



EXPERIENCE:
Ren Zarnesky
brings happiness
to her family.
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DISCUSSION WITH SGI-USA CULTURE DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

A New Sun Shines on America!

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

‘We will continue to make our way serenely out into the world,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Today, the Buddhism of the sun is beginning to shine on America and the rest of the world.’

On Aug. 23–24, SGI President Ikeda met with representatives of the SGI-USA Culture Department at the Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. The SGI leader shared his hopes and expectations for the new Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus and discoursed on such subjects as education, life and Buddhism with the visiting members. Participants in this discussion are: Dr. Eric Hauber, vice president of academic affairs at SUA, AV; Dr. Maria Guajardo Lucero, director of Assets for Colorado Youth and a trustee of the University of Denver; Michael Curtis, doctoral candidate in energy technology policy and sustainable development at George Mason University; and Professor Tadashige Takamura, associate vice president of Soka University, Japan.



Dr. Maria Guajardo Lucero and Dr. Eric Hauber talk with SGI President Ikeda at the Nagano Training Center in August about the future of America and the role education will play in it.

SGI President Ikeda: Welcome! Thank you all for coming here from so far away! You all look wonderful. I am so happy to see you!

All: Thank you!

Ikeda: A millionaire is a person who has money. A scholar is a person who has learning. A politician is a person who has political power.

But what do those who are

worthy of the greatest respect possess? It is not titles or academic degrees. No, it is the Law—the Mystic Law.

Nichiren Daishonin states, “Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1097). This is a quintessential teaching of Buddhism. Therefore, the most praiseworthy of all are those who propagate the Mystic Law.

No one can surpass them.

There is nothing great about corrupt politicians or clergy. It is ordinary people who embrace the Mystic Law who are the true monarchs. That is why I greet you all today with the

highest respect and veneration.

Mastery of foreign languages will be important in the 21st century.

Dr. Eric Hauber: Aug. 24 is the anniversary of the day you started

practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is a great joy to meet you on this meaningful occasion.

Ikeda: The honor is all mine. Nothing could make me happy!
PLEASE SEE CULTURE DEPT., 4

SAN ANTONIO WELCOMES CHILDREN’S RIGHTS EXHIBIT

Photo by BRANT MILLER

By NICK MEYERS, BRANT MILLER AND AKIRA MARTIN
SAN ANTONIO CORRESPONDENTS

The excited chatter and exuberant laughter of children filled the air Aug. 20 at the opening ceremony of the SGI-USA sponsored exhibition “Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities” at the beautiful North Star Mall in San Antonio, Texas.

Brightly colored costumes, singing, dancing, poetry recitals and magic tricks enchanted an enthusiastic audience both young and old. There were multicultural performances by, among others, the San Antonio Independent School District Mariachi Band and the SGI-USA San Antonio

Chorus and Dancers, who performed a Nigerian folk song.

Children’s Rights Exhibition Coordinator Malina Moore explained that the exhibition was created by the Youth Peace Committee of the SGI-USA in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), reflecting the philosophy of the Soka Gakkai’s founders to respect the dignity of all human life. “In order to do that,” Malina said, “we have to start with our children.”

SGI-USA Executive Advisor Fred Zaitzu and San Antonio Area Leader Roy Duggan accepted proclamations from the City of San Antonio and County of Bexar, a resolution from the State of Texas and a letter to SGI President Ikeda from U.S. Con-

gressman Ciro Rodriguez, which will be entered in the Congressional Record later this year. Bexar County Family Court Judge Peter Sakai and Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson spoke of the importance of nurturing our children as the future leaders of society.

Mr. Zaitzu also expressed his hope that the exhibition would become “a significant milestone to awaken people to the importance of children’s rights.” He added that “protecting children’s rights has been a tradition of the SGI since the time of first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of our organization, who dedicated himself to educating children, especially those who were underprivileged.” Mr. Zaitzu concluded by expressing his wish that the exhibition



SGI-USA Executive Advisor Fred Zaitzu (center) joins San Antonio City Councilman Mario Salas (far left) and UNICEF Regional Manager Nicole O’Neil (far right) in the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

would spur dialogue, thereby “expanding the message of peace and hope in the wonderful community

of San Antonio” and making the ideals expressed in the exhibition a reality. **WT**

The Three Obstacles and Four Devils

Back to the Basics

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

When we carry out our Buddhist practice sincerely and powerfully — when we are truly serious about attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime — we must face hindrance in the form of the three obstacles and four devils.

Achieving something great in any field of endeavor is no easy task. Establishing Buddhahood is even more difficult, as this is the highest triumph a human being can hope for. Buddhahood is an ultimate victory over our innermost weaknesses and over fierce outer opposition that would misguide us in Buddhist practice and send our lives careening.

Buddhism also sheds light on the dimension to which the strongest destructive force inherent in the life of the universe exerts itself to stop us at crucial points in our Buddhist practice from attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. In this respect, Nichiren Daishonin states: "There is definitely something

extraordinary in the ebb and flow of the tide, the rising and setting of the moon, and the way in which summer, autumn, winter, and spring give way to each other. Something uncommon also occurs when an ordinary person attains Buddhahood. At such a time, the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 637).

When we have defeated great hindrances in Buddhist practice, we can see that these devilish functions have actually appeared to help us become stronger and attain Buddhahood. SGI President Ikeda thus states: "The functions of both the 'devil' and the 'Buddha' exist within our lives. Ultimately, our battle is with ourselves. Whether in our Buddhist practice or in activities in society, or whether in historical, political or economic developments, everything essentially boils down to a struggle between positive and negative forces" (*For Today and Tomorrow*, p. 281).

Buddhist practice thus boils down to our ceaseless battle with every possible destructive function in life. The reward of continual victory in this battle is indeed awesome — the life of Buddhahood.

The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin define the three obstacles and four devils as follows: *The three obstacles are: 1) the obstacle of earthly desires; 2) the obstacle of karma; and 3) the obstacle of retribution (also obstacles caused by one's superiors, such as rulers or parents). The four devils are: 1) the hindrance of the five components; 2) the hindrance of earthly desires; 3) the hindrance of death (because untimely death obstructs one's practice of Buddhism, or because the premature death of another practitioner causes doubts); and 4) the hindrance of the devil king. See The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 1277.*



Leadership Announcement

SGI-USA Vice YWD Leader
MIKA IKEDA

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 3 ENCOURAGEMENT

The Times Call for Equality

'For all human beings to advance joyfully together in unity, free of discrimination and inequality — this is the ideal that the world and the times are moving toward,' SGI President Ikeda says.

defeated. It is vital that we go out among the people, forging bonds of solidarity with them.

"For all human beings to advance joyfully together in unity, free of discrimination and inequality — this is the ideal that the world and the times are moving toward. Those who steadfastly walk alongside the people can savor lives of true victory."

Speaking of the power of the Mystic Law, President Ikeda said: "We can transform the place where we are now into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. This is the power of the Mystic Law. Let us steadily create an everlasting foundation brimming with good fortune in our local areas."

"The Mystic Law is the great law pervading all life and the universe. When we dedicate ourselves to the struggle of kosen-rufu without begrudging our lives, we set out on the path to absolute happiness. Everything becomes a seed of eternal happiness that will without fail bloom as wonderful fortune and benefit in the future. This is Buddhism. I hope you will be convinced of this." WT

On Sept. 3, SGI President Ikeda attended an executive conference with local leaders at the Yamanashi Study and Training Center in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan. President Ikeda commended the outstanding growth achieved by the Yamanashi members, who commemorate 40 years of the kosen-rufu movement in their prefecture this fall.

"Who essentially are the most respectable human beings?" he asked. "It is not the powerful. It is not the famous. The truly great and wise are ordinary people who spread the Mystic Law."

"People who are caught up in vanities and look down on others only end up alone and

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NEW MEMBER'S EXPERIENCE — MICHAEL ANGELO, LOS ANGELES

It's Just the Beginning

Photo by BUDDY ROSENBERG

Michael Angelo shares what he has gained from 16 months of Buddhist practice.

I was born the first child of a 16-year-old young woman in Tuskegee, Ala. My father's presence in my early years was sporadic at best. I think The Temptations said it best, "... Papa was a rollin' stone ... wherever he laid his hat was his home." So as a child, I was often left alone and felt that the physical and emotional unavailability of my parents had something to do with me. By age 5, roots of deep fear of abandonment and rejection had been firmly planted in my life.

I would say I was always a "good" kid. I made good grades in school (A's and B's), never got into serious trouble and I excelled both in academics and the arts. I was fortunate to have a grandmother who was very supportive and encouraging to me when it came to achieving goals. So in 1990, I began a successful college career at Alabama State University. I was courageous enough to speak up to my grandmother and refuse a scholarship in biology to pursue one in music education. Al-

though being a music teacher was not really what I wanted, it was closer to my true desire to be a performer.

