



EXPERIENCE:
Andrea Weissenberger (right) challenges her learning difficulty.

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SGI President Ikeda says that 'the significance of the birth of Soka University of America, which is destined to invigorate the world of education in the 21st century, is immeasurable.'

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 24 SPEECH—PART 2

A PIVOTAL ROLE FOR THE FUTURE

'The United States will play a pivotal role in the 21st century,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'I want to put even greater energy into developing our movement in America while contributing to the welfare and prosperity of each local community.'

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 46th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, May 24.

In Japan and throughout the world, we have begun our grand advance toward May 3, 2001. May 3 is also Constitution Day in Japan. As the

Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun* reported May 3, I was recently presented with an ornamental folding screen featuring the handwritten calligraphy of Yukio Ozaki, the father of constitutional government in Japan. The director of the Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation, Yukiyo Ozaki, a nephew of Yukio Ozaki, bestowed this precious treasure on me.

Yukio Ozaki was a great Japanese liberal politician. From the establishment of Japan's national assembly—the Diet—in 1890, he was elected 25 times in a row to the House of Representatives and remained an active member of parliament for 63 years. He holds the world record as the longest serving

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6

Southern California Zone Sets Goals for 2001

By **STEPHANIE CELANO**
STAFF WRITER

More than 2,000 Southern California Zone leaders gathered June 17 at the Hollywood Palladium to set goals toward May 3, 2001. Various leaders, including SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, shared their vision of celebrating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, next year by gathering 30,000 people for a cultural festival.

Linda Johnson, zone women's leader, emphasized "quality care" of each member

and the importance of introducing others to the practice. She encouraged everyone to use the organizational structure to take care of each new member.

SGI President Ikeda sent a message, which read in part: "To live for the sake of this Buddhism is to lead a supremely noble life, a life filled with happiness and great satisfaction. As Nichiren Daishonin states, 'Nam-myohorenge-kyo is the greatest of all joys' (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788).

"People will gather where there are bright and cheerful smiles. Boundless good fortune will shine where there is joyful

faith. Victory will arise where people are full of positive energy and enthusiasm.

"For this reason, I ask that all of you please advance anew with the harmonious unity of many in body, one in mind. Advance with the spirit to enjoy working for what is right and to enjoy winning. Through your faith, please achieve victory at home, at work, in society and in life....

"Let us wholeheartedly pray, speak and work hard to create a new era for America—an America that will lead the rest of the world. I will certainly join you in your struggle." **WT**



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

More than 2,000 leaders gather at the Hollywood Palladium, June 17.

Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

Back to the Basics

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

What did Nichiren Daishonin have in mind when he introduced the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo? We can get a sense of his thinking in "The One Essential Phrase" (*The*

Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 922-24).

One thing we can see from this letter is how the Daishonin encouraged the lay believers, like the lay nun Myoho, the recipient of this letter, to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith even though they did not understand its full meaning. He states, "Even though one neither reads nor studies the sutra, chanting the title alone is the source of tremendous good fortune" (WND, p. 923).

That we can instantly tap our

inherent Buddhahood by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is "[an incomparably greater wonder than] fire being produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, or a lantern lighting up a place that has been dark for a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years," the Daishonin explains (WND, 923).

If we wait to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo until we completely understand the depths of its meaning, we wait unnecessarily to light up our lives.

The 26th high priest, Nichikan, in talking on the significance of chanting, stresses two aspects: faith and practice. In other words, he treats Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as something that we should first of all chant—with a conscious effort to trust in the value of chanting—before we go about analyzing its meaning.

The Daishonin also states that "within the title, or daimoku of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the entire sutra..." (WND, 922). This passage

means that all the ultimate principles of life expounded in Buddhism are contained in the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Since Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is such a vital phrase for humanity, the Daishonin's simple yet profound teaching is that "one's voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). In other words, use your voice—chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—to open and vitalize Buddhahood.

Next week: More on Nam-myoho-renge-kyo from Ted Morino.

Lifetime Endurance

By LYDIA FORT

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Be diligent in developing your faith until the last moment of your life. Otherwise you will have regrets. For example, the journey from Kamakura to Kyoto takes twelve days. If you travel for eleven but stop with only one day remaining, how can you admire the moon over the capital? No matter what, stay close to the priest who knows the heart of the Lotus Sutra, keep learning from him the principles of Buddhism, and continue your journey of faith. ("Letter to Niike," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1027)

This passage has been one of my most treasured for many years. In particular, the middle portion, about the trip from Kamakura to Kyoto, has been a touchstone. I could easily relate the undertaking of a long, treacherous journey to various situations in my life where I felt I could not see something through to the end. (For exam-



IN MY LIFE

NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS IN
ACTION

Kyoto helped inspire me to complete things knowing that I would savor the sweet victory of accomplishment.

Recently, I had been feeling discouraged about my seeming inability to overcome an illness that has plagued me since I was a teenager. My doubt and feel-

ing powerless to affect change in my life regarding this illness were draining me. During the most recent flare-up of my condition, I started down my usual road of "Why hasn't this changed yet?" I sat down to chant, crying in utter agony to the Gohonzon: "This illness is ruining my life. I can't let it take control over me." Deep down, I knew not to give in to negativity. Hadn't I seen some progress? I would overcome it. I would just have to fight harder. I would be more resolute in my health regime, in chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo consistently, in reading Nichiren Daishonin's writings every day, in connecting more deeply with SGI President Ikeda's vision for humanity and in developing more compassion for my fellow SGI members.

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Rereading the famous Kamakura to Kyoto quote, the words "Be diligent in developing your faith until the last moment of your life" reverberated within me. What hit home was that I needed not just endurance in the face of obstacles but endurance to develop resolute faith over the entire course of my life.

And suddenly it made sense to me that my illness is my great fortune (as I had heard from a senior in faith but couldn't quite muster up her enthusiasm about). My illness is the key to my human revolution and the way in which I will establish true happiness and a life free of regrets. And isn't this the purpose of our Buddhist practice?

I think so, and I will continue on in my journey knowing that my victory is assured. **W**

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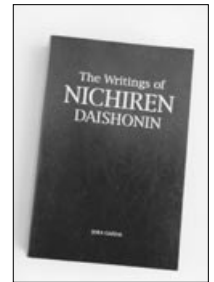
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EXPERIENCE — ANDREA WEISSENBERGER, SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

Discovering My Mission

Andrea Weissenberger challenges her learning difficulty and realizes her desire to become an occupational therapy assistant.

School was difficult for me because I didn't understand the material. As a result, I was put into the lowest learning groups. Because I had such a hard time learning, I lacked self-esteem and other classmates teased me. I never knew why I had so much trouble learning. It wasn't until I attended Santa Monica College that I was diagnosed as having a learning difficulty. Recently I have come to view my disability as a difficulty to be overcome. Therefore, in this experience, I will be using difficulty in place of disability.

Eleven years ago, while still in college, I began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. One of my first prayers was to overcome my learning difficulty. I graduated with a degree in child development from Santa Monica College and worked in special education for the past 10 years. I enjoyed this field, although working with large groups of special education children proved unrewarding.

I started chanting to fulfill my unique mission and realized that I was more effective working one-on-one. At that time, I worked regularly with occupational therapists and enjoyed carrying out their treatment interventions with the children. Because of this experience, I decided to become an occupational therapy assistant.

I knew I had to go back to school. It would be a challenge because I needed to learn a lot of medical terminology, take difficult classes such as anatomy and physiology, kinesiology and so forth. In addition, I had to complete two fieldwork internships with patients in a clinic and a hospital. I was accepted to Mt. Saint Mary's College Occupational Therapy Program. I took eight units a semester, finishing in two years.

