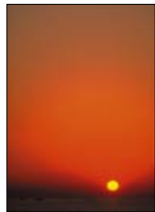


World TRIBUNE

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World Peace Festival Lights Up Indiana

By BARBARA STAFFEN
INDIANAPOLIS CORRESPONDENT

Looking toward the future, with a song in their hearts, the members of Indiana Area held their first ever World Peace Festival on Oct. 8. Held outdoors around the Indiana Community Center, the afternoon weather was an unseasonably chilly 50 degrees and mostly overcast. Despite these obstacles however, festival participants determined to warm the hearts of all who attended.

Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Indiana Community Center and the 40th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's first trip to the United States, the festival was inspired by President Ikeda's recent poem "Soar — Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!" It incorporated the vision of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth emerging, like the phoenix bird, rising from the ashes of an old, past life. This image inspired the design of the festival logo showing a phoenix, together with the state of Indiana, rising up and flying into a new era.

Production committee members creating the performances used excerpts from the poem as a mission statement for the festival. They also wrote and recorded a theme song for the event, "The Indiana Sun." For the many members who struggled to even believe that an event like this could happen in Indiana, this song became a source of inspiration, as well as a spirited means of inviting people to the event.

As preparations got closer to the day of the festival, members found themselves challenging unprecedented obstacles and encouraging one another in ways much deeper than they had in the past. Many commented on how

much they truly appreciated one another's friendships in ways that they had forgotten about through the years. Over and over, the importance of chanting first in overcoming difficulties became evident. Through the example of the youth standing up in their districts, men's and women's division members "emerged" to help support the stage crew, carnival and booth construction, food preparation and other behind-the-scenes efforts. Youth also worked hard to develop a strong behind-the-scenes movement.

The festival began with a carnival, consisting of various games, clowns, etc., as well as information booths on the SGI,

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY POEMS

CELEBRATING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY

SGI President Ikeda has written several new poems to all SGI members in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, Nov. 18. See pages 6-7 for "The Victorious Future of Mentor and Disciple," a major new poem he wrote for the anniversary.

We have won!
The Soka Gakkai's benefit
In pioneering the path
Of global kosen-rufu
Fragrant for all eternity.



I celebrate
the 70th anniversary
Of the Soka Gakkai's
founding,
Gazing upon
the smiling faces
Of friends around
the world.

Carrying out the mission
We pledged to fulfill
In the remote past,
Our resolute procession
Stretches on far into
the distance.



The SGI
In accord with
Nichiren Daishonin's
prophecy
Has spread to
163 countries.

My friends,
May you win renown
Throughout eternity
As noble champions
Of worldwide kosen-rufu.



Your selfless commitment
To realizing the Buddha's
will and decree
Has brought the
Mystic Law
To this country and that.

Soka University of America and the Victory Over Violence project. Booth participation was also opened to groups outside the SGI who have similar

purposes in promoting peace, education and culture throughout society. Participants included the Julian Center, a crisis intervention center for

women, and the Peace and Learning Center, an Indianapolis organization dedicated to

PLEASE SEE FESTIVAL, 12

Photo by GLORIA VELASQUEZ



Young performers encourage the audience at the first Indiana World Peace Festival on Oct. 8 at the Indianapolis Community Center.

FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA

A Great Conclusion to the Year

Hello everyone! I hope you are all in great health and spirits. There is not much time left to go before Jan. 1, 2001. Let's continue to make this a year filled with victorious accomplishments. I feel that this year's end is the cause for a great beginning in the new century and in welcoming SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda back to America.

This year, I have also been challenging myself to meet as many of our members as possible and have been greatly encouraged by every person I have met. Through this column, I will share my encounters in the hope of passing on the inspiration you have given me.

Recently, I participated in chapter meeting in Killeen, Texas. The members there have such a tremendous seeking spirit and have been introducing many people to this practice. Since the beginning of this year, 21 members have received the Gohonzon. I discovered that the key to the Killeen members' success is their continuous effort to home visit and care for each member. They are on fire!

At the Central Zone 40th anniversary celebration on Nov. 4, I enjoyed the event with almost 4,000 members representing 13 states — some even spent 12 hours traveling just one way to be there!



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Danny greets a young member at the Victory Over Violence Summit in Denver, Oct. 5.

One remarkable woman who was able to attend this event is Etta Moten Barnett, who is 100 years old. She was a professional dancer and was the first African-American woman to be invited to the White House. She gracefully performed for President Franklin D. Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Etta is still vigorous and was overjoyed at having the opportunity to see President Ikeda on video at the meeting. I was so moved by her beautiful spirit to continue to advance kosenruffu throughout her life.

Immediately following this celebration, I flew to Denver, where I attended a Victory Over Violence Summit on Nov. 5, held against the backdrop of

the breathtaking snow-capped Rocky Mountains. Despite the heavy snowfall, the members of the Rocky Mountain Region gathered almost 2,000 members from places as far away as Wyoming, Utah, Albuquerque, N.M., and Phoenix. The activity was a tremendous success, and I'm sure it will serve as a historic launching pad for the members of the Rocky Mountain Region.

I will continue to travel all over the United States, attending activities and doing many home visits in hopes of meeting each of you and, together, creating a new SGI-USA. Please take good care of yourselves and your families, and I hope to see you soon! **WT**

MANY IN BODY, ONE IN MIND

Back to the Basics

By GEOFF ROHDE
SACRAMENTO REGION LEADER

All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind," Nichiren Daishonin writes, "transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 217).