My college years were bittersweet because underneath all of the artistic success also came that dark hellish hole of abandonment and neediness that was a part of my daily existence. I chose to medicate my deep pain and confusion with my drug of choice: unhealthy codependent relationships and lots of risky sexual escapades. These forays into oblivion left me in a seemingly hopeless cycle of shame, guilt and unworthiness.

For the next eight years of my life, I would constantly be seeking the validation and approval of my existence outside of myself. This led me into erratic attempts to cure myself and reach some land of earthly nirvana. I joined several Southern Christian cults, which led me to almost quit school, lose nearly 60 pounds from fasting and isolate myself from my friends and family. But the proof of lasting happiness and peace still evaded me.

In 1996, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to a Twelve Step Program for sexual and emotional recovery. After three years of intensive therapy and self-affirmation and healing, I was once again awakened to the dream that I still held in my heart. Even though I had been a music teacher for three years, I was not pursuing a full-time career as an entertainer due to the fear and doubt that pervaded my life.

So in January 1999, I had finally reached a level of Learning and Realization that if I was going to be a successful artist, I had to take action to make it happen. I had to

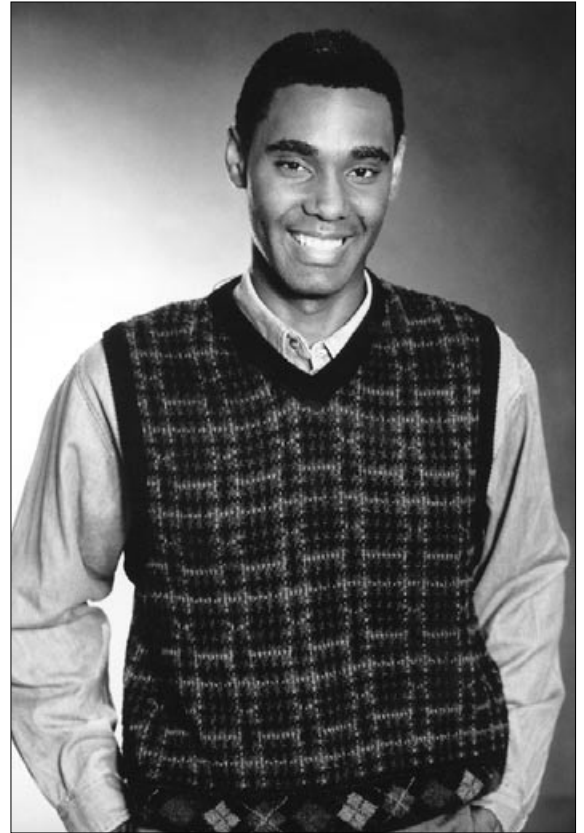
take destiny in my own hands. It was either New York or Los Angeles. My new life began when my college friend, who had just moved to L.A., told me of a room available in the house he was staying in. So L.A. is the place! I was overjoyed as I slowly began to realize that the universe was supporting me in altering my life course.

And thus enter the Gohonzon. I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in early May '99 by a fellow Twelve Step Program member. At my first newcomers' meeting, I felt an immediate comfort with the happiness and positive energy radiating from the SGI-USA members in Houston. Being gifted in linguistics, I had no problem in pronouncing the Chinese characters from the Lotus Sutra. So I, with much doubt, began chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as I headed for my new life in Los Angeles.

Not long afterward, I met another SGI member, seemingly by chance, through a friend of one of my roommates. Soon I was attending SGI activities and getting to know everyone. Of course, I hadn't fully made the connection that the brunt of my depression and sense of hopelessness was gone due not only to my being in a wonderful new city, but due largely to my wonderful new Buddhist practice.

This proved even more true when, in the winter of '99, I slacked off on my Buddhist practice and then eventually stopped altogether. I found that old depression creeping back as I continued my Twelve Step meetings, plus weekly therapy, plus medication. But fortunately, a faithful friend and practicing SGI-USA member urged me to reinitiate my practice, and thus I began chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and performing gongyo like never before. And boy, what a difference that has made.

Since March of this year, my increased sincerity and faith in this practice has brought about the following benefits: Almost total freedom of any depression, shame, guilt or feeling hopeless — and that's without Twelve Step meetings, therapy or medication (not that I'm opposed to these forms of help). I received the Gohonzon almost exactly a year after I was intro-



duced to this practice on May 6. I have gotten a small commercial agent who has gotten me background work with such artists as N'Sync, Macy Gray and Jagged Edge. I've also auditioned for several national commercials, most recently Diet Coke. I recently moved into a larger apartment for \$40 less a month than I previously paid. My mother has offered to help me with a past due car note. And I recently was accepted for an 80-hour volunteer program to become a member of SAG.

The list goes on and on. In 16 months of practice, I have had so much proof — and I know this is just the beginning. I chant daily for continuing total freedom from the lower worlds of Hell, Hunger and Animality that are in my life. And I am surrounded by other wonderful practicing members who encourage me to never give up in my mission to become one of the most prolific and groundbreaking performing artists for kosen-rufu in this new millennium.

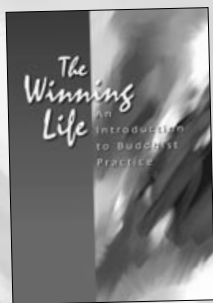
The question has been asked: What is the purpose of life?

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda replies: "It is happiness. But there are two kinds of happiness — relative and absolute. Relative happiness comes in a wide variety of forms. But absolute happiness is a state of happiness that can never be destroyed or defeated" (*For Today and Tomorrow*, p. 354).

I realize that this truly is the greatest benefit of this practice that I have received thus far — the attainment of true happiness — which is in essence the attainment of Buddhahood for myself and others. I hope to have encouraged the practice of any new members and refreshed the faith of old. I am grateful for each present moment that will lead to a glorious future filled with absolutely amazing, mind-blowing, mystical, unbelievable, gargantuan benefits and most importantly: indestructible happiness! **WT**

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 World Tribune
Press

FROM CULTURE DEPT., 1

pier than meeting with all of you today. It is exactly 53 years since I embraced faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Hauber: We plan to hold the entrance ceremony for the first class of students entering Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo on Aug. 24 of next year. I am happy to report that we are receiving many application inquiries. We set up an admissions hotline, with a special ring tone, so that we know when people are calling about applying to the school. We established a system in which our staff can respond individually to each student who is interested in attending SUA.

Ikeda: What do you get the most inquiries about?

Hauber: The curriculum. SUA, AV will emphasize language education and international studies. But we will encourage our students to not only master foreign languages but also acquire a deep understanding of that nation's culture. In addition to studying the language of her or his choice, each student will study that nation's or region's history, way of life and thought.

In the third year of study, each student will be required to spend one semester as a foreign student in a nation that uses that language. We want the students to have a chance to move beyond the abstract, conceptual realm and have direct contact with the daily life of other cultures. We want to encourage them to acquire a broader point of view, to see the world from the perspective of another culture. That, we believe, is absolutely essential to educating truly international people.

Ikeda: Languages give one the wings to forge ties of friendship with people around the world. A mastery of foreign languages is going to be more and more important in the 21st century.

Hauber: We want to carry out the mission that you have outlined for SUA, AV as its founder: to foster leaders of ability and humanism, who can make great contributions to the world. An international person must have a strong desire to be of service to others and to work for society, otherwise all his or her study will be self-serving and of no use to the world.

We want to nurture talented people who will make genuine contributions to society. We want to produce a steady stream of leaders who will lead the world in the coming century.

This is the mission of SUA, AV. We are doing everything we

can to create an educational environment that will produce such leaders. We want to create a university in which the founding spirit is alive not only in the curriculum but in the behavior and minds of all our teaching staff, because we believe that spirit will inspire and encourage our students.

SUA will be a new fortress for world peace.

Professor Tadashige Takamura: In what respects do you think American educators and intellectuals have high expectations for SUA, AV?

Hauber: It varies, but one person made the observation that because SUA, AV is a new university, it is unfettered by pre-conceived notions, ties and outdated traditions. As such, it can seek the absolute best in education without any restrictions.

SUA also has a clear educational philosophy and ideal, and a profound founding spirit, this person noted, expressing confidence that this would enable it to provide education that puts the student first.

SUA, AV is a university for the 21st century. It will realize the kind of education that has been the longed-for, yet unachieved, ideal of so many educators. I strongly feel the huge expectations that everyone has for the university.

