



EXPERIENCE:

Earnestine Harris dares to pursue her dreams.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 48TH CEC

PROOF OF OUR VICTORY

'Efforts for the sake of kosen-rufu are themselves proof of one's victory as a human being,' SGI President Ikeda says.

I express my sincerest congratulations to all of you on the occasion of your victorious Central Executive Conference of the new SGI-USA. I understand that you are meeting this weekend in triumph due to your victories in introducing new members, *World Tribune* promotion, the Soka Spirit movement and the May Commemorative Contribution. Thank you so much for all your untiring efforts!

Only our struggles in prayer and action toward the ultimate goal of kosen-rufu give life its exquisite flavor. Furthermore, efforts for the sake of kosen-rufu are themselves proof of one's victory as a human being.

To move for the sake of friends in dire need; to go anywhere for the sake of people's happiness; to care for our members on the forefront—surely, it is our challenge as leaders to practice this “bodhisattva way.” Please be convinced that through the campaigns you have been waging, you are creating a golden history of boundless life force and unparalleled good fortune that will eternally span the three existences.

Next year, Soka University of America will open at last. It

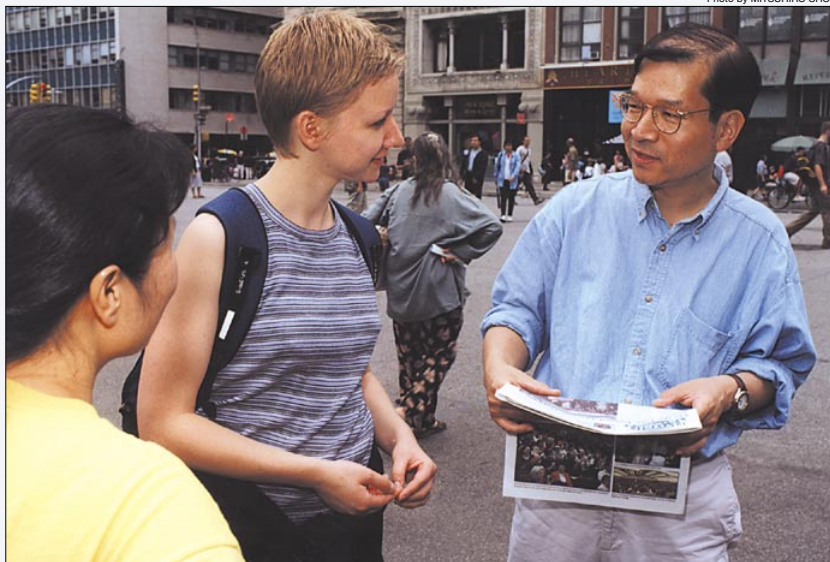


Photo by MITSUHIRO SHOUJI

Andy Ushijima shares the 'World Tribune' with guests at the SGI-USA Day of New York Celebration in Union Square Park, June 18. Organized by New York youth, the event welcomed 4,500 people. (See next week's issue for more on the Day of New York.)

is my fervent wish and prayer that through your united strength you will ensure the success of this major undertaking, which will mark the beginning of a new era. SUA is the symbol of hope for the entire world and a guidepost for humanity's future.

The last 10 years of reform and development have led to the construction of a glorious

age for the SGI-USA. I hope that each of you will aim toward the opening of SUA by chanting resonantly and summoning forth the “heart of a lion king.” Fearing nothing, please walk the path of your mission with dignity while breaking through every difficulty you encounter in life and in society. I will fight along with all of you.

I am chanting daimoku with my entire being that you carry out your activities freely, cheerfully and in the best of health. I am looking forward to the day next year when I will meet all of you in the land of America. Please take care!

*Daisaku Ikeda
June 23, 2000*

June CEC Focuses on Soka Care

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Soka University, Soka Spirit and Soka Care. At the June Central Executive Conference held in Los Angeles, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima emphasized these three organizational focuses based on input from SGI President Ikeda. Mr. Nagashima shared with the zone and national leaders gathered for the 48th CEC that encouraging students to attend the

new Soka University of America campus, continuing Soka Spirit education efforts and improving care for all SGI-USA members—including the more than 1,000 new members who have joined this year—are important steps toward creating an ideal future for the SGI-USA.

This CEC was at once an in-depth discussion of what that ideal future might look like and a celebration of recent victories. Based on progress made in introducing new members, the May Commemorative Contri-

butions, publications promotion and efforts to reach out to temple members, the CEC intended to develop a vision for next year's activities. But President Ikeda sent a message asking the leaders to first think about the next 10 years of the SGI-USA's activities—then to think about next year.

This inspired a wide-ranging dialogue on how, in the next decade, the SGI-USA can contribute to the world, express its

PLEASE SEE CEC, 10



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Mid-Atlantic Zone leaders Ronnie Smith (left) and Bill Aiken enjoy the CEC, in Santa Monica, Calif., June 24.

Striking the Bell

BY GREG MARTIN
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

It was a pitiable sound—tinny and feeble. Thus began the recitation of gongyo at an SGI-USA community center the other night. The source of this rather inauspicious beginning? The much abused bell.

Curious, I examined its body more closely. The signs of misuse were obvious. It had been beaten into complete submission, albeit with much sincere and heartfelt gusto. Its skin was no longer lustrous, youthful and smooth.

Rather it had the look of a

battered war veteran—crinkled and scarred. I pondered how many beatings it must have endured.

Sound familiar? There are many such veterans of friendly wars in our centers across the land. In the interest of saving new generations of bells from further indignities, here is a guide for striking the bell—how to do it and how not to do it. Of course, using a bell is simply a formality. But if we're going to do it, let's do it right.

Enjoy a rekindled, passionate relationship with the bell. The bell is, after all, your friend. Be kind to your friends, and they will serve you well. **WT**

The Meaning of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo

Back to the Basics

BY TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In my last "Back to the Basics" (July 7 *World Tribune*, p. 2), I explained that we should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with faith in the significance of chanting it. I wrote that enjoying the effects of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is even more significant than knowing its literal meaning.

In this article, though, I will address each component of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo based on the initial part of the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings." Here, Nichiren Daishonin sums up the quintessence of each component. He lectures: "*Nam* [means]...to devote one's life. *Myo* indicates the nature of enlightenment, while *ho* indicates darkness or delusion. *Myoho*, the Mystic Law, indicates the oneness of delusion and enlightenment. *Renge* expresses the two principles of cause and effect. It also indicates the oneness of cause and effect. *Kyo* means the words, speech, sounds and voices of all living beings.... *Kyo* also

signifies that life spans the three existences of past, present and future. All things are myoho, all things are rengo, and all things are kyo" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

The profound, all-inclusive meaning of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo should be clear to us when we chant. In chanting it, we are saying that

Instructions for Striking the Bell

1) Where should the bell be struck? The rounded side skin of the bell is its thinnest and weakest part. It is also where the sound emanates from. The bell should not be struck on the side. Striking a bell there with even moderate strength can dent it, and one dent begins its collapse. The thicker rim that encircles the top of the bell is stronger and designed to be struck—it's where the sound is initiated.

2) What part of the bell ringer should hit the bell? The tip or end of the bell ringer should not strike the bell. Rather, the shaft of the ringer should contact the bell.

3) How to correctly strike the bell? The shaft of the bell ringer should strike, with modest strength, the top rim of the bell. This will produce the best sound and greatly extend the life expectancy of the bell.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



How to ring the bell.



How not to ring the bell.

we will devote ourselves to the ultimate truth of life (the Law) and base ourselves upon the wisdom (Buddhahood) we tap thereby. We are promising to create value in daily life using the life-condition we tap through chanting. Through each daimoku, we are vowing to use our lives for our happiness and others' welfare.

In essence, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo means that our lives are manifestations of the Mystic Law; our lives are ultimately precious. By chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we come to fully embody this. We affirm the universal in our lives.

As second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once stated, we should chant to the point where

we exhibit the "life of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo" itself, to the point where we become one with the Gohonzon. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — BOB REEL, SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Challenging Finances

Bob Reel grounds himself in Buddhist practice and develops his financial fortune.

You can mash 'em, fry 'em, boil 'em or bake 'em; add only salt and pepper, or butter and sour cream; or maybe only cheese. I'm talking about a few of the ways you can eat potatoes. I can vividly recall what it was like on a very limited income to eat only potatoes.

I didn't begin auspiciously. As a 17-year-old high school senior in El Paso, Texas, I led a dangerous life of excessive partying that piled poor family interactions on ordinary teenage troubles. I was rebellious and had no direction. But I was searching for something deep. One night I went with a group of friends to a Buddhist meeting (thanks, Linda). I sensed "this is right," that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was what I needed and wanted.

Right after graduation, three of us left for a long backpacking adventure in Canada, working our way through national parks back to El Paso. My practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, hit and miss at the start, improved as we traveled. However, you can imagine the mixed reception I received at my parents' home! Having had very limited communication with them for nearly five months, I was showing up on their doorstep. It didn't take long to see that the best thing for me to do was move out. Almost everything I owned was in my backpack, including the Gohonzon.

I changed jobs continuously, lacking any real sense of hope around employment issues. I really struggled just to eat. I can't recall the number of times my utilities were turned off, the number of miles I must have hitchhiked or all the places I lived. Fortunately, several SGI families looked out for me.

In the midst of this poverty and youthful struggle, I found a sense of mission and hope by participating in every type of activity. Introductory meetings, chanting sessions, study

meetings, conventions mixed with ongoing behind the scene efforts—I was there! From this, I started to understand what it meant to contribute to kosen-rufu by developing myself and helping others. I've sustained this rhythm to varying degrees throughout my 26 years of practicing Buddhism, my greatest joy.

Fueled and guided by a growing personal mentor-disciple relationship with SGI President Ikeda, I studied his guidance on a daily basis, progressively understanding that the practice of Buddhism and our daily life are not separate. Slowly but surely, I faced my low self-esteem, limited respect for authority and more, in order to contribute toward world peace through this Buddhism. Because of President Ikeda's influence and that of many leaders and members, I began to evolve into a person who could get things done.

My developing fortune manifested externally when I landed a job as an equipment orderly in a hospital, cleaning respiratory therapy equipment and supplies. I actually kept a job! I wanted to win in my daily life. Within a year I was offered the opportunity for more on-the-job training in minor clinical support procedures. I became interested in respiratory therapy (helping to diagnose and treat cardiac and pulmonary disease). The hospital allowed me a flexible schedule while I attended community college and even paid for one hundred percent of my tuition! I graduated with an associate degree and successfully completed my registry examinations.

After a couple of years as a respiratory therapist who never let up on participating in SGI activities, I became an assistant manager for the respiratory care department of a small local hospital. Within a few months, I was promoted and relocated in Texas to direct a slightly larger cardiopulmonary department in the small town of Nacogdoches. I traveled monthly to Houston to attend the World Peace Prayer meeting, continued my personal practice and study, attended a large activity in Dallas with President Ikeda, and every once in awhile actually explained my Buddhist practice to another human being. Struggling to maintain an active practice for

myself and others was not easy on my own—my personal strength, happiness and sense of mission were really tested. Man, I missed the West Coast and a more active practice! I could feel the difference in my life.

Over the next 10 years, I continued to develop by challenging myself to achieve many work and SGI organizational objectives while treating people in the most encouraging manner. Facing increasing challenges as a manager in health care with only an associate's degree, my practice always enabled me to somehow renew myself and address the immediate issues at hand.

Again I relocated to direct a larger cardiopulmonary department in Farmington, N.M., helping SGI members there progressively create a lively district while participating in all major events in Albuquerque, three hours away. It felt so great being back with other members regularly and contributing again to the development of world peace. Shortly after a conversation with my young men's leader (thanks, Dennis!) about moving to Albuquerque to participate in SGI on a larger scale, a job with a multi-hospital system in Albuquerque became available.

Although this potential new position was about five times larger than my current one, I decided to go for it and was selected. The new job, another relocation, and increased SGI responsibilities again forced me to address my fear of not being good enough, that I wasn't worth it. I worked to apply President Ikeda's guidance to support me through my personal and professional problems, expanding my hope, wisdom and courage to succeed no matter my fears. Quite unexpectedly, the hospital system asked me to assume a larger administrative role—responsibility for all surgical services.

Then I faced true difficulty. The entire health care industry, including my new hospital system, transitioned through a stressful period of downsizing and restructuring. Without my practice I'm sure I would have been overwhelmed by these circumstances and self-destructed as I had done many times early in my practice. Instead, my responsibilities at work doubled with the addition of all heart-re-



Bob Reel has found success in the health care industry.

lated services.

In studying President Ikeda's guidance to the Culture Department members, I grew into understanding that education imparts a sense of constant learning and growth. It's another way to evolve beyond one's current level of contribution. Wanting to reply to him (in addition to recognizing my own limitations and vulnerabilities without further, more formal education), I finally made the determination to go back to school and both worked and attended classes full time. Time itself was a rare commodity but school was great! I had prepared myself to just struggle through, so it was encouraging that I loved it. In 1998, I earned my bachelor's degree in Public Administration. I felt so strong and joyful from my accomplishment. My life's rhythm was identical to my years of vigorous Buddhist campaigns and consequently I took only one semester off before beginning a master's program in business. And the hospital system paid for my entire tuition for both degrees! For someone who had no financial fortune at all when I began practicing Buddhism, having the cost of three degrees paid for by my employers just amazed me.

Last summer, I was recruited by one of the largest not-for-profit healthcare systems in the country. The recruiter enticed me to consider applying for a key administrative role in their Sacramento region. California had never occurred to me! But after reading her material and personally investigating further, I applied for the position and went off to a men's meeting at the Florida Nature and Culture Center (thanks, Tony). There I renewed my determination that

once I completed my degree in December 1999, I would leap forward with my life and my participation in SGI activities. I chanted with this determination regardless of whether I would be living in Northern California or in Albuquerque.

Now in California, I'm in awe of the trajectory of my life. I work as a vice president in the system's greater Sacramento operations, responsible for all specialty services (women's, children's, orthopedics, heart, oncology, trauma and neuroscience)—the expanding results of continuing to practice this Buddhism and open my life. It's a new world for me in the sense that I now must dig deeper into my life to find the strength necessary to contribute to my new employer and to the Sacramento SGI community in a value-creating fashion.

I thank President Ikeda for his insights into how to practice this Buddhism and live as a human being. I thank the many people in the SGI who have enabled me to continue practicing and to progress in my development as a person. I thank my family for their support. I've kept my promise by jumping into activities in Sacramento. Recently my chapter leader (thanks, Caesar) encouraged me by reminding me that "the voice does the Buddha's work." His profound words stimulated me to go out of my way to give frequent and greater expression of my experiences practicing this Buddhism. I must reply to President Ikeda and the SGI by becoming a person who can inherit this mission for kosen-rufu.

By the way, I still like potatoes!

—with help from Donna Parten

EXPERIENCE — EARNESTINE HARRIS, NORFOLK, VA.

Pursuing My Dreams

Challenging Finances

Earnestine Harris gets off welfare and dares to pursue her dreams.

When I began my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1984, my life was so different than it is today. I was a single mother on welfare with two daughters ages 11 and 2, and living with my boyfriend. I hated my life and felt worthless and inadequate.

This feeling stemmed from the sense of sadness I always had about my father not being around. Though he promised many times that he would come to spend time with us, he never showed up. I would see other kids with their fathers and wonder what that must be like. Our family was so poor, though my mother, grandmother and aunt tried their best to provide for us. When I went to school, the other kids teased me about my clothes and play cruel games to embarrass me, which all made me feel I just wasn't good enough. Though I had dreams of being a model or a dancer, I didn't even feel good enough to try to achieve these dreams because of my very low self-esteem and lack of confidence. When I talked to my mother about my feelings, she encouraged me to pray, and accept my life as God's will. I became a very depressed person.

By 1984, I had been on welfare for five years and had little hope of changing my circumstances. Nevertheless, my sister encouraged me to go to beauty school, which I did and then got my license. While I had a desire to own my own business, I just didn't think something like that could happen for me. Seven months passed and I still didn't have a job.

Around this time, my neighbor introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. She told me to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for my own happiness. I was very skeptical of this Japanese woman but frankly felt I had nothing to lose. As I chanted and attended meetings,

I became determined to show actual proof to my family. I started feeling relieved of my depression and more confident.

The time came for me to renew my eligibility for welfare. In the middle of completing the forms, I stopped and told my social worker that I didn't want welfare anymore. She asked me if I had a job already. I told her no, I had Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Of course, she looked at me like I was crazy but I was already feeling that I could overcome the financial poverty in my life. I chanted with the belief "I will get a job."

Right away, things started to get worse instead of better, but with the encouragement from the members that "Winter never fails to turn to spring," I kept on chanting. My family was totally against my practice, and said "this mess"—as they called it—was doing nothing for me. I determined I would try even harder to find out for myself.

Just three days after I received my Gohonzon, I rented a booth at a hair salon. I had no customers and only the money required to pay the first month's rent. Days would go by with no customers coming into the shop but I remained confident and spent the time chanting as I paced back and forth.

Slowly, customers started to come. I had to get money from each customer in advance so that I could purchase the supplies needed to even start the hairstyle. I was only able to collect enough each month to meet the booth rental.

It was at this time that my leader strongly encouraged me to participate in the monthly contribution. This would mean pledging to contribute a set amount each month to support the SGI organization. I thought she must be crazy. I was already squeezing out \$6 to pay for my publications and did not know where this additional money would come from. Still, I agreed to participate and challenged myself to stretch every dollar. Instead of drinking 7-11 coffee two or three times a day, I saved my money and it added up. Every month I was able to participate without fail. More customers came, and I found that I was able to move out on my own into an apartment with my two children. It felt so good to be able to pay my bills and take

care of my family all by myself!

After suffering through so much financial difficulty, I was finally beginning to see a change. So when I heard about the May contribution, I was excited to be able to contribute more. I still have the little yellow container that my district leader gave me for my first May contribution so that I could save all of my change, tips and any other money that I would have spent wastefully. It was such a joy to present this money in support of this organization that had helped me find the guts to pursue my dreams. I did this without expecting anything in return. Since then, I look forward to contributing every year, always giving more money than the year before.

Over the past 15 years, my business has grown to the point that I have my own salon and many loyal customers who have stuck with me through two changes in location. Now, I'm even able to reduce my work schedule to four days and still meet my financial obligations. I am also a proud homeowner and have investments that will allow me to retire someday. I never thought I would have this kind of financial security and I know it is all through my hard work, consistent Buddhist practice and faithful support of this great organization. I am now working toward my next dream, which is to be a fashion designer; I want to make it possible for any woman to afford the total transformation—for a woman to feel good about herself.

In February, I attended the Women's Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I had an opportunity to hear SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck's experience. She explained how she discovered the source of the unhappiness in her family and how she found the guts to change it. Listening to her, I realized that I still had anger toward my father and had not forgiven him even at his death. For the first time, I began to appreciate him for giving me life.

Through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and taking bold action, I feel that I have totally changed my life and can provide hope for my daughters that they can do the same. SGI President Ikeda encourages us that "Buddhism is win or lose." I am winning! **WT**

Photo by ROB HENDRY



Earnestine Harris shares her story at the Virginia/Carolina Region 'Prelude to May 3, 2001' kick-off meeting, April 29.



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EXPERIENCE—RAFAEL LLADÓ, PUERTO RICO

Changing My Dependent Attitude

Challenging Finances

'Had I not changed my lax and dependent attitude at that crucial moment, I am certain I would not be sharing this experience with you today,' says Rafael Lladó.

I was raised in an environment that was relatively comfortable but engendered extreme dependency. Even though my family struggled with problems emotionally and financially, my parents hid these challenges from their eight children. I can say that I had a pleasant childhood, but, unfortunately, it was not conducive to developing the ability to put forth efforts and fight to achieve goals. I feel I grew up with an unrealistic view of life—it was too easy. I didn't have to cope with life's problems so I didn't develop the skills necessary to deal with them later in life.

During the last years of my adolescence and first years of young adulthood, my life became rife with self-destruction with frequent forays into physical excesses. I lived a life of the seemingly happy but egoistic bohemian, immersed in the world of drugs and alcohol. This indulgent lifestyle was new and appealing, but spiritually I felt empty and was searching to fill this void.

Even in the midst of such turbulent passions and circumstances, I always had the fortune to be successful whenever I would focus my efforts and set my mind to accomplish a project. This capacity to win when I wanted to and to always find the easy way out of problems was counterproductive, since I never had to struggle or face challenges squarely on. It took many "falls" as an adult (and later on many hours of chanting), for me to realize the harm my comfortable environment had created in my life.

I must have accumulated good fortune since, within a period of five years, I received the

two greatest benefits of my life. First, I met my beloved wife and second, I met this marvelous practice—Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism—which gave me the tools to change my life and propel me on the correct path to true happiness.

Five years ago, I faced the most challenging period of my life. In what had appeared to be the blink of an eye, when my business as an apparel manufacturer representative went sour, I lost my home and all of my financial resources.

Eventually, I found myself working as a sales rep for an information systems company, which was completely foreign to the business I had successfully established for some 20 years. Although I had a technical background in engineering, it was not in computers so I had to challenge myself, working and studying 18 hours a day.

I was assailed by doubts from every direction. Why was this happening when I was maintaining a strong Buddhist practice? Although I knew Buddhism was the correct path for me, I doubted whether I was practicing correctly. I found the answer through studying Nichiren Daishonin's writings, many long hours of chanting and an arduous, internal battle within.

In the letter, "The Fourteen Slanders," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "As a lay believer, the important thing for you is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo single-mindedly.... And if we go by the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should also teach the sutra to the best of your ability. When the world makes you feel downcast, you should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, remembering that, although the sufferings of this life are painful, those in the next life could be much worse. And when you are happy, you should remember that your happiness in this life is nothing but a dream within a dream, and that the only true happiness is that found in the pure land of Eagle Peak, and with that thought in mind, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Continue your practice without backsliding until the final moment of your life, and when that time comes... then to your amazement you will see that the entire realm of phenomena is the Land of Tranquil Light.... But if we are weak in faith, we will never reach that wonderful

place" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 760–61).

I realized that the answer to all my questions is simple: A correct practice is comprised of a wholehearted dedication to pray with faith and firm determination, through both the good and bad times, until the very last moment of our lives. It is to not allow myself to stray from the practice for even a single moment. It is to continue steadfastly, making efforts for the happiness of every human being. It is having the secure knowledge that we have the power to confront absolutely any circumstance and emerge a victor, showing tremendous actual proof of our practice.

With this new determination, I started to refresh and revitalize my practice. Much to my surprise, my dependent and comfortable attitude underwent a change. I started to receive opportunities at work involving important projects which required much effort and responsibility. Suddenly I found myself working 70 to 80 hours a week. The small amount of free time I had was dedicated to my family and to SGI activities.

Certainly I need to express my appreciation to my family, for I am entirely aware of the fact that they were, in a sense, abandoned and robbed of precious time. In spite of this, they always supported me. The leaders of this organization also expressed their support and encouraged me to triumph. For this I am also extremely grateful. Had I not changed my lax and dependent attitude at that crucial moment, I am certain I would not be sharing this experience with you today.

For the past two years, I have been the consultant and leading salesman for the company, generating an income far superior to that of my own business. My family and I now reside in a home that is more spacious and comfortable than the one we lost during our financial debacle. It is in this new home, which is filled with great joy and pride, that we sponsor Buddhist meetings. We now have the opportunity to travel as a family each year, enjoying time together that is precious and irreplaceable. My work has become more stabilized, affording me more time to spend with my family and doing SGI activities—both of which I had

Photo by MARTIN FIGUEROA



Rafael Lladó with his wife, Lydza, and their children Mara, 13, Cristina, 11, and Rafael Jr., 9, at their home in Trujillo, P.R.

been praying for. We are even able to maintain financial savings, which we had never accomplished in the past, even though I had been earning more than \$200,000 annually as a business owner.

But of utmost importance is that I have continued my practice with the same resolve as when things were going badly. I feel tremendous appreciation for the benefits we have received but I will not become careless and sit on my laurels. Now in my 11th year of practice, I am continuing to advance in faith until the very last moment of my life, exactly as the Daishonin says.

I have learned that it is extremely important, in order to fulfill my mission, to live a full and happy life and that I must strive to teach others to do the same. We can and must triumph if we really want to achieve kosen-rufu in Puerto Rico.

Translation from Spanish by
María Antonia Bardino

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LIVE FULFILLING LIVES

A Record of My Life by Daisaku Ikeda

'Buddhism exists to enable people to live fulfilling, satisfying lives until the very end,' SGI President Ikeda writes.

Having dreams and aspirations nourishes one's spirit. When people lose their ideals, they lose their depth of character.

Shakyamuni teaches, "It is better to live a day or two / with equipoise and great wisdom, / than live one hundred years / in foolish agitation" (*The Tibetan Dhammapada*, p. 117). And Nichiren Daishonin says, "A hundred years of practice in the Land of Perfect Bliss cannot compare to the benefit gained from one day's practice in the impure world" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 736). He also declares, "It is better to live a single day with honor than to live to 120 and die in disgrace" (WND, 851).

I met Konosuke Matsushita, the brilliant entrepreneur who founded Panasonic, on a number of occasions, and we published a dialogue in Japan together. I understand that he was determined to live to the age of 120.

Mr. Matsushita once reportedly told someone close to him: "When I met the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, he encouraged me, saying, 'Since you have only lived half of your heavenly life, you have many years ahead of you.' Chinese tradition holds that one's life span is bestowed by heaven — hence the expression 'heavenly life' — and that the natural span of life is 160 years. According to this reasoning, I should be able to live another 80 years to 160."

He continued: "Since I was born with a weak constitution, I figure my life has been cut short by about 10 percent. In addition, my having worked much harder than others has probably taken off another 10 percent. This leaves me with 128 years. But as things never go according to calculation in the world, I suppose that, allowing for various risks, I should be able to live to the age of 120. No, I will live to be 120."

Mr. Matsushita died when he was 94. I believe that his life was so full and rich that it was indeed as though he had lived 120 years.

When I turned 60, he sent me a letter of congratulations. That was in 1988, the year before he died. He wrote: "I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on your having reached your 60th birthday in good health. In body and mind, you are so overflowing with youth that you seem far younger than your age. I hope you will view today as the start of your real endeavors. I pray that you will enjoy lasting good health and will strive with even greater energy — as if creating another Soka Gakkai — as you continue to work for world peace and the happiness and prosperity of all humankind."

I deeply appreciated receiving these words from a senior in life who had lived thoroughly and vigorously into his later years without ever retreating a step. And I have been determined to reply with my life to his sincere encouragement.

My mentor gave me his very life.

A journalist once asked Mahatma Gandhi, who demonstrated with his entire being the indomitability of the human spirit and left behind a philosophy of nonviolence, to convey a message to the American people, particularly those of African descent. Gandhi replied, "My life is its own message" (*A Higher Standard of Leadership*, p. 3).

Gandhi was 61 when he boldly undertook the famous Salt March. His struggle for human rights continued until the moment of his death at 78.

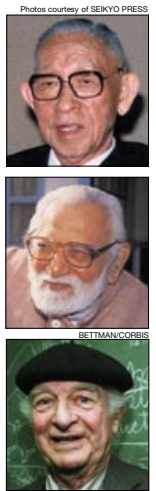
What am I doing now? What have I accomplished? How have I lived? How am I living? The answers to these questions are the greatest message we can leave for others.

I turned 60 on Jan. 2, 1988. That was a significant point in my life. Thirty years had passed since the death of my mentor Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president.

For a period of 10 years, from early morning until late at night, I received guidance and training from my mentor, who was 58 when he died. When I look at photographs from back then, I have a profound feeling that it was sheer will that kept me going.



DYNAMIC INTO THEIR 90s: SGI President Ikeda has met with many intellectuals, including Austregésilo de Athayde (above), who remained active late in life. (Right, top to bottom) Konosuke Matsushita, B. Nath Pande, Dr. Linus Pauling.



By 1988, more than three times the length of time that I had spent with my mentor had passed since his death. Because I was 30 when we parted, I was by then twice as old. I believe that my having lived this long is due to his having given me his very life. He once said to me: "You must live — live out your life to the fullest. I will give you my life so that you may do so."

Incidentally, on Feb. 11, 1960, the same year that I became third Soka Gakkai president, I wrote in my diary: "Today is President Toda's birthday. If he were alive now, he would be celebrating his sixtieth birthday. My wife and I talked about this as if we were his son and daughter" (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 247).

I have no need for recognition, wealth or praise. I spent the days of my youth striving ceaselessly alongside my mentor, determined to give my life to spreading Nichiren Daishonin's teachings for the sake of the world, for the sake of all people. I do not have a single regret. And after my mentor's passing, I continued advancing with all my might into my 30s, 40s and 50s.

Time has passed so quickly. It is now 12 years — one "turn" in the zodiacal cycle — since I reached 60. This year, I am 72. Long ago, I was told by a physician that I would not live to 30. My wife, who knows my condition best of all and who is the one most concerned for my health, has commented with great delight that I now have more energy than I ever had before. Looking at photos taken in the early days of my marriage, in which I am so thin that I seem

a different person, gives me an incredible sense of the passage of time.

Shakyamuni was 72 when he began expounding the Lotus Sutra, the reason for which he appeared in the world. During his last eight years, he gave himself completely to expounding and propagating this most exalted of Buddhist teachings. As a Buddhist, I, too, am taking action based on a vow to exert myself on behalf of the people and the Law, in the spirit that the most important work of my life is still ahead.

Old age is a time of golden harvest and fruition.

In Japanese, 60 years of age is called the "calendar return" because it completes the 60-year cycle. That is, at 60 we return to a year with the same symbol as the year of our birth. [In the ancient Japanese calendar system, each year has a name, and there are 60 names that make up a cycle of 60 years. Thus, on one's 60th birthday, a full cycle has been completed.] There are apparently still places where it is customary for people to celebrate their 60th birthday wearing a red sleeveless kimono jacket. The color red is associated with infancy, so doing so is supposed to signify a kind of rebirth.

The Daishonin was born in February 1222, and he passed away in October 1282. According to the modern method of calculating age, he lived to be exactly 60, which means he reached his calendar return. I am exceedingly grateful for each additional year that I live beyond 60. This is one criteria for the way I view longevity.

People often say that those advanced in age are living their silver years. But this has a lonely ring to it. In terms of seasons, it brings to mind an image of winter. I have also heard it suggested that one's later years should be called the golden age, conjuring an image of autumn and a time of golden harvest and fruition. I would agree with the latter.

Anyone, no matter who they are, who reaches this stage of life having lived in earnest, is qualified to be regarded as a champion of life. It is my personal wish and determination to live out each day with composure and boundless strength. My life is adorned with the uncelebrated status of having struggled against all kinds of hardship and obstacles.

When my series "The Third Stage of Life" was running in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, an 80-year-old member presented me with a towel on which was printed a number of adages regarding longevity well known in Japan. They shine with the wisdom and humor of ordinary people:

Life is a journey of traversing many mountains and hills.

When death starts to beckon: At 60 (the calendar return), tell him, "Don't be silly," and send him away.

At 70 (old and rare age), reject him, saying, "You're too early."

At 77 (joyful age), tell him: "Don't be in such a hurry. The fun is just beginning."

At 80 (umbrella age — the Chinese character for umbrella is made up of the same elements

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE YWD CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

Accumulate the Treasures of the Heart

'You need not chase after fleeting popularity, wealth or glamour,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Instead you must seek to accumulate treasures of the heart during your youth.'

The Young Women's Division Conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, June 15-18.

My sincere congratulations to all of you on your SGI-USA Young Women's Division Conference — a gathering of young women filled with spirit and vigor who are enacting the drama of youth. From the bottom of my heart, I am praying that each of you, without a single exception, will live with strength

and composure, attaining supreme happiness in the 21st century, which I believe will be the era of women.

Nichiren Daishonin states: "There is nothing to lament when we consider that we will surely become Buddhas.... Even if one were to be reborn in heaven, what end would it serve?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 657). I ask that all of you — young women of America — have confidence in your inner palace of eternity and live each day free from regret, as you dance a youthful dance of freedom on the stage of kosen-rufu. You need not chase after fleeting popularity, wealth or glamour. Instead you must seek to accumulate treasures of the heart during your youth.

Whatever hardships you may be facing now, please turn them into a source of prayer. Improve yourself each day, do your utmost for the sake of others and study hard so that you can actively, freely



Photo by JOELLE GONCALVES

Anne-Marie Akin sings an original song that she wrote with fellow participants at the Young Women's Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in June.

contribute in the field of your mission. Nor should you be hasty. Rather, please always base yourself on daimoku, and steadily build a foundation of indestructible fortune. I hope that your conference

will be filled with harmony, joy and cheer, as you expand and strengthen your bonds of friendship. Please be convinced that you will be always embraced and protected in this circle of good friends.

I am offering my heartfelt prayer for your excellent health, peace and security. Please give my sincerest regards to your families as well.
Daisaku Ikeda
June 15, 2000

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE YMD CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

Open the Door to the New Era

'Only the burning passion of youth will open the door to the new era,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'It is my hope that you will become excellent citizens who show splendid actual proof in your communities, in society, at your places of work and in your families.'

The Young Men's Division Conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, June 8-11.

To all the young men's division members of SGI-USA, in whom I place the highest trust and greatest hopes: Congratulations on the holding of your

Florida Nature and Culture Center conference. Soka University of America will finally be opening next year. It has been my hope and prayer to make America the stage from which many promising young people will gallantly emerge to create a new age. Please take this opportunity to make a fresh, courageous start toward the future.

Only the burning passion of youth will open the door to the new era. It is my hope that you will become excellent citizens who show splendid actual proof in your communities, in society, at your places of work and in your families. Please lead upright lives that are free from compromise and dedicated to the ideal of kosen-rufu.

Nichiren Daishonin states: "Although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra. Though evils

may be numerous, they cannot prevail over a single great truth" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 618). As the Daishonin promises, if you, as young, brave generals, make your hearts one and strive together to build a solid network of good, then

there is nothing you cannot accomplish.

I am praying from the very depths of my heart that all of you will spend a most significant, joy-filled time together at this conference, cultivating many deep, meaningful friendships. With my whole

life, I am sending daimoku to each of you to play out a splendid drama of growth and victory in society and in life. Please convey my warmest regards to your families and friends.
Daisaku Ikeda
June 8, 2000



Photo by ARIES SANTIAGO

Eddie Boroumand, Ali Rezaei and Robin Quon develop bonds of friendship at the recent Young Men's Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in June.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Absolutely Opposed to War

‘I am absolutely opposed to war,’ writes SGI President Ikeda. ‘That is one reason why I so highly respect Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, who, imprisoned by the military government, became foremost champions of truth and justice.’

A Headquarters Leaders Meeting celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding was held with great festivity on a beautiful May day, May 24, at the Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Tokyo.

The sight of our members, who are working so hard to achieve kosen-rufu, was so refreshing and inspiring that it is difficult to describe.

How noble are their incredible efforts to promote our movement, their courageous fighting spirit to sail intrepidly through the fiercest storms, their intense prayers and committed actions to thoroughly vanquish the enemies of the Buddha, based on eternal principles and the invincible power of the Mystic Law!

In addition, a large number of overseas members, hailing from 13 countries and territories, joined us, brimming with energy and shining with the praiseworthy spirit of selfless dedication.

Our goals are peace, progress, and increasing happiness throughout the world.

The hearts of all that day were filled with the irrepressible joy of Buddhas.

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After the meeting, my wife and I gazed out at a knoll in front of the Makiguchi Hall that we call Moonlight Hill and talked of many things. Our conversation led to a letter I had received from one of my elementary school teachers and from there moved on to memories of my youth.

In 1937, I was 9 years old. My father was finally beginning to recover from a long, severe bout of rheumatism. It was at that time that my eldest

brother was drafted into the army. His name was Kiichi, and he was 12 years older than me, making him 21 when he was called up for military service.

He was very earnest and sincere, and I respected him a lot. While our father was ill, Kiichi worked hard to support us, becoming the pillar and mainstay of our family.

First he and then my three other elder brothers—all in the prime of life—were snatched away from us by the military. As a result, the responsibility to care for our aged parents fell to me, weak and sick with tuberculosis. My father’s illness also persisted. What cruel demands nationalism makes on the lives of ordinary people!

In the early spring of 1939, two years after he was drafted, Kiichi was sent abroad to fight. We received notification from the army that we could go and see him before he was shipped overseas, so my mother and I hurried to Tokyo Station to do so. I was a fifth grader by then. My mother prepared some food, mainly rice balls—a veritable feast in wartime Japan—which she generously wrapped in large sheets of seaweed; as she said, “We won’t be seeing him for a long time.”

When we got to the station, there were about 300 soldiers on the way to the front. Their families had gathered with them in the open area in front of the station, and they were enjoying themselves eating and talking together. Since the young men were headed for the battlefield, this might well be their final farewell. The eyes of many of the mothers and young wives were filled with tears.

The soldiers’ departure had been decided so suddenly that the families of those from regions far away from Tokyo, such as Yamagata and Akita, did not have time to get to Tokyo to say good-bye. I still have a clear memory of those soldiers sitting quietly in their uniforms on the concrete outside the station with no one to talk to, their shoulders drooping. My mother called out to several of them to join us, and she sent me to hand rice balls to those who seemed too shy to accept her invitation. Their forlorn expressions brightened, and they smiled and talked in friendly camaraderie as they shared in the humble yet heartfelt repast my mother had made.

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Finally, though it broke our hearts, the time for departure arrived. My brother retied his gaiters, checked the sword in his belt and returned to his squad.

My mother and I headed back by public railway to Shinagawa Station, which was on our way home. We were waiting on the platform in the hope that my brother’s train would pass through the station, when a train full of soldiers pulled in.

My mother dashed from window to window, looking for my brother, but she was unable to find him. Just then, an elderly station attendant, sympathizing with our plight, grabbed a megaphone and began calling in a loud voice: “Is Kiichi Ikeda there? Is Kiichi Ikeda there? Your mother is here to see you.” He walked up and down the platform for us, searching for my brother.

The train was preparing to pull out when one of my brother’s comrades heard the attendant’s call. I think it was a boy from Yamagata who had eaten with us earlier. He rushed to my brother, who was sitting on the other side of the train, and said, “Kiichi, it’s your mother!”

The train had quietly started to move. My brother flew to the window and leaned out to see her.

“Kiichi, Kiichi, take care of yourself!” said my mother as she chased after the accelerating train for several steps. My brother nodded silently and waved his arm vigorously.

My mother and I continued to wave good-bye until the train had completely disappeared from sight.

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In 1941, Kiichi was temporarily discharged and came back to us from China. It was at this time that he said to me, his voice shaking with anger, “The Japanese army is too cruel for words.”

My father said privately to my mother: “We don’t know when they’ll send Kiichi back to the front. He should think about getting married while he has the chance.” He told Kiichi: “As the eldest son, you should choose a wife. What do you say?”

It became a subject of concern among the entire extended family. But in Japan at the time, completely dominated by militarism, a happy marriage was



Japanese soldiers leave home to fight during the war years.

unthinkable. Everyone was taught that the greatest possible honor was to fight and die heroically for the nation.

The next year, Kiichi was called up again. In a letter from the front, he wrote, “As the son of a seaweed farmer [and being used to working in freezing temperatures as a result], I was hoping to be sent to a cold place, but as luck would have it I’ve been sent to tropical Burma!” When I read these words, I feel a pang of pity all over again.

Some time later, Kiichi became a victim of the Imphal Campaign [an abortive Japanese attempt to seize Imphal, in northeastern India, through Burma, during the final stages of World War II]. This is famed as one of Japan’s most ill-conceived military operations. He died in Burma (now Myanmar) in January 1945. He was 29.

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I am against war! I am absolutely opposed to it!

Many of the young men of my generation were incited by the military government to go proudly to the battlefield and give their lives there. The families left behind were praised for their sacrifice as “military mothers” and “families of soldiers at the front”—terms deemed to carry high honor.

But in reality, what a doleful tumult of pain, grief and misery swirled in the depths of their hearts! What deep wounds did the contrived praises and sympathy of others, oblivious to this inner turmoil, inflict on the aching hearts of the mothers and children left behind!

A mother’s love, a mother’s wisdom, is too great to be fooled by such false phrases as

“for the sake of the nation.”

During the war, every season of the year was like winter. Then, finally, when the war ended, a new sun of peace began to rise on the horizon—quiet, yet shining bright and strong.

I heard the emperor’s Aug. 15, 1945, radio announcement of the end of the war at the home of relatives in Magome in Tokyo’s Ota Ward, where we had taken refuge. I was 17. The complex feelings I experienced at that time remain indelibly engraved in the core of my being.

I am absolutely opposed to war. That is one reason why I so highly respect Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, who, imprisoned by the military government, became foremost champions of truth and justice. That is why I readily became a disciple of these great mentors of the Soka Gakkai.

Above all, I am proud to follow in the footsteps of the first and second presidents, who gave their lives selflessly for their faith in Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of eternal peace.

I am determined to fight against anyone who supports or advocates war. I will fight against the dark, demonic forces of destruction!

And I am joined by an impressive force of Buddhas close to 10 million strong, a force that is armed with tremendous strength of spirit and powerfully committed to the cause of achieving genuine lasting peace.

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the May 29 *Seikyo Shim-bun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 27-28

The Soka Gakkai breaks its record for the number of new households to join in one month. 'The members simply could not stand by and watch in silence while their friends suffered and were deadlocked by their problems' — they had to share Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

The next morning, Feb. 21, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Kansai Headquarters Annex in Osaka, which would serve as the No. 2 Kansai Headquarters. He expressed his boundless hopes for the region's great advancement, emphasizing that this day marked the "beginning of the second era of Kansai."

That afternoon, he attended the first Kansai women's division leaders meeting, held at the Amagasaki Municipal Gymnasium in Hyogo Prefecture, adjacent to Osaka. He declared that the Soka Gakkai women's division was the foremost women's organization in all of Japan dedicated to a new vision of women's liberation. And he encouraged them to keep studying and learning, so that they would become leaders not only of the Soka Gakkai but of society.

He emphasized having a firm grasp of the Eastern philosophy of Buddhism, a teaching that elucidates life's ultimate truths, and of sharing it with friends and fellow members in a way that they could easily understand and accept. Furthermore, since Buddhism is manifested in society, Shin'ichi asked the women to turn their gaze to all aspects of society and acquire knowledge on a wide range of subjects by reading top-quality magazines, newspapers and books.

On Feb. 22, Shin'ichi flew to Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands. During the day, he had a look at the new temple in the city of Takamatsu that was scheduled to open in March. In the evening, he delivered a lecture on the "Record

of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" at a joint leaders meeting for Shikoku's three general chapters at the Takamatsu Community Center.

The following day, he took the ferry across the Inland Sea back to the main island of Honshu to visit the Chugoku region. At 2:00 p.m., he attended a joint leaders guidance meeting for Chugoku's three general chapters at the Okayama Civic Hall.

After that, he returned to Tokyo, where the February Headquarters Leaders Meeting was waiting for him on the 27th.

The month's propagation results announced at that meeting set a new Soka Gakkai record — more than 160,000 new households in a month. With total membership in excess of 3 million, the momentum of the Soka Gakkai's drive to realize kosen-rufu knew no bounds.

The members weren't exerting themselves to propagate the Daishonin's teachings because of orders from above. What spurred them on was the conviction they gained through their own experiences of triumphing over hardship based on faith and the pure joy of devoting their lives to the mission of kosen-rufu.

The members simply could not stand by and watch in silence while their friends suffered and were deadlocked by their problems. Filled with a strong desire to help such people become happy, the members couldn't help but tell others about Buddhism.

These efforts brought them greater and greater joy, which in turn gave them increased energy to spread the Mystic Law. Moreover, they could see that



Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

their daily endeavors to share Buddhism with others were steadily changing their society.

The tide of a great new religious movement dedicated to reinvigorating modern society had begun to flow rapidly into the ocean of humanity. Silver waves of hope rippled out to create a dynamic symphony of life.

In March, the Komei-kai parliamentary group planned to hold regional meetings nationwide, starting with Nagoya on the 3rd and moving on to Yokohama, Kita-Kyushu, Kawaguchi, Sapporo and Sendai.

The Komei-kai was formed as an independent parliamentary group after the Upper House election in July 1962. At that time, nine candidates backed by the Komei Political Federation were newly elected, which, along with six previously elected councilors, brought the Federation's total membership in the Upper House to 15. [This fulfilled the minimum requirement of 10 members for establishing such a parliamentary group.]

On Dec. 6, 1962, a National Convention for the Establishment of the Komei-kai was held at the Taito Gymnasium in Tokyo. And on Dec. 16, an Osaka Komei-kai convention was held at the Chuo Civic Hall

in Nakanoshima, Osaka. The regional meetings scheduled for March were to be a continuation of those meetings.

Koichi Harayama, chairperson of the Komei Political Federation and secretary-general of the new Komei-kai, had asked Shin'ichi to speak at the national conventions. As Soka Gakkai president, Shin'ichi had carefully refrained from involving himself in the political organization. While the Soka Gakkai, the Komei Political Federation and the Komei-kai should all share the same fundamental goal of realizing world peace and happiness for humanity, religion and politics ultimately operate on two different dimensions.

At the very least, an appropriate structural distance should be established between the two realms, and each should function independently of the other. Based on such reasoning, Shin'ichi at first decided not to attend the Komei-kai's conventions.

But Harayama tried hard to persuade him. Both the Komei-kai and the Komei Political Federation originally were offshoots of the Soka Gakkai, Harayama pointed out, and Shin'ichi was the founder of both of them. In addition, most of the supporters of these political associations were Soka Gakkai members, so

it would be appropriate for Shin'ichi to appear as a representative of those supporters.

There was truth to Harayama's argument. Furthermore, some Soka Gakkai members still did not have a clear understanding of the relationship between the Soka Gakkai and the two political groups. Some even believed that the purpose of the Komei-kai and Komei Political Federation was to promote policies favorable to the Soka Gakkai.

This was, of course, a terrible misconception. The aim of the Komei-kai was the true happiness and prosperity of all the people of Japan and, on a broader scale, lasting peace for all humanity.

Nationwide local elections, including those at the prefecture level, were coming up in April. Shin'ichi felt that now would be a good time to clarify once again the Soka Gakkai's relationship with the Komei-kai, as well as to promote a correct understanding of that relationship in society. With this in mind, he finally accepted Harayama's invitation to speak at the regional Komei-kai conventions.

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

FROM SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA

Soka University, Soka Spirit, Soka Care

From SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima's speech at the closing session of the Central Executive Conference, June 25.



person is the most important work of all. Soka Care is the basis of all our efforts, of our entire organization.

It is vital that we extend this Soka Care to the 1,000 new members who have joined SGI-USA this year.

As we continue to welcome new members into our family this year, we must reconfirm that the point is not the numbers of people who join. The point is how much we can care for our new friends and how happy they can become. Our primary objective is forever quality, not quantity.

For the next three months, let us also not forget our quarterly focus on publications promotion. When we care for our friends and new members with the desire to share President Ikeda's guidance with them, encouraging them to read the *World Tribune* comes naturally.

Thank you for all your hard work in these areas.

I always start my speeches by asking "Are you happy?" That is because for us, everything starts and ends with the happiness of the members. We conduct our activities as tools to help our members become happy. Based on the happiness in the members' lives, waves of expansion will swell still further.

Let us enjoy the next 300 days toward May 3, 2001! And let us create an everlasting history in the next 300 days! **WT**

Correction: The April 29 Virginia/Carolina Region kickoff (July 7 *World Tribune*, p. 8) was attended by 2,100 members and guests. Congratulations to VCR Region!

SGI President Ikeda is always assuring us that our history is everlasting. SGI-USA is still a small organization, but we will become a great river and a great ocean. Even hundreds and thousands of years later, our struggles and our names will be remembered.

"Like history itself, the lives of those who create history are everlasting," SGI President Ikeda told us in 1990. "All of you have dedicated yourselves over [these past decades] to opening the hitherto untrodden path of kosen-rufu in your respective countries. Each of your names, without exception, will be remembered forever throughout the Latter Day of the Law. And the blessings you accumulate are everlasting, indestructible and inexhaustible" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 26).

The next step in our history will be focusing on three points: Soka University of America, Soka Spirit and what SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck has termed *Soka Care*.

Soka University: President Ikeda has encouraged us recently that SUA will be a treasure of America. For him to establish this school in the United States is indeed our greatest honor. At the same time, it is our tremendous responsibility to support this university by encouraging students to attend it.

Soka Spirit: Educating the American people about the truth of Nichiren Shoshu is the responsibility of each of us. It is important for the leaders of the SGI-USA to take action first in this endeavor.

Soka Care: To care for each



CEC members discuss at the Malibu Training Center the next 10 years of the SGI-USA's activities, June 23.

FROM CEC, 1

core values in American society, raise its next generation of youth and embrace its growing diversity.

As well, goals already set for this year and next were reconfirmed: to reach 30,000 *World Tribune* subscribers by the end of the year; to achieve two new members per district by the end of the year; to have a nation-

wide discussion meeting attendance of at least 70,000 for commemorations of Nov. 18, Day of the Soka Gakkai's Founding; and to gather 100,000 people at zone culture festivals slated for next year.

Whenever we think of the future, General Director Nagashima reminded the CEC, we should not forget the pioneers' efforts that have

brought our organization to this point of prosperity. "When I came to this country, I couldn't speak English," he shared. "But all the American members embraced me and taught me English. I am here thanks to the pioneers. We need to embrace our new members in the same warm way that the pioneers embraced us." **WT**

Summer 2000 Publications Promotion Begins

BY RENU JIANDANI

SGI-USA YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADER

Summer is here! Time to fire up our grill with friends and family to enjoy hearty ribs, chicken and corn on the cob. What makes a barbecue party fun is not only the friendship but also the food.

Likewise, in our kosen-rufu activities, the meat of the matter can be found in our publications. Using the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* in our SGI family gatherings make them much more spiritually fulfilling. With this spirit, let's enjoy our publications promotion drive this summer.

The processing of renewals and new orders, which we were experiencing troubles with early this year, has been improved by moving the entire operation in-house. Now, for the first time in our history, we handle all aspects of the subscriptions at the SGI Plaza in



Santa Monica, Calif. Doing so, without intermediate help

greatly in providing better service to our readership. We thank you for your patience.

We hope that you received extra copies of the May 19 *World Tribune* along with promotion envelopes and order forms. Please feel free to use these materials to encourage and inspire new subscribers to our publications, including your friends and family. If you want additional forms, please don't hesitate to obtain them from your local community center or contact us at the SGI Plaza at 1-800-835-4558.

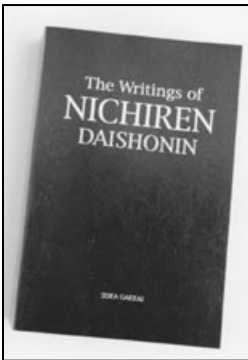
The summer fun has already begun — New York has created a *World Tribune* kiosk and Hawaii has created a *World Tri-*

bune hut in their culture centers. What can you do to join the fun? Please contact your region leaders for details regarding promotion activities in your area. Here are some tips:

- You can include skits, presentations and experiences related to the publications in your SGI meetings.
- You can hold meetings to introduce friends to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and share the publications with them.
- You can have a publications promotion booth or table at festivals, Victory Over Violence activities and other large events.
- You can remember to take subscription envelopes and order forms with you to SGI activities.
- You can give gift subscriptions to friends or family.

Let's unite and have wonderful, creative promotion activities this summer. We thank you in advance for your support. **WT**

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FROM RECORD, 6

used to depict the number 80), tell him: "Hold on! I'm still needed."

At 88 (rice age), tell him, "Just let me eat a little more rice."

At 90 (graduation age), tell him, "Age has no graduation."

At 99 (white age), ask him, "How about waiting until I've reached 100?"

At 108 (tea age), tell him, "I haven't had nearly enough tea to drink."

And at 111 (imperial age), you can say, "Now that I've become the oldest in the land, I am ready to relinquish my position."

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, encountered the Daishonin's Buddhism when he was nearly 60 years old. His description of his feelings on beginning to practice seethes with emotion: "With indescribable joy, I transformed the way I had lived my life for almost 60 years. The anxiety of searching in the dark for life's answers completely evaporated, and my inborn reserve and diffidence disappeared. My goals in life became increasingly grander and loftier, and my fears dissipated."

He could be described as a 60-year-old youth. He was filled with a youthful spirit to challenge things. One philosopher says, "Being old is a wonderful thing as long as one does not forget the true meaning of *beginning*." In accord with these words, President Makiguchi completely transformed his way of life at 60 and embarked on a new journey, beginning his life again.

By the traditional way of counting years in Japan [a person is 1 at birth], the calendar return comes at age 59. It was at this age that Mr. Makiguchi founded the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), forerunner of the Soka Gakkai. From that point forward, he gave his life to spreading the true Law under the banner of Soka. Courageously enduring persecution at the hands of Japan's militarist government, he died in prison at 73. The heart and soul of the Soka Gakkai were forged through the life-or-death struggles of President Makiguchi and President Toda in their final years.

The newspaper *Value Creation* was founded in 1941 when President Makiguchi was 70. During the next two years, he attended more than 240 discussion meetings. Mr. Toda says of the state of affairs prior to President Makiguchi's arrest, "If I would meet Mr. Makiguchi

after not seeing him for three months, I would find that he had grown spiritually in like measure." Mr. Makiguchi was truly getting younger, just as the Daishonin promises ["You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (WND, 464)].

I recall the faces of the intellectuals I have met who carried out dynamic activities well into their 90s. There was Dr. Bishambhar Nath Pande of India, a direct disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, at age 91; Austregésilo de Athayde, the Brazilian champion of human rights and former president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, at 94; and the American scientist Dr. Linus Pauling, recipient of two Nobel Prizes, at 94. They all led dauntless lives of incredible struggle.

The Chinese writer and journalist Ba Jin has also continued to work tirelessly into his 90s. He says, "I set fire to my pen and ignite my life." And John Kenneth Galbraith, the world-renowned economist and professor emeritus of Harvard University, now in his 90s is working on a new book and remains hale and hearty. His statement "I believe people should learn more and more as they grow older" impressed me. Former President Joaquin Balaguer of the Dominican Republic, the "Jewel of the Caribbean," last September turned 92. Even so, he continues to burn with the great, selfless passion of a young man.

Religion exists precisely to help people live valiantly.

From its inception, Buddhism has focused on the fundamental issue of life and death, and pursued the question of how to lead a fulfilled, meaningful existence. It could be said that the prime motivation of all world religions is to find an answer to the question of how to live in light of the reality of death. Religion exists precisely to help people live valiantly, embracing high aspirations and burning with ideals until the moment of death.

About a year ago, there was a documentary on Japanese television featuring the life of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. One scene involved a village near the city of Chittagong, Bangladesh. This village has in a sense "preserved" the practice of Buddhism as it was in Shakyamuni's day, more than 2,000 years ago. In this scene, an old woman is on her deathbed. A family member goes to summon a monk and returns with him. The monk says

to the relatives and friends gathered, "Let us recount all the good things that this woman has done, so that we may all know them and keep them in our memory." Each person then relates fond memories of the grandmother, one after another recalling how she helped or encouraged them. The monk was not called after she died.

Originally, Shakyamuni devoted himself only to the living. After his death, Shakyamuni's non-lay disciples abided by their mentor's instructions to continue their practice without involving themselves in funerals, and so they did not have a direct hand in conducting ceremonies for the deceased.

Incidentally, after the documentary was aired, a university professor who had been involved in the show's production contacted a Soka Gakkai member with whom he studied in graduate school. He told the member: "The more I learn about the Buddha, the more I am convinced of the Soka Gakkai's correctness. I want to see the Soka Gakkai succeed in its endeavors. The Buddha is surely delighted by your efforts."

Buddhism exists to enable people to live fulfilling, satisfying lives until the very end. After reaching Japan, however, this religion of life gradually devolved into funeral Buddhism.

Surplices and the like seem to have become ceremonial accessories of funeral Buddhism. But the word *surplice* (Jpn *kesa*) actually comes from the Sanskrit term *kashaya*, which was transliterated in China as *jiasha*. *Kashaya* literally means dirty cloth. It refers to the coarse garments worn in the time of Shakyamuni by those known as *chandala*, the class of people subjected to the most severe discrimination.

Declaring himself the "son of a chandala family" (WND, 202), the Daishonin waged an ongoing struggle to lead people to enlightenment. The young Shakyamuni also discarded his princely robes and clad himself in these garments of the poor. In other words, surplices are a symbol of living together with and sharing the sufferings of society's poor and unfortunate. They were certainly not intended as, nor should they become, a sign of clerical authority.

Eight in a series

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The *World Tribune* welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

AROUND THE SGI-USA

Princeton District Joins Community Festival

By STEPHANIE NATKINS
PRINCETON, N.J., CORRESPONDENT

Wet pavement, soggy turf, gray skies, and a sea of umbrellas were the order of the day at this year's Communiversality events on April 15. Communiversality, an annual street fair and international festival jointly sponsored by Princeton University and the town of Princeton, N.J., was a truly festive affair in spite of gray skies, wet pavement and soggy turf. Exotic foods, exhibits of international dance and culture, face painting, craft making, rides and games filled the campus and streets adjacent to the University. In addition, an abundance of exhibits of a more serious nature were presented by student and community organizations.

An exhibit with the theme, "One Person Can Make a Difference" was based upon the SGI-USA youth division's Victory Over Violence project. Skye Flusser, a member of Princeton District and a sophomore at Princeton University, spearheaded SGI-USA's first-time participation in the event. With their collective determination, the young members succeeded in completing the entire presentation in one week's time. Art student Joslyn Leslie worked long hours to complete the "Quest for Peace" poster. Others helped to create the "One Person Can Make a Difference" signboard; they collected brochures and publications for display, and organized the staging of the exhibit.

Scores of passersby who visited the SGI exhibit learned



Despite rainy skies, Joslyn Leslie (left) and Takako Sze prepare the 'Quest for Peace' poster for the exhibit.

about its philosophy of constructive humanism and the efforts that the SGI is making for world peace. They were encouraged to contribute to the exhibit by creating a handprint that was placed on the "Quest for Peace" poster. On each handprint they wrote their

thoughts on how they could contribute to a peaceful and constructive society.

Both the members involved and the people they talked with were encouraged by their participation in Communiversality. Reflecting on her experience, Takako Sze, said, "I think the



SGI-USA member and Princeton University sophomore Skye Flusser (right) discusses the SGI's movement with a fellow student.

district youth division members have been really waiting for this kind of activity. Skye's strong determination gave us the spark to work together and to express our unique capabilities. Talking with everyone, I really felt that so many people are looking for this Buddhism. Success is all

up to the action we take."

Joslyn, who had put in much behind-the-scenes effort towards Communiversality, remarked, "I felt like I was part of something beautiful here at Communiversality because of everyone's sincere and undaunted spirit." WT

Boise Members Welcome Matilda Buck

By MIKE HYATT AND BETSY COOK
BOISE, ID., CORRESPONDENTS

More than 60 enthusiastic Idaho Chapter members and their guests, some having traveled longer than six hours, gathered June 3 in Boise to welcome SGI-USA Women's Leader

Matilda Buck to their World Peace Prayer Meeting.

Following the recitation of gongyo, young women sang an upbeat song composed the night before at their youth meeting. Two members from Idaho Falls played an acoustic guitar duet, followed by a Taiko drum performance. Personal



June Sailor plays a Taiko drum at the Idaho Chapter World Peace Prayer Meeting, June 3.

experiences and a presentation on the history of kosen-rufu efforts in Idaho followed these dynamic performances.

After the meeting, everyone

enjoyed refreshments and informal dialogue. During a Q-and-A session with Mrs. Buck, she commented on how encouraging it was to see so

many mothers and daughters practicing together. Having never visited the area before, she said, "I now have my own private Idaho." WT



Women of Idaho Chapter pose for a group photo with Matilda Buck (center), June 3.

Photos by EARL COOK