changed. My blood sugar level is now within normal limits. I will not have to take pills or shots to control my diabetes.

Chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo turned the darkest moments of this entire nightmare—this horrible poison—into the sweetest medicine. Why do I say this? Because I believe that Elizabeth was protected by our Buddhist practice.

At the time of her collapse in the Hyatt's cafeteria that foggy night in November, a co-worker ran out to alert an ambulance crew that was on break in the Hyatt's parking lot. She was attended to in seconds. If she had collapsed in a room or in an elevator, she would have died.

In the three hours it took to get word to me of Elizabeth's brush with death, her fellow co-workers implored and demanded that life-saving interventions be started immediately by the paramedics. Thanks to the strong support of her friends and fellow workers, she was



Gregory Pierson with his wife, Elizabeth, at the Hyatt Islandia Christmas party in 1998.

given a fighting chance.

Hyatt Islandia had taken great care to insure that she was covered for the duration of her rehabilitation by insuring that her disability paperwork was done before the ambulance left the parking lot. Although they were not obligated to do it, the Hyatt allowed Elizabeth to use her vacation and sick leave while her disability papers worked their way into the State's system. She started receiving all these benefits on Jan. 17.

Life in our home now is tranquil. During my visits to the hospital, it was as if Elizabeth and I got to know each other—really know each other—for the very first time.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote these profound words: "A man is like a pillar. A woman is like a crossbeam. A man is like the legs of a person, a woman like the trunk. A man is like the wings of a bird, a woman like the body. If the wings and the body become separated, then how can the bird fly? And if the pillar topples, then the crossbeam will surely fall to the ground" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1043).

Thanks to the power of the Mystic Law, we all have the opportunity to change our karma and our life-condition during this lifetime. My appreciation for the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and the guidance of President Ikeda is as boundless as the sky.

Our battles are not over, however, I know we will make it. **W**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 24 SPEECH—PART 2

FOR THE SAKE OF THE NEXT GENERATION

'We are on the right path only when the next generation can enjoy an even more solid, stable peace and happiness than we do today,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'This is the view of Buddhism.'

The conclusion 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.

Inheriting the spirit of the prophecies of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin, I wish to lead humanity in the direction of peace for the sake of the next generation, the generation after that and for all generations to come. The desire to turn the entire universe, for billions of years in the future, in the direction of peace—this is the vow and the vast, boundless

state of life of the Buddha. It will be a tragedy, if, although we may be doing well now, the next generation fails. We are on the right path only when the next generation can enjoy an even more solid, stable peace and happiness than we do today. This is the view of Buddhism. This is the Buddha's immense compassion. I want to build a base that ensures that the SGI will develop even further and work even harder than it did in the 20th century to contribute to people's happiness in the 21st century.

Selfishness—caring only about one's own convenience, position, wealth and benefit—is not the way of genuine faith. It is not the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism. Kosen-rufu is an undertaking to blaze a path to the happiness, prosperity and peace of all humanity, based on a great philosophy that will shine across eternity. This is an awesome enterprise.

Not even the greatest scholar, philosopher or political leader can accomplish such a feat. Only the SGI can do it! And let us do just that! [Participants en-



The 44th Headquarters Leaders Meeting is held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, March 24.

thusiastically raised their hands in agreement.] You've just raised your hands. This may seem like a small thing, but from the perspective of Buddhism, everything has meaning. Those who have raised their hands will be leaders in lifetime after lifetime. Buddhism tells us that by raising your hand now in a pledge to work for the happiness of the people, you have made a cause to have many people in the future raise their hands in support of you.

When one devotes one's life to the Mystic Law and lives according to it unswervingly, the smallest, seemingly inconsequential act can result in immeasurable future benefits. Similarly, to the extent that you have paid your highest respects to the Gohonzon, people will respect, honor and protect you in lifetime after lifetime.

This may sound like a fairytale, but the law of cause and effect that governs life is uncompromising. Its workings are in fact so powerful that it is difficult to believe.

Introducing one person to Buddhism contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement.

I want to share with you a passage from Nichiren Daishonin's "On the Buddha's Prophecy," a letter he wrote on May 1273,

when he was in exile on the island of Sado: "At such a time [the Latter Day of the Law, when the country is overrun with slander-



A statue of Leonardo da Vinci in the main lobby of Soka University of Japan's new Central Tower.

ers of the Law], the heavenly gods and benevolent deities abandon the country, and only perverse heavenly beings and perverse demons remain, possessing the minds and bodies of the ruler, his subjects, and monks and nuns, and causing them to curse, revile, and heap shame on the votary of the Lotus Sutra" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 400).

Who today are the practitioners of the true teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism who have been cursed and reviled by the authorities and evil priests, just as the Goshu predicts? It is us, the members of the SGI, an organization committed to carrying out the Buddha's will and decree.

I am certain that the story of the relentless, continual persecution that we have experienced—particularly that of the last 20 years—will be handed down from generation to generation.