I am also proud that we are in fact beginning to create one of the best systems in the realm of curriculum planning as well.

Ikeda: I am really looking forward to the university's opening, and I am deeply appreciative of the outstanding efforts of the entire staff.

SUA, AV will be a new fortress for world peace. I pray that the talented graduates who leave its doors will go out into the world to spread friendship on this planet and exert themselves freely in all spheres of endeavor for the happiness of humankind. I hope that they will be a shining light of hope that illuminates the next century and the next millennium.

There is nothing as beautiful as the ties of mentor and disciple.

Ikeda: Dr. Guajardo Lucero, you are looking well! I will never forget the honor bestowed upon me by the University of Denver in 1996.

Dr. Maria Guajardo Lucero: The university trustees voted unanimously to bestow an honorary doctorate in education on you, President Ikeda. At the meeting at which it was decided, Chancellor Daniel Ritchie re-



(L-r) Yoshiko Matsumoto (SGI staff), David Saito (SGI staff), SGI-USA Culture Department Senior Advisor Masao Yokota, Michael Curtis, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada, Dr. Takao Kato, Dr. Karen Lewis, Dr. Donna Fabian, Dr. Patricia Walker, Dr. Alison Hirsch, Dr. Maria Guajardo Lucero, Dr. Lynne Miller, SGI-USA Culture Department Leader Eric Hauber, SGI Vice Women's Leader Yumiko Hachiya and Professor Tadashige Takamura.

cited your many accomplishments for all the trustees without my having to explain anything.

Ikeda: I was deeply honored. The chancellor treated me with such warmth and sincerity. The moment I met him, I knew he was a person of the highest caliber. Please give him my best regards.

Guajardo Lucero: I most certainly will. Prior to that, you had spoken with Dr. Vincent Harding of our university. [Dr. Vincent Harding, professor of religion and social transformation at the University of Denver, was a close friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He met with President Ikeda in January 1994 in Tokyo.]

I am collaborating with Dr. Harding on a video he is making about the mentor-disciple spirit. He says he wants to pass that spirit on to the next generation and is interviewing elders in communities throughout the United States who have fought for social justice.

One of his questions is "Who influenced you in continuing your social activism?" He wants to show the video to young people to have them learn from outstanding people, so that they are given a great example of the importance of relationships both with mentors and teachers.

Ikeda: For a human being, there is nothing more beautiful than the ties of mentor and disciple. There is nothing stronger. The mentor-disciple relationship is the heart of Buddhism.

But we must remember that a mentor is not some higher being. Mentor and disciple are comrades striving together in real life to achieve a shared ideal.

Viewed from one perspective, Buddhism shows us how to live our lives bravely challenging the daunting realities that confront us. At the same time, it expounds a way of life that is natural and unforced, peace-loving and unfettered by rigid

formality, brimming with warm human sentiment, laughter, tears and affection.

It teaches the unsurpassed way of human existence—the spirit to fight rigorously against evil and injustice, to fight and triumph unafraid of imprisonment or death. In short, Buddhism is the most humane way of life there is. And Buddhism exists within the living reality of society and daily life.

Dialogue is the essence of religion.

Ikeda: Recently, Japan has seen a series of instances where youth have committed vicious, brutal crimes. This is a grave problem in many societies around the world. Dr. Guajardo Lucero, if I remember correctly, you are the director of an institute that studies the educational development of young people.

Guajardo Lucero: Yes. I am the director of Assets for Colorado Youth. Juvenile crime is a serious problem in the United States as well. In Colorado, where I live, a terrible school shooting took place last year [at Colombine High School, in Littleton, Colo.], in which 15 students and teachers were killed. Most people asked the question "Why did this happen?" but we asked instead, "How can we prevent this from happening again?" and took this as the starting point of our activities.

The important thing is to view children not as a problem but as a resource, full of potential, and as society's assets.

We encouraged adults to meet and develop connections with youth. Through this process of involvement and dialogue, children can begin to change and have hope for the future again.

Ikeda: That is very important. What you are doing is truly commendable. Dialogue—talking with others heart-to-heart—is so important. "In the beginning

there was the Word," as the Bible says. Or as the Daishonin tells us, "The voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

The process of overcoming hardships and making harmonious progress starts with discussion. Dialogue is the essence of religion. It is a life-to-life exchange, a source of life-to-life inspiration.

Guajardo Lucero: I used to be involved in a community project, where I was working with elementary schools with many poor students. We do not really have the custom of teachers visiting children's homes in the United States, but we proposed that teachers visit every child's home.

At one school where the teachers tried this, the children reacted very positively—far more so than we had anticipated. Since then, teachers and parents have remained in close communication, and we have also started an English class, staffed by volunteers, for Mexican-American parents who do not speak English.

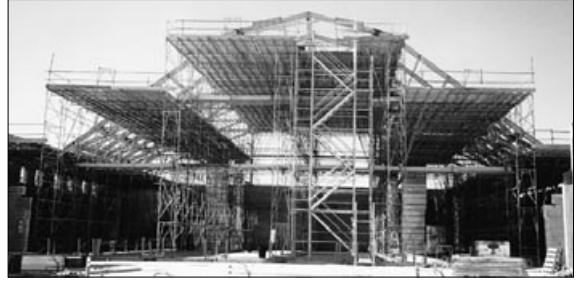
As the parents came to know more about their children's school, and the teachers came to know their students' family lives, the students began to work harder at school. After we put our home visit program into effect, the grades of the students went up. The school became one of the top elementary schools in Denver.

Ikeda: That is wonderful!

Guajardo Lucero: I was born into a poor Mexican farming family. But I have lived my life with the conviction that we can each bring forth unlimited potential through education.

I had a hard time when I was studying at Harvard. I graduated with honors, and I wanted my mother to see the graduation ceremony. But by the time my last class ended, I did not even have enough money to pay the

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The Recreation Center under construction at the Soka University, Aliso Viejo campus in Orange County, Calif.

rent for my apartment. And even though I had graduated, I could not afford to attend the ceremony myself, much less bring my mother to see it.

That is why each time I have received an award from SGI or SUA, I say to myself, "This is my graduation ceremony." I have been lucky to graduate several times. Thank you so very much!

Never detach yourself from the SGI organization.

Michael Curtis: I participated in the SGI-USA Culture Department training course in Japan in 1991, and it proved to be an important turning point for my life. Over the last nine years, I have worked hard to actualize the determinations I made at that time. But it took me a long time to make my efforts bear fruit.

How one can advance on the right path and fulfill one's mission without any wasted effort? I want to devote my life to realizing the American ideal that you, President Ikeda, articulated for us in the new poem that you presented to us in the United States, "Soar—Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!"

Ikeda: Thank you very much. The bottom line, essentially, is never to detach yourself from the SGI organization.

No matter what kinds of leaders or members you may encounter there, it is important that you do activities in the organization throughout your life. Why? Because the core of the Daishonin's Buddhism is *kosen-rufu*. And faith that is dedicated to realizing *kosen-rufu* is found only in the SGI.

The reason for your participating in training courses such as these is to build a self dedicated to *kosen-rufu*. Herein lies correct faith and correct action.

Chant to the Gohonzon for whatever it is that you want most.

Ikeda: In addition, the important thing is to chant to the Gohonzon for whatever it is that you want most. The Daishonin described his own spirit to propagate the Mystic Law as having "the same compassion as a mother who urges her child to drink from her breast" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 585). Thus, you should chant to the Gohonzon honestly with whatever is in your heart, free of all pretension, just like a child entreating a parent.

You can chant for anything you like. If you want, you can chant to be wealthy, or you can even chant to be president of your country! All of your prayers will be answered. And they also carry on into future lifetimes. Of

course, I am not saying that becoming president will necessarily make you happy!

At any rate, the important thing is to earnestly chant for what you want in your real, everyday life. Please also try to do your best in SGI activities. The SGI is an organization that champions justice and works for good. It is an organization that fights for people's happiness and for the sake of the Law.

Other than that, please act with honesty and integrity in your personal life—in your job, your family, your friendships. Please advance confidently, honorably and cheerfully, making steady efforts to improve and grow and achieve your dreams.

Curtis: Thank you.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the Buddhism of inconspicuous benefits.

Ikeda: The benefits received by practitioners of the Mystic Law in the Latter Day of the Law are called inconspicuous benefits. Inconspicuous benefits pile up quietly, like snow gradually accumulating.

Shakyamuni's Buddhism, in contrast, was a Buddhism of conspicuous benefits. These are benefits that are clearly visible and recognizable. The people during Shakyamuni's lifetime were pure-hearted and good, and the benefits of their faith were manifested immediately.

But in the Latter Day of the Law, most benefits are inconspicuous benefits. The Daishonin's Buddhism is the Buddhism of inconspicuous benefits.

Some may think that conspicuous benefits are preferable, but if benefits appear immediately, you tend to grow complacent and arrogant. You may not be able to experience the great depth and breadth of life.

Buddhism is the law that governs all things in the universe. We must be confident of this and wholeheartedly chant daimoku.

Moreover, the daimoku that we chant for others ultimately returns to us. Daimoku benefits both ourselves and those we chant for. Benefit is received by all parties and, in this way, grows exponentially.

To take this even further, the "daimoku savings account" into which we make regular deposits each day through chanting reveals its worth at crucial moments in our life. In our final years, we will be able to declare with deep feeling: "I have truly achieved a life pervaded by eternity, happiness, true self and purity!" "What a wonderful state of being I have attained!" Buddhism, as the sutras and the Daishonin's writings teach, as-

ures us of such triumph.

A way of life that accords with the Daishonin's Buddhism, a life dedicated to fulfilling one's personal mission—this is what Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda taught us.

Please do not worry. No matter what happens, chant daimoku, and never leave the SGI. In faith, there is no special technique you have to master or special form you have to strive for in order to attain enlightenment.

You can build an eternal palace of happiness within the depths of your life, just as you are. This is the Buddhist teaching that the lives of ordinary people and the supreme state of Buddhahood are one. You can attain Buddhahood in your present form. You, as you are right now, possess the state of Buddhahood within. This is called the Buddha of the true aspect of all phenomena. Please be confident that the life-state, the power and the good fortune of the Buddha will quite naturally come to manifest in your life.

The SGI must never succumb to authoritarianism and bureaucracy.

Guajardo Lucero: All the SGI-USA members are advancing with optimism and hope. We have a perfect combination in General Director Danny Nagashima, who is passionate, and Women's Leader Matilda Buck, who is very natural. With their leadership and the poem you wrote us, I feel that a bright new future is opening up for SGI-USA.

Ikeda: Really? That is wonderful to hear. Nothing gives me greater joy than knowing that everyone is happy and working joyfully for *kosen-rufu*. I have great hopes for both Danny Nagashima and Matilda Buck.

An organization hinges on its leaders. That is why people in leadership positions have a tremendous responsibility. At the same time, the higher their position, the graver their offense and subsequent retribution should they betray their fellow members or discard their faith.

During World War II, the Soka Gakkai in Japan was harshly suppressed by the militarist authorities. Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda and 19 other leaders were imprisoned. Of them all, the only two not to abandon their faith were Mr. Makiguchi, who died in prison, and Mr. Toda. This is an undeniable historical fact.

Mr. Toda emerged from his ordeal in prison to rebuild the Soka Gakkai after the war. At that time, too, people of high

leadership positions in the organization betrayed him. Also, during the time of both the Daishonin and his successor, Nikko Shonin, many direct disciples—the top leaders of those days—forsook their faith.

We must not tolerate corrupt people, even if they are leaders. We cannot experience truly profound benefit unless we fight against evil. The Daishonin defined benefit (Jpn *kudoku*) as follows: "The *ku* [of *kudoku*] means to extinguish evil, and *doku* means to bring forth good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762).

By refuting evil, we expiate our own past offenses and impurities, and bring forth a pure, unsullied state of life brimming with good fortune and benefit. This is the meaning of benefit.

No one is superior or inferior in Buddhism—we are all equal. No one is more important than anyone else. Worthy of greatest respect is the person who has a strong, pure faith in the Mystic Law.

We must not succumb to authoritarianism and bureaucracy. Our organization is solely a means for enabling people to become happy. The SGI is absolutely committed to equality and humanism.

Hauber: Every time I meet you, President Ikeda, I make new progress. I feel so inspired.

Ikeda: The world of the SGI is a world of heart-to-heart dialogue, of life-to-life bonds between comrades.

There are countless living beings on Earth and in the universe. How can we live together in peace and harmony? How can we build a paradise, a utopia for all?

The attempt to answer these questions is one of the starting points of religion. Here, we also find the fundamental meaning of religion. Ultimately, it can be said that neither science nor economics nor politics has answered these questions clearly.

There have been many religions throughout human history. The founders of all great religions—the Buddha, Christ, Muhammad and so forth—

were people of deep wisdom, outstanding leaders who wanted to bring happiness to humanity. But as time passed, the spirit of these founders was lost, and their religions lapsed in formality, degenerating into a means for the clergy to make money and subjugate believers to their authority and manipulation.

This might be described as the inevitable destiny of religion. The same thing happened to the Nikken sect. But we must absolutely never ever allow this to happen to the SGI. This is my most fervent wish.

That is why I say over and over again: "Let us return to the time of Shakyamuni! Let us return to the time of the Daishonin!"

The SGI is the only organization in the present age that goes out among the people in accord with the Daishonin's spirit.

Persecution is a sign that a religion is alive. Because we are an organization dedicated to truth and justice, we are buffeted by strong winds. These are all trials that will help us create a pure stream of faith that will flow forever.

We will continue to make our way serenely out into the world. Today, the Buddhism of the sun is beginning to shine on America and the rest of the world.

Other SGI-USA Culture Department representatives who attended the training course at Karuizawa included: Mr. Masao Yokota, president of the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century; Dr. Takao Kato, professor of economics and chairperson of the Economics Department at Colgate University, New York; Dr. Donna Fabian, research assistant at the genetics lab at Emory University; Dr. Alison Hirsch, independent historian; Dr. Lynne Miller, associate professor and chairperson of the Department of Elementary Education, Florida International University; Dr. Patricia Walker, international economic policy analyst; and Dr. Karen Lewis, professor of economics at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

EXPERIENCE — REN ZARNESKY, ALAMOGORDO, N.M.

Forever Grateful

AS TOLD TO JUDY HYMAN

Ren Zarnesky brings happiness to her family through her Buddhist practice.

In the mid-1950s, I lived in Saigon with my husband and our six children. My husband, though Vietnamese, spoke fluent French and worked as a translator for the French government. We owned our home and had a good life. Then, the French left Saigon and the communists came in. Soon after, communists came to our home in the night and took my husband away. I never saw him again. Friends told me later that the communists had shot him and thrown his body into the river.

Our house was taken over by communists, and the children and I were turned out with only a few personal possessions. I was quite young and had no work experience, so I took in sewing to support my family. Though I worked hard, life was still very difficult. Two of my children died due to unknown causes.

A neighbor, who was married to an American, told me her husband's best friend (also an American) was looking for a housekeeper. She brought this handsome American to visit me and he offered me a job. I did not speak English, nor did he speak Vietnamese, but we communicated through my Vietnamese friend and her husband. I was to be a live-in housekeeper, but of course, there was no place for my children. My aunt, however, agreed to take care of the children and I accepted the job.

The American paid me well and I was able to see that my children did not starve. After working a year as his housekeeper, this American asked if I would become his girlfriend.

To his credit, he didn't try to deceive me that he intended marriage. He was a young man, younger than I. He had had many girlfriends, but had never married and said frankly that he found most women to be after his money. Besides, I had too many children.

After some hesitation, I decided to talk it over with my aunt. She pointed out that he had rescued me and my chil-

dren from a life of poverty, protected me and made it possible for me to protect my children. Obviously I wasn't able to take care of them alone, and with my husband gone, there was no one left to look after us. So, she wondered, what choice did I have? Her advice was to "close my eyes and make him happy."

The American and I were lovers for three years, during which time I became pregnant.

While I was pregnant, he was transferred back to America. He asked me to wait for him, but still refused to make any commitment of marriage. However, after discussing the situation with his mother, he soon returned to Vietnam and we were married. We moved to America with our newborn baby, leaving my other children with my aunt in Saigon.

Our marriage seemed to go well for a time. After the Vietnam War ended, my husband allowed me to go back and bring my three youngest Vietnamese children to the United States. My oldest son, then 17, had left my aunt's home and we were unable to contact him. Later we learned the communists had imprisoned him because his mother had married an American.

After I returned to America with my Vietnamese children, my husband's attitude changed dramatically. He seemed angry with the children and began to discipline them immediately. He expected them to come straight home from school, stay in their room and do their homework. If they disobeyed him in the slightest way, he disciplined them in a way I thought was unreasonably strict and harsh. We argued constantly. All my hopes and dreams of having a happy family life seemed to dissipate.

I cried all the time. I thought of leaving him, but I had no place to go. I even thought of killing myself, but if I did that, who would take care of the children? I stayed on and did my best to please him, but I was miserable. Not long after, he took a job in the Middle East, and my children and I were alone again. My husband sent money back to us, so we were not in danger of starving, but I was lonely and frightened without him. He came home for a month only once a year but each time, we argued and he seemed



Ren Zarnesky realizes her dream of having a happy family.

relieved to go back to his job.

Around that time, I enrolled in a class to learn English as a Second Language. One of my classmates was a member of the SGI-USA. She taught me how to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and told me I could overcome all my problems and become happy if I practiced Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Although my family had practiced Vietnamese Buddhism, I was glad to try anything that might relieve my suffering. I began chanting, trying to learn gongyo and going to Buddhist meetings as often as possible. My friend told me to keep chanting even if I didn't understand, and on Jan. 4, 1981, I received the Gohonzon.

As I did my best to practice faithfully, chanting daily to the Gohonzon, a subtle change began to take place in my thinking. For the first time, I began seeing things from my husband's perspective. He was young, had never been married and not been around children much until our own marriage. I realized he must have found the sudden acquisition of such a big family confusing and trying. I began chanting to understand him better, and to be more helpful instead of criticizing so much. Instead of arguing with him when he chastised the children, I began encouraging them to appreciate him and to respect his wishes. I showed

my own appreciation by telling my husband how happy he made me by bringing my three children to America and giving them a good home. I realized how fortunate I was to have a husband who was a good provider as well as faithful. He wasn't perfect, but as my attitude changed, his behavior began to change, too.

On his visits home from the Middle East, my husband began spending more time with the children, and really seemed to care about them. When my youngest son entered high school, my husband saw to it that he had a car to drive. He seemed genuinely interested in seeing that all the children's needs were met so they could enjoy life and do well in school. He began to treat me with more respect and kindness, too. As I practiced steadily, our family situation thrived.

After several years, my husband took a job at Holloman Air force Base, near our home in Alamogordo, N.M., and moved back in with us. We were a family again at last.

My husband continues to be a good husband and father. He allows me to visit my family in Vietnam often, he brings me flowers, supports my Buddhist practice and doesn't even complain about eating leftovers any more. Now, he makes me happy.

All our children have finished high school, and two

graduated from college. They all have good jobs and good marriages. Best of all, my Vietnamese children love their stepfather. My youngest son said to me recently: "Daddy taught me how to write, how to fix my car, how to manage money and how to be a good citizen. At first I thought he was bad, but now, I love him. Thank you, Mama, for giving me Daddy."

My oldest son, imprisoned by the communists for 10 years, was released several years ago. Last year, under the sponsorship of his younger siblings, he was able to bring his wife and daughter to America. Thanks to chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, my dream of having a happy family has come true.

I thank my friend who introduced me to this Buddhism. I thank my Alamogordo Buddhist family who encouraged me and helped me practice, and I thank all the members of the SGI-USA for enabling me to develop and strengthen my faith in the Gohonzon. Through practicing this Buddhism, I have changed my life completely, and I will be forever grateful. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — THEA MATTHEWS, ROYAL OAK, MICH.

Joy After Grieving

Thea Matthews finds joy after the stillbirth of her daughter Jovita.

Thea Matthews wrote this experience when she lived in Bowling Green, Ky. Recently, Thea and her family moved to Michigan.

In July 1997, my husband, Bruce, my daughter, Salina, and I moved from Columbus, Ohio, to Bowling Green, Ky. Bruce had just finished his engineering degree and had gotten a job there. After moving into a new house in October, I discovered that I was pregnant. With all the changes that had just occurred in our lives, we were a little shocked but excited at the same time. I really wanted a second child and was looking forward to a new addition to our family.

My first pregnancy was pretty difficult, and I had hoped that this one would not be so hard, but it was much more difficult. For the first month, I was sick with a viral infection that I could not get over. Finally, I overcame the infection, but 24 hours of nausea and fatigue set in. Then nine weeks into the pregnancy, I started bleeding. Not knowing whether I was threatened with a miscarriage, I was advised to seek bed rest. Nausea, fatigue and bed rest can make it really difficult to unpack and organize a house and care for a very energetic 4-year-old. The bleeding finally stopped after three weeks, and an ultrasound showed that the fetus was fine. Bruce and I were so relieved.

I still felt so miserable. At four months, I began to suffer from chronic insomnia on top of the nausea and fatigue. For the next two months, I would get two or three hours of sleep a night. I didn't know sometimes how I would get through a day. At times, I found it too much to sit up and do gongyo and would lay on the couch and do it. But I chanted morning and evening because I knew that this is how I would get through the day, and because I wanted to have a happy, healthy baby.

Despite my miserable physical condition, there were some very positive things going on in the pregnancy. I didn't like my first doctor with Salina's birth and was chanting to find someone I liked to help to deliver this

baby. I found two wonderful midwives in Tennessee. Not only were they experienced, they were so humanistic, and I looked forward to my appointments with them. Salina and I would go to the appointments and the midwives would get Salina involved in helping to take my blood pressure and listening to the baby's heartbeat. The appointments were special to Salina and she felt a connection to this baby. In addition, all the tests I took showed that the baby was fine. I felt that I could deal with the nausea, fatigue and insomnia, as long as the baby was fine.

On Thursday, March 19, I felt very strange, and I noticed that I hadn't felt the baby move all day. When I contacted my midwife that evening, she was very concerned and told me that a baby that doesn't move at six months might not be alive. Well, I simply did not believe that because I was six months pregnant, and because I was chanting for a healthy baby. Even so, my husband and I rushed to her office, an hour's drive away. I performed morning prayers before I left and chanted all the way there.

The midwife spent several minutes looking for a heartbeat but found none. As I lay there listening to that silence, I felt as if my life was being swallowed by some strange darkness. After six months of hell, this could not be happening to me. Once a doctor confirmed my midwife's diagnosis, Bruce, Salina and I returned home to decide whether I would wait for the onset of labor or be induced. At six months pregnancy, I would have to go through a full labor and delivery.

I didn't sleep that night, and as the sun rose on Friday morning, for the first time in my 13 years of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I could not find any reason to do gongyo and chant. As I lay there crying, I wondered: "Why, why should I chant? What was the purpose?"

My husband did gongyo and chanted for a long time, then came downstairs and read to me the following passage from SGI President Ikeda: "Life is eternal. Suppose a person dies in pain and suffering. Even after death, that person's life may remain in a state of suffering. It might be likened to someone moaning in his or her sleep due to a nightmare.

"If you chant daimoku with that deceased person in mind,

you can remove the suffering from his or her agonized life and impart ease and joy through the rejuvenating and illuminating power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And since chanting is that powerful, there is no way that your daimoku cannot help move in the direction of happiness the lives of you parents and friends who are still with you. Though it might be difficult to appreciate at first, the mud of our suffering provides the building material from which we can erect a solid bulwark for our palace of happiness within. The deeper the mire of suffering, the more indomitable a palace we can establish" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 2, pp. 201-02).

As he read this guidance, something stirred in my heart. Through all the pain I was feeling, I realized that I needed to chant for this child I had lost. I managed to get myself out of bed to do so.

Throughout the next several days, I experienced the power of my practice helping me through this difficult experience. People in my life surrounded me with love and support. Friends I had recently made in Bowling Green helped care for Salina, brought food and offered comfort and information about how to get through this experience. Two of my sisters, one of whom I had not been getting along with, drove several hours to see me. My mother and father drove down and stayed with me through the whole ordeal. My mom does not chant, but she sat with me many times as I did. She spent many hours holding me in her arms as I wept uncontrollable tears. My father, who normally tells you exactly what he thinks, never said anything about any of our decisions concerning the birth and waited patiently through everything. I never realized how lucky I am to have the parents I have.

Even people I did not know reached out to me. Bruce and I realized we had to plan a funeral. We had no idea how to do it, and in my state of mind, I just didn't know where to begin. A woman, Joy, from Nashville, had heard about our situation from our midwife. She, too, had lost a child soon after she gave birth, so she understood the anguish I was going through. Without us asking, she had made several long-distance



Thea Matthews with her husband, Bruce, and daughter, Salina, 4.

phone calls and found out where and how to have the baby cremated. She arranged everything for us. I felt so fortunate to have this woman come into my life.

The doctor and staff at the hospital where I delivered my baby were incredible. I went to a small 36-bed hospital in Carthage, Tenn., and I have never met nurses and doctors who were more humanistic and compassionate. They were human beings before they were medical professionals. The doctor held my hand when I cried. She encouraged me when she saw I was in pain and afraid. The labor was taking longer than expected and one of the nurses had her husband bring a video from home for my daughter to watch. Whatever I needed, they were there to help. I felt so fortunate to go through this experience at that hospital.

Shortly after midnight the baby was born. She was a girl, and she had died because she had developed severe deformities. We named her Jovita, which means joyous. With the help of my midwives and doctor, I summoned the courage to hold Jovita, and in the morning, my parents and Salina held her as well.

We returned to Bowling Green with the baby. Before taking her to be cremated, Bruce, Salina, my mother and I did chanted for her. During that time, I realized how protected I was by my Buddhist practice. I realized in a very profound way that this was our karma and because of my practice, the universe had reached out to us and at every step of the way had helped us through this trauma. Through my pain, I could feel the awesome power of practicing this Buddhism.

I think the most important benefit came with the memorial service. There are no other members in Bowling Green,

and since moving there, Bruce and I had been chanting about and trying to find ways to introduce this Buddhism to others. We had not been very successful. With SGI-USA members far away, the only people who could attend the service were our friends in Bowling Green. On the day of the memorial service, all my friends were there and they all got to hear Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and see the Gohonzon. Jovita, in her short 6-month life was able to introduce Buddhism to more than 11 people. If Jovita had lived to full term, which 50 percent of babies with this deformity do, the shock of expecting to deliver a healthy baby but delivering one with anencephaly, (a congenital absence of a brain or severely deformed one), would have been far more painful for us. Had I miscarried her, I never would have had the opportunity to share this Buddhism with others. If Jovita had to die, she died at the best time to do the most good.

In "The Three Kinds of Treasures," Nichiren Daishonin says: "It is rare to be born a human being. ... Life as a human being is hard to sustain ... But it is better to live a single day with honor than to live to 120 and die in disgrace. ... More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 851).

Jovita only lived 27 weeks, but her life was so purposeful and powerful. Because of her, I could share this Buddhism with others, I could see the great power of this practice in our lives and I could see all the love I have in my life. While I still grieve for the loss of Jovita, I feel so fortunate to have had her in our lives. **WT**

Virginia/Carolina Families Enjoy Camp-Out

By **GEORGE UTTING**

ANNANDALE, VA., CORRESPONDENT

What do you get when you combine 27 boys and girls with 23 young men and women, together with parents and other adults, bring them together for two days, add water and sun, and mellow them over a campfire? In a word — fun. As one young woman put it, “I’m just having complete fun. Nothing’s negative and I’m not feeling stressed out. Even the parents are having fun.”

They came together from all over the recently formed Virginia/Carolina Region for a Boys and Girls and Youth Family Camp June 16–18 at the 4-H Educational Center in Jamestown, Va., to sleep (maybe) in cabins, and join together in an intimate family festival and encouragement in faith. The motto of the 4-H Club is “Head, Heart, Hands and Health,” which seemed to coincide neatly with the theme for the event, “Raising the Next Generation of Disciples.”

On Saturday, everyone was divided into four teams for activities that included fishing with a seine net in the James river, a teamwork exercise with ropes, water polo and swimming in the pool, and a name game, where each person had to guess the name taped on their back. The names ranged from Nichiren Daishonin and the presidents of the Soka Gakkai to Barney the Dinosaur.

A 4-H camp counselor noted the uniqueness of the group, and was

particularly impressed by the ethnic diversity. Another counselor observed that “this was a really great group that worked together, and they all got so excited when they got through [the ropes]. The teamwork was wonderful.” More swimming, tie dyeing, an outstanding game of soccer and a bonfire, complete with s’mores, musical entertainment and ghost stories, topped off a rather full Saturday.

The outing closed, on Sunday, with outpourings of shared sentiments from the young partici-

pants, such as “I didn’t know I was going to have so much fun,” and “I didn’t want to come here but I’m glad I did, and I hope to see everyone again next year.”

The parents at the event were reminded of the importance of the Boys and Girls group, not only for the children, but for all of us, by bringing us together in such a relaxed, family atmosphere. For many of us, this weekend will inspire us to reflect even more how to connect the next generation to the SGI and President Ikeda. **WU**



Photo by GEORGE UTTING

Participants enjoy an ‘icebreaker’ activity at the Virginia/Carolina Region Family Camp in Jamestown, Va.



ALISO VIEJO CAMPUS

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

Question:

How do I, as a parent, handle doubt or criticism about sending my child to Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo from our extended family, our own non-member relatives?

Answer:

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them to the SUA office for a personal tour of the campus, so that they can understand the level of preparation and commitment that has gone into making the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus so outstanding. Have them meet our new faculty and catch the excitement and enthusiasm they have for mentoring students. SUA will be hosting a Family Tour Day

on Oct. 7, 2000, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.—and everyone is welcome!

If you cannot make the trip, have them look at the SUA Web page at www.soka.edu and check out the faculty and their impressive credentials.

The most common reaction we get from adults touring the Aliso Viejo campus is a heartfelt “It makes me want to come back to college!”

Question:

How should we describe SUA, Aliso Viejo to others?

Answer:

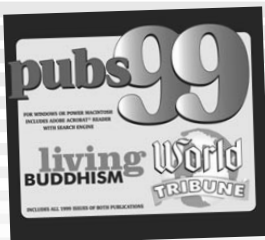
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If you have questions of any kind about SUA, please send them to SUA at either admission@soka.edu or info@soka.edu. We will use this World Tribune column to share our answer with others who might have the same questions.

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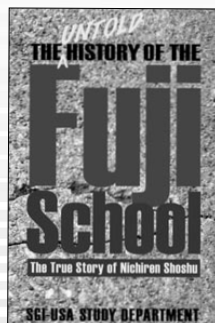


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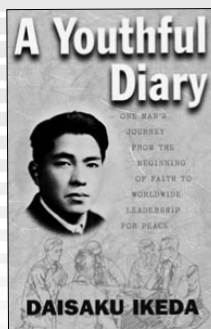
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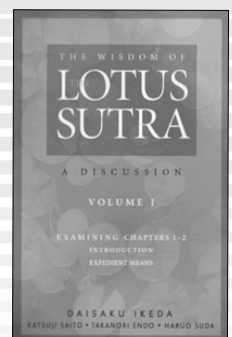
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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 43-44

Kosen-rufu in Taiwan faces a big obstacle: The government orders the organization to disband. 'Encountering persecution verifies that we are practicing the correct teaching,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto comments. 'It is only by facing great obstacles that we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.'

In April, a major obstacle hit the Soka Gakkai organization in Taiwan. Taipei Chapter Leader Zhu Qianxun was ordered to appear at the Taiwan Garrison General Headquarters, which was responsible for national security under martial law, the morning of April 3.

As he left the house, his wife asked a worried look: "Will you be all right? Will they let you come home?"

Her father had been arrested as a "thought criminal" by the Japanese military during the war and spent three years in prison. [Japan's Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and later amendments provided for the surveillance and arrest of those suspected of "thought crimes," which included holding ideas that differed from the defined ideology of the state.] Thinking of this made her all the more concerned.

"Don't worry," Zhu said reassuringly. "Neither the Soka Gakkai nor I have done anything wrong. In fact, this is an

excellent opportunity to impart a correct understanding of the Soka Gakkai to the authorities."

At the GGH, the interrogation began. The investigating officers grilled Zhu in great detail about the organization in Taiwan, its activities, its membership, its relationship with the Soka Gakkai in Japan and the doctrines it upheld. Zhu answered each question fully and honestly. He had absolutely nothing to hide.

The questioning continued late into the night, but they still weren't finished. Zhu had to stay overnight. When the interrogation finally ended the next day, one of the investigating officers said: "We have come to the conclusion that the Soka Gakkai is an illegal organization. You'd better prepare yourself for being ordered to disband."

Even though Taiwan's constitution guaranteed the freedom of religion, assembly and association, according to the State of Emergency Civic Organizations Law in effect under

martial law, all civic organizations had to apply to the government for official recognition and permission to carry out their activities. The Soka Gakkai in Taiwan had done this, but permission had not been granted.

The law also stipulated that only one organization of each type could be recognized. The government maintained that since an officially recognized Buddhist organization already existed in Taiwan, it could not approve a new Buddhist association. Without official recognition, the Soka Gakkai was operating illegally.

But something had bothered Zhu as he went through the application process. Although the doctrines upheld by the Soka Gakkai and the other Buddhist group were completely different, no matter how much he appealed to the authorities to acknowledge this, they refused to listen.

There was still a strong anti-Japanese sentiment in Taiwan, and it is possible that the real reason the Soka Gakkai did not receive official recognition was because of its Japanese origins. It is also likely that certain parties hostile to the organization in Japan were deliberately spreading rumors discrediting the Soka Gakkai as a dangerous ideological group in Taiwan.

At any rate, all Zhu's efforts had come to naught, and the Soka Gakkai's application to form an organization in Taiwan was rejected.

On April 9, six days after Zhu had been called to the GGH for questioning, an official came to his home and served him notice to disband the Soka Gakkai's Taipei chapter. Zhu phoned Southeast Asia General Chapter Leader Kazumasa Morikawa in Japan and let him know the details of the

situation. Morikawa immediately relayed this information to Shin'ichi Yamamoto.

"What? They're being forced to disband?!" Shin'ichi exclaimed. "How awful for the members! From the perspective of Buddhism, though, this is proof that they have developed genuine faith. Doesn't the Goshō say, 'As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishōnin*, p. 770)? Encountering persecution verifies that we are practicing the correct teaching. It is only by facing great obstacles that we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

"Even if the organization has to disband because the law of the land calls for it, the members must never lose their faith. Taiwan still guarantees the freedom of religion, so it should be possible for our members to continue practicing faith there.

"The Daishōnin states: 'Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler's domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart' (WND, 579). This is a grand proclamation of spiritual freedom. The Taiwan members must also continue in this spirit.

"Faith is something that no one can take away from us, no matter how hard they may try. For we are the rulers of our own hearts. Ultimately, it is not so

much due to pressure from without that people abandon their faith—it is due to their own fear and cowardice in the face of possible oppression."

Shin'ichi then asked, "Incidentally, how old is Taipei Chapter Leader Zhu now?"

"I believe he'll be 40 soon," replied Morikawa.

"He's still young," said Shin'ichi. "Real victory doesn't come until one's 70s and 80s. There is no way this situation will persist for decades. The day will definitely come when the members in Taiwan will carry out Soka Gakkai activities freely.

"Night always gives way to day. Winter always turns into spring. Now is the time for the members to store their energy, just as plants do when they send their roots deep into the soil, so that when dawn comes, when spring arrives, they can cause a great flourishing of kosen-rufu.

"The important thing is that the members patiently endure this time of hardship with the determination not to retreat even a single step. And that they work to steadily build a solid foundation for kosen-rufu in the future. If they triumph over this obstacle, the Soka Gakkai in Taiwan will see tremendous growth. It will usher in a golden age in the 21st century."

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

Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA



A View of Enlightenment

PERSPECTIVE

By EDWARD MARASHIAN
HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

My name is Eddie Marashian, though I am also known as Mother, the professional name I sing under. I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism since November 1999. I have supported myself as a professional yoga teacher for nearly four years. Before I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I dedicated myself earnestly to the discipline of yoga meditation. Though I became quite adept at the exercises and taught meditation to large numbers of students, I was perplexed by the mystery that surrounded enlightenment. Each secret mantra or technique I learned provided a key that opened another door into what became an endless labyrinth of the soul.

Around the time of my 27th birthday last November, I found myself feeling incredibly frustrated and distraught. At times I could feel a part of my life was transcendent, but for all my meditation efforts, I could not seem to actualize myself in the world.

However, my life changed dramatically within a matter of four days of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and I thank my sister Julianne for her tireless, four-year effort to introduce me to this practice. The egalitarian simplicity and effectiveness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism won me over instantly.

The following is my perspective on what I find to be so revolutionary about enlightenment from the standpoint of this Buddhism.

In most spiritual disciplines, "enlightenment" is a perplexing concept. Notions such as, "Awareness of the soul"; "Merging with the infinite"; or "Being in nothingness," for instance, are shrouded in language and mysticism far removed from our daily life experience. In fact, enlightenment is often equated with a style of life (ie. in a monastery) and a set of preferences (ie. vegetarianism and billowy white clothing) different from our own.

Yet, as can be seen in the school of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, enlightenment does not have to be such an enigma. In fact, the accessible and ap-



Photo by PAUL MARCARELLI

pliable nature of enlightenment to our everyday reality is exactly that which sets Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism apart from other practices as both more progressive and in rhythm with the needs of society as a whole. To begin to understand better why this practice is so revolutionary, let us look to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*—the scriptural text comprised of 172 letters written by the founder of the practice, Nichiren Daishonin, in 13th century Japan.

The concept of enlightenment is clearly spelled out in the letter, "Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood." The Daishonin explains that our Buddhahood, his word for enlightenment, consists of two things: reality and wisdom. Reality is defined as the "true nature of all phenomenon" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 746). From the perspective of each individual's life, this means that we all possess a uniqueness about us that is unparalleled by anything else in the universe. To uncover this uniqueness we must continually ask our selves the following questions: What is the most original aspect of me, providing me with a gift that only I can present to humanity in my special way? Or, what makes me the greatest, most wonderful, most vital person on the entire planet? And what is the one thing that I must achieve with my life that would represent the perfect expression and manifestation of me? To be able to answer these questions honestly is to know your reality.

So if reality represents our unique nature, then wisdom, the second component of enlightenment, "is the illuminating and manifesting of this true nature" (WND, 746). Wisdom is taking that which is special and unique and creative about each and every one of us and making it a real, living, breathing presence

Kyoto Priest Secedes From Nichiren Shoshu

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Another priest seceded from Nichiren Shoshu on Sept. 4. Rando Shuho, chief priest of Kenmyo-ji temple in Kyoto, says in his notice to High Priest Nikken Abe, "The critical situation that Nichiren Shoshu finds itself in today is solely due to your distorted faith."

He adds: "There is no denying the fact that, in excommunicating the Soka Gakkai—an act that hardly seems Buddhist—you have committed one of the five cardinal sins in Buddhism: disrupting the unity of Buddhist practitioners."

Mr. Shuho further resolves: "It is my duty to point out your grave sins as high priest, so that I can atone for the sins I have committed as your disciple. I thus demand that you re-



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Rando Shuho

sign from the position of high priest immediately."

In 1972, Mr. Shuho, then a teenager, joined the priesthood. Early in his career, he was assigned to Heian-ji temple in Kyoto, where the chief priest was Nikken Abe, future high priest.

Two Nichiren Shoshu priests have seceded this year: Mr. Shuho and Endo Ishida, who left the Overseas Bureau of Nichiren Shoshu in July. **WT**

here in the world. Hence, from the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, enlightenment is neither a state of mind nor being blissed out in meditation. Enlightenment, or Buddhahood, is simply the process of unlocking the door to our long-hidden gifts and bringing them to the light of day here in the world. The words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo represent the key that unlocks that door.

A very wise man taught me recently that our Buddhahood is not just a spiritual awakening, but very much a physical one as well. To support this idea, let us look to the Lotus Sutra, the final teaching of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, and the teaching that this school of Buddhism is based upon. The final lines of chapter 16, the "Life Span" chapter—considered to be the heart of the Sutra—are, "At all times I think to myself, how can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way, and quickly acquire the body of the Buddha?"

Make note that Shakyamuni does not say the heart of the Buddha. Nor does he say the mind or the meditative appearance of a Buddha. He says the body of a Buddha, meaning that we are all here on Earth to embody our truth and to become the physical vehicle capable of walking through the world perpetuating that truth on a daily basis for the benefit of all soci-

ety. Though meditation possesses value, our purpose in life is not simply to sit cross-legged and to attain a state in which we feel our own awareness merge with the infinite.

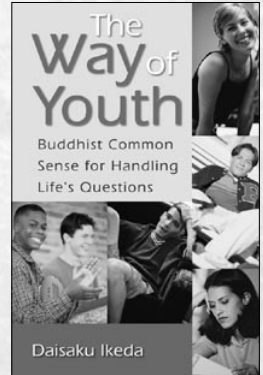
Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Daisaku Ikeda—arguably the three greatest spiritual leaders of the past century—proved beyond a doubt that only truth put into fearless action can make a significant impact on the quality of life experienced by humanity as a whole.

Nichiren Daishonin urges us to take "the riverbed of reality and to fill it with the water of wisdom" (WND, 746). In other words, just as the path of a riverbed will invariably direct the water of the river to its destination of the sea, so will the riverbed of our unique and true nature fuse with the water of our innate wisdom to deliver us to our happiness, purpose and destination in life. Whether we are rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, doctor or doorman is irrelevant. All that matters is that we each learn to take who we are at our core and use it to make a difference in our own community and environment: I think this is enlightenment!

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

The Way of Youth

Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life's Questions
Daisaku Ikeda



Based on the popular "Discussions on Youth" series in the *World Tribune*, *The Way of Youth* brings together President Ikeda's responses to the questions of today's young people. Edited for a general audience, the book offers insights into a variety of issues of concern to today's young people, including how to build confidence and character, learning to live with and respect both yourself and others, finding true happiness, dealing with peer pressure and how to contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society. The book is sure to appeal to teens and their parents of all faiths. 0-9674697-0-8, Paperback, \$14.95

"An outstanding guide to humanity. I recommend it to all who desire to seek self-improvement."

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



APPLYING BUDDHISM TO DAILY LIFE

Middleway Press books are available at your favorite neighborhood or on-line bookseller. (Not available at SGI-USA bookstores.)

Praise for Men

I really enjoyed the Sept. 15 issue of the *World Tribune* with the men's division articles, especially Matilda Buck's letter. It was a beautiful heartfelt and refreshing statement. I can truly say that Matilda's compassionate words have healed some anger in my heart; for 24 years, I have practiced in an organization that routinely makes jokes about the men's division ... With leaders like Danny Nagashima and Matilda, I have 100 percent confidence that we are on the correct course for victory in the new century.

—DIXON HAMBY
Seattle
http://www.idixon.com/

Congratulations, Minnesota Youth

Thank you for your great coverage of the Minnesota Culture Festival (Sept. 1 *World Tribune*). As a member of the area, I am so happy to read about our event of the year. I understand that because of the limited space it is very difficult to cover every aspect of the event. Therefore, I thought that I would like to extend the most respect and appreciation to our youth, who worked and chanted so hard for the success of this event. We love you guys.

—KATHY and
HANK FUKUI
St. Paul, Minn.
fukuihh@hotmail.com

Excited About the Parables

Thanks for the great parable of "The Three Carts and the Burning House" in the Aug. 18 issue. I was so excited that you've decided to use the stories in the Lotus Sutra as material for kids and adults. It's very applicable and easy for people to understand. Story telling is a great art and symbol of culture and we need to develop this art with Buddhist parables and stories. It's also an important facet of family life that I want to pass on to my children. My wife and I had our first daughter four months ago.

Over the past year since my wife has been pregnant, I've had a great determination to find parables and stories in the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Daishonin's writings. I want to create stories for my kids and all kids from these writings so that even children can understand and learn Buddhist concepts. Over this past year, I have

World Tribune MAILBOX

taken to writing some of these parables on my computer. Some of them are so straight forward that they only need to be copied from book to computer. Others are only an analogy that I created a story out of, such as the carp climbing a waterfall to become a dragon in "Dragon Gate."

I can't wait for the day to see a children's story book made of Buddhist parables and stories from Nichiren Daishonin and the Lotus Sutra. This is my dream and my goal even though I am not a professional writer.

—CHRIS CONLEY,
Seattle
cconley5@juno.com

—ADRIENNE LANDAU,
Center for Wellness & Health
Communication
Harvard University, Mass.
alandau@uhs.harvard.edu

Appreciation for Parents

I really appreciated seeing the Mother's Day feature on parenting (June 2 *World Tribune*). The messages from parents were inspiring and also encouraging, because the parents shared both their joys and struggles. I can identify with both. From one parent's description of low daimoku days on which her life-condition "bee-lines to the lower worlds" to another saying that parenting compels him to become a better person, to the mention of the happiness that comes from watching our "baby Buddhas" grow, hearing these parents' experiences was food for my soul. Also, as someone who is a big advocate of our organization encouraging and supporting 100 percent participatory fatherhood, I thought it significant, appropriate, contemporary, visionary and affirming that dads were a big part of this feature. Thanks so much!

—LAVORA PERRY,
Cleveland, Ohio
perryrich@juno.com

Thanks for Pride

Thanks so much for the beautiful spread on GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) Pride events in the Aug. 4 issue: I'm always proud to be an SGI member, but especially so when we show appreciation for members who have the stand-alone spirit and lots of spunk! It was so much fun walking through the streets of Boston with our SGI Rainbow Lotus banner, hearing people along the route cheer us on. My smile was quite broad all day!

Thank You for the Prayer Article

I want to say thank you to Matilda Buck for the wonderful article "Prayer: A Real Force for Change" in the June 9 issue. I have just celebrated my 12th year of practice on June 4. However, for the last several months have felt very "stuck" with the death of my best friend in November, followed by the death of another dear friend in February. Then my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer in March. I have been going through serious doubt and have had a difficult time with deciding what my prayer should be. After reading this article, I realize that I have had serious doubts believing that I am a Buddha (guess that will hold ya back, eh?). I am determined to pray with the belief that I am a Buddha (there I said it and it felt pretty darn good!). My sincerest appreciation to Matilda for sharing her wisdom.

—KAREN CHRISTEN,
Brisbane, Calif.



Congratulations

Tiny fortune baby has arrived to the Stormonts! Konstanza Theiss Stormont was born on July 24, 2000, at 8:28 p.m. after a fairly "easy delivery of a fortune child" (just as mom and dad had chanted!). She weighed in at 8 pounds, and was 20 inches long. Konstanza joins Linda and Rob Stormont, and big sister, Siubhan!

Lost and Found

TERRI MITCHELL, flautist & my kosen-rufu friend in LA's Horizon Chapter and the SGI-USA orchestra: Where are you? Please contact Ron Culver: pacificrimshot@mediaone.net

For the Spanish-Language Pages

Please forward all articles for and questions about the Spanish Pages to:
wtspanish@sgi-usa.org



The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper
General Director
Daniel Nagashima

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

Managing Editor
Marge Hall
mhall@sgi-usa.org

Associate Editor
Jeff Farr
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

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

Contributing Writer
Terry Ellis

Contributing Artists
Stephanie Sydney
ssydney@sgi-usa.org
Linda Eberle

Staff Translators
Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi

Contributing Photographers

Gregory Nakasuji
Kirk Condyles
Jonathan Wilson
Dixon Hamby
Carol Barnstead
Martin Cohen
Jean Pritchard

Photo Editor
Lisa Hollis
marvilisa@cs.com

Bureau Chiefs

Phil Simpson, Atlanta
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Foreign Language Pages

Chinese: Ingrid Yeh
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READERS COMMENTS

Send to:
Mailbox
606 Wilshire Blvd. PO Box 1427
Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907
or e-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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

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

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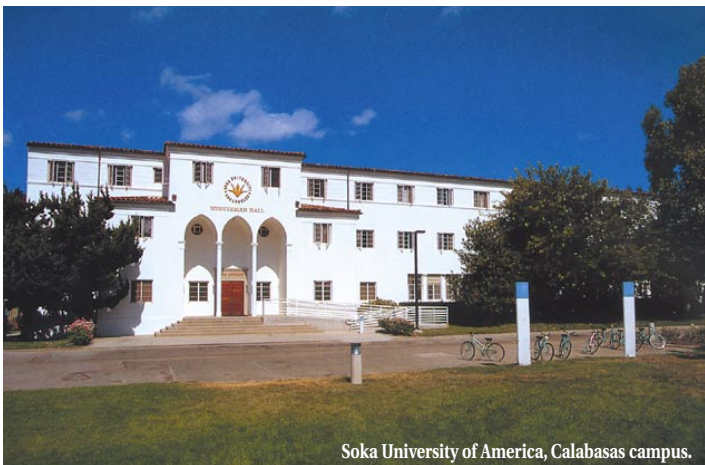
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BUILDING A NOBLE LEGACY OF ACHIEVEMENT

In the month of November, there will be an opportunity to contribute to the SGI-USA Scholarship Fund for Soka University of America.



The Student and Community Services Building on the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus.



Soka University of America, Calabasas campus.



Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus.

FROM SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA



Greetings to all the readers of the *World Tribune*. In a recent essay about Soka University of America, SGI President Ikeda writes: "I also wish to express profound gratitude to the SGI-USA members for their tremendous support, directly and indirectly. They are all comrades united by lofty ideals whom I regard as the university's founders, as magnificent pioneers and builders. All of their sweat and hard work will without a doubt give rise to a noble, immortal legacy of achievement" (Sept. 1 *World Tribune*, p. 3).

I would also like to offer my deep appreciation for all of your efforts to support this most amazing chapter in the history of our movement.

While many of you are working tirelessly for the success of the university, I have heard from many people that they don't know how they can personally contribute, particularly if they do not have college-age children. Some people have expressed that they don't yet feel personally involved.

There are a few ways we can all lend our support, furthering President Ikeda's dream for SUA. We can personally encourage those students around us who have an opportunity to apply, sharing with them the great vision of Soka education. We can offer our sincere prayers for the greatest possible dedication ceremony for the university on May 3, 2001.

Additionally, in the month of November, we have the opportunity to contribute to the SGI-USA Scholarship Fund for Soka University of America, helping to ensure that the best and brightest students, regardless of their economic situation, are able to attend this wonderful institution. Contribution envelopes will be available at each SGI-USA Culture and Community Center very soon.

Again, thank you for all of your effort so far. Together, let's continue to build this "noble, immortal legacy of achievement." Please take good care of your health and families, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

David K. Nagashima