The first year was rough. I quickly found out that the school was not prepared to accommo-

date anyone with a learning difficulty, even though they had a designated "learning specialist." She was inexperienced; I struggled to help her understand what my needs were and how she could make the accommodations necessary for my classes. For example, I needed extra time for my tests and extra time for writing papers.

I worked full time while going to school, as well as attending my district, Byakuren and other SGI activities. It was challenging to balance everything and still make time to study. My greatest challenge was to overcome my own weaknesses. Throughout the program, I chanted to be disciplined and organized, to find the right students to study with, to get good grades, for one of the two internships to be in pediatrics, and that through my struggle, I would make a difference for other learning disabled students.

There were many competitive students in the program but I was fortunate in meeting one particular student that opened his home to all of us every weekend for long study sessions. I made sure I took advantage of this opportunity. All of us contributed our strengths and we learned from one another. My grades soared. I was even on the honor roll! He was a true bodhisattva! I learned so much from his spirit.

After finishing classes, the next challenge was the two fieldwork internships. I barely made it through the first internship. The fieldwork was so difficult I felt I couldn't complete it. In tears, I called my friend who chants. I really wanted to give up but she encouraged me to show up anyway whether I had all the treatment plans done or not.

I arrived at the hospital an hour early to prepare for my patients and at times I'd work through lunch to get the treatment notes done. Often I stayed late to finish my charting. I was so anxious I barely slept at night. I met the instructor's challenge. After this steady, concentrated effort, I passed.

The following internship was much better. I felt at home in the pediatric environment. At this time, I was chanting to bring out my creativity. As a result, I designed several original



Andrea Weissenberger (right) with her mother, Linda, at home in Santa Monica.

projects to address the patient's unique disabilities. I received an outstanding review, getting highest marks in areas noted as weak in the first fieldwork!

After passing my fieldwork, my next challenge was to study and pass my National Certification Exam in Occupational Therapy. In order to obtain accommodations to take this exam, I needed current testing of my learning difficulty. I was retested at Santa Monica College Learning Disability Program.

My learning scores were well above those recorded 12 years earlier. The learning specialist said I made significant improvement in the test scores, and students whom re-test rarely make such progress. I could clearly see the results of my Buddhist practice over the past 11 years.

At this time, I saw a medical specialist who reviewed my testing and medical reports and expected to see someone with low self-esteem and lacking in self-confidence. When he met and talked with me, he commented on how confident and poised I looked. He was impressed with my accomplishments. The doctor encouraged me to tell my story to other learning disabled students.

On March 18, I took the National Certification Exam. I studied for the exam for three months with a good friend I met

in class. She came to my home three times each week to study with me. She is a wonderful person and a great study partner. I feel positive and know I did my best on the exam.

After the exam, I received a phone call from a friend of my study partner who has a learning difficulty. She wanted to talk to me about my experience. I was happy to assist her in locating appropriate services. She was relieved and I'm glad she could benefit from my experience.

Throughout this whole experience my mom was my greatest supporter. She picked up a lot of the slack and was there to talk over important matters. She helped me keep a level head. I'd like to thank her from the bottom of my heart.

I found a wonderful quote that describes my chosen field. It is special because, I believe, it is truly Buddhist in nature and thought:

"The whole of human organization has its shape in a kind of rhythm. It is not enough that our hearts should beat in a useful rhythm, always kept up to a standard at which it can meet rest as well as wholesome strain without upset. There are many other rhythms which we must be attuned to: the larger rhythms of night and day, of sleep and waking hours, of hunger and its gratification, and finally the big four — work and

play and rest and sleep, which our organism must be able to balance even under difficulty. The only way to attain balance in all this is actual doing, actual practice, a program of wholesome living as the basis of wholesome feeling and thinking and fancy and interests" (Adolf Meyer, 1922).

SGI President Ikeda frequently speaks about life's rhythm, challenging us to "Do something, start something. As you make consistent efforts you will begin to see your goals come into focus. You will discover your mission—the one only you can fulfill!" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 49). **WT**

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The SGI's Struggle Against Power

A Record of My Life
by Daisaku Ikeda

'The Soka Gakkai has throughout its history been engaged in a fierce struggle against the devilish nature of power,' SGI President Ikeda writes, remembering his unjust detention in 1957.

Because we are advancing along the correct path of Buddhism exactly as Nichiren Daishonin taught, the Soka Gakkai has throughout its history been engaged in a fierce struggle against the devilish nature of power. First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi died in prison during World War II. President Toda was also imprisoned. It is safe to say that the real advance of the Soka Gakkai in post-war Japan stemmed from the intense fight for human rights waged by the first two presidents.

July 3 is the anniversary of the day on which Mr. Toda was released from prison, in 1945. On that same day in 1957, I was arrested and jailed as part of a scheme by the authorities. The warrant for my arrest was delivered by the Osaka Prefectural Police at 7:00 p.m. Oddly enough, this was not only the same date but precisely the same time that President Toda had been released more than a decade earlier.

I was accused of violating election laws, specifically those concerning door-to-door canvassing. These charges were completely unfounded. Yet, without even a shred of evidence, I was arrested.

My incarceration lasted 15 days. I spent several days in the police lock-up and 10 days in solitary confinement in a cell that measured less than six feet by six feet.

The police interrogation was relentless. The official would pound on the desk in an attempt to intimidate me. There were times when I was left in handcuffs during questioning.

Once, I was led handcuffed on foot from the main building of the Osaka District Prosecu-

tor's Office to another building several minutes away for questioning. Then, without being asked a single question, I was immediately escorted back to the main building. They simply wanted to parade me up and down the street with my hands bound for all to see. This went well beyond a simple violation of my rights.

The Soka Gakkai was at the time beginning to show itself to society as a great popular force. Its growth was doubtless appearing to be a major threat to the existing powers.

The dark side of power is quick to sense the presence of an enemy.

It is the nature of authoritarian power to react to even the slightest activity of something that may threaten its existence. True to its nature, the dark side of power, possessing keen intuition, is quick to sense the presence of an enemy.

On July 3, 1957, I was enroute to Osaka from Hokkaido, urgently rushing to help find a solution to the Yubari Coal Miners' Incident [a case of blatant religious discrimination in which miners in Yubari, Hokkaido, were threatened with losing their jobs on account of belonging to the Soka Gakkai]. When we landed at Haneda Airport to change planes, to my surprise I found my mentor waiting for me there. President Toda embraced me and said, "If you should die, I would rush to where you were and join you in death."

I learned later that upon my arrest he called the Soka Gakkai's Kansai Headquarters every two hours to get a detailed report on the situation. At one point, he was calling as frequently as every 10 minutes. He apparently even berated someone who picked up the phone and couldn't answer his questions.

His voice trembling, he said: "Forgive me for scolding you, but I am concerned about my disciple. If I could take his place, I would gladly do so. Unless you have been to prison yourself, you cannot understand." Words cannot express how wonderful it is to have such a mentor!

Since the charges against me were groundless, no matter how severe the interrogation, I had no choice but to endure. Seeing that they were getting nowhere, my captors began insinuating that they might make a raid on the Soka Gakkai Headquarters

and even arrest President Toda.

This was the year before Mr. Toda died. I knew better than anyone how weak he had become. I therefore decided that, even though the charges were unfounded, I had no choice but to take the blame, then settle everything in court later.

In my diary at the time I wrote: "The prosecutors' interrogation was laden with schemes. Angry feelings are growing steadily stronger. We will by all means create a time when truth will win over all. Must accurately record the facts" (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 336).

When I was released on July 17, my mentor was standing at the Osaka Central Municipal Hall in Nakanoshima appealing to his beloved friends of Kansai: "Unless we fight, justice will not prevail. Because the Soka Gakkai is in the right, we cannot be defeated. We absolutely have to win. Therefore, we must fight. A lion is a lion by virtue of its roar."

The trial dragged on for four and a half years. Part of the reason I hesitated to accept appointment as third Soka Gakkai president after President Toda's death, despite repeated entreaties from those around me, was that this matter had not yet been resolved. I personally could have handled a guilty verdict brought against me as president, but it was clear that such an outcome would become a great obstacle to the Soka Gakkai's advance. Even after becoming president, I continued to earnestly pray that justice would be served.

The Osaka District Court handed down its decision on Jan. 25, 1962. The verdict, needless to say, was not guilty. When I heard the court announce, "We hereby find the defendant, Daisaku Ikeda, not guilty;" I was filled with deep emotion.

I had endured such a long, arduous battle. I was keenly aware that there were many, however,



When President Ikeda was released from his unjust detention on July 17, 1957, Kansai members held a protest rally at the Osaka Central Municipal Hall. 'Unless we fight, justice will not prevail,' second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda declared that day. 'Because the Soka Gakkai is in the right, we cannot be defeated. We absolutely have to win.'

who, lacking the means to defend their rights, had no choice but to withstand the abuses of authoritarian power. Before the war, there were doubtless a great many. Profoundly aware that such tragedy must never be repeated, I made a strong determination to dedicate my life to working on the side of those suffering from injustice, to advance together with the people.

True to the vow that I made that day, I have fought and called out for justice. I have battled with all my might the nefarious forces that oppress the people. The continuing struggles I have waged throughout my life are themselves my life's record.

People everywhere long for a movement of human rights based on compassion and respect for life.

In May 1999, I met with President Allen Lee Sessoms and Vice President Hamid Shirvani of Queens College of the City University of New York. The day before our meeting, they had paid a visit to the SGI Study Culture Center in Kamakura at what was formerly known as Tatsunokuchi, a place with a deep connection to the Daishonin. Our discussion naturally turned to the topic of persecution at the hands of the powerful.

At one point, President Sessoms said: "You [President Ikeda] are committed to peace. Someone who actively strives for peace is bound to meet with persecution. This was true of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. They were both committed to peace, but they

did not compromise or try to fit in 'peacefully' with the social realities that they encountered. They sought to change society fundamentally.

"Almost all societies are structured to serve the needs of the powerful. People engaged in activities of real value and meaning pose a threat to those in power and will be harassed and persecuted."

Persecution by the authorities, he was suggesting, is the sign of a champion of peace. He also asserted his view that a century of human rights and peace must be won through unceasing struggle against the powerful.

Following the end of the Cold War, the current of world peace seemed to be rapidly accelerating. But what happened to that trend?

Sadly, narrow-minded nationalism and racism now prevail in many parts of the world. In light of this reality, people everywhere are longing for a movement of human rights based on the ideals of compassion and respect for life that are the core of Buddhist philosophy.

Voices yearning for human liberation — which was the aim of the French Revolution — can be heard today around the world. Therefore, let us raise high the tricolor flag of humanism toward the creation of a new era of human rights in the 21st century. This can only be accomplished when people in all corners of the globe issue an undying declaration of human rights from the depths of their lives.

Seven in a series

WITH THE END IN MIND

PERSPECTIVE

By SHAWAWN M. BERRY
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.



Photo by MORI BAK

There are many possible ways of living, but among them, none is more powerful and courageous than one motivated by a deep sense of mission. Mission is not something others can give you. You must awaken to it yourself. Those who decide their own mission by themselves and pursue it bravely live the most profound and rewarding life.

—Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism In Action*, vol. 1, p. 192

Imagine your funeral. Envision the end of your life. What would your partner, your children, your friends, your co-workers say about you if you died tomorrow? Would their comments reflect the best of you? What would you want them to say were your greatest accomplishments?

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey encourages his readers to develop a mission statement for living—a sort of personal “constitution” by which to live. He emphasizes the need to begin “with the end in mind,” and trace back to

today’s actions, today’s purpose. He asks, “Are you living today for a great purpose or are you just drifting through the years, very busily accomplishing nothing of lasting significance?” Covey emphasizes the need to establish deep within our hearts what it is that is truly important to us. And, not surprisingly, the answer is rarely about fame, money, status or material wealth. It is usually reflective of developing a compass for our lives that is based in love, integrity, spirituality and communion. It centers around becoming compassionate and kind and reverent. All things that we can freely become without seeing anything that our society typically labels as success.

Fifteen years ago when I first encountered Buddhism, I had a trunk full of wild dreams. They pulled me first to London, then Seattle, and later to New York City as I chased after what I thought was missing from my life: fame, fortune, recognition as a performing artist. I had no sense of purpose or identity other than the ethereal aspiration of writing and playing music, of

being loved, of being seen in a world where I felt invisible. Buddhism made these impossible things seem possible. I started my Buddhist practice because I had so many dreams and I was terrified of ending up broken, lost and bitter if I was unable to see them manifested. This philosophy gave me the dream of “every day start fresh, every day a new beginning.” With that spirit, I ran toward the future.

After many false starts and wrong turns, I have finally realized that my mission is to be a writer: to record my sense of the truth, to tell stories that reveal the interior of my heart and mind. I have always loved words, loved finding the exact bits of language that would create a mosaic to help someone understand me or feel that I understood them. When a friend of mine committed suicide in 1996, I realized with sudden clarity that I had a story to tell. Her death sent me on a journey into the wilderness of my life. I reassessed everything. I realized who I truly was. I saw how interconnected we all are. I wanted to make sense of her death, to share my understanding as a gift, as possible solace to someone who might be suffering in the same way. My spiritual awakening about my mission has shown me what is really important, what is absolutely crucial for me. And that is the

only thing that each of us can do. Find our path, light our own way—and possibly share our wisdom with the others we find on the road with us.

Recently at our group meeting in West Hollywood, Calif., we discussed this idea of a personal mission statement. Each person spoke of childhood

life’s work. He is an extraordinary example of how a human life could be lived. He has accomplished phenomenal things not because he is more capable than other human beings but because he is acutely aware of his greatness—the Buddha within. He lives this way to show us what is possible for us, too.

I have realized the important thing is to know how you want your story to end, to know what your gift to the world is. We each have a mission. Unearthing it is sometimes agonizing work—yet it is also magic, wondrous. I am no longer lost. Writing is my compass, my voice, my true north now.

What is your true north? Having a sense of purpose, understanding your mission—is the ground beneath your feet.

All manner of doors open to a traveler who knows where he is headed. So, ask yourself the question: Where do I want to end up? What will I leave behind? Start making causes today so that when you come to the end of your life, you will find that you’ve left no stone unturned, you’ve loved, and laughed, and lived well, and can say with absolute conviction: I have no regrets.

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

My spiritual awakening about my mission has shown me what is really important, what is absolutely crucial for me. And that is the only thing that each of us can do. Find our path, light our own way—and possibly share our wisdom with the others we find on the road with us.

dreams, of things they had forgotten, of values and principals that make our lives meaningful. Our discussion illustrated the power inherent in living a life that is awakened. To me, one of the most impressive things about SGI President Ikeda is his joyous, burning sense of mission. He is irrepressible, undefeated and completely passionate about the life he is leading. He plans for the future of the SGI. He sees his life in terms of thousands of years, hundreds of lifetimes. He is bold and knows what he wants to leave as his

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A Youthful Diary

One Man’s Journey From the
Beginning of Faith to Worldwide
Leadership for Peace

By Daisaku Ikeda

**A Youthful
Diary**



DAISAKU IKEDA

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

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FROM SPEECH, I

member of any parliamentary body in the world.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi mentioned in one of his writings that Ozaki fought against corrupt, high-handed political leaders. I will never forget how Mr. Toda once sternly scolded a politician by saying, "Take Ozaki, the defender of constitutional government, as your model!"

Young people grow from taking decisive action.

Ozaki wrote the calligraphy on the folding screen during the Pacific War. It is in the Chinese style of writing called *kambun*, and it says with great literary elegance:

*From my Cloud and Wind Pavilion,
I gaze out upon the world of
cloud and wind,
And find it rampant with treachery
and disloyalty.*

*The Royal Road has crumbled
into dust
And constitutional government
is in disarray.*

*The whole world is bent on
deceiving people with lies.
I quickly take up my brush
And write these words to save
our age.*

Through his writings and speeches, Ozaki fought back fiercely against betrayals and falsehoods. He called on youth to possess a rebellious spirit, to reject and rise up against injustice. Youth, he said, should regard criticism and attack as the greatest encouragement for their further effort. This spirit of fighting back is the special privilege of youth.

Young people can grow when they take decisive action to rebut every onslaught of groundless slander and criticism. There's no better way to forge one's inner strength. It is a tremendous opportunity.

The Soka Gakkai is on the side of right and justice. This is why we can fight against evil and injustice with complete conviction. The members in the early days of our movement burned with that spirit. Those who fail to fight back energetically against all oppression and vanquish it can no longer be called youth—they are losers in life.

I have chanted to the Gohonzon with all my heart, praying that I, and I alone, would be the object of all persecution, while the rest of our members would be protected and kept safe from harm. And I will continue to

fight. I am determined to exert myself a thousand or even 10,000 times harder than I have up to now. Unlimited strength surges forth within me.

If we do not teach our present youthful successors the spirit of faith to meet persecution head-on, to fight it and triumph over it, what will become of our organization in the future? The only chance we have to teach them this spirit is now. I want to foster and raise youth in earnest for the sake of the eternal prosperity of the Law, for the sake of kosen-rufu and for the sake of the SGI's unending growth and development. I ask the youth division members to train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice.

One cannot fight great battles unless one is prepared to risk everything.

The pioneers of every age come under attack. This is an unchanging truth of human history. Ozaki was a lion. Though he was denounced as unpatriotic and a traitor to his country, he remained unwavering in his opposition to militarism.

A lion is strong. A lion rises up bravely alone to fight.

In 1931, Ozaki boldly argued in the Diet that the Peace Preservation Law—the law that was later used during World War II to suppress the Soka Gakkai's activities—should be rescinded. A decade earlier, in 1921, he had submitted to the Diet a resolution calling for arms reduction and delivered a historic speech on the subject. [He was expelled from his political party for this.] At the time, the respected Japanese poet Akiko Yosano praised Ozaki as a pioneer who turned his back on the notion of "politics as power" and instead followed the path of "politics as humanism" and "politics as art."

I eagerly look forward to the realization of government solidly based on humanism.

Because of Ozaki's active defense of justice, his life was threatened many times. Once, a young ruffian broke into his home and tried to attack him. Some time later, the young man's father visited Ozaki to apologize. The political leader, far from offering harsh words of condemnation, presented the father with a poem he had composed to the effect that he should be proud that his son cared so much for his country that he would risk his life for his beliefs.

It goes without saying that under any circumstances there is no justification for violence or inflicting injury upon another's person, but Ozaki



SGI President Ikeda speaks at the 46th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, May 24.

wanted to praise the young man's spirit.

I have always been ready to give my life for kosen-rufu and for our members. One cannot fight great battles unless one is prepared to risk one's life. That is how the Soka Gakkai we have today was built.

When still a young man, Ozaki had a grand ambition: He wanted to become the Victor Hugo of Asia. I hope that young people will aspire to great achievement just as Ozaki did.

Buddhism teaches us to 'rely on the Law and not upon persons.'

Ozaki is also well known for donating 3,000 cherry trees to Washington, D.C., when he was the mayor of Tokyo.

That reminds me—the cherry trees in the Toda Memorial Cemetery Park in second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's hometown of Atsuta Village, Hokkaido, bloomed with special beauty this spring, as if joining us in celebrating the centennial of Mr. Toda's birth. They made a breathtaking sight. People living in the area sent me photographs, and I was deeply moved by the marvelous blossoms.

Buddhism teaches us to "rely on the Law and not upon persons" (the Nirvana Sutra). Mr. Makiguchi, in his *System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, argued that this philosophy was consistent with the basic principles of constitutional government. People, not the law run autocratic governments, he pointed out. They are not based on right and wrong or good and evil but only on the unbridled will of the ruling dictators.

Mr. Makiguchi was of the

opinion that as societies advance, they move beyond that stage and evolve into the rule of law—as set forth in a constitution. And he believed that the same principle would apply to religion. This was his view of history.

It is dangerous to base anything on the constantly changing human heart, affected as it is by so many causes and conditions. Both Buddhism and human society must be based on laws and principles.

The SGI's movement is leading the times.

In March, I met with former Philippine President Fidel Ramos here at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall. One subject we discussed was constitutions. I asked him what book he would recommend to young people. Most people answer this question with a great novel or work of philosophy, but Mr. Ramos immediately replied, "I would recommend that young people read the constitution of their country." He added: "The ideals that the people of a nation should work to realize are always spelled out in the preamble of their constitution."

This reply made a strong impression on me. Probably very few people have read their nation's constitution.

The present Japanese constitution enshrines the sovereignty of the people, the renunciation of war and respect for fundamental human rights. Ozaki writes that the crucial thing is whether "the Japanese people possess the ability to properly implement this brilliant, excellent constitution." He believed that Japan's future would be bright if the people

could learn to use their constitution correctly.

The Japanese Constitution guarantees citizens' basic human rights in several of its articles. Article 11 states, "The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights." Article 14 says, "All of the people are equal under the law." Article 19 states, "Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated." Article 20 states, "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all." And Article 21 states, "Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed."

To what extent have we succeeded in realizing these ideals? Many would say that as far as human rights are concerned, Japan is still a developing nation. A great deal of hard work is necessary to make our constitutional guarantees a reality.

Ozaki focused on Article 14, which guarantees equality under the law. He believed that the concept of equality was the fundamental principle of democracy. Article 14 reads in part, "All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin."

Discussing this article, Ozaki writes: "Article 14 of our new constitution guarantees that all citizens are equal under the law. In other words, no one—whether prime minister, wealthy capitalist or landowner—is better than us or inferior to us. All people possess equal worth in the eyes of the law. If we really understand

the spirit of this article, no one would think of himself as lowly or unimportant.... People with self-respect do not capitulate to authoritarian power. People with self-respect are not swayed by wealth.... Let us not look for power outside ourselves. Let us awaken to the power within." These words have a deep resonance with the teachings of Buddhism.

Many say that the Japanese people are too concerned with external distinctions of prestige, such as social status, family background and academic titles. Our wonderful alliance of the people, the Soka Gakkai, however, is fully awakened to the principles of equality and human dignity. Our movement is at the cutting edge, leading the times. Humanity of future ages will applaud our efforts. Nichiren Daishonin will rejoice at our victory and praise us.

Mr. Toda declares: "The Soka Gakkai has no reason to fear anyone, because its actions are completely justified from the perspectives of Buddhism, the laws of the land and the rules and customs of society" (March 31, 1956, Headquarters Leaders Meeting). Let us keep advancing with this same pride, this same sense of mission, this same conviction.