The Daishonin continues: "If, however, in the time after the Buddha's passing, a person renounces his attachments to the four flavors and three teachings [the entire body of teachings preached prior to the Lotus Sutra], and converts to faith in the Lotus Sutra that is true Mahayana, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, as well as the bodhisattvas numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from beneath

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Journey of a Thousand Miles

From This Speech:

The road to the SGI's further development in the 21st century opens brightly, limitlessly before us. We are aiming to propagate the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. Let us advance with that great goal firmly in mind. The world is not somewhere far from us. Just introducing one person to the Daishonin's Buddhism or visiting the home of one person for the sake of kosen-rufu contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Let us courageously advance along the path to kosen-rufu and attain eternal benefit!

- 1) What does SGI President Ikeda mean when he says that "the world is not somewhere far from us"?
- 2) How does practicing this Buddhism help us to become true global citizens?
- 3) How does introducing one person to this Buddhism or home visiting one person contribute to kosen-rufu?
- 4) Have you ever had a home visit that changed the way you practice Buddhism? That changed your life?
- 5) "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." What's the next step that you want to take in your Buddhist practice?

the ground, will protect him as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Under their protection, he will [establish and] spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa [the entire world] the object of devotion of the essential teaching, or the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo" (WND, 400).

The votary of the Lotus Sutra referred to here is of course the Daishonin. In a broader, general sense, however, we can read this passage as the Daishonin's encouragement for those who are striving to carry out kosen-rufu across the globe in modern times — the SGI members, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who are rising to fulfill this mission.

Today, the SGI has earned the trust and applause of the world's Brahmas and Shaktas [the two major tutelary gods of Buddhism, representatives of the heavenly gods and benevolent deities who function to protect the practitioners of Buddhism] — in other words, leaders in every field of human endeavor around the globe. This, I believe, is the protection that the Daishonin speaks of.

In any event, the Daishonin, along with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space, and the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, have rigorously protected the SGI because our actions are in complete accord with the Daishonin's teachings.

The road to the SGI's further development in the 21st century opens brightly, limitlessly before us. We are aiming to propagate the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. Let us advance with that great goal firmly in mind. The world is not somewhere far from us. Just introducing one person to the Daishonin's Buddhism or visiting the home of one person for the sake of kosen-rufu contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Let us courageously advance along the path to kosen-rufu and attain eternal benefit!

The brilliant sun of truth ultimately reveals what is right.

Today, fellow members from the golden land of Malaysia, who are visiting Japan for study and training, join us. Thank you for your wonderful efforts!

The new SGI-Malaysia Grand Culture Center, a symbol of the SGI's phenomenal development in that country, is scheduled to open this December. With 14 floors — 12 above

ground and two below — it is roughly the same height as Soka University's new Central Tower. Congratulations!

Also with us today are fellow members from Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance, who are here on a training course as well. Thank you for all your hard work!

In Italy, as in other parts of the world, lively, high-spirited youth division general meetings were held to commemorate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day. I have heard that meetings took place in 13 centers around Italy, and that more than 13,000 members attended. Congratulations! I have been told that the youth division general meeting in Florence was attended by the city's mayor, Leonardo Domenici, and that he officially announced the city's decision to present me with its Seal of Peace.

Discussion meetings were also held throughout March all across Italy at 2,500 locations to commemorate March 16, with more than 27,000 people attending. I wholeheartedly applaud the Italian members on their magnificent progress, which is truly a model for all.

Speaking of Italy, I am of course reminded of Leonardo da Vinci.

Incidentally, when former Philippine president Fidel Ramos visited Soka University on March 23, he viewed the statue of Leonardo da Vinci that adorns the new Central Tower's main lobby.

Leonardo declares, "Nothing is hidden under the sun" (*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 1, p. 357). In other words, the brilliant sun of truth ultimately reveals what is right. Leonardo, who fought his entire life against slander and insult, firmly believed that lies and falsehood would not endure.

Leonardo likens lies to a mole: "The mole has very small eyes and it always lives underground; and it lives as long as it is in the dark but when it comes into the light it dies immediately, because it becomes known; — and so it is with lies" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 319). Lies are short-lived. They cannot survive in the sun of truth. Please never become the kind of person who cannot live under the sun.

If you say you're going to do something, then you must do it!

Leonardo wrote several fables ridiculing arrogance and pride. In one, he narrates the story of a proud cedar: "The cedar, puffed up with pride of its beauty, separated itself from the trees around it and in so



Soka Schools alumni take a group photo at SUA, Calabasas, April 23.

Soka Schools Alumni Gather at SUA, Calabasas

Graduates of the Soka Schools in Japan and California came from Los Angeles, San Diego and Las Vegas for a reunion at Soka University of America, Calabasas on April 23 — their first gathering in nearly four years. During that time, the number of Soka graduates living in Southern California has dramatically increased, from around 90 to more than 160. (Nationwide, there are more than 450 Soka graduates.)

Ed Feasel, the dean of students at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, did a presentation for the graduates on the progress of the new campus. "The dedication ceremony for the Aliso Viejo campus will be on May 3, 2001, which will be exactly 50 years after President Toda became the second Soka Gakkai president," he explained. "SGI President Ikeda recently shared that he established Soka University to realize Mr. Makiguchi's

dream and to reply to the pledge he made to Mr. Toda. I've learned that Soka University itself is a concrete manifestation of the mentor-and-disciple relationship."