Is the Daishonin asking us here to discard our individuality and participate in SGI activities as if the organization were the Borg collective? Not at all.

The Daishonin celebrates the uniqueness of cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms — the uniqueness of each individual. And the SGI has long celebrated the power of a united yet highly diverse group of people. This is why SGI President Ikeda is constantly reminding us that every person has a unique role to play, one for which only he or she is qualified.

Discovering one's purpose in life, that mission and identity — and then striving with all

your heart to share those gifts with society — is, after all, what living an effective, happy life is all about!

The human body is a living monument to the powers of synergy (perhaps the closest English equivalent to *itai doshin*), the mysterious ability of complex systems to manifest qualities that transcend the specific properties of their component parts. Our present human form is the product of millions of years of evolution.

But large-scale human societies have existed for less than 10,000 years, a mere instant of geological time. Religion, commerce and politics are common methods of uniting individuals into a larger, more effective and robust "organism."

The Daishonin's deepest wish, and the goal of the SGI, is to help all people of the world discover their shared heritage of humanity. We do this by promoting peace, culture and education; by introducing others to the practice of Buddhism, and most important, by living the most humane, compassionate life each of us can possibly live. **WT**

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

Corrections

• On page 12 of our Nov. 17 issue, all photos should have been credited to Josea Johnson.

• Clarification for p. 6 of the Oct. 20 *World Tribune*: The official song for the State of Hawaii is "Hawaii Ponoï." The song "These Islands" — after its debut at the 1998 Ms. Universe Contest in Hawaii — was unofficially adopted as the state song to promote Hawaii as an island paradise to visitors from around the world.

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EXPERIENCE — CAROL LUEDEMAN, NEW YORK

Developing the Core of My Life

Challenging Relationships

‘Whether I am married or not, no one can give or take away the feelings I have about myself,’ says Carol Luedeman.

Nineteen years ago, I could never have said that I loved my life. My practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism has helped me grow in all areas of my life, but the most fundamental changes have occurred because of the growth in my relationships — with my family and friends, in my jobs, with the world around me, and especially, with men. It wasn’t until seven years ago, though, that I realized that the most important relationship I needed to work on was the one with myself.

I grew up in a good family that was predominately tranquil, which sounds great, but in reality it came at the expense of no one really expressing their feelings. The result of this was that I felt completely powerless in my relationships, always feeling pushed around by what was happening with another person or in my environment. I had no idea of the dynamic law of cause and effect in my life. So, even though I had good circumstances, I didn’t know how to enjoy and appreciate them. I only knew how I felt. From the outside, I was perceived to be a lucky girl from a good home with no problems. On the inside, I was confused, angry, negative and defensive. The worst part was that I had no idea why I felt this way.

My only refuge from this pain was my creativity. After I graduated from art school, I started an apprenticeship at a photo studio in New York City. It was at this first job that I was introduced to Buddhism by a co-worker Victor Podesser. I was so not interested in the practice. I thought religion was a crutch.

Just around the same time, I remember ending yet another relationship with a guy. Another painful cycle of intense rapture that soon turned into the hell of misunderstanding and hurt. I determined, “That’s it, I’m done with relationships.” I was only 21.

Looking back, it is not sur-

prising that it was precisely because of the relationship that I had with Victor and his deep caring for my happiness that I started attending SGI meetings. He became my mentor in photography, and even though I fell in love with him, I remained suspicious about his motives. I thought: “Why should he care for my happiness so much? What does he want from me?” It took a while for me to trust him, but as I did we became the closest of friends. I started chanting not really knowing why, but Victor knew why; he could see my pain, and he never gave up on me. Because of our friendship and the SGI-USA organization, I began to have hope that I could challenge those weak and negative parts of my life.

Two years into my practice, I attended a huge meeting in San Diego, Calif., with 20,000 youth and SGI President Ikeda. I came away from the weekend with the determination to work on myself and not to focus on a boyfriend.

In fact, I became so focused on myself and on helping the other young women in my district to grow, that I got used to being alone. The few times I did start dating, I knew I was not ready for it yet.

It wasn’t until my late 20s that I started to chant for a boyfriend. All of my old insecurities came flooding back. My question was: “How is it possible to meet someone and actually want to spend my life with him?” The idea was overwhelming.

At the same time, I was forced to work on a difficult relationship at work. My boss was abusive, demeaning and controlling. I received guidance to support her, but also to tell her how I felt. I was scared to confront her, but I did and it was a huge victory. In five years of working together, I started to change what I learned were my passive aggressive tendencies. I grew stronger, which turned our relationship into a positive one for both of us.

After many hours of chanting for a boyfriend and trying not to lose hope, I met and started dating someone in my early 30s. I was scared and elated. Amazingly, for the first time I was able to communicate with him and not just through sex. We became so close. The problem was I didn’t know whether I wanted to get more serious with this man. But I chanted and was sure that I

needed to continue the relationship. I fell in love with him but could not explain why I did not trust him. I really doubted myself. It was as if my heart and my head were doing battle.

When he proposed two years later, what should have been a happy event was not because I didn’t know what to say. I went to a senior for guidance. Her first words were, “The reason you are confused is because the core of your life is gone.” I cried when she said this because I thought that is all that I have been trying to do all these years, to build a strong core.