Peace cannot be achieved without a struggle.

Ozaki also writes, "Life is a peaceful struggle from beginning to end." In these words, he has brilliantly captured an important truth. We of the Soka Gakkai, too, are waging this peaceful struggle. Peace cannot be achieved without a struggle, nor can prosperity, nor happiness. Everything in life, in society, is a struggle. This is a universal truth.

Ozaki writes, "The proof of victory or defeat in life is in the last five minutes." With this conviction, he fought into his 90s, never retreating a step. He waged an unremitting battle against evil and injustice. I hope all of you will do the same.

The important thing is whether you can say at the end of your life: "I did my very best! I have won! I have no sadness or regrets!" Those who keep fighting to the end are beautiful. Their lives shine with triumph. Leaders, when they exert themselves in earnest like this, can create a momentum that spreads throughout the entire organization.

I hope that all of you will write an unprecedented personal history, always advancing with fresh vigor in the spirit that "You haven't seen anything yet!"

SUA's Orange County campus is attracting tremendous attention.

I am holding an English-language newspaper that carries a feature article about Soka University of America's Orange County campus. The new campus is attracting tremendous attention, and people have great expectations for it. As the university's founder, I propose three new guiding principles for the school:

Foster leaders of culture in the community.

Foster leaders of humanism in society.

Foster leaders of pacifism in the world.

What do you think? They are in addition to Soka University of America's mottoes, which are:

Be philosophers of a renaissance of life.

Be world citizens in solidarity for peace.

Be the pioneers of a global civilization.

The newspaper I held up is the *Orange County Register*, which has the largest circulation in Orange County. SUA is introduced in the May 17 edition, with the headline "The School of Life: Soka University, now being built on a hilltop in Aliso Viejo, will reach beyond the basics to instill value."

The article, presenting a general overview of facilities and curriculum of the new university, begins on the front page and then continues to page six, which it fills. It includes a photograph of Mr. Makiguchi and describes in detail the school's founding spirit and the significance of Soka education.

The article also quotes the university's architect, Norman Pfeiffer: "It's an uncommon thing for a brand new university in America to be built from scratch on a raw piece of land." The article states that while the buildings are in the European style, the campus also incorporates "Buddhist values of appreciation of nature and concern for the land." It reports that the university will offer "courses that encourage respect for peace and the sanctity of life," and that the university's educational aim is to create global citizens.

A great deal of positive interest among Orange County residents has been generated by the article, with the university receiving many calls from the local community requesting further information. As this shows, the Orange County residents



SGI President Ikeda meets with former Philippine President Fidel Ramos at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, March 23. Mr. Ramos mentions in their dialogue, 'The ideals that the people of a nation should work to realize are always spelled out in the preamble of their constitution.'

welcome the addition of SUA to their community. As the university's founder, nothing could make me happier. Construction is progressing according to schedule toward the university's opening next year [as a full-fledged liberal arts college].

The significance of the birth of SUA, which is destined to invigorate the world of education in the 21st century, is immeasurable. I ask for your kind support in recruiting students for the university and in all other aspects involved in making it a success.

The United States will play a pivotal role in the 21st century. I want to put even greater energy into developing our movement in America while contributing to the welfare and prosperity of each local community.

We have already entered the second phase of our endeavor to create world peace, and I hope to see SGI members in the United States and the rest of the Americas, as well as Europe and all other parts of the world, working together in solid unity.

When we dedicate ourselves to kosen-rufu, our lives expand limitlessly.

As I close today, I want to share some words of wisdom by the German poet and dramatist Friedrich von Schiller: "To the brave, to the determined, [this is] an auspicious moment!" I want you all to be brave, determined leaders — advancing with brilliant leadership like the great ancient Chinese prime minister of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Chuko K'ung-ming.

The heavenly deities will protect such a person. They will not protect a coward.

Schiller also writes, "With larger objects man himself expands." By "objects," he means purposes and goals. Our object is large: worldwide kosen-rufu, leading all humanity to happiness. When we dedicate ourselves to this just, grand goal, we expand our lives.

Shakespeare, in his tragedy

King Lear, has the character Gloucester say, "Henceforth I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself, / Enough, enough, and die" (Act IV, Scene VI). Let us, too, staunchly bear all tribulation and fight — fight until the end. If we do, tribulation itself will cry, "Enough!"

With constant prayers for the health, activities and victory of our members around the world, I close my speech today. **WT**

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The Next Generation

From This Speech:

If we do not teach our present youthful successors the spirit of faith to meet persecution head-on, to fight it and triumph over it, what will become of our organization in the future? The only chance we have to teach them this spirit is now. I want to foster and raise the youth in earnest for the sake of the eternal prosperity of the Law, for the sake of kosen-rufu and for the sake of the SGI's unending growth and development. I ask the youth division members to train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice.

- 1) Why do you think that SGI President Ikeda feels it so important to teach youth this spirit to protect our organization?
- 2) How can each of us, whether young or old, help teach this spirit?
- 3) What are the different ways that each of us can protect our organization?
- 4) What are the different ways that youth can "train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice"?
- 5) President Ikeda is obviously thinking a lot about our organization's future. What ideas do you have for SGI-USA's future? What kind of organization do you want it to become in, say, 10 years?

VCR Members Hold 'Prelude to May 3, 2001'

By JANET PALMER MULLANEY
CHARLOTTEVILLE, N.C. CORRESPONDENT

The ringing sounds of Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" played live on trumpet and a colorful Chinese dragon dance by boys and girls were the joyful preludes to the new Virginia/Carolina Region's kickoff, "Prelude to May 3, 2001." The April 29 extravaganza — featuring inspiring solo songs, lively dances, zestful group harmonizing, and powerful experiences — was attended

by 1,100 members and guests at the Dorton Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

Youth of the various chapters spearheaded the entire meeting. SGI-USA Young Men's Leader Cory Taylor summed up their energetic spirit with a quote from SGI President Ikeda: "The SGI has always succeeded because youth took the lead."

VCR Region Leader Steve Doty congratulated the participants for "making it here today to be a part of this historic moment in the unfolding of our peace movement. Whether you come from Edisto Island, S.C.,

Farmville, Va., Taylorsville, N.C., or any other place, you are not alone. You have the whole Soka family here for you."

"Even though I'm not an SGI member," commented a guest named Rann, "I came along to encourage my sister and see my nephew perform in the dragon dance. What I found most interesting and impressive about the meeting is the passion you all bring to the activity."

Robin Meader of Washington, D.C., and Merilee Brown of Chapel Hill, N.C., assisted in preparing this article.



South Carolina boys and girls perform 'You Gotta Be Strong'



Boys and girls do a Latin dance to the music of the North Carolina Area Jazz Band.



Pioneer members enjoy the meeting in Raleigh, N.C.

Washington, D.C. Sponsors Spring Family Festival

By ROB HENDRY, BARBARA KRAFT AND ROBIN MEADER
WASHINGTON, D.C. CORRESPONDENTS

On April 30, children and their parents and friends joyfully gathered at the SGI-USA Washington, D.C. Community Center for a spring Family Festival to commemorate the first time Nam-myohorenge-kyo was chanted, on April 28, 1253, and to celebrate Soka Gakkai Day, May 3.

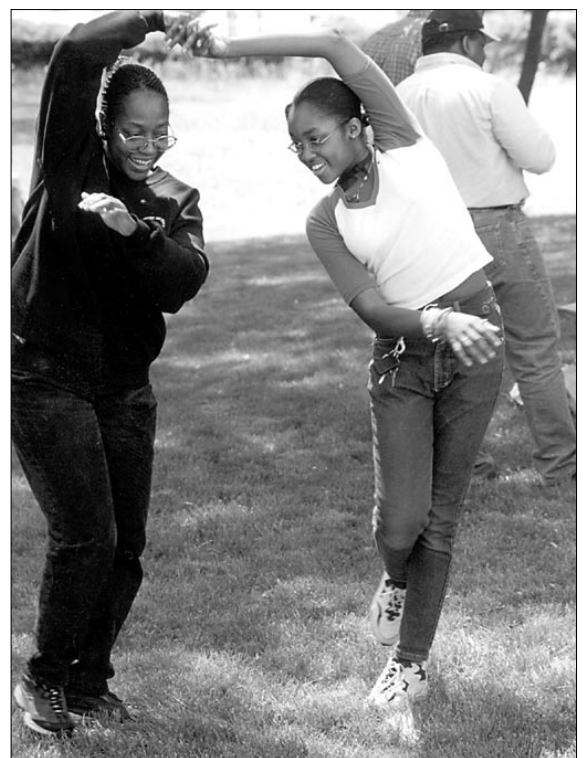
After an abbreviated gongyo, Julie Takakuwa explained the purpose of the day's celebration and the Boys and Girls Group sang "Hooray for the World." A mother-and-son experience in faith by Barbara and Randy

Asare-Bediako, an original skit by Paul and John Stonebraker, a presentation on Soka Spirit and a song by the Washington, D.C., Region Chorus followed in lively succession.

One goal of the semiannual Family Festivals — to establish a family atmosphere for everyone, not just for people with children — had clearly been fulfilled by the end of the day. **WT**



Lilla Sutton of the D.C. Region Chorus performs.



A mother and daughter dance for joy at the D.C. Family Festival.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 25-26

Shin'ichi Yamamoto encourages an elderly woman who waited for hours in front of the Kyoto Headquarters to meet him.

The consideration President Shin'ichi Yamamoto showed the elderly woman warmed the hearts of all who had been waiting in the snow to greet him.

Inside the building, the members were happy and smiling. Seeing them rejoice at the completion of their new Headquarters made Shin'ichi think of the Kyoto Community Center, located near the famous Nijo Castle. Until now, the old wooden building had been the center of all the Kyoto organization's activities. All the rooms, including the main hall, had wooden floors. The roof leaked, and the wind blew through the building's many cracks and crevices.

Kyoto is packed with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. There are a number of time-honored Buddhist temples and headquarters of many long-established Japanese Buddhist schools.

Much hostility and opposition, therefore, existed toward the Soka Gakkai members, who, determined to carry out a religious reformation, questioned the nature and practice of religion and who strove to correct the erroneous teachings of other Buddhist schools. Nevertheless, the Kyoto members would gather at the Kyoto Community Center to hold meetings, study Nichiren Daishonin's writings, chant

daimoku and then go out to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Shin'ichi had visited the center in early spring three years before. At that time, the members had been enthusiastic and energetic, but the building itself was cramped and shabby. Shin'ichi felt that the members deserved better, and so he resolved to build a new Kyoto Headquarters for them.

As Soka Gakkai president, he made every effort to treasure the members, who embraced the Daishonin's teachings, and he gave constant thought to how to support and protect them. All those who had come together as fellow members of the Soka Gakkai with the mission to accomplish kosen-rufu were Bodhisattvas of the Earth, Buddhas committed to working for the people's happiness. It was Shin'ichi's personal philosophy and conviction that the only way to serve the Buddha was to serve these members.

The completion ceremony for the new Headquarters was a joyous, festive occasion. In his speech, Shin'ichi called on the members to advance with fresh determination toward the next 10 years, with the new Headquarters serving as the driving force for the flourishing of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

After the ceremony, a meeting of chapter leaders was held



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

at the Kyoto Annex, a short distance away. There, one leader told Shin'ichi about a member, an elderly woman, who wanted to meet him. She was 73 and had waited near the new Headquarters since the morning. Worried about her health, the chapter leader persuaded her to return home.

Because of the limited space inside the new building, only those who were district leaders and up could attend the completion ceremony. The elderly woman, unfortunately, was ineligible to attend.

But she was determined to meet President Yamamoto and insisted on going to the Headquarters anyway. Her family members sympathized, but they tried to make her understand that uninvited members would only cause confusion. However, she refused to listen.

It seems that the elderly woman feared that if she didn't meet President Yamamoto that time, she might never meet him. Early that morning, she left her home in Kyoto's Fushimi Ward, making her way to the neighborhood where the new Headquarters was located. If she waited nearby, she thought, she would surely meet him.

After she stood around a cou-

ple of hours, her chapter leader happened by. When he heard what she was doing and how long she had been waiting, he persuaded her to go home, saying that it wouldn't do for her to catch a cold or cause trouble to the neighborhood. She reluctantly decided to do as the chapter leader suggested but said to him, "All right, I'll go home, but I want you to give my very best regards to President Yamamoto."

"I will. I promise to give him your message," he replied.

To keep his promise, the chapter leader told President Yamamoto about the woman.

When the chapter leader finished, Shin'ichi said: "I see. So she waited in the cold all morning to see me. I feel terrible. But I'm glad to hear that she is all right.

"Please give her this message from me: 'Thank you. And please stay in good health for all your days.' And let's give her a copy of the *Collected Lectures of the President*. What is her name?"

"Mrs. Terasaki," the chapter leader answered.

"And her first name?"

"Uh...Aki. Aki Terasaki."

"And what are the Chinese characters for her name?"

"I think it's just written phonetically."

As a matter of fact, the chapter leader had gotten her first

name wrong. It was actually Tomi, and her daughter-in-law, who lived with her, was named Akiko. Confusing the two, the chapter leader had mistakenly given the woman's name as Aki.

Shin'ichi took out a copy of the fifth volume of his collected lectures, which he had brought from Tokyo, and wrote on the flyleaf, "On the occasion of the Kyoto Headquarters Completion Ceremony, to Aki Terasaki, from Shin'ichi Yamamoto." He then asked one of the vice directors accompanying him to deliver it to her.

When Tomi opened the book from Shin'ichi, she was puzzled to see the name Aki Terasaki. She thought about it and decided that President Yamamoto had written Aki because someday her daughter-in-law would inherit the book. A few days later, the chapter leader realized that he had made a mistake, and he went to Tomi's house to apologize. He was relieved to hear Tomi say, "Some day the book will pass on to my daughter-in-law, so I don't mind." At the same time, he felt the heavy responsibility that leaders bear.

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



AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Let Us Continue Our Song

Reflecting on 40 years of leading the Soka Gakkai—from May 3, 1960—May 3, 2000—SGI President Ikeda encourages each of us to ‘continue our song!’ Let us, you and I, keep moving forward! Looking down on the foul swamp of low-minded hatred and jealousy, let us shake hands with noble friends around the world...’

May 3, 1960

A thrilling sound rose from the venue like crashing waves. Again and again, the Brass Band’s rousing performance shook the huge Nihon University Auditorium.

It was May 3, 1960—the day of my inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president. Everyone there was looking toward the future, aiming for the goal of worldwide kosen-rufu. Their hearts were filled with excitement, and their eyes sparkled with hope. How indestructible was their determination to achieve that lofty goal! How noble was their mission!

In the Goshu is the passage “One’s body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 366). Before my eyes was a gathering transcending time and space, where valiant individuals prepared to dance out onto the grand stage of mission from time without beginning.

It seemed to me that the heavenly deities were watching over these heroic trailblazers of Soka, who continued to forge ahead energetically, day and night, on the great path of spreading Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. It seemed to me that the sun, moon and stars were shining down their praise and veneration on the members.

The Soka Gakkai had been buffeted by countless storms of hatred and malice in the course of its efforts to realize kosen-rufu. All over Japan, my

beloved fellow members had borne the painful brunt of unjustified criticisms and oppression. But none among these intrepid friends, dedicated to realizing the Buddha’s intent and decree, was deterred by these onslaughts. They were applauded and embraced by all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, having triumphed in all their struggles and advanced proudly to the strains of an indomitable song of human victory.



The Bodhisattvas of the Earth—the champions of truth who are undaunted by the roaring cannon fire of criticism and abuse, who are filled with determination and perseverance, and who fight with absolute certainty of their final triumph—possess a faith of enormous, indestructible power.

Every day, we hear the music of an exuberant victory march, in which everything is a source of joy. In our morning and evening gongyo, we find the rhythm of total victory that is at one with the universe. This is because gongyo embodies a distillation of joy, wisdom, freedom and life’s sanctity.

We will never be defeated by wild attacks or the actions of degenerate, inhuman individuals. We gaze on such pitiful, arrogant people from the heights of our unsurpassed citadel, which brims with our pure-hearted, vital force, as we talk of the future with friends, share laughter and encourage one another. This is because we live with assurance and joy, like suns shining brightly in the infinite universe. Because, possessing the spiritual sword of truth that sparkles with vitality and fulfillment, we confidently make our way through life with an indefatigable fighting spirit.

My comrades, my friends! Let us, you and I, continue our song! Let us, you and I, keep moving forward! Looking down on the foul swamp of low-minded hatred and jealousy, let us shake hands with noble friends around the world, enveloped in the exhilarating, welcoming golden breezes of the heavenly deities.



The great Chinese Tang-Dynasty poet Li Po writes:

The phoenix rides with the wind



Photo by ROB HENDRY

The Virginia/Carolina Regional Chorus sings ‘Ode to Joy’ at VCR’s kickoff, ‘Prelude to May 3, 2001,’ held April 29 at the Dorton Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

*all day and, stirring up whirlwinds,
Soars in an instant to 90,000 li
[a Chinese unit of length].*



On May 3, 1951, my mentor, Josei Toda, became the second Soka Gakkai president. I became president on May 3, 1960, to work on your behalf, to work for the Soka Gakkai members and to work for kosen-rufu.

May 3 is our initial starting point. Simultaneously, it is the day we make our final declaration of complete victory. It is the grand anniversary that celebrates our efforts to realize a golden age of supreme spiritual triumph and glory.

May 3 is invincible, unshaken by raging tempests. May 3 is filled with jubilation and ever-victorious hope. May 3 is the day on which friends around the world rejoice, celebrate and deepen their determination to keep fighting for kosen-rufu.

We know that the Daishonin is watching over us, praising us and smiling at us.

There are members who are far away. There are members who are ill. There are members who are bravely struggling to survive trying economic times. There are members who are grappling with all kinds of cir-

cumstances and situations.

But the goal of all is clear, and so is the outcome. Namely, victory, happiness, everlasting truth and justice, and becoming a person of immense spiritual wealth and integrity, living in accord with the law of cause and effect.

That is why there is no need to fear being misunderstood by the world. There is no need to fear the spiritually dead who dwell among us. There is no need to fear the criticisms of the morally bankrupt. There is nothing to fear in pathetic slurs and slanders. They all simply accord with the Lotus Sutra’s prediction “There will be many ignorant people / who will curse

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and speak ill of us" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 193).

We are great pioneers, whom people of the 21st century — no, of the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law — will thank, weeping tears of gratitude. We are champions who possess lives as bright and strong as diamonds, not poor fragile lives of glass. We are walking the supreme, unparalleled path as human beings, a path that will lead us out of a society resembling a long, dark, underground prison and put our lives on the course toward a Buddha realm pervaded by eternity, happiness, true self and purity.

We know that our determination, our efforts and our living in accord with the Mystic Law are the fundamental, ultimate causes that will clearly decide the outcome of all our struggles. Buddhism teaches the oneness of time without beginning and the Latter Day of the Law, and the oneness of this moment and eternity.

The purpose of our efforts — right here, right now — is to realize our pledge from the infinite past. The purpose of our practice and struggle in each moment is to be eternally victorious in all things. Those who live contrary to these principles will lead a dark, painful, sad life. They will be defeated and end up in the state of Hell.

That May 3 of 1960 was bright and sunny. The hearts of all those who had assembled that day were bright and sunny, too. Without doubt, the May 3 of time without beginning was just the same. The Soka Gakkai, champion of truth, alone having inherited the pure spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism, has never been daunted by the nefarious schemes and insidious persecution of the Nikken sect. We have never been defeated by that base group of slanderers, including a convicted extortionist, which continues to attack and lay dark plots against us.

The great literati of Ming-Dynasty China, Liu Ji, says, "If 10,000 men unite, they will be invincible." The brilliant light of the SGI has spread to 156 countries, and the shimmering mountain ranges of peace — of worldwide kosen-rufu, the goal we have dreamed of so long — are beginning to come into view.

We have fought! We have won! May 3 celebrates the triumph of the forces of the Buddha called Soka.

We have beaten the base-hearted Devadatta, demonstrating the power of Soka, champion of justice.

May 3, 2000

The weather was fine on May 3, 2000. It was fine all across Japan. And the fragrance of the spring greenery was wonderful. When I awoke, the first thing my wife said to me was, "It's a sunny day." I was delighted.

My wife went on to say, with deep conviction, "Our fellow members throughout Japan and the world must have prayed for this sunny weather."

Congratulatory telegrams flooded in from around the globe.

Fondly remembered overseas members sent mountains of telegrams that accumulated in a happy heap on my desk. In addition, I received congratulatory telegrams from top government leaders of more than 50 nations.

Dr. Linus Pauling Jr., son of the late Nobel laureate Linus Pauling, sent me the following warm message: "It is the 40th anniversary of the beginning of your international travels, activities that have increased the awareness of many political and lay leaders of the necessity for peace, education and tolerance, and which have enabled the lives of many people in many countries to become enriched."

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As May 3 approached, each day saw more than 10,000 people from all over Japan visit the Soka Gakkai Headquarters Annex in Tokyo [where a Visitors Center is located] to pay their respects. My appreciation for them is boundless and inexhaustible.

Seeing the joyful throngs of Soka Gakkai members gathering at the Headquarters, a non-member who came to offer congratulations on this anniversary, said to the staff with admiration: "This is wonderful. Where else in the world can one see such a vibrant, dynamic group of people?" He went on to say: "For a variety of reasons, including my position in society, I am not a member, but I feel in my innermost heart that such inspiring faith, which enables people to lead vigorous, hope-filled lives, is essential. I know my wife feels the same."

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One of our youth division members wrote me: "The stage of the 21st century now lies before us. We will do our very best and win. We will strive to grow and develop." How happy those words made me, ringing as they did with enthusiastic determination!

An elderly member, a true hero of faith who has long fought by my side, wrote me: "Living my life together with

the Soka Gakkai has been my unsurpassed joy. I celebrate this May 3 without a cloud in my heart. My life resounds continually with the music of good fortune and is free of all darkness and regret."

Another leader, an honest, forthright man, copied a passage from the Goshu for me in brush and ink: "Life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land" (WND, 214). In closing, he wrote, "Magnificent May 3 is a day of fresh departure."

Another member, who has made outstanding contributions to our movement, composed this waka poem:

*Even old trees
Sprout fresh young buds.
We, too,
Undaunted and fearless,
Continue to speak out and press
forward.*

On the spot, I composed this reply:

*"Until you wither,
Live your life like a young
tree"—
Together, let us deeply ponder
and appreciate
These words of our mentor
[Mr. Toda].*

I profoundly treasure all your congratulatory messages.

A fresh advance toward the 21st century has begun throughout Japan and the entire world.

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In the Soka Gakkai, we have no need for the arrogant, base-hearted or degenerate. Nor do we need cowards, schemers and seekers of fame. Anyone who wishes to behave this way can do so but not in the Soka Gakkai.

We don't need the spiritually dead, who haunt the world like ghosts. Nor devious people who exploit sincere people while cunningly looking out for their own best interests, their hearts shut away from sunlight, their lives lonely and isolated from others' lives.

This was Mr. Toda's strict, constant teaching.

Our forces for kosen-rufu gather under a roof of eternal, undeniable beauty, honor and glory, perfect and indestructible. We have the most fortunate home base in the world — a citadel where people who possess that strong, unshakable conviction known as faith come together. This movement of Soka is formed by the fusion of your life with the great cause of truth and justice.

We know no despair. We

know no fear. We need no one's sympathy. Why? Because in the depths of our hearts, we know the pleasure and joy of eternity, happiness, true self and purity.

Many people disappear in the shadows of the heavy mist of destiny at the end of their temporal journey through this lifetime. We, on the other hand, engrave in our beings a state of supreme happiness. Our lives come to shine with radiant brilliance.

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The cowardly lot who seek to destroy the forces of the Buddha, the forces of Soka, though exhausting themselves with futile efforts, still pathetically continue their assaults. But those attacks are nothing but the empty cries of a gang of petty criminals — people without integrity, publicity seekers without any sense of truth or justice, those lost in a pitiful maze of their own making.

Their painstakingly constructed falsehoods, their laughable lies, which go on ad infinitum, are all nothing but the profoundly malevolent intrigues of a pack of the most reprehensible human beings.

Whatever happens, the momentum of our advance will never diminish. Our joy will only increase. And, as we courageously fight against evil, seek out the enemy and eagerly push the front lines forward, our path will become a battleground of victory and glory.

A poet says: "The sonorous sound of gongyo thrills my heart. I see and I hear it rousing waves toward victory, toward triumph."

In the process of doing gongyo, the fragrant flowers of deep compassion naturally bloom. A graceful, sublime music fills the air. The great path leading from the world of Hell to the world of Buddhahood opens before us. A marvelous, shimmering palace of profound depths comes into view within our lives.

In the last 40 years, in which we have created a golden history, we have been subjected to fierce assaults of slander and abuse in untold number. The attacks, criticisms and accusations have all been based on lies. In contrast to that black, putrid and uninterupted stream of falsehoods, our world has been a bright, clear, happy and well-ordered realm of joy and prosperity.

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THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



The Seoul Guest House

The building looked alive. It seemed to be conversing, softly, voicelessly, with the clear blue sky. It was my second trip to Korea, in May 1998. White ridges topped the graceful blue-tiled roof—a portrait of gently arcing lines. Here in Korea, amid a beautiful natural setting, I felt I had encountered an indescribable gentleness. This building, visible from my hotel-room window, is called the “Guest House.” Exactly as its name implies, the state once used it to greet and entertain special guests. It took eight years to build, construction beginning in 1959, and the entire project, including the stately courtyard and garden, was completed in 1967.

My first visit to Korea had been eight years earlier, in the fall of 1990. At that time, I was scheduled to attend the opening of an exhibition of Western art in Korea. We had sponsored this exhibit hoping to express our gratitude, even in some small way, to this country that we Japanese owe a profound cultural debt. However, a typhoon delayed my flight, and so my stay was shortened to a mere 26 hours, making my first visit to Korea an extremely rushed affair. All I could do was briefly pay my respects to the city of Seoul, for 500 years the capital

of the Yi Choson Dynasty, before having to return to Japan. I vowed that I would visit again.

So in 1998, at the invitation of the esteemed Kyung Hee University in Seoul, I realized my wish. On that occasion, I enjoyed a tour of that university’s two campuses—one in the city and the other in the suburbs of Seoul. I also paid a visit to the SGI Korea Headquarters, where I met representatives of the Korean members, who had all endured indescribable hardship. Seeing them moved me beyond measure. A fragrant May breeze graced the city of Seoul on that day.

The Korean people are gentle of heart. A scene that eloquently depicts this kindness, and which was often observed in the countryside, is that of a farmer leading an ox that is pulling a cartload of rice straw. The farmer shares in the animal’s labors, simultaneously shouldering a full load of straw on his own back. Among Korea’s myths of national origin, none are warlike. There are very few tales of invasion of foreign lands or of cruel destruction. Even to the Western ships that had encroached on Korean waters with the aim of opening the country to foreign trade, the Koreans provided food with the sentiment, “How hungry you

must be, having sailed the oceans for thousands of miles, braving wind and waves!”

Such is the magnanimous spirit of the Korean people. The heart of the Korean nation is rich and profound. These are a people who, despite having endured and transcended 5,000 years of hardship, have never lost their kindness. Rather than direct hatred at others, smiling, they have allowed their sorrow to pile up like drifts of snow in the depths of their hearts, all the while believing in tomorrow.

It is a country of love, a country of beauty, and a country of culture. Nevertheless, Japan’s brutal nationalists managed to inspire anger deep in the hearts of these peace-loving people, an anger that will not be forgotten for many generations. Wherever they went, the Japanese plundered and pillaged, brutalized and massacred. The Korean people knew them as uncivilized demons, as lower than animals. Culture—this is the power to recognize and appreciate what is invisible to the eye, to sense the unseen heart of things. How lacking modern Japan is in this regard!

Gazing down at the Guest House from my hotel window, I could see a square-shaped garden in the center of the courtyard. It is traditional in Korea

for such a courtyard garden to take the shape of either a square, resembling the Chinese character for *mouth*; of two adjacent squares, resembling the Chinese character for *sun*; or of three adjacent squares, resembling the character for *moon*. A mouth-shaped garden is said to invite good fortune in the form of abundant foodstuffs to the household. A sun- or moon-shaped garden is said to provide a household with heaven’s energy. Through this space, the entire structure communes with the heavens. This is why great pains were taken to align the roof tiles in an exquisite, delicate pattern, even in places that are hidden from view. Culture is also the spirit never to dismiss such honest simplicity.

On the last night of my visit, I borrowed a room in the Guest House to hold a banquet for representatives of Kyung Hee University and others I wished to thank for their assistance with my visit. On that occasion, I praised Madame Oh, the wife of Choue Young Seek, the university’s founder. During the early days of the university, with her baby strapped to her back, she would prepare and serve home-cooked meals for students suffering financial difficulty, and offer them encouragement.

In those days, there were times when the university had a hard time paying teachers’ salaries. One day before payday, Madame Oh took her diamond engagement ring to a pawnshop to exchange for much-needed cash. The pawnbroker turned her away, though, claiming that he could not be sure the diamond was real. She walked home alone in the dark in tears. In spite of such hardships, she has lived for the purpose of realizing Dr. Choue’s determination for the creation of a “world of culture.” That is the strength and kindness of this amazing “mother” of Kyung Hee University.

That, I thought, is the heart of this Eastern “country of kindness,” a spirit that also imbues the Guest House. Standing next to her husband, dressed in a traditional Chogori short-coat and Chima pants, Madame Oh looked beautiful and charmingly innocent as she shifted, somewhat bashfully, at my remarks in her praise. That night, the silver light of a half-moon bathed the blue-tiled roofs of the Guest House. At that moment, as I thought of the arrogance of the Japanese who had trampled upon this beautiful country, anger surged within me.

Thirteen in a series