The Soka graduates broke up into groups by area to discuss how, with this spirit, they could promote students for the first class of SUA, Aliso Viejo (entering September 2001) and the SUA, Calabasas master's degree program in second- and foreign-language education. **WT**

doing it turned away towards the wind, which not being [hindered] in its fury, flung [the tree] uprooted on the earth" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 374).

The priesthood took all it could get from the SGI, which had made tremendous contributions to the head temple, and then separated itself from us. But, in so doing, it has, just like the cedar tree, brought about its own ruin.

Another of Leonardo's fables warns against the folly of straying from one's destined path in life: "A stone of some size recently uncovered by the water lay on a certain spot somewhat raised, and just where a delightful grove ended by a stony road; here it was surrounded by plants decorated by various flowers of diverse colours. And as it saw the great quantity of stones collected together in the roadway below, it began to wish it could let itself fall down there, saying to itself: 'What have I to do here with these plants? I want to live in the company of those, my sisters.' And letting itself fall, its rapid course ended

among these longed for companions. When it had been there sometime it began to find itself constantly toiling under the wheels of the carts, the iron-shoed feet of horses, and travelers. This one rolled it over, that one trod upon it; sometimes it lifted itself a little and then it was covered with mud or the dung of some animal, and it was in vain that it looked to the spot whence it had come as a place of solitude and [tranquillity]" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 339).

How sad and lonely are the lives of those former members who have left the SGI, our joyous organization that accords with the Buddha's intent and decree! This is all too apparent when we look at the kind of existences led by those who abandoned their faith.

Today in Italy, in Malaysia and all around the world, a new, 21st century Renaissance — based on the principle of human revolution — is beginning to bloom. Let us move forward cheerfully and enthusiastically, always together with the Daishonin's Bud-

dism of the sun, along the great road to happiness!

In closing, let me share the words of the great Chinese philosopher and writer Lu Xun with you: "If you say you're going to do something, then do it! Blaze a new trail!" This was Lu Xun's creed. Let us advance with the same commitment into a grand Century of Soka! **WT**

Read the WT E-mail Express

The WT E-mail Express is a free, weekly e-mailer for World Tribune subscribers. It features excerpts from President Ikeda's new speeches, essays and dialogues, as well as previews of other upcoming World Tribune articles.

To subscribe to the WT E-mail Express, just follow these three easy steps:
1) Open a new e-mail message
2) Enter to:
ListManager@sgi-usa.org
3) Enter message text (first line): SUBSCRIBE wtexpress

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

The Golden Bonds of Mentor and Disciple

SGI President Ikeda recalls how he was finally convinced to accept the Soka Gakkai presidency in the spring of 1960. Remembering that 'the golden bonds of the oneness of mentor and disciple are the essence of Buddhism and the tradition and spirit of the Soka Gakkai,' he determined to do his best.

"Great love cannot be separated from deep wisdom. Breadth of wisdom is the same as depth of emotion. Therefore, it is great hearts that reach the loftiest heights of humanity, and that in itself is great wisdom." These are the words of the renowned Russian author Ivan Goncharov, who visited Nagasaki, Japan, in the mid-19th century.

◆◆◆◆

Soka Gakkai General Director Takashi Koizumi, one of my seniors in faith, used to live near Kamata Station in Tokyo's Ota Ward. His home had previously been a kindergarten, and we often used it as a meeting place for the local Kamata Chapter.

My home was in Kobayashicho, a 20-minute walk from Mr. Koizumi's place. I fondly remember how he would often visit me, leading his dog—a fine Akita—on a leash. His friendly, open manner never changed, even after he became a member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. Later, in the autumn of 1958, about six months after Josei Toda's death, General Director Koizumi moved to Meguro Ward, where Mr. Toda had lived.

Early in 1960, on a cold winter's morning, General Director Koizumi suddenly appeared at my home. Surprised, I invited him in. "You are probably preparing to go out," he began, "so I won't keep you."

With an expression of tremendous intensity, he continued: "Please, please accept the post of third Soka Gakkai president. This is the unanimous wish of the directors.

"The person who worked hardest at President Toda's side

should become the next president. Also, President Toda frequently told us, 'Daisaku will be the next president.' I promise to support you, no matter what may happen, so please accept—for the sake of the Gakkai, for kosen-rufu and for President Toda."

He went on to say: "Koji Harashima [one of the Soka Gakkai's directors] wanted to come with me this morning, but I thought it would be better if I came alone. He told me to do my best, and said he looked forward to me bringing back good news." Then Mr. Koizumi left.

Both my wife and I were very moved by his sincere plea.

◆◆◆◆

When I think about it, General Director Koizumi and I seem to have been bound by some mysterious connection. He was there at the discussion meeting where I first met Mr. Toda on Aug. 14, 1947. And when my mentor's business fell into dire straits, and I alone continued to stand by Mr. Toda and work wholeheartedly for him, Mr. Koizumi was the one to express his sincere gratitude to me.