She shared President Ikeda’s guidance that happiness is something that you create with your life. Marriage, a relationship, will not create happiness. Marriage is not a goal — if it will help me grow than OK, but if it will make me regress then I don’t want it. I chanted and cried and read this guidance hundreds of times to understand it with my life.

I went into a depression; I could not sleep or eat. Every day was complete hell. I don’t know how I made it through each day at work. I thought, “If this continues, I don’t want to live.” I felt that there was something terribly wrong with me, so I chanted, asking the question, “What’s wrong with me?” I went to a therapist.

In therapy, I learned that depression comes from anger turned inward, and that I had been depressed on and off since I was a teen.

During this time, I kept chanting as best I could. I also studied and cried because this philosophy seemed to be the only thing I understood and that made me feel better. Three weeks later, I was chanting at the New York Culture Center about the priesthood issue. I still can’t explain how, but after this chanting, the worst feelings lifted.

Months later, I still could not make a decision, yes or no. My boyfriend gave up and started dating another woman. I was dev-



Carol Barnstead and Mark Luedeman were married on July 24, 1999.

asted about his decision. Thoughts of missing him and why I couldn’t commit tortured me through the next year. I really wanted this thinking of him to stop. I had a deep realization that to live in either the past or the future was too painful; that I would sink back into depression if I didn’t live in the present.

Finally something happened that showed me clearly that he didn’t truly respect my feelings. It took a lot for me to realize this, because deep down I felt this was what I deserved, but as soon as I did, the obsessive thought “What’s wrong with me?” ended.

I started chanting in a new way — to see my Buddha nature. I read one of my favorite writing from Nichiren Daishonin, “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” over and over, especially where it says to “summon up deep faith that Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 3). I started to think about myself differently, treating myself better. I started running. I went for facials and manicures.

One year later, at 37, I graduated from young women’s to women’s division. I still held some bad feelings, because I felt I should have a boyfriend or be married.

After the graduation ceremony, my feelings completely changed.

For the first time I felt truly happy, so light as if all of the benefits of struggling as a young woman all those years were deeply embedded in my life as fortune. All I could feel was pure joy from within to be me.

I finally understood with my life that I didn’t need to be with someone or be married to be happy.

Exactly one week later, a guy that I had worked on a job with years ago called me because he wanted to learn about this practice. Of course, I said yes. Mark and I met and there was an instant attraction. He said he “could feel my strong core.” This blew me away. I have to say that the timing was definitely amazing, because if he had called me even a few weeks earlier, he would not have seen such a happy woman. After nine months of dating, he proposed. I had no hesitation to say yes.

He is the perfect person for me; we just fit. The impossible became possible a year ago last July, when we were married in a beautiful Buddhist ceremony that truly came from our hearts, with our families and friends. I know now that whether I am married or not, no one can give or take away the feelings I have about myself. I feel completely free to improve myself without beating myself up in the process. I truly trust the Gohonzon and my Buddhist practice. **W**

Photo by LEO SORELL

EXPERIENCE — PENNY PARKER, ANNANDALE, VA.

My Happiness Is Connected to Others' Happiness

Challenging Relationships

Penny Parker says, 'I am convinced that everything I have learned in the SGI about how to care for others enabled me to help guide my family to face our hardships.'

Before I began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism 27 years ago at age 14, I found it difficult to feel compassion for others. I loved nature — animals, plants, even rocks and soil — and was concerned about environmental protection. However, I could not seem to well up the same concern for other human beings. If some awful disaster with a large number of fatalities struck, I would think to myself, "It's for the best because the world's too populated anyway." This perception also clouded my feelings toward family members. I had no empathy for my parents, who both had big emotional hang-ups and quarreled constantly. I had nothing but contempt for them and had even entertained homicidal thoughts toward my unhappy, bullheaded father.

However, through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, studying Buddhist teachings and engaging in SGI activities to share Buddhist wisdom with others, I gradually came to understand that my happiness is profoundly connected to others' happiness. I started to realize my happiness increases when others are happy, and that I experience deep fulfillment in life only when I take committed action to help others awaken their joy. Based on this realization, I started making more efforts to be nice to, and spend time with, my family. But, frankly, this was not easy for me, and I still kept my emotional distance from them. They did likewise.

At that time, I didn't feel strong enough to directly face their unhappiness. So, instead, as a youth, I focused my energies on participating in many SGI activities and helping friends and fellow members. During this period, I felt my



Penny Parker (second from the right) with her sisters (L-r) Ruth, Marjorie and Jill.

sense of self — my own true identity — gradually develop and strengthen. Little did I know how much this strength would be put to the test.

In May 1993, my mother was diagnosed with tumors caused by melanoma — an aggressive form of skin cancer. Surgery was quickly scheduled because the situation was very serious, and the doctors offered little hope. I began to fear I'd soon lose my mother, and I cried for days at the thought. Why I so feared losing my mother is that I felt she had always emotionally shut herself off from others, including her daughters. I was scared that she would die, and I would have regrets because we never truly bonded.

I was in hell and sought the advice of a trusted friend in faith. She reminded me of the power of the universal law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urged me to pray and act with the conviction that, even if I only had one month left with my mother, I would completely resolve any issues with her. This encouragement enabled me to pray and support my mother with renewed hope for her happiness and the strengthening of our relationship.

