



EXPERIENCE:

Jim Johannsen shares his story about the premature birth of his son.

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Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401 and at additional mailing offices
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SGI-USA Subscribers, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907

No. 3310

\$2.00

SEPTEMBER 8, 2000

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JULY 18 SPEECH—PART 2

Buddhism Is Dialogue

'The eternal, unchanging spirit of Buddhism is dialogue,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Handing directives down from above is not dialogue. Rather, dialogue arises when we open our hearts to one another, walk together on life's path and work together.'

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 48th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, July 18.

Saion was a great Okinawan philosopher-statesman who, in the 18th century, built the foundation for the golden age of the Ryukyu Kingdom, present-day Okinawa. He is one of the most respected figures in Okinawan history, and I

have talked about him before in one of my speeches.

A person of remarkable insight into human thought and behavior, Saion told a story about an encounter between a boy and an old man, a story of advice and encouragement.



At the 48th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, July 18, SGI President Ikeda encourages SGI members who have contributed to their respective communities.

The young Okinawan lad in Saion's story proudly told the old man: "I have a sword that has been handed down in my family for generations. I polish it every day, never missing

a single one!" The old man then asked, "Do you have any treasure other than the sword?" The young man replied, "No, I don't."

The old man continued qui-

etly: "That sword is just a small treasure. You have the most wonderful treasure of all: you yourself."

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 4

Florida Youth Ignite 'Beacon of Hope'

By JIM DREIBACH
FLORIDA BUREAU CHIEF

Photo by LINDA ST. HILAIRE

If you were worried about the future, don't be. It's in good hands. That was the clear and vibrant message that reverberated from the 134 young performers who danced, sang, played and acted during the Florida Youth Culture Festival on Aug. 5 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

The lights of the Friendship Auditorium dimmed as the Florida Youth Music Group powered their instruments. Together, they set the nearly 1,000 spectators to grooving in their seats in anticipation of what their children, brothers, sisters—the young from all corners of the state—were about to present.

What those who had supported them had witnessed was



A colorful finale at the Florida Youth Culture Festival, Aug. 5.

the transformation of these young people, in their various stages of growth in life—many with just fledgling faith—come together to gain a sense of commitment and community.

"The Power of Youth, Beacon of Hope for Humanity" was the festival's theme. This became the guideline that brought the performances together.

"The youth basically wrote

See pictorial
on pages 6-7

the script themselves," explained Indira Jattan, one of the festival's main producers. "What you see in the festival are issues they are struggling with daily and about which they have strong opinions."

The issues were expressed in nighttime street scenes. Tampa youth began the show, establishing a steadily building cadence by a "Stomp"-styled street drumming performance that accompanied a dance group. The dancers ended their performance by expressing their frustrations at being young today. "I am angry," one called. "I am depressed," another shouted, until they painted a montage of their struggles. Their segment ended

with a call to fight their enemy—violence—by seeking their goal, peace.

Youth from South Florida and Orlando used drama to depict the common elements of violence and identify its root cause. Gathering on the stage in tight knots, illustrating cliques as if straight from high school, the performers demonstrated different ways of approaching life, from vanity to vandalism to class distinction.

Gang warfare broke out across the stage as rivals fought for respect measured by spray paint tags. Violence came home in the form of child abuse and in school as sexism. Finally, it came to consciousness as a single teen had to determine if his own struggle for respect

PLEASE SEE YOUTH FESTIVAL, 6

THE MEANING OF 'SHAKUBUKU'

Back to the Basics

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In SGI-USA, the word *shakubuku* is often used to mean propagation. There is one important factor that we should keep in mind regarding this strong Buddhist term, which literally means to break and subdue. Namely, it is to remember that the real meaning of *break and subdue* is to help others break their attachments to

narrow views of their lives and help them to reveal their inherent Buddhahood, thus subduing their fundamental darkness.

Shakubuku is part of what this Buddhism calls practice for oneself and others. Practice for oneself means the chanting of daimoku, the reciting of the sutra and the offering of prayers—in other words, gongyo. Practice for others, *shakubuku*, means helping our friends realize that they innately possess the greatest life-condition of Buddhahood.

Taken literally, *shakubuku* is a harsh word. But Nichiren Daishonin uses it because of his conviction in the supreme power

of the Mystic Law and the potential of Buddhahood in each person. He encourages us, too, to “practice only the shakubuku method of propagation, and if one has the capacity, use one’s influence and authority to destroy slander of the correct teaching, and one’s knowledge of the teachings to refute erroneous doctrines” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 127).

In the end, *shakubuku* comes down to heartfelt dialogue. To “use one’s influence and authority” really means to become people who others want to discuss their sufferings with. As SGI President Ikeda says in this week’s issue: “One’s voice does

the Buddha’s work’ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). How important it is that we talk with others, that we engage in dialogue! Armed with patience and wearing the ‘robe of gentleness and forbearance’ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 971), let us make a point of always speaking to others with bright, vibrant voices. Let us hold warm dialogues, happy dialogues. Let us hold dialogues that inspire and encourage. Let us hold dialogues brimming with philosophy. Such dialogues are what pave the way to a truly humane world. And let us work hard to link those dialogues to the ongoing victory of our movement” (p. 4). **W**

World
TRIBUNE The
SGI-USA's
Weekly
Newspaper

The *World Tribune* (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907; (310) 260-8900; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org SGIUSBS@aol.com

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The Right Time

EDITORIAL

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Looking toward the second seven bells—the SGI’s new history in the 21st century—Jeff Farr asks, ‘Aren’t we fortunate to be practicing Buddhism in the SGI right now, to be alive when the time is so right?’

That bell is not an evening bell, but the bell of dawn.

—SGI President Ikeda, “Soar—Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!”

It is a big relief in chapter 11 of *The Untold History of the Fuji School* when the Soka Gakkai finally appears. After centuries of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism being cooped up with a small group of priests at the head temple, the common people, represented by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, ride in to save the day. They rescue this philosophy and deliver it to the world.

Showing up seven centuries after the Daishonin’s time, the Soka Gakkai has always had a mystic rhythm to its history. In

this vein, second Soka Gakkai president Toda used to say, “The Gakkai should advance a major step every seven years.” He used the analogy of ringing a bell: “Let’s sound a bell every seven years to mark our progress toward kosen-rufu. Let’s aim to strike seven bells!” (February 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 42).

Looking toward the future, SGI President Ikeda expanded on this idea in a speech a month after Toda’s death. At the May 3, 1958, general meeting, he shared how our organization’s history could be divided into “seven bells”—seven seven-year periods from 1930–79. From today’s vantage point, it is clear how the Soka Gakkai did “sound a bell every seven years,” as Toda envisioned:

• **1930–37:** Makiguchi and Toda began the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creation Education Society) on Nov. 18, 1930, by publishing the first volume of *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. The initial period of our movement, the early years of Makiguchi and Toda’s Buddhist practice, closed in 1937 with the official inauguration of the organization and the launch of steady propagation efforts.

• **1937–44:** The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai grew to a membership of 3,000, mostly educators. In 1943, first president Makiguchi stood up to the priesthood to protect this Buddhism’s integrity, while the

Nichiren Shoshu priests complied with the military government in accepting State Shinto. Makiguchi was thus arrested and met his death in prison on Nov. 18, 1944—exactly 14 years after the organization was founded.

• **1944–51:** During these postwar years, Toda followed in Makiguchi’s steps to rebuild the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, which had fallen apart, as the Soka Gakkai (Value-Creation Society). On May 3, 1951, seven years after Makiguchi’s death, with the organization back to its prewar size, Toda accepted the presidency.

• **1951–58:** At his inauguration, Toda determined to increase the membership to 750,000. This is the point where kosen-rufu started to spread at a rapid pace. Toda accomplished his goal at the end of 1957, shortly before his death. The Soka Gakkai’s future course was set with his 1957 call to youth to abolish nuclear weapons and the March 16, 1958, ceremony at which he turned his responsibilities over to young Daisaku Ikeda and the youth division.

• **1958–65:** President Ikeda took leadership as third president in 1960, the same year he started his travels for kosen-rufu outside Japan, with the United States as his first destination. The Soka Gakkai surpassed a membership of 3 million, President Ikeda’s target for the seventh memorial (sixth anniversary) of Toda’s death.

• **1965–72:** The Soka Gakkai focused on the completion of the Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo) at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple to support the burgeoning worldwide movement. While he led the Soka Gakkai to a membership of 7.5 million, 10 times Toda’s 1951 determination, President Ikeda saw to the completion of the Soka University campus in Japan to actualize the ideals set forth in *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*.

• **1972–79:** The international movement started to come together, leading to the formation of the SGI on Guam in 1975, with representatives from 51 nations in attendance. Various anti-Soka Gakkai parties incited a conflict between the priesthood and the organization in the late 1970s, ending in President Ikeda, resolved to do whatever it took to protect the membership, stepping down as Soka Gakkai president.

This 49-year history takes the Soka Gakkai from its birth, through its transformation into an international movement, to a crucial moment that tested its spiritual identity. The appearance of strong anti-Soka Gakkai forces signified that the SGI was in accord with the Lotus Sutra’s teaching that enemies of the Buddha must appear if the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are correctly spreading the teachings. This was the opportunity, then, for the SGI to prove it was a gathering of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thanks to President Ikeda’s resilient leadership at the time—reminding us that the organization’s core mission was to save and serve the common people—the SGI stayed

the course, survived the dispute and started moving straight toward the 21st century with a solidified sense of purpose.

On May 3, 1966, President Ikeda had first shared his vision of a second set of seven bells—a new history for the Soka Gakkai beginning in 2001. On Nov. 18, 1978, when the “first temple issue” was coming to a head, President Ikeda announced a series of four five-year plans to cover 1980–2000, the years between the first and second seven bells. Here is how the five-year periods have played out:

• **1980–85:** Coming out of the conflict, President Ikeda decided to strengthen the SGI by developing more capable leaders, particularly youth leaders. A new generation, many who grew up in the organization, began propelling the spread of this Buddhism. Inspired by the 1975 formation of the SGI, organizations in many countries became much stronger and larger.

• **1985–90:** Toward the 700th anniversary of the head temple in 1990, the SGI donated more than 100 temples to the priesthood, hoping that, despite the difficulties in the late ’70s, Nichiren Shoshu would continue supporting the kosen-rufu movement. At the same time, the SGI became increasingly involved in peace activities, including efforts for nuclear disarmament and refugee relief, often in concert with the United Nations. President Ikeda opened the first Soka University of America campus in Calabasas, Calif., in 1987, which became an

PLEASE SEE SEVEN BELLS, 5

EXPERIENCE—JIM JOHANNSEN, ARVADA, COLO.

Special Delivery

Due to the loving support and prayers of his fellow SGI-USA members, Jim Johannsen says, 'Our son Garrett's birth was an incontrovertible victory.'

March 29 started out like any other day—with my Buddhist prayers and a drive through Denver rush-hour traffic to work. Just before lunch, I received a call from my wife, Janet. She went to our midwife's office because she noticed a significant change in the baby's movement in her 32nd week of pregnancy ("normal" term is 40 weeks). When the first words she said were, "I hope you're ready," I knew there was a serious problem.

Apparently the baby was in position to be born—two months too early. On the phone she said, "Gloria (our midwife) wants us to focus our minds on April 12 as the birth date, and get to the hospital as soon as possible." Even Gloria herself had felt that labor would start at any moment, but would be thrilled if we could make it to April 12.

I told my co-workers about the situation, and after wrapping a few things up, I headed for home. I chanted *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* all the way, my only thought being: "We have to win!"

My wife and I packed a few things and headed for the hospital along with our 4-year-old son, Gregory. Thus began the most intense experience in my 26 years of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

As medical professionals often do, when we checked Janet into the hospital, our doctor and midwife painted the worst-case scenario for us. The baby would not be able to breathe on its own, and would require an extensive stay in ICU. Hopefully its brain function would not be too seriously impaired. Dazed and in shock, I could only chant under my breath for victory.

Janet was given a steroid shot to accelerate development of

the baby's lungs. This would take 24 hours to take effect.

Gregory and I went home, and after putting him to bed, I sent out e-mails to fellow members asking them to chant for us.

I had to drop everything at work in order to care for Gregory. He had been staying at home with Janet, and we did not have time to make arrangements for his care, so that was up to me.

On March 31, a test was done to detect the presence of amniotic fluid—to see if there was any leakage that would indicate a break in the bag of waters enclosing the baby. A trace of this fluid was found. The medical staff was predicting a birth within 24 hours, and advising us to be ready for the possibility of a lengthy stay in ICU for the baby. When I got back home, I e-mailed again, asking for people to chant for us.

Janet was chanting several hours a day in the hospital. I knew that my own prayers for victory were critical, but the demands on my time were such that I could chant very little. As such, I was quite stressed out because I was on-call 24 hours a day in case the baby was born; taking care of my son and running back and forth to the hospital; and the medical staff painted a very bleak situation.

I also was battling chronic insomnia that had plagued me for the past two years, and this situation certainly didn't make it any easier to sleep—constantly waiting for the phone call from the hospital telling me a birth was under way. Janet was calm and confident—I was a wreck. Gregory was having quite a hard time too, only being able to see his mother for a couple hours each day when we went to the hospital. He had never been away from her for more than a couple days at a time before.

I still kept chanting as much as I was able, anywhere I was, with the thought "we have to win" and e-mailing progress reports to a growing list of family, friends and fellow members around the world.

We received many encouraging responses in return. For every member who wrote, I know there were many more behind the scenes who were chanting for us. We could feel the prayers that people were chanting for us as if it were a



Jim Johannsen, with his wife, Janet, and two sons, Gregory, 4, and Garrett, 2 months.

physical force. I felt a lot more chanting was necessary than I was able to do. I believe their prayers really kept me together and re-emphasized the value of the SGI organization. Everyone was willing to help chant.

The peri-natal unit at Rose Medical Center, where my wife's room was, is reached through a hallway off the rest of the maternity floor. This is a unit for high-risk pregnancies. In that hallway hang pictures of babies who were successful survivors of premature birth and other high-risk factors—some as early as 23 weeks. They call it the Hall of Hope, and I walked down it every day chanting inside for all of the people in desperate situations there. This unit was full to overflowing the entire time Janet was there.

The hospital staff was great. We were indeed fortunate to have so many talented and caring people looking after us.

Janet was in a high-risk situation because the bag of waters was broken. With each day, the risk of infection and contamination of the amniotic fluid increased. At the same time, each day that the baby gained inside the womb was priceless to its development.

Janet had been given antibiotics to minimize the risk of infection.

On April 3, an amniocentesis was conducted to determine whether any infection was present. The following day, the results of the test showed no infection, and further showed that the baby's lungs were developed so that it could breathe on its own. An ultrasound conducted at the same time approximated the baby's weight at 5 pounds! The doctors and the insurance company were pushing for immediate inducement

of labor, but we continued to chant for the baby to be born at exactly the right time.

More days passed, and the pressure put on us to induce grew. We knew that the insurance company at some point would draw the line and say things had to proceed. Our midwife, who was well aware of our Buddhist practice, supported us and kept saying that ultimately it was our decision.

We couldn't delay indefinitely. In addition to concern for the baby's health, I was on leave from work—my co-workers were very supportive and told me they would take care of everything at work. Even so, I am in a commission-only position, and if I don't work, I don't get paid. Most of the deals I put together in the commercial mortgage business take quite a while to come to fruition, so I was set back quite a bit.

We continued to chant, usually doing evening prayers together in Janet's room (we later found out that the nurses loved the sound of our chanting and would turn on the room monitor when we were doing it and listen at the nurses' station).

We knew that the risk of infection was increasing greatly with each day that passed, so we gave the go-ahead to the midwife to schedule a time for natural labor induction. When we looked at the calendar, we realized the date was April 12! We had little expectation at the start that we would make it this far—only a desperate hope and prayer. I used the following passages from Nichiren Daishonin's writings to keep my spirits high: "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle? ... Muster your faith, and pray

to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412).

Labor was induced and the baby was born—a son—Garrett James Johannsen, 6 pounds, 12 ounces! The ICU people were hovering and checked the baby out within seconds after he was born, and gave him a clean bill of health! His APGAR score (a method of judging a baby's health based on skin tone, breathing, and responsiveness) was 8–9, as good as it gets in our mile-high altitude!

Our son Garrett's safe and healthy delivery was an incontrovertible victory for our family. He came home with us two days later, and now at 4 months old shows no adverse effects from his early start. He's also the happiest baby I've ever seen!

I'd like to thank everyone who prayed for us and encouraged and helped us throughout this ordeal—this is *your* victory as well. To anyone who might be in a similar situation, never give up hope. You will be victorious as long as you keep chanting and trusting the power of your practice.

As a final note, our midwife was so impressed with the whole situation that she has decided to start chanting! A card she sent us after the birth said: "In all my 17 years of practice as a midwife never before have I come away from a birth and felt that a little part of me was being born—until now. You are directing me to use the 'Buddha spirit' within me." **WT**

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FROM SPEECH, I

The old man's inference was "Why don't you polish the treasure that is your life?" The boy was deeply moved by the old man's words and grateful for this important lesson.

This story resonates with the Buddhist teachings. We must always come back to our original point of departure, to us and to life itself. To live with dignity and reveal the full shining potential of our humanity—nothing surpasses this. Only by so doing can we find true happiness, peace and coexistence with the natural world. This should also be the true purpose of all scientific and technological advances.

As we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, the human race must reconfirm this fundamental truth. It is time we return to the starting point of the human being.

In this regard, Okinawa shines with the philosophy that life itself is a treasure. Respect for life is also the foundation of humanistic education.

Because life is precious, taking human life and committing war are absolutely wrong. This is a simple but fundamental principle, one that we must pass on rigorously to the next generation, the generation that will shape the 21st century.

Aside from that sacred principle, I think our best course is to educate and encourage our young people with warmth and

broad-mindedness, so that they have sufficient freedom and room to grow and develop their potential.

The information revolution has led to a dire shortage of real dialogue.

One of the major topics of discussion for the Okinawa Summit is the information technology revolution. I have discussed this subject in the past with the world-renowned economist Dr. Lester C. Thurow and more recently with a group of Japanese business leaders here in Tokyo. The dynamic information revolution, perhaps best symbolized by the Internet, has opened the way for large numbers of people to have access to information that had previously been available only to a select few. What will be increasingly needed henceforth is the wisdom to use that information and knowledge to promote peace and the happiness of all humankind.

I also took up the subject of the information revolution in one of my discussions with the noted Iranian-born peace scholar Dr. Majid Tehrani. Dr. Tehrani, who is also an authority on international communications, points out that the new world we are living in has, in spite of its greatly increased channels of communication, a dire shortage of real dialogue. The world is connected, but no real dialogue is taking place, he says. I could not agree more.

Although technical advances have rapidly narrowed physical distances, our hearts remain far apart. Alienation continues to be a persistent, acute problem. That is why our increasingly information-oriented society will need leaders who are committed to humanism and will pursue life-to-life dialogue, demonstrating character and integrity. Dr. Tehrani and I were in complete agreement on this score.

Dr. Tehrani goes on to cite the SGI's promotion of discussion meetings and dialogue as an ideal model for such inspirational life-to-life communication. Says the peace scholar: "I highly value the role of such voluntary associations as the SGI, who promote small group meetings and discussions among the membership and their associates. At the level of modern states and corporations, abstraction, impersonality, greed and aggression tend to predominate."

As the information technology revolution continues to advance, it is only natural that one-on-one dialogue, where genuine life-to-life communication takes place, will be increasingly crucial for healthy individual and social development.

Intellectual leaders around the globe are beginning to take note that the SGI is leading the way in creating that kind of world and in contributing to the development of a new global civilization.

Shakyamuni Buddha spent his life walking all over the land that today is India, engaging in one-on-one dialogue with all kinds of people. Nichiren Daishonin's treatise "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" is also written in the form of a dialogue.

The eternal, unchanging spirit of Buddhism is dialogue. Handing directives down from above is not dialogue. Rather, dialogue arises when we open our hearts to one another, walk together on life's path and work together.

During the war, as the militarist authorities closed their dark net around him, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi continued his propagation activities and his dialogues to convey the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism to the very end. He was arrested in Shimoda on the Izu Peninsula having made the long journey there from Tokyo in order to meet and talk on an individual basis with people there.

"One's voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). How important it is that we talk with others, that we engage in dialogue! Armed with patience and wearing the "robe of gentleness and forbearance" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 971), let us make a point of always speaking to others with bright, vibrant voices. Let us hold warm dialogues, happy dialogues. Let us hold dialogues that inspire and encourage. Let us

hold dialogues brimming with philosophy. Such dialogues are what pave the way to a truly humane world. And let us work hard to link those dialogues to the ongoing victory of our movement.

Truth is found in the practice, not in the theory.

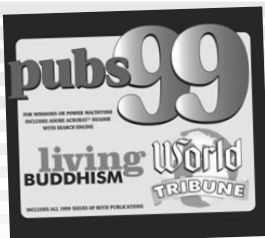
Last autumn, the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century published a collection of papers under the title *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace*, which has attracted considerable attention across the United States. I contributed a paper, "The SGI's Peace Movement," to the collection. The book is now being used in classrooms at the University of Hawaii and three other American universities, and it has been well received by university students.

In the United States, people are pretty straightforward in their judgments: They are not afraid to come out and say what they think is right and wrong or good and bad. In Japan, on the other hand, people tend to be envious of any real achievement, a common manifestation of their narrow-minded island mentality.

BRC President Masao Yokota interviewed Dr. Donna Giancola, associate professor of philosophy and director of the Religious Studies Program

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 5

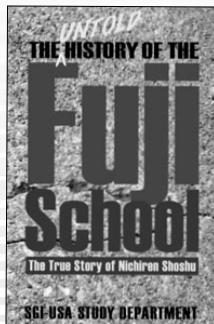
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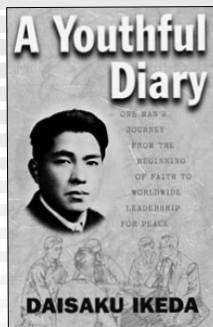
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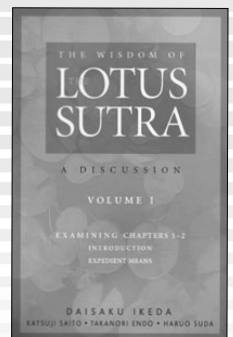
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FROM SPEECH, 4

at Suffolk University in Boston, who is using *Buddhist Peace-work* in one of her courses. Dr. Giancola says that many world religions today have no real practice. She feels that practice is a crucial component of religious faith, adding that the truth is found in the practice, not in the theory. This is why she views the SGI's activities with great interest.

She also has something to say about the SGI's discussion meetings. By participating in such meetings, she says, individuals learn they are not the only ones who are suffering, and that other people have overcome their suffering. Discussion meetings not only provide an opportunity for people to come together but offer a source of inspiration and mutual trust, because everyone chants and practices the Daishonin's Buddhism and is working toward being a better human being, she says.

She describes the SGI members she has met as "honest, authentic people," saying that such people are a rarity in today's world. She adds that while many other religions try to build a sense of community among their members like that which the SGI enjoys, so many of them do not succeed. She says she found it amazing the way the SGI's practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism has taken off, especially in this past century, noting that it has flourished and spread all over the world.

Revitalization and genuine hope are found in the practice of the SGI. The thoughts I have just introduced are an example of the praise that people around the globe are showering on our

movement. I am certain, too, that later generations will say that the SGI movement is a great religious revolution that inspires all humanity and revitalizes people all over the world.

Prayer can fundamentally transform your life.

Let me share words of wisdom from some of the great thinkers of the world that might serve to spur our advance. Thomas Paine, whose work greatly influenced the American Revolution, writes in his famous treatise *Common Sense*, "It is not in numbers but in unity, that our great strength lies."

Unity is strength. In the realm of faith, people who cannot join hands and cooperate with others undermine the harmonious unity of the community of believers. This is the most serious of offenses. Consequently, those who cause such disharmony will experience no benefit.

The German poet and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes in *Faust*, "With little men go little acts, / Among the great a small one grows." We must take on big challenges. That is why I hope you will not seek to accumulate petty, minor benefit but great benefit. I hope you will not restrict your focus to this little island-country of Japan, but allow your gaze to encompass the great wide world.

Mahatma Gandhi says, "Those who will not do it, although they appreciate the truth, will deserve to be called cowards." We must act on what we know to be right and true. We know the importance of discussion meetings, gongyo and the struggle for kosen-rufu. If we fail to carry them out, we

are cowards. Gandhi also says that there is no greater crime than cowardice.

Let me introduce another remark by Thomas Paine. "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." Today, the world is our arena—the world is the stage upon which kosen-rufu is unfolding.

Abraham Lincoln says: "Let none falter, who thinks he is right, and we may succeed." "I am a slow walker, but I never walk back." We must stick to our ideals to the end. Let us say, for example, that you have a friend who just does not seem willing to accept Buddhism. He attended a discussion meeting with you, but he does not want to practice. That is fine. What matters is that you keep moving forward in your practice, letting nothing set you back.

Then, I always keep a copy of Ralph Waldo Emerson's collected works close to my desk. Mr. Makiguchi and second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda were both fond of the American writer. Emerson writes in "Spiritual Laws," "Never was a sincere word utterly lost." Sincere words, words filled with conviction—they are the key to victory. We do not need to exaggerate, plot or scheme.

Finally, let me share more words by Lincoln: "We proposed to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier together." "For all to become happy together!"—let us advance with this spirit.

And let us meet again next month, in victory. I pray for your health and long life and for your success in all endeavors. I am sending you daimoku.

I hope you will all pray, too.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The Secret to Human Revolution

From This Speech:

Pray that instead of devils or negative, destructive forces infiltrating your being, Brahma (Jpn Bonten), Shakra (Jpn Taishaku) and the gods of the Sun and the Moon—the positive, protective forces of the universe—will enter your life! Pray that they will enter the lives of all members in your region and the entire membership of the SGI, as well. If you do this, your strength will multiply a hundredfold, a thousandfold. With such prayer, with such faith, you will realize a fundamental transformation in the very depths of your life. This is the secret to achieving your human revolution.

- 1) What do you think SGI President Ikeda means by saying we should pray for protective forces to enter our lives? Where do these protective forces come from?
- 2) Why do you think he asks us to pray that they will enter our friends' lives?
- 3) If we do this, our strength can multiply a thousand times, he says. In what ways do you want to become a stronger person?
- 4) Have you ever experienced your prayer fundamentally transforming your life? How did that happen?

Pray that instead of devils or negative, destructive forces infiltrating your being, Brahma (Jpn Bonten), Shakra (Jpn Taishaku) and the gods of the Sun and the Moon—the positive, protective forces of the universe—will enter your life! Pray that they will enter the lives of all members in your region and the entire membership of the SGI, as well. If you do this, your strength will multiply a hundredfold, a thousandfold. With such prayer, with such faith, you will realize a fundamental transformation in the very depths of your life. This is the secret to achieving your human revolution.

In one of his commentaries, 26th high priest Nichikan writes that the Daishonin's life manifests itself in our lives. [In his "Commentary on 'The Entity of the Mystic Law,'" Nichikan states, "Through the power of the Mystic Law, we manifest the life of the Daishonin within ourselves."]

This is the ultimate truth of faith in the Mystic Law. Nichikan says that the life of the Daishonin manifests itself in the life of each of us. That is why we will never be defeated. Let us move forward with this invincible conviction.

Thank you for being here today. **W**

FROM SEVEN BELLS, 2

international graduate school for Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

• **1990-95:** The intent for these five years was to get everything squared away for the SGI's activities in the new century. Fortunately, Nichiren Shoshu's attacks on the SGI, which peaked with the excommunication of all SGI members in 1991, freed us from the priests' authoritarian attempts to control our activities.

• **1995-2000:** While the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood destroyed the Grand Main Temple, the SGI spread its movement to 163 countries. Throughout the world, the new

generation raised by the pioneers became the central figures of the movement, in turn working to raise the next generation, which will take the lead in the second seven bells. Interfaith activities became a crucial part of the SGI's ongoing peace activities. The construction of the Soka University of America campus in Orange County, Calif., to be an international liberal arts college, was undertaken.

Which brings us to today. Here we are, standing on a mountain of SGI history—and a mountain of prayer. Behind the scenes, every step of the way, has been the rhythm of

Nam-myoho-rence-kyo; the members' sincere prayers to progress kosen-rufu are what have made the Soka Gakkai's history so impressive.

President Ikeda has explained that the five-year periods and the first seven bells represent Nam-myoho-rence-kyo—the five or seven Chinese characters that make it up (the five being *myo*, *ho*, *ren*, *ge* and *kyo*, and the seven being these plus *nam*, made up of two characters). (Likewise, High Priest Nichijun, regarding Toda's goal of 750,000, once said, "I believe President Toda called forth these people in the number of 750,000, representing the five or seven characters of Myoho-rence-kyo.")

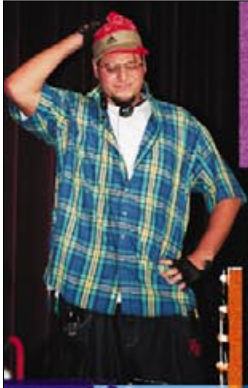
The first seven bells and the five-year periods also express the oneness of mentor and disciple, which is based on Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. As President Ikeda told Kansai Senior High School students during a February Q-and-A session: "My mentor and I are linked together by the rhythm of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. And that is why I must realize his dreams and ideals, why I must keep exerting myself" (April 7 *World Tribune*, p. 4).

Our prayers for kosen-rufu, too, can link us with the SGI's history and the spirit of the three presidents. And our prayers can create the SGI's future. The second seven bells are, after all, up to us. Aren't

we fortunate to be practicing Buddhism in the SGI right now, to be alive when the time is so right? "From a mundane view, I am the poorest person in Japan," the Daishonin writes, "but in light of Buddhism, I am the wealthiest person in all Jambudvipa [the entire world]. When I consider that this is all because the time is right, I am overwhelmed with joy and cannot restrain my tears" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 977).

Who are the luckiest people in the world today? We are. The second seven bells are about to ring—history is about to be made—and we are here not only as witnesses to the dawn of a new era but as the creators of it. **W**

Florida Youth C



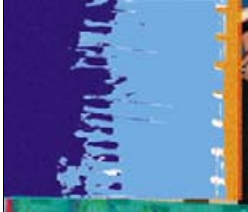
through establishing a tag in the neighborhood gang is more important than keeping peace. It took an entire courtroom—dubbed “The People’s Court”—to help him decide.

Should a girl be able to play basketball in competition with the boys, or is keeping her apart sexist? Jacksonville youth challenged this issue with a basketball scene where a girl wanted to be judged on her talents, not her gender. As she prepared to take a shot in a pickup game, some 70 members of the Boys and Girls Group came on stage and sang an endearing song of hope called “I Can.”

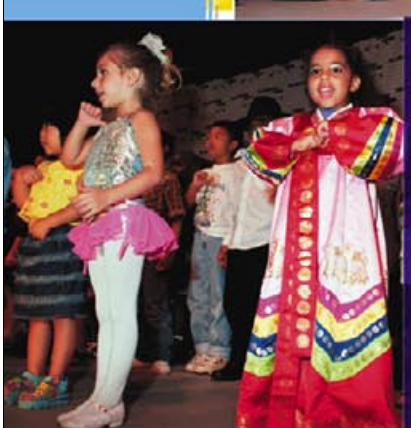
Even the audience was able to participate beyond offering standing ovations. The entire cast gathered on stage during the grand finale and led the audience in taking the Victory Over Violence pledge.

What had taken months to shape and build had come to an end, but in its place was a new sense of bonding and community. Young men

and women who had been nothing but strangers before the practices started were now close. They had experienced so much.



Photos by
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Linda St. Hilaire
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Victor Golden

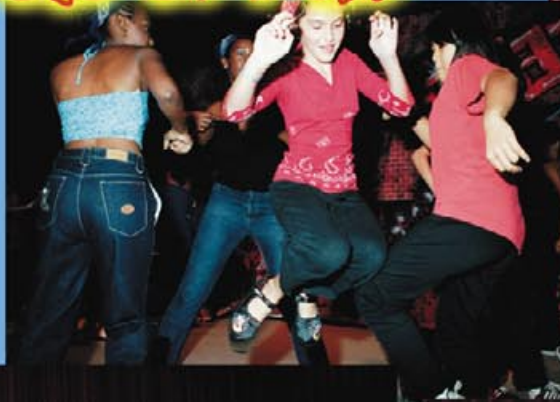


Culture Festival

"Before I became involved in preparing for the concert, I was in a bad place with my life," said Freddy Harford, from Jacksonville. "I was unhappy, I didn't have a job, I didn't go to school. As soon as I got involved, things started to change. I started to study. I started to see results. I finished school and got a job."

"Deeper than this though, I've changed. Now I think differently. Working with all these younger kids, I helped them and they've helped change me. They're like my brothers and sisters. It was a great experience to work together with people, young and old, for the same goal."

One supporter from Orlando, Kount Williams, expressed his pride at the development shown by the youth: "I've been a teacher and an assistant principle, so I know a little something about youth development. I can tell you I've never seen anything change kids so quickly into committed and concerned individuals like this."



For more information and behind the scenes pictures, please visit the Florida Regional Web site's fall edition at <http://www.sgi-usa-florida.org>



AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Opening the Way to a Century Without War

‘We must open the way to a century without war, a century of peace,’ SGI President Ikeda writes, remembering World War II. ‘This, I believe, is our destiny and our mission.’

Recently, for the first time in a long while, I wrote a letter to a friend from my elementary school days.

When we were in elementary school together, the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–45 had already started, and year after year the fires of war were spreading. Everyone was poor.

Childhood is usually a time of imagination and excitement, but the war had driven Japan into such a state of misery and desperation that our hearts were unable to soar free and find refuge. We sensed that some black, dire event was approaching like a storm.

It was an age of unending sorrow and pain. Even if we dreamed, on the wings of imagination, of an enjoyable, fairy tale world, at dawn the shrill blast of a military bugle would sound. Fathers and sons were torn from their families and sent to distant battlefields.

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From the spring of 1942—shortly after the start of the Pacific War and after finishing my studies at the national people’s school—I was forced, at age 14, to spend the days of my youth working at the Niigata Steelworks in my hometown of Kamata, Tokyo.

It was not long before the war quickly took a turn for the worse.

My good friend from elementary school used to regularly express his discontent and sorrow to me. “Aren’t our souls allowed to be free?” he asked. “It is just so oppressive always being forced to control our thoughts and feelings. I get so sick of it. Blue sky stretches above us and flowers are blooming in the field, but we are like prisoners. We have nothing to be proud or excited about, nothing to hope for. We are drowning in despair.”

The faces in the street



Morigasaki — where SGI President Ikeda and his friend would take walks and talk during World War II—is now a park.

to be the same story; hardly anyone smiled.

One day, we ran into a group of factory workers making a loud ruckus. They were venting their pent-up frustrations at the world by shouting and cursing and generally behaving badly. “Let’s get out of here,” said my friend, having no time for such displays. He was the kind of young man who would say, “I just have a stitch in my side,” rather than whine, “I’m hungry.”

We walked along the beach at nearby Morigasaki. As he chewed on a blade of grass, my friend talked to me seriously for a long time. “I hate our country,” he said. “Japan is truly frightening. Someday I want to go to Europe. I am prepared to swim, to ride the sea wind, to get out of here and go to another country.”

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The streets were dark at night because of the threat of air raids. There was no food, no clothing. People’s homes had been destroyed, and they had nowhere to live. They spoke in hushed, subdued voices. And the sight of people sadly evacuating the city was heartrending.

“I want to be saved by something,” said my friend. “If I go on like this, I will die. There are no bright possibilities to look forward to. There is no future. We are supposed to be entering

the best days of our youth, but the road ahead is shrouded in darkness, and I cannot see a thing. I want to beat a drum and shout something. But day after day is dark and gloomy, and I feel like I am falling into a world of emptiness and meaninglessness. When I think of my country, which is all in a frenzy over this war, I feel nothing. I wonder if it is just that I am a weak person.”

He went on: “If people want to abuse me, they can go ahead. If they say I am frivolous or do not show proper commitment to the cause, let them. But I want to create something solid and enduring, forge an unshakable spirit and inner strength, so that dear friends like you will understand my heart even after I am gone.”

“My life is my greatest treasure. How can I live my life so that it will one day shine with glorious triumph? How can I challenge and conquer the humiliations, cruelties and temptations I meet along the way while always keeping a spirit of indignation toward such things blazing in my heart?”

“Right now, I see nothing of jewel-like brilliance before me. To my side, I see a sodden, muddy path that has none of the warmth of a nice, thick rug underfoot.

“How will these insane times toy with my life? I am exhausted by all the monstrous social upheavals we have gone

through, yet I feel sure that the eternal, true reality that I long and thirst for from the depths of my being lies beyond these dark storm clouds.

“I have begun to deeply ponder the unfathomable mystery of the human spirit and the treasure that is the life of the universe. There must exist the power to survive even the most calamitous flood. I want to experience for myself the reality of that shining power.

“No matter how foul a road we must traverse, no matter how painful and even bloody the path, I want to keep pressing onward toward the green fields abloom with flowers that lie beyond the present darkness and confusion.”

Hot tears fell from my friend’s eyes.

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A wind was blowing, tapping at the windows of the houses. Our conversation continued.

We noted that many people had gotten into the habit of spiritual laziness. They did not have the means to open the window of their minds and see clearly.

It was blatant that the hearts of Japan’s leaders were putrid with rot and decay. And the great hopes that the people had so long lost sight of were reemerging as a powerful cry and beginning to take shape as a broad popular alliance.

Hope would come. And, not

to be outdone, so would despair. We agreed that the strength to transform even despair into hope had to exist. We acknowledged the need to forge resolute inner strength so that we could live true to ourselves, undefeated by disappointment. And we pondered where we could find a philosophy and a mentor to teach us how to do just that.

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Recalling that conversation of more than 55 years ago, I wrote to my old friend.

Many of our classmates died in the war. I also lost contact with many in the long, chaotic years during and after the war. But I remember many of them, just as they were when we were young. They are precious friends from my hometown, their images engraved deep in my heart.

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who is around the same age as I, once told me that our generation could be described as the “children of war.” It is true that as children we were forced to endure the pain and misery of wars started by our elders. That is precisely why we must never allow future generations of children to experience that cruel tragedy.

We must open the way to a century without war, a century of peace. This, I believe, is our destiny and our mission.

I had the good fortune to encounter my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. I have lived my life striving with all my might as his disciple. The work of education that he entrusted to me and to which I have devoted my life has now progressed to the stage where Soka University of America is under construction.

I am looking forward to someday continuing the conversation that my childhood friend and I held on Morigasaki Beach those many years ago but this time at the new SUA Orange County campus, bathed in fresh sea breezes from the Pacific Ocean.

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the July 14 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

Courtesy of SEIKO PRESS

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 39-40

Shin'ichi Yamamoto marks the fifth anniversary of his mentor's death. Under Shin'ichi's leadership, the Soka Gakkai has achieved a membership of 3.3 million households, 'a crystallization of the spirit of mentor and disciple.'

The cherry blossom season was again approaching. Not that Shin'ichi Yamamoto had any spare time these days to enjoy a quiet respite viewing the fragrant blooms. Still, catching but a fleeting glimpse of cherry blossoms from the car window refreshed his spirits and filled him with memories of his mentor, who had embarked on his journey to Eagle Peak when the cherries were in bloom.

On April 2, the sixth memorial service for Josei Toda — marking the fifth anniversary of his death — was held at the Seikyo Shimbun Annex in Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward. In the five years since Toda's passing, the Soka Gakkai had achieved a membership of 3.3 million households. This was a crystallization of the spirit of mentor and disciple — an achievement realized through the dedicated efforts of the members uniting

behind Shin'ichi, who singlemindedly strove to actualize the vision of his mentor.

Shin'ichi had taken it as his duty to make a report of victory to his mentor on this day each year. No matter how difficult the struggles he faced might be, he was determined to come to this ceremony showing actual proof of victory of some kind without fail. For therein, he believed, lay the way of a disciple.

Toda never trusted those who made empty determinations. He would severely reprimand them and would not hesitate to call them "frauds," "con artists" and "impostors."

True lions, Toda asserted, are those who advance, win and fulfill their vows, enduring all adversity with unflinching determination. And it was out of his compassion as a mentor that he tried to teach his disciples the weighty responsibility that falls on those who work

for kosen-rufu.

While reciting the sutra and chanting daimoku during the service, Shin'ichi firmly resolved to expand the flow of kosen-rufu and to return next year for his mentor's seventh memorial with even more proof of great advancement.

Also on this day, it was announced that prefectural assembly elections would be held in Japan's 46 prefectures and city assembly elections held in the five major cities of Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe. These elections marked the first half of a battery of nationwide local elections to be held that spring.

The Komei Political Federation was fielding 57 candidates in the prefectural elections and 38 in the city elections. All of the candidates and the Soka Gakkai members supporting them threw themselves into campaign activities with their sights set on Election Day, April 17.

Shin'ichi visited the Kansai region that month. On April 5, he attended the opening and Gohonzon-enshrinement ceremony of Heian-ji, the newest temple the Soka Gakkai had built and donated to Nichiren Shoshu, in Kyoto's Ukyo Ward. Coming on the heels of the completion of the new

Kyoto Headquarters in February, the temple's construction added further to the Kyoto members' joy.

Heian-ji was a large temple — a stately, modern, three-story structure of reinforced concrete. The chief priest was the same Shinno Abe, who was head of the priesthood's Study Department, and had been dispatched to the United States to carry out the first overseas Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies. [Abe would later become the 67th high priest, Nikken.]

To have a large Nichiren Shoshu temple in Kyoto, a city teeming with famous temples of other Buddhist schools, gave the members a sense of confidence and pride. And they were all the more thrilled when they heard that Abe would be the chief priest of the new temple.

"Mr. Abe is the head of the priesthood's Study Department, and he traveled to the United States to confer Gohonzon on members there for the sake of worldwide kosen-rufu. Also, he is the son of a former high priest," they said admiringly.

"How fortunate we are to get such a wonderful person," others remarked. "Since he is the son of a high priest, I am confident he will initiate a great propagation effort in Kyoto in accord with the Daishonin's commitment to refuting the erroneous and revealing the true and to selflessly spreading the Law.

"There will surely come a day when temples throughout Kyoto, such as Higashi Honganji, Nishi Honganji, Kiyomizudera and Daitokuji, will all convert to the Daishonin's Buddhism. We must also do our best."

At the time, of course, no one knew Abe's true nature. The pure-hearted Soka Gakkai members had only the highest expectations of him.

At the opening and Gohonzon-enshrinement ceremony, High Priest Nittatsu delivered a congratulatory speech, in which he said: "In this city, Buddhist temples are so numerous that they stand rooftop to rooftop, but they all represent schools that adhere to provisional, theoretical and shallow teachings. As a result, it is a place that could be

called the foremost abode of devilish functions in Japan. This new temple has been built as a center from which the future leaders of our school can wage a struggle against evil, where they can thoroughly forge and develop themselves in faith."

In his speech, Shin'ichi shared his thoughts on the conduct of Buddhist practitioners: "It is important, I feel, for those of us who uphold the teachings of Buddhism to behave in such a way that others may say of us: 'So-and-so is a really upstanding person. If people who practice the Daishonin's Buddhism are like that, then I would like to try practicing, too.'"

The Daishonin writes: "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). As he indicates, Buddhism elucidates the ultimate way of life for a human being. The most important issue for a Buddhist is how one acts and conducts oneself as a human being. For that reason, Shin'ichi spoke about this in his speech.

Two weeks after the opening, on April 21, a ceremony to introduce the new chief priests who would be taking up posts at Nichiren Shoshu branch temples in the Kansai region was held at Heian-ji. Shin'ichi again traveled to Kyoto and celebrated Abe's fresh start as Heian-ji's chief priest. As the representative of all lay believers, Shin'ichi also had high expectations for Abe and treated him with utmost respect.

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

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



Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

PERSPECTIVE — AMY BROWNFIELD, BURBANK, CALIF.

My Responsibility As a Parent

At home and SGI activities, Amy Brownfield says: 'As Buddhists, the first step after chanting for our child's protection is to take action to ensure it. That means carefully supervising them.'

I'm in the process of raising two daughters, Sheena, 15, and Maddy, 12, in the SGI-USA. During my entire 15 years of parenthood, I have also been either a district or chapter leader in the SGI-USA, and I've taken my children with me to every conceivable kind of activity. I have fond memories of doing home visits with one group leader when we had to take four children under the age of 5 to see a new member living in a crowded studio apartment. I've nursed babies and changed diapers, helped with homework, played games and been used as something to fall asleep on during meetings.

I've also had to chase toddlers or leave the meeting early. More times than I can count, after an enormous effort to get the family to the activity, I've missed 90 percent of what was said because of the kids. I remember several times having to drag my oldest daughter out

of a meeting when she was 3 and 4 years old because she was having a full-fledged screaming tantrum.

For the first 7 or 8 years that I was a parent, I focused on raising well-behaved children. But somewhere along the line, I made the profound realization that what I needed was to become a well-behaved parent. Everything changed after that. The kids responded differently because I behaved differently.

I also realized that when I took kids to meetings, my position of responsibility as the parent could not be compromised by whatever role I had to take at the meeting. I still had to be 100 percent parent.

It's my belief that kids are full-fledged SGI members and they belong at SGI activities. It is vital to both the safety of the children and the comfort of the other members that we keep our children under our immediate supervision at all times. If you bring a child with you that does not sit with you, it means that child is totally unsupervised. The volunteers who answer the phones, such as Byakuren, Soka Group and Gajokai members, are not responsible for your kids. They may be great at taking care of the community center but take it from me, some of them haven't the slightest idea what to do with kids. It's not their job anyway.

Don't forget, we welcome everyone at our SGI community



centers. Strangers can walk in off the street. For that matter, we don't have door monitors to prevent children from just walking out. I think it's a mistake to feel the kids will be okay on their own just because we are at an SGI community center. On the contrary, as Buddhists the first step after chanting for our children's protection is to take action to ensure it. That means carefully supervising them.

Occasionally, there are unpleasant incidents involving unsupervised children. We can't blame or banish the kids. As parents, we must take full responsibility. Kids belong at SGI activities but must always be under the direct care of the appropriate adult, most often a parent.

When we bring a child of any age to a meeting, we are bringing a full-fledged SGI member to a Buddhist activity and we need to treat them as such. We must always be con-

cerned for their safety and happiness. How can we help them enjoy the activity? When appropriate, it means bringing toys or books, providing a snack or a hand-held video game. Sometimes it means we have to leave the meeting early, which is perfectly okay and does not reflect poorly on a parent's faith. We want to make sure children enjoy coming to SGI activities.

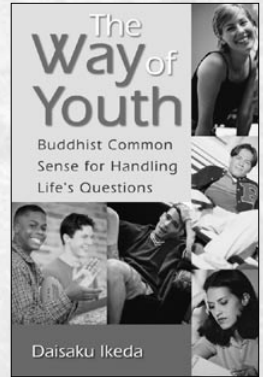
I realize it's an incredible challenge to get a child to sit quietly beside you throughout a meeting. You have to come prepared and be flexible. You have to have prayer and solid determination behind you.

SGI President Ikeda says: "We should chant with the determination to lead our children, as well as our parents, to happiness and complete fulfillment. Each daimoku [Nam-myohorenge-kyo] we chant with such determination becomes a brilliant sun illuminating the lives of our children or parents, transcending great distances and even the threshold of life and death" (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 168).

I'd like to ask the support of other members in nurturing these very special young people. We have the opportunity to get to know them now, because they'll be your leaders someday. **W**

The Way of Youth

Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life's Questions
Daisaku Ikeda



Geared for people of all faiths. Renowned author, teacher and spiritual leader Daisaku Ikeda, in a straightforward, no-nonsense approach, connects the timeless wisdom of Buddhism to the problems and concerns of today's youth. 0-9674697-0-8, Paperback, \$14.95

DAISAKU IKEDA is president of the Soka Gakkai International, one of the fastest growing and most dynamic Buddhist movements in the world today—a movement based on the teachings of Nichiren, the 13th-century Buddhist teacher and reformer.

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—Arun Gandhi, Founding Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence



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ALISO VIEJO CAMPUS

Send in your own questions, and we'll share the answers!

Question:

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo feels like a risk to me. Why should I send my child to a college nobody knows?

Answer:

We are encouraging stu-

dents to apply to SUA because it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them to experience a 5:1 student-to-faculty ratio (which will grow to 9:1 as the university grows) and be part of the foundation of SUA's new liberal arts college.

Like all new colleges, SUA, Aliso Viejo faces the challenge of building its academic

reputation, but our outstanding new faculty coming from such institutions as Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Texas A&M, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Johns Hopkins, Colby, Swarthmore, George Washington, University of Hawaii and Columbia University are committed to providing a truly personalized education.

SUA also offers many unique opportunities:

- SUA is based upon the Buddhist principles of peace, human rights and the sanctity of life.
- All students take a second language and everyone does an international internship in their junior year.
- Eastern and Western perspectives are taught across a liberal arts curriculum.

Yes, it is challenging to attend a new university, and we do expect our first class to have a definite sense of adventure. The first class at SUA, Aliso Viejo will have the opportunity to help write the first honor code, to help name their dorm, to help compose the school song and to set the first traditions. Only 100 freshmen students will enter in fall 2001.

If you have questions of any kind about SUA, please send them to SUA at either admission@soka.edu or info@soka.edu. We will use this World Tribune column to share our answer with others who might have the same questions.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE RAISING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

Develop Courage To Respect Our Children

'My hope is that all of you develop the courage and compassion to always respect your children as individuals,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'and sincerely, earnestly offer heartwarming encouragement to as many young friends as possible.'

The Raising Our Children Conference was held July 27-30 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations on your unprecedented Raising Our Children Conference. Gathered here today are those

mothers, fathers, teachers and youth leaders engaged in raising the children who will develop into great leaders. I sincerely appreciate and honor you who struggle daily to raise and educate our precious children. As a parent, I truly understand all of your hardships. Thank you very much for all

your hard work. Nichiren Daishonin states: "The voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). My hope is that all of you develop the courage and compassion to always respect your children as individuals and sincerely, earnestly offer heartwarming encouragement to as many young friends as possible. Please be confident that you are opening a great new road toward kosen-rufu as you struggle to discover and develop capable youth in your family through your resolute prayer and action.

The environment surrounding our youth today is by no means bright. Neither are their future prospects. For this reason, I hope that each of you

will create the best environment for our children, like a lighthouse of hope illuminating the path toward the future. Through our mystic karmic connections, we encountered the messengers from our future at this time. I ask that all of you, together with me, exert your utmost in encouraging and nurturing them.

Each one of you is a precious pioneer of the great new century. Every day I pray sincerely for your continued good health, happiness and glorious noble life filled with great fortune.

Please convey my warmest regards to those who could not attend today.

*Daisaku Ikeda
July 27, 2000*

IMPRESSION OF THE RAISING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE

Listen to Our Children

BY JANET VINOGRAD
ALISO VIEJO, CALIF.

As a participant in the recent Raising Our Children Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, I gained so much insight into my role as a parent. On one level, we were taught practical everyday tools to motivate our children to do such things as homework and chores without complaining. On a more profound level, we were propelled forward in our journey toward an inner revolution, looking at our own deep-seated thoughts, feelings and behaviors — the true keys to discerning why we relate to our children the way we do.

I found myself realizing that I was going to have to work hard, dig deep and look at how I felt and saw myself — a necessary first step toward accomplishing my own personal goals that I had written down on my alter at home. Soon I began asking myself questions. How did I feel about my own parenting skills? Am I a good mother? Am I a good daughter? What baggage do I hold? I needed to discover the answers to these questions because, as was revealed within the workshops at the conference, parenting and raising children starts with me.



On the topic of developing children, SGI President Ikeda has expressed many times that in order for children to become great leaders for the future of our world, parents must first learn to respect and listen to children as individuals. I found myself questioning if I was really listening. Am I just taking the parenting path of least resistance? In the different workshops, I had a chance to think about that.

The workshops were given by SGI-USA members who are professionals, (such as counselors, educators), fellow parents and others who work with children on a daily basis. Many of them have received high acclaim for their efforts in their communities.

During the conference, an

open discussion was facilitated by SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck, who began by sharing her personal experience as a parent. Everyone was truly touched by her openness, and reciprocated by revealing their personal struggles in raising children. Visions for creating environments conducive to the well-being of children within our districts, as well as a child-friendly atmosphere at SGI-USA community centers, were emphatically set forth by the group.

"Let's create a warm and inviting atmosphere for the children, a place where they can be heard, nurtured and encour-

aged." This became the anthem of the conference participants, who voiced a desire to see the shining faces of children participating within SGI meetings — not simply performing a song for other members and leaving the room, but becoming integral players in SGI's world peace movement. We as members need to learn patience and discard the tendency to "shush" when kids are too loud. Instead, we should recognize their voices as part of the great symphony of diversity within SGI-USA. Let's listen to our children and watch them blossom into dynamic young people — the hope of the future! **WT**

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Raising Our Children Conference Expands Its Scope

By **DON SANDERS**
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

The messengers of the future were the focus of the Raising Our Children Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center on July 27-30. The fourth meeting of this conference was not just for parents. Among the participants were educators who work with children and are applying themselves to helping parents teach their children about the SGI and our Buddhist practice.

This was a goal achieved by National Boys and Girls Group Coordinators Palma Odano and Cass Wilson, and many of the returning participants who seek to draw from the vast pool of creative talent in our organization to support families.

Recognizing how mightily parents struggle with balancing family, work and activity commitments, SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck also attended to offer encouragement and hear participants' concerns.

Part of what was new was increased male participation, al-



Participants in the Raising Our Children Conference pose for a photo in front of Toda Lake at the FNCC.

though the women have certainly been the driving force in making this conference so powerful, refreshing and lively.

Chris Jaffe, an educator from Indiana and a father himself, led a workshop titled "Being the Best Father to Your Children." Out of the dialogue con-

ducted in this workshop by both men and women came the idea that there are two very unbalanced myths operative in our society with respect to fathers. One is that they are unessential, dumb and unimportant. The other is that they should "do it all."

The consensus built by the group is that fathers have a powerful influence on children both through their presence and their absence, and that we need a new vision of the role of fathers. Another point brought out is that men cause women deep suffering by losing touch with their own significance.

A new and original workshop was the "Z-Wave Mentoring Program for Boys and Girls Group." The program utilizes the educational theories of Tsunesaburo Maki-guchi and Howard Gardner, as well as the socratic method, in an extraordinary way to provide a varied experiential activity for children ages 7-12. Children learn that work in the adult world is based on relationships, and with relationships to the community. Mentors help children grasp the basics of faith and engage in hands-on projects, and the parents do not need to make it all happen

themselves. Discussion among children and mentors within the activity has focused on numerous Buddhist concepts and terms and SGI President Ikeda's *Discussions on Youth* books.

This program, begun in Santa Monica, Calif., is on its way to replication in other areas soon.

The conference participants collectively raised many strong concerns. The four days will undoubtedly be the fuel for a lot of fresh dialogue all over the SGI-USA. Many parents expressed a longing to see a paradigm shift in how our organization views children. Tremendous energy went into seeking ways to make meetings attractive and friendly to children.

SGI President Ikeda, in his message to the conference, writes: "I hope that each of you will create the best environment for our children, like a lighthouse of hope illuminating the path toward the future."

While we owe an unrepayable debt of gratitude to all the pioneers who have paved the way to bring us to where we stand now, we must invest solidly in our future as well, raising many bright and inspired young people to take us where we still need to go.

For more information on the SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group, please contact Palma Odano at Podano@aol.com.

IMPRESSION OF THE RAISING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE

Being the Best Father to Our Children

By **CHRIS JAFFE**
BLOOMINGTON, IND.

Father. This one word evokes many emotions and meanings. For some, it conjures images of a protective, loving presence; for others, a mean or authoritarian one. Father also may represent what was experienced as missing, a palpable absence or emotional distance.

Fatherhood was the topic of discussion at one of the workshops offered at the recent Raising Our Children Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

Although mostly comprising fathers, some mothers attended the session also in the hopes of better understanding the role of men in the family.

The dialogue began with participants recognizing the significance of their own fathers in their lives. The flow of tears and laughter that ensued as we shared our stories indicated how important fathers are to the formation of who their children become.

The discussion also ad-



Chris Jaffe with his son, Jurion.

ressed the changing roles of fathers in society and the confusion and challenges that this has created for men and women engaged in the task of raising children.

Many participants agreed that there is a strong need for more dialogue on this topic so that the challenges of fatherhood can be better met for the happiness of generations to come. **WT**

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