Finally, those difficulties were overcome, and Mr. Toda was inaugurated as second Soka Gakkai president in May 1951. Several months later, in January 1952, I was appointed chapter staff of the Kamata Chapter at the age of 24. Mr. Koizumi was the Kamata Chapter leader at the time, and Shizuko Shiraki, my wife's mother, was the chapter women's division leader. In the single month of February, Kamata set a propagation record, with more than 200 new households joining the Soka Gakkai. This was the February Struggle, the catalyst that sparked the monumental effort to achieve Mr. Toda's goal of a membership of 750,000 households.

Later, General Director Koizumi was arrested together with me in the Osaka Incident, and he joined me in preventing Mr. Toda from being persecuted. [President Ikeda was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in a House of Councilor by-election in Osaka in 1957. At the end of the court case, which dragged on for almost five years, he was fully exonerated.] Also, High Priest Nichijun called General Director Koizumi and myself to his bedside the day before he

died to solemnly entrust us with the widespread propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

General Director Koizumi was always saying: "There's no question about who will inherit the leadership of the Gakkai after Mr. Toda. It should be the person who has worked the hardest for the Gakkai. And that is clearly Mr. Ikeda. Who else could it possibly be?"

◆◆◆◆

With the death of Mr. Toda, many were saying that the Soka Gakkai would "disintegrate in midair," but as general administrator I did everything in my power to support General Director Koizumi and lead the organization in the direction of unity and advancement.

However, in 1960, as the second anniversary of Mr. Toda's death approached on April 2, the Soka Gakkai directors, led by General Director Koizumi, moved to have me inaugurated as third president. On the afternoon of March 30, in Reception Room 1 of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, General Director Koizumi formally asked me to accept the presidency.

"The Gakkai will experience no fresh development if things continue as they are," he said. "Calls for you to assume the presidency have been growing louder throughout the organization. I want very much to see you inaugurated as the new president at this year's general meeting on May 3." His sincere intent was painfully clear to me, but still I refused, selfish as it might have seemed.

I was only 32. I was too young for the position. Mr. Toda only assumed the post after the sixth anniversary of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's death. I wanted to wait at least until we had observed the sixth anniversary of Mr. Toda's death. I was also a defendant in the Osaka Incident trial. If, after becoming president, I was for some reason found guilty, it could only harm the Gakkai. I had decided not to accept the presidency until I had proven my innocence to all.

General Director Koizumi's expression clouded with disappointment at my refusal, but clearly he had not given up.

Following that meeting, at a specially convened board of directors meeting on April 9, the directors decided to ask me to

accept as a formal resolution of the board. But I again politely declined. My health was poor; my doctor had told me many years before that I would be lucky to live to be 30. In my diary that day, I wrote, "Is there no one else who can take leadership in place of my tired, worn-out self?" (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 498).

Then, on April 11, an emergency board of directors meeting was convened in a conference room at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, and I also attended. The directors unanimously requested that I become president. It was very hard for me, but I could not concede. The following day, April 12, and again on April 13, representatives of the directors contacted me, but I remained adamant in my refusal.

◆◆◆◆

On Thursday, April 14, the rain that had been falling from morning gradually ceased, and the sky began to clear. General Director Koizumi and the other directors, Koji Harashima, Takehisa Tsuji and Yasu Kashiwabara, were waiting for me again in Reception Room 1. General Director Koizumi urged me fervently—in a tone that showed he would not take no for an answer.

"Your turning down the presidency will only delay kosen-rufu," he declared. "Mr. Toda told us that if we support the third president with all our might, if we devote our lives to working together with the third president, we will achieve kosen-rufu without fail." He further stressed: "Out of a sincere desire to realize kosen-rufu, all of our leaders wish you to become president. Please accept the presidency."

I no longer had any choice. "If this is how strongly you all feel, then..." The moment I said those words, General Director Koizumi jumped in: "You accept? Thank you very much." He bowed deeply in gratitude. It was 10:10 in the morning.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Daisaku Ikeda, at his inauguration as Soka Gakkai president, May 3, 1960.

Portraits of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda looked down on the scene. One of the directors dashed from the room. Cheers erupted outside and spread like a wave. With tears in his eyes, General Director Koizumi grasped my hand and squeezed it hard. He held on to it and would not let it go.

◆◆◆◆

There were members who betrayed Mr. Makiguchi during the war, fearing persecution by the military authorities. And there were those who turned on Mr. Toda in the years of the Soka Gakkai's development after the war. Using those examples, General Director Koizumi always strictly warned the leaders: "This is something that personally concerns each of us. Because it is longtime practitioners who, if they're not careful, end up being tainted with the jealousy that corrupted the five senior priests who betrayed the Daishonin." He was determined that the Soka Gakkai would never allow the schemes of spiritual descendants of the five senior priests to divide it.

Around that time, youth division members were impatiently demanding to know why the Soka Gakkai executives were taking so long to appoint me third president, urging them to take prompt action. General Director Koizumi was greatly heartened by the youth division's strong resolve and sense of responsibility.

On leaving Mount Minobu, which had become a place of slander, Nikko wrote in a letter

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 13-14

Shin'ichi Yamamoto remembers John F. Kennedy's famous speech to the 16th U.N. General Assembly, in which he likened the arms race to 'living under a sword of Damocles.'

In 1957, when Josei Toda made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, the major world powers were putting increased energy into the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons. The justification for the possession of nuclear arms was a theory called nuclear deterrence, which held that the fear of the human race's utter annihilation by full-scale nuclear war would serve as a deterrent to war. But this very theory nurtured the "demonic claws" that Mr. Toda warned were hidden within humankind. This theory held hostage the inherent right to live of all human beings, and it was premised on fear. Toda's declaration aimed to destroy this demonic nature of humanity at its root.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto recalled the Cuban Missile Crisis, which took place in October 1962, the previous year. This terrifying incident, which deeply shocked the world, clearly revealed just how fragile, risky and illusory was the idea of preserving peace by means of a balance of fear—the essence of nuclear deterrence.

In September 1961, the year that John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president, he was invited to address the 16th Session of the U.N. General Assembly. He then likened the circumstances in which humanity found itself to "living under a sword of Damocles."

Damocles was a Greek courtier, who was always speaking extravagantly of the good fortune of his sovereign, Dionysius. Growing tired of his subject's flatteries, Dionysius one day at a banquet had Damocles sit in his throne. Above Damocles' head hung an unsheathed sword suspended by a single horsehair that could snap, sending the sword falling down, at any moment. Through

this harrowing experience, Damocles learned that the throne he had thought so glorious was in fact always exposed to mortal danger.

President Kennedy asserted that humankind, living as it did with the threat of destruction by mass quantities of nuclear weapons, was in the same boat as Damocles. The Cuban Missile Crisis took place a little more than a year after the president's speech.

The use of hydrogen and atomic bombs would be suicidal for humankind and for their planet. Placed in a situation where his decision could possibly lead to the complete annihilation of humanity, President Kennedy no doubt experienced the great anguish and loneliness of sitting directly under this terrible sword of Damocles. The situation was extremely tense, but President Kennedy persevered with a strong will and level-headed judgment, doing all in his power to avert nuclear conflict.

Shin'ichi was certain that President Kennedy would completely understand the spirit of Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, and that there would be much in common between a person of Kennedy's integrity and Toda, who had been dedicated to peace and happiness for all humanity.

Shin'ichi believed that in order to establish world peace, it was necessary to realize the spirit of Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons in society, and he thus wanted to propose to President Kennedy an early resumption of talks between U.S. and Soviet leaders.

The Cuban Missile Crisis must have given the leaders of both countries a sobering taste of the real danger of full-scale nuclear war. Now was the perfect opportunity, Shin'ichi felt,

for those leaders to meet directly and carry out open, honest dialogue, striving to improve their relations and move from opposition to peaceful coexistence. The time had also come, he believed, for them to substantially rethink their positions on nuclear weapons and to work for these weapons' elimination.

As well, he felt that the first step toward stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons around the world would be for the United States and the Soviet Union to agree to a total ban on all nuclear testing. If the leaders of the Eastern and Western blocs were to halt all testing, it would curb the development of nuclear weapons in other nations.

That, in turn, would serve as a basis for the next step: a combined effort to find a way to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. This, if anything, was the superpowers' duty.

Wanting to see nuclear weapons abolished and a tide toward lasting peace created, Shin'ichi also intended to propose, the holding of a global summit where leaders from all nations of the world could sit together and speak frankly about the issues of nuclear weapons and war. He was certain that it was the true desire of every nation not to have to pour such a large part of their national budget into maintaining nuclear arsenals.

But as the number of nuclear powers increased, many other nations felt it necessary to possess their own nuclear capability to keep up with the rest. It was their anxiety and fear that drew them into the quagmire of the nuclear arms race.

Behind all this was a deep rift formed by mutual distrust and suspicion. The only way to close that rift was for the leaders of each nation to sit down and talk openly with one another.

Shin'ichi knew, of course, that distrust would not turn into trust overnight. He was also



Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

well aware of the harsh, complex reality of international politics, with the various competing expectations of the different nations. But none of this would ever change without an attempt at dialogue. Such a course might at first seem long and cir-

cuitous, but Shin'ichi was convinced that in the end it would actually be the shortest, most direct route to peace.

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

FROM ESSAY, 8

to a young follower named Hara, "I am glad that you know what is right" (*Fuji Shugaku Yoshu*, vol. 8, p. 12). In other words, Nikko's mind was at ease as long as Hara and other young followers held fast to the correct path of faith, even if others were deceived and led astray by evil friends.

Seeing the youth division rise up to fight at the side of the new young president, General Director Koizumi, Soka Gakkai elder, smiled with confidence. He knew that this meant the future of the kosen-rufu movement had been eternally secured.



During the Freedom of Speech Incident in 1970, when I was a target of criticism from all sides in Japan, General Director Koizumi, then already retired, declared, "We must not allow the third president to be toppled!" And for an entire year, he performed early morning ushitora gongyo to pray for my health, knowing how poor my constitution was. He was a man deeply committed to the Soka Gakkai spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

Later, when he was very ill, I prayed with all my heart for his recovery. I received reports on his progress from his daughter and his wife, and they relayed to me that he had said, "I was ready to die, but because of Sensei's prayers I've surprisingly gotten better and feel quite well again."

The golden bonds of the oneness of mentor and disciple are the essence of Buddhism and the tradition and spirit of the Soka Gakkai.

I wonder whether Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, seeing today's top Soka Gakkai leaders content in their comfortable surroundings—used to having everything so easy and feeling "important"—wouldn't think that this fundamental spirit was on the wane.

My young friends of the youth division, I am counting on you to do your best! This is my hope, and that of all the SGI members.

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" series in the March 29 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

EXPERIENCE — KELLY YI, WESTCHESTER, CALIF.

Calling All MOMS

Kelly Yi shares how her experiences as a young woman in the SGI-USA helped her transition to motherhood and start a support group for mothers in her community.

I began my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism on Oct. 31, 1987, and experienced many wonderful days as a young woman in the SGI-USA. During those activity-filled years, through my practice of Buddhism I learned to have goals and to take action to realize these goals, and that the universe would support me in this realization process.

After having my daughter, Amber, I had a difficult time transitioning into the women's division. Initially, I didn't want to go because I thought that it would be boring. I thought the women would be too mature for me. After all, I was only 33.

Then I got to know my women's district leader, Lillian Lee. I realized from listening to her and watching her that she'd experienced being a new mother, and it helped me to accept moving into the women's division. I realize now the wisdom of having support groups such as the women's division within our organization.

As a new mother, I was very nervous and insecure. I constantly worried, "Am I doing this right?" It was also an exciting experience, for example, changing Amber's diaper for the first time or giving her her first bath.

The hardest part for me was breastfeeding; I wasn't producing enough milk. I asked for a lot of advice, but nobody ever talks about how hard breastfeeding is; they just talk about how "natural" it is. I was having such a difficult time I thought there must be something wrong with me. I was angry at myself and blamed my doctor for recommending formula in the second week of Amber's life. I even went to a class in breastfeeding. All the other mothers in class were successfully breastfeeding, and then I pulled out the

"taboo" bottle of formula and fed Amber. I distinctly remember feeling like running out of there as fast as I could, never to return.

Shortly after that, my husband, Philip, and I agreed that it was OK not to breastfeed. It just didn't seem worth the suffering that we were all experiencing. I discovered I wasn't horrible because I couldn't breastfeed and that many people grow up healthy having been fed formula.

Throughout these early days of motherhood, getting little or no sleep and all the added challenges, I had to encourage myself constantly. My mother and mother-in-law were also a tremendous help. My husband had many people over to chant, which really helped me to be more consistent in my Buddhist practice. I prayed for wisdom and patience; I wanted to be a good mom.

Just after Amber was born, all at the same time, Philip became an area leader and began a new job getting a sushi academy up and running, and I decided not to return to my job as a sales/marketing rep for an airlines. I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom; I couldn't bear to leave Amber. I knew motherhood would be challenging, but I never expected it to affect every aspect of my life — emotionally, physically and mentally. In taking care of my daughter, I found that I always had to be "on."

After about two months or so of being cooped up at home, I decided it was time to get back into society. I wanted to get to know other mothers, but didn't know any families in my neighborhood.

Lillian encouraged me to chant with other new mothers in the SGI. I helped start a chanting group with other mothers in my area. I began to chant to connect with mothers in my community. At parks, I usually met nannies, not mothers. I thought, "Where are all the moms?" From there, I unknowingly was set on a course to bring more mothers together.

Shortly after forming this chanting group, I learned about MOMS Club (Moms Offering Moms Support), a nondenominational organization started in 1983 by Mary James of Simi Valley, Calif., to support mothers who decide to stay at home to



Kelly Yi, SGI-USA member and founder of Westchester-Playa Del Rey-El Segundo Chapter of MOMS Club, with her husband, Philip, and her daughter, Amber, age 2 and a half.

raise their kids. It's actually open to all mothers, they don't turn anyone away — not even dads!

There were no meetings close to my home, so I realized I needed to put my SGI training and work experience to good use. I decided to start a MOMS Club in my area, which includes Westchester, Playa Del Rey and El Segundo. After receiving information from the international organization, I chanted to meet other women who could help me, who had the same desire.

Within a month or two, I met with four women to see if we could pull it off. I was so amazed to see how the five of us divided up the many responsibilities. We established bank accounts and a treasury; did our own PR and advertising; secured a meeting place; created a calendar of events — which includes a book club, quilting club, a babysitting co-op, a monthly newsletter; and Helping Hands, which provides support for new moms or sick moms. We also are required to provide some community service and by sponsoring raffles, etc., we raise funds to give to charities or to

help a family in crisis. Recently the money we raised at a garage sale will help send three kids with diabetes to summer camp.

At our first meeting one October morning in 1998, we had 20 other women join. I'm on the shy side, but at this first meeting I made a conscious decision to open up to these strangers. I talked about why I wanted to start the group — because I felt isolated, needed to be with other mothers and to connect to society in general. I believe my honesty encouraged so many of those mothers to join and to volunteer to take responsibility. With all these women's wonderful talents, we've created a fantastic support group for mothers; presently we have 75-80 mothers in our group. I'm proud of what the women of our MOMS Club chapter have created.

As the chapter founder, I became the president and later the treasurer along with being an area coordinator for the international organization. We are now holding our first elections for the next board; as of June, I will no longer be a board

member. I will take on the challenge of state coordinator starting June 1.

This club is run only by volunteers — no one receives a salary, not even the founder, Mary James. I became a coordinator to help create a better-functioning organization and to further support mothers by helping with communication and problem-solving.

I believe my involvement with MOMS Club has happened for a reason, though I'm not sure where it will lead. I still have dreams professionally that I haven't fulfilled yet. I feel fortunate to be in this position of receiving such tremendous training. Now I know there's life after motherhood and that the women's division of the SGI is not dull!!

I welcomed Mother's Day with so much appreciation for my own motherhood and for my own mother and mother-in-law. I believe all mothers deserve a badge of honor.

I'd like to thank my husband, Phil, my daughter, Amber, my family and all the SGI-USA members for their loving support during my first years of motherhood. **WT**

NEW from World Tribune Press



Gain new insight into the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Through this detailed history of the priesthood, you will gain a new understanding of the current problems within Nichiren Shoshu as well as a clearer picture of where our kosen-rufu movement must go in the future.

This history traces a pattern of doctrinal mistakes and corrupt behavior over 700 years that call into question Nichiren Shoshu's claims of orthodoxy and authority. You'll also learn about the reformers—such as the 9th and 26th high priests—and their struggle to try to bring Nichiren Shoshu back to the true spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.



World Tribune Press

Available at all SGI-USA bookstores. Or purchase your copy via mail order: 1-800-626-1313 or sgimoc@aol.com M/O # 4102, Paperback, \$9.95

Reorganized Detroit Area Holds Kickoff

By JOHN BROOKS
DETROIT CORRESPONDENT

Due to the start of daylight savings time, the worlds of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood sprang up an hour earlier than usual. The reorganized Detroit Area was holding its inaugural meeting April 2 at the Ramada Inn Convention Center in Southfield, Mich. SGI-USA Advisor Guy McCloskey and more than 250 members and friends were in attendance.

A highlight of the kickoff was an experience from Janice Matthews, who in addition to receiving the Gohonzon and singing in the chorus at this meeting, shared how her Buddhist practice has improved her spinal problems and outlook on life.

Mr. McCloskey mentioned that May 3, 2001, a target date set by SGI President Ikeda many years ago, is fast approaching. There is still a lot to accomplish, he said, encouraging the De-



The Boys and Girls Group performs a Liberian welcome song.

troit members to follow up with the many guests who participated in recent commemorative meetings to see if they want to join SGI-USA. **WT**



The Women's Chorus sings 'What Can I Do?'

FNCC To Host Reunion of 1990 Groups

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's historic visit to the United States in 1990, members of several youth groups formed at that time will be gathering at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in June.

During his visit, President Ikeda formed six groups: the American New Century Group, the American Soaring Group, the

American School of Glory, the American Wisdom Group, the Performers Group and the Eureka Group. Some 1,000 youth division members became members of one or more of these groups, and now plans are underway for their 10-year reunion.

"This will be a wonderful opportunity to catch up with one another's lives, recall the spirit of youth we had 10 years ago and

make a fresh resolve for the next 10 years," said Ian McIlraith, the co-coordinator for the event.

If you are a member of one of these groups, you are invited to the FNCC conference, June 22-25. As with other conferences, the cost is \$375 plus airfare. This includes food, lodging and ground transportation. Please contact your region or zone office for more information. **WT**

Subscribe yourself or share it with a friend.

To subscribe, send in the order form below with your payment enclosed. No cash, please. Call 1-800-835-4558 if you have questions. Please check the appropriate boxes.

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| WORLD TRIBUNE <input type="checkbox"/> 3 months \$15 (13 issues) Save \$11 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months \$28 (26 issues) Save \$24 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$50 (52 issues) Save \$54 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years \$85 (104 issues) Save \$123 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years \$110 (156 issues) Save \$202 | | LIVING BUDDHISM <input type="checkbox"/> 3 months \$15 (3 issues) Save \$3 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months \$28 (6 issues) Save \$8 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$50 (12 issues) Save \$22 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years \$90 (24 issues) Save \$54 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years \$125 (36 issues) Save \$91 | | If you wish, please select one free optional language supplement of your choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Korean <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| Are you a new subscriber? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No U.S. rates only. International rates vary. | | | | |
| Charge my VISA <input type="checkbox"/> or Master Card <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |
| Card # _____ | | | | |
| Expiration date _____ | | | | |
| Signature _____ | | <small>All credit card orders are subject to bank approval</small> | | |
| Name _____ | | | | |
| Address _____ | | Apt. # _____ | | |
| City _____ | | State _____ Zip _____ | | |
| <small>(For gift subscription, please indicate gift giver)</small> | | | | |
| SEND TO: SGI-USA Subscriptions, PO Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907 | | | | |



The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

General Director
Daniel Nagashima

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

Managing Editor
Marge Hall
mhall@sgi-usa.org

Associate Editor
Jeff Farr
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

Staff Writers
Stephanie Celano
scelano@sgi-usa.org
Jamie Liptan
jliptan@sgi-usa.org

Contributing Writer
Terry Ellis

Contributing Artist
Stephanie Sydney
ssydney@sgi-usa.org

Staff Translators
Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi

Contributing Photographers
Gregory Nakasuiji
Kirk Condyles
Jonathan Wilson
Dixon Hamby

Photo Editor
Lisa Hollis
lisahollis@earthlink.net

Bureau Chiefs
Phil Simpson, Atlanta
Fletcher Dalton, Boston
Veronica Evans, Chicago
Jim Dreisbach, Florida
Joanne Tachibana, Hawaii
Margie Hall, Los Angeles
Cheryl Utley, Midwest
Robert Taliaferro, New York
Dave Shadovitz, Philadelphia
Irene Owada, Rocky Mountain
Liz Anderson, San Diego
Ron Baird, San Francisco
Bill Lawrence, Seattle
Troy Murrain, Texas
Robin Meader, Washington, D.C.

Foreign Language Pages
Chinese: Ingrid Yeh
Korean: Charles Lee
Spanish: Cesarina Caro

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

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

FRIENDS FOR PEACE
fip@sgi-usa.org

SEIZE THE DAY
seize@sgi-usa.org

FINE PRINT
fine.print@sgi-usa.org

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.

Denver Cherry Trees — Messages of Hope

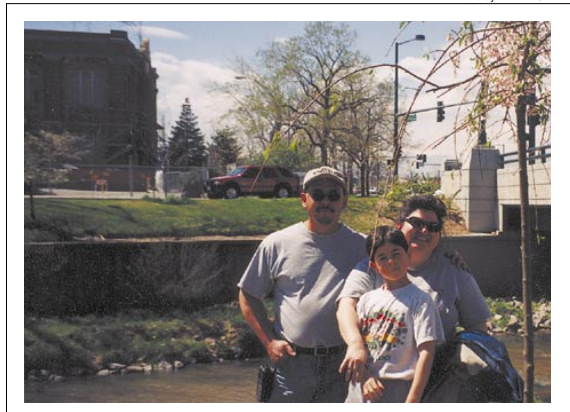
Photo by CAROL DIMEFF

**By IRLENE OWADA AND
SHELBY FORSYTH**
ROCKY MOUNTAIN CORRESPONDENTS

This year, the cherry trees planted faithfully by SGI-USA Rocky Mountain Region members came into full bloom. For 12 years, Colorado members have been consistently planting the delicate little cherry trees. They wanted to beautify their city and replenish the trees that once grew along Cherry Creek and in

other parts of town. They also wanted to express their feelings about the mentor-and-disciple relationship. SGI President Ikeda has often written about the cherry blossoms in bloom on the day that his mentor, Josei Toda, died (April 2, 1958). Always remembering that day, President Ikeda has determined to establish world peace. By caring for the trees, the members feel they are forging the same connection with President Ikeda.

Photo by IRLENE OWADA



Colby Valdez, 10, has been coming to the tree planting with his parents since he was a baby.

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



A representative of the Denver City Parks and Recreation Department demonstrates the correct way to plant cherry trees.



Cherry blossoms in bloom at the SGI-USA Denver Culture Center.

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF

In 1989, Federico Pena, then Denver's mayor, told members at the opening ceremony for the Denver Culture Center that he felt the cherry trees represented hope for the future. He said, "People need to learn from the SGI's example of commitment and energy, which members bring not only to Denver but to the whole world."

Last year, just a few days after members planted cherry trees for the close of the century, violence broke out at Columbine High School. A black cloud seemed to hang over the city. However, people of all backgrounds banded together, and the black cloud turned into a vision for nonviolence. When the cherry blossoms burst forth this spring, it was a message of hope from the universe.

Many SGI-USA families came out April 16 to enjoy the sunshine after the previous day's snow and participate in the tree planting. This year more than 100 trees were planted in three separate locations along Cherry Creek. A new variety of weeping cherry trees was introduced, their life span expected to be more than 1,000 years.

Colby Valdez, 10, has been coming to the tree planting with his parents since he was a baby. He started planting trees himself when he was 3. This year Colby helped the Boys and Girls Group plant their own



Daughter, with shovel in hand, is learning from Dad about the roots of a cherry tree.

cherry tree located directly in front of the Denver Culture Center. Since it is of the weeping cherry tree variety, they expect to enjoy many years—or even many lifetimes—with this tree! **WT**

If you have any questions or problems with your subscription to the World Tribune or Living Buddhism magazine, please call 1-800-835-4558