My mother's surgery was successful. But soon there appeared another tumor for which surgery was impossible. She underwent radiation therapy, and that tumor went away. However, more growths came, followed by rounds of chemotherapy.

As difficult as all this was for Mom, her spirits remained high. Actually, during her illness, my mother started dealing with emotional sufferings she had always held inside. Until then, she had a tendency to avoid emotionally

difficult situations. If she had a conflict with someone, she'd simply avoid that person and retreat into her shell. And, if someone raised an unpleasant topic in conversation, Mom would ignore it by immediately changing the subject. She kept everything to herself, never discussing her feelings with anyone.

The more I chanted for her happiness, the more I realized that I too, behaved similarly. I became determined to show my mother through my own example what it meant to change these unproductive habits. I stopped judging her and started listening carefully to whatever she said. And I began to notice Mom was genuinely changing for the better. For example, she agreed to meet with her sisters with whom she'd had a falling out. She started opening up about some of the painful experiences she had undergone as a child and in marriage, and seemed happier and more at ease. I was amazed at her progress.

A few months after Mom became ill, my father underwent major surgery to correct a painful ankle condition. Since he was severely diabetic, the lengthy surgery was risky, but he got through it successfully. Although the surgery removed Dad's terrible ankle pain, it rendered him unable to walk easily. My ailing mother, who had always taken care of my father, could no longer manage him.

Meanwhile, I was working full time, going to school at night and taking responsibility as the young women's leader for the SGI-USA Virginia Area. My normal tendency would be to jump in and handle matters by myself. But I realized that caring for two sick parents

while trying to juggle all my responsibilities demanded that I use good judgment and work as a team player with my sisters. I chanted intensely for the wisdom to care for my parents. My sisters and I started talking and engaging with one another in ways we never had done before.

I initiated family meetings where we discussed how best to care for our parents and started to open up more to my sisters. They responded in kind. Based on our growing bonds of respect and love for one another, we came up with unique, effective ways to support our parents' needs and worked as an excellent team. Even medical staff would comment on our family's remarkable cooperation.

These extraordinary difficulties provided the perfect opportunity for our once emotionally distant family members to support one another in meaningful, loving ways. I am convinced that everything I learned in the SGI about how to care for others enabled me to help guide my family to face our hardships with remarkable good will and cooperation.

My mother lived four years beyond her initial diagnosis, and I am confident that she died with a happy heart. Her appearance at death revealed great peacefulness. And I felt our relationship had grown deeper and stronger than I ever could have imagined.

Shortly after Mom passed away in April 1997, my father's health worsened dramatically, and I decided to move in with him to manage his care. Relatives urged me to put Dad into a nursing home. Even my sisters couldn't help much because they all had families of their own. But, because I understood that taking actions for another's happiness expands my own, I had to step up to the task of supporting my father in his hour of need.

Due to an infection, Dad had to have his left leg amputated, and the powerful antibiotics he was taking further damaged his already weak kidneys, which shut down, forcing him to go on dialysis. In a procedure preparing him for dialysis, my father's nerves were damaged so that he no longer had full use of his right hand.

But with each new medical problem, Dad grew more determined to challenge his circumstances. The personal at-




Penny's parents, Mary and Bill Parker.

tributes that had always made him so hard to deal with — his bullheadedness and intense intellectualism — started revealing their positive qualities: His stubbornness became perseverance, and his intellectualism turned into a fascination about life. It was a stunning transformation.

As I exerted myself on Dad's behalf, the Buddha's wisdom and energy continually emerged in my life. And, again, our family's tribulations served to draw us all even closer. My father, who had always found it so hard to praise others, started saying things to me like: "I'm so proud of you." "I don't know what I would have done without you." He also started appreciating my sisters more and, in turn, they felt more love toward him.

In the few days before his sudden death in April 1999, Dad declared how fortunate he was and repeatedly praised his medical support staff, neighbors and family. He had concluded his life in — a state of complete joy.

What I had always dreamed of and prayed for — truly bonding with my parents and uniting my family — had happened. Witnessing this has convinced me that, even though it may take time to appear, our efforts toward others really do have an effect on them — a profound effect.

I appreciate SGI President Ikeda, whose many messages to me both personally and through his articles in the *World Tribune* have led me on the path of becoming a real contributor to my family, friends and community. And I could never thank enough all of my fellow SGI members who have supported and inspired me to persevere and win over my hardships. I am winning! 

EXPERIENCE — GEOFF JORDAN, OMAHA, NEB.

Winning in Life After Divorce

Challenging Relationships

‘Once I saw what I needed to change and how, my relationship with my former wife changed instantly,’ says Geoff Jordan.

Buddhism is humanism. Buddhism is also win or lose.

I am finally embarking on the relationship I always wanted to have with my wife. That is, my former wife, Mari, and our daughters, Niki, 17, and Georgie, 16.

I was married in the early '80s, and at the time, it looked to me like a make-do situation. To varying degrees we both felt it was not the best match, let alone the right time, but as energetic youth division we were given well-meant guidance that it was the “right thing to do,” considering Mari’s “condition”—she was pregnant. So, I was optimistic and hopeful it would develop into a relationship capable of nurturing love and respect.

Then, after four years of unsteady jobs, turned-off utilities, repossessed cars, evictions, bugs in the house and no milk for the babies, etc., Mari had had enough. We divorced because I abused my wife—economically, verbally and emotionally.

When my marriage came to its early end, I realized this was my worst fear. For many of the last 13 years, I have struggled deeply with intense feelings of bitterness, anger and betrayal, coupled with a need for revenge over my wife divorcing me.

After 20 years of Buddhist practice and innately always willing to rise to a challenge, and, because I found in my heart that I could not quite quit my faith or practice, I naively vowed that my divorce would be different. My determination as the “estranged” father and husband was that I would not be left behind in defeat.

A seed was planted for me almost 13 years ago. Soon after Mari divorced me, she told me she had invited her boyfriend to our meeting that night as a

guest. I was horrified! After feeling such heart-wrenching betrayal that she could even divorce me, now she wanted to drag a boyfriend into the mix! All the way to the meeting, I was filled with rage and dread.

Sitting in front of the Gohonzon, my fellow members chanting cheerfully, expectantly all around me, it struck me—an epiphany. What if, this man, her guest, her boyfriend, really wanted to practice? Wow, what a concept! Suddenly things were clear. That is what truly mattered.

I vowed then to the Gohonzon that if her boyfriend was sincere in wanting to practice, I would do anything I could to spark and encourage his pure seeking mind and faith. Suddenly all my anger and resentment melted away and changed to a bright and joyful determination. I realized if he took sincere faith in the Gohonzon, he could only be a positive component of the family unit, building and adding fortune and protection to it.

Amazingly, that’s just what happened. And I am still much in his debt for the way he took care of my children in the capacity he took on as the new dad.

There was no immediate outward result at that time other than I was able to look him in the eye and firmly shake his hand to welcome him to our group. Since then we have enjoyed many SGI activities as young men, Gajokai, Soka Group, men’s division, and as fathers.

Meanwhile, no matter how many times I self-righteously felt slighted by Mari, I clung to the realization that I introduced her to this practice and was bound by and beholden to that karma; she had a healthy and strong practice; and she was and is an incredibly strong and devoted mother to our children. Many times I have been greatly encouraged by her example via her experiences, in meetings, in encouraging fellow members in faith, as well as in her daily life.

Today, after 13 years of divorce, I can finally see the glimmer of a successful difference—one that I had almost lost hope and sight of. That of helping to forge a new example, a new outcome, that might encourage others faced with the same difficult karma. An example of both partners finding individual happi-

ness while continuing their practice within the SGI.

I am so grateful and appreciative that we have now overcome many of our difficulties in our relationship. For me, it has been the bare civilities, bitterness over perceptions of wasted effort, the deep unshakable feelings of shame, of being cast aside and ignored as a failure by family, members, leaders and friends. For her, I can only guess that at the very least it has been resentment of my real or perceived freedom to date, party and to play, as well as my inability to meet financial obligations, while she dealt with the day-to-day responsibility of raising two beautiful daughters.

The seed planted at that long-ago meeting finally started to blossom in my life in October of last year when I helped drive my sister 1,800 miles back to her home. Through my sister’s eyes, I saw a reflection of one of my darkest potentials, frightening me to my core, in the guise of her abusive husband.

In him I see what I could have become if I didn’t practice Buddhism or had quit my practice; if perhaps I had not gotten divorced; and most importantly, if I hadn’t ultimately realized the need and been given the blueprint for cutting the cycle of abuse.

All the time I was holding (or pulling) my sister’s hand to free her from the immediacy of her abusive situation, my thoughts were instinctively drawn to my former wife. I started to realize that I had been guilty of the same patterns of behavior in my marriage as I saw right before me in my sister’s husband, and that I still was not free of them. Even though I knew I manifested these same behaviors, albeit to a lesser extent, I had the strongest feeling that Mari would know exactly what to do and say at every turn to help my sister.

When I returned from the trip, due to my self-reflection from what I saw in my sister’s husband, and even though Mari and I hadn’t spoken meaningfully in nearly two years, we renewed a dialogue, a dialogue of the heart and spirit; through the simplicity of e-mail at first, and now through personal exchanges and actions.

I shared this practice with Mari 18 years ago, and this past winter she shared with me the



Photo by ROBERT JORDAN

Geoff Jordan believes that ‘to be an example you must realize your flaws and then show human revolution or transformation because of them.’

blueprint for overcoming the cycle of abuse deep in my life, and that of my family, that she herself had used to change her own life. It was in the form of a Web site on codependence and a buser/victims: www.drirene.com/you_too.htm.

I am so appreciative to Mari that I now have both tools to break this cycle. The first tool of course, is this Buddhist practice. I have deeply apologized to Mari for manifesting my dark side of abuse in our relationship, and to our daughters, for passing any of it on. We are friends today and continue to deepen our connection.

Through all of this, I have been struck by a very frightening and powerful fact. If not for this practice and if not for the breathing room for self-reflection I got from Mari divorcing me, I too would have ended up just like my sister’s husband—intolerant, an abuser through neglect, as well as through words and emotions, if not also physically.

Because economic neglect and verbal and emotional abuse do not generally show immediate physical marks like physical abuse, it is easy for outsiders to disqualify it even as they refuse to “get involved” and see for themselves because “it’s not their place or business” or “would upset the status quo.”

I am convinced that many of those people are abusers and victims themselves. Their common viewpoint: Appearances are more important than openness, honesty and integrity.

Which makes me wonder about those in our own organization who may outwardly seem to be righteous and upstanding,

but who may, even unknowingly, be manifesting the terrible affliction of abuse in their own lives, families or positions.

There are some people who might say that to be an example, you must not reveal your flaws. I believe that to be an example you must realize your flaws and then show human revolution or transformation because of them.

In the Nov. 10 *WorldTribune*, President Ikeda states: “Arrogant leaders—those who have stopped growing, lost the spirit of challenge and just strut around self-importantly—are, if anything, a hindrance to our movement.”

“It is the time for a new generation of talented people to take the stage, confidently and without hesitation. May the young people stir up a storm with their youthful power and energy, creating a whirlwind of dynamic progress for kosen-rufu in the new century.”

Once I saw what I needed to change and how, my relationship with my former wife changed instantly. I was able to see her change and joyfully embrace my need to change. Not superficially because I was told to, but because I can’t live with not changing. I realize that my change must permeate my whole life, my family, my practice, my organization, through my action.

I know this could never have happened unless Mari and I were each sincere and committed to our day-to-day practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism within this SGI-USA organization. Much love to my daughters and their mother, my sister, and appreciation to her husband for showing me my ‘dark side!’ **WT**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S POEM

THE VICTORIOUS FUTURE OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

I have a mentor:
Josei Toda.

I have given my whole life
To my mentor!
To carrying out his
instructions!
To perpetuating the noble
spirit
Of mentor and disciple!
To overcoming and crushing
Devious and base
persecutions!
To the oneness of mentor
and disciple!
To leaving behind a history of
kosen-rufu
Of eternal glory and splendor!
To vanquishing arrogant
authorities
And the three powerful enemies
Who inflicted such suffering
on my mentor!
To the correct teaching of
Buddhism!

To my selfless, hard-working
comrades in faith!
To those disciples who are
striving to widen
The path to the eternal future
still further!

We stood up resolutely.
We fought resolutely.
We were ready to die for
our cause
As we pushed onward in
our struggle.
What regrets could we have?
What hesitation?

This indeed
Is the pride of disciples
Who carry on the spirit
And the work
Of Nichiren Daishonin.
This is the solemn,
trial-filled path
Of mentor and disciple
Who together
Energetically wage
An unrelenting struggle
for good,
Following the Buddha's
will and decree.

My mentor called out to us:
Do not become blank-eyed
Spiritual sleepwalkers!
Do not become people
Whose minds are closed
and rigid,
Who are unable to dream!

Always look far into the future
And never lose your inner
spark.
Treasure every day,
Bidding a solemn farewell
To each as it passes.

Do not give up!
Never let yourself
be defeated!
Love the struggles and
challenges of your life
So that you never tire!
Exhaustion
Is a sign of spiritual defeat,
And gives rise to sighs
Of weary old age.
With such a spirit,
You cannot hope to overcome
The manifold difficulties
ahead.

You must live on,
With vitality and energy!
Do not walk through life
Pitifully stumbling over
each setback!

My friends!
Though you may encounter
People who are derisive
And arrogant in attitude,
Each of you is a person
of mission
Whose life emanates
virtue and good.

Spreading your wings and
soaring
To the world's loftiest heights,
You will most certainly
Develop into a person
Who is praised and lauded
By countless heavenly deities.

Your spirit,
Your faith,
Can never be broken,
Even by the heaviest of blows;
Can never be shaken,
Even by the most relentless
of lashings.

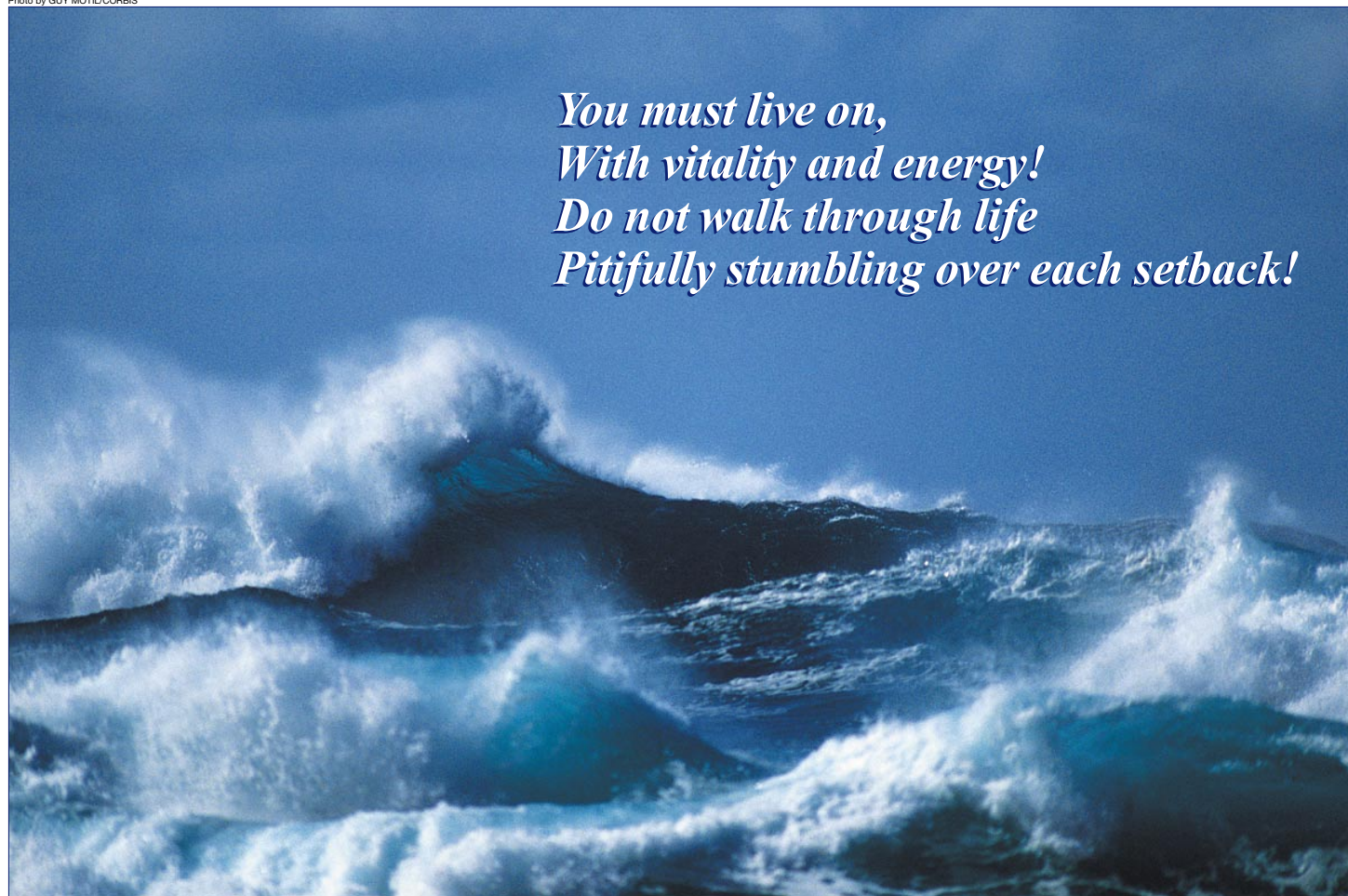
No matter how cruelly
your spirit
Is thrashed and beaten,
You remain undaunted.
Your eyes,
Lit by a passionate flame,
Will shine only brighter
And more beautifully.
You are a champion of life
Who fears nothing.

Let persecutions come!
Let trials befall me!
I have the means to generate
Powerful and lofty hope.

I can see
Those who are like demons
Milling around what,
Unbeknownst to them,
Is only an execution block.

They trample
The noble spirit
Of the Daishonin
And have become
Pitiful robbers of the Law.
Like a rapacious swarm
of locusts,
High Priest Nikken Abe and
his cronies

Photo by GUY MOTIL/CORBIS



*You must live on,
With vitality and energy!
Do not walk through life
Pitifully stumbling over each setback!*

Have exploited and
persecuted
And even plotted to destroy
The Soka Gakkai,
An organization of the
highest good
That has made unprecedented
contributions
To spreading the Law
And worked so hard
To support and protect the
priesthood.

Their evil deeds
Will go down forever in
history
And they will be severely
judged
According to the law of
cause and effect.
This I believe
To be the unwavering position
Of the Daishonin.

It will be just as he states
In the writing "On Persecu-
tions Befalling the Sage":
They "seem to be free from
punishment at first,
But eventually they are all
doomed to fall"
(*The Writings of Nichiren
Daishonin*, p. 997).

The plots and schemes of
High Priest Nikken and his
cohorts,
Spinning a web of the most
base lies
And vicious slander,
Were designed to bring
us down.

Yet
We shone on brightly
Like the morning sun!
We rose boldly to the
challenge,
And began our battle!

The Daishonin, too,
Was slandered as an immoral
priest,
And his struggles amid
persecution
Were beyond description.
Our first president
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
Used to strictly remind us
That in comparison
The persecution we encounter
Is truly small and trivial.

With silent forbearance,
The firm resolve demon-
strated by the Buddha
Engraved in our hearts,
We waged an arduous struggle
To overcome
Every imaginative
Haughty and arrogant
utterance.

We will not be defeated.
We are fed up
With the clamoring and
abusive foolishness
Of these spiritual paupers.
In fact, our mighty,
passionate spirit
Only burns all the brighter.

They who are
At times frenzied,
At times coldly silent,
At times filled with excuses,
Will eventually depart this
world,
Gasping and trembling in fear.

Backsliders in faith!
Are you satisfied
To lead a life
Trapped in a maze
Of hellish depths?

Slanderers of the Law!
Having corrupted the
Daishonin's teachings
And veered from the
eternal truth,
Are you prepared
To drift along forever in a
state of life
Of agonized defeat?

Traitors!
Having turned your backs
On the Daishonin's
golden words,
Are you ready
To be burned in the fires
Of the hell of incessant
suffering?
To be imprisoned in a cavern
In the hell of extreme cold?
To be shut off in the darkness
Of misery and strife,
Forever deprived of the
sun's light?

Our faith and conviction,
Blazing like a flame,
Like molten sunshine
Flowing down from the
heavens,
Has opened the eyes
Of many who were ignorant
of the truth,
Has brought light to their
darkened homes
And melted away the
slanderous words
Of publications that have
defamed us.

Illuminated by the sun,
Illuminated by the moon,
Illuminated by the great spirit
Of humanity,
Illuminated by the uncompro-
mising spirit
Of history,
Ignoring the pitiful sighs
Of those who act against
the Law,
Eventually the dawn
Of the triumph of humanism
Will come.

We have won!
Without a doubt
The power of the sun
Rising over the new century
Is limitless.

We have triumphed!
Today
Our brave Soka alliance
Of champions of justice
and truth
Has spread to 163 nations!

*Always look far into the future
And never lose your inner spark.
Treasure every day,
Bidding a solemn farewell
To each as it passes.*

*Spreading your wings and soaring
To the world's loftiest heights,
You will most certainly
Develop into a person
Who is praised and lauded
By countless heavenly deities.*

My friends!
Once more today,
As strong and generous allies
of the people,
Cheerfully, positively
Throw yourselves into the
challenge
Of fighting against evil!
Break through all walls
of obstacles!

O storm,
Rage if you will!
O pounding waves,
Crash upon us with all
your might!

Our march forward,
Yours and mine,
A march of nameless heroes,
May seem quiet and sedate,
But our hearts are afire,
For the jeweled sword of
justice and truth
Shines in the depths of
our lives.

Our banner of glory
Flutters in celebration of
The 70th anniversary
Of the Soka Gakkai's
founding.
The crown of life
Each of us wears
Sparkles ever more brilliantly.

We will forever strive to
achieve
Our most solemn
And noble undertaking.

Our struggle will resound
Throughout eternity —
An enterprise without
parallel,
That will spread far and wide,
Ever increasing in its
golden splendor.

The Daishonin declares:
Haven't we been bound by
a promise
To be mentor and disciple

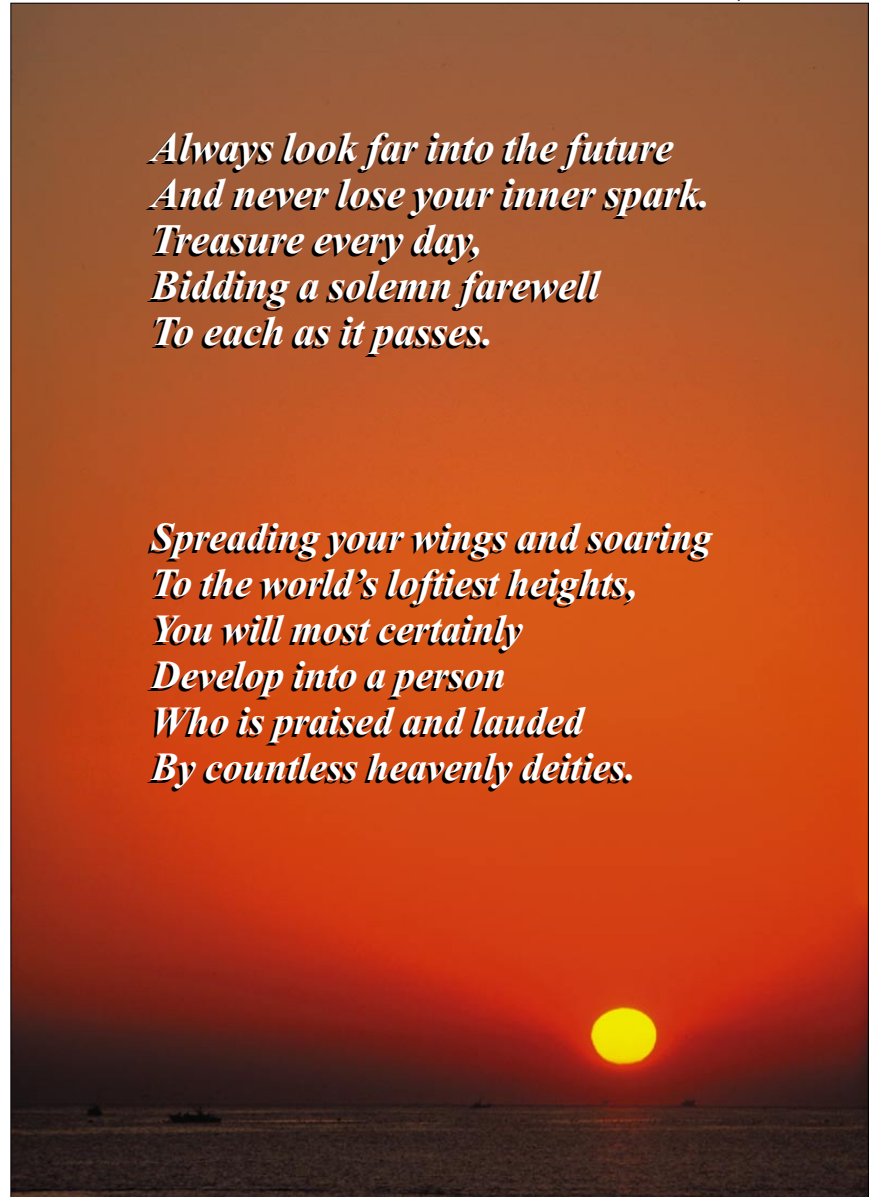
From the beginningless past?

My friends!
Lead a life
Burning with a
magnificent mission!
My friends!
Shun a life
Headed toward the gallows
of suffering!
My friends!
Summon your courage!

I, too,
Regardless of the insults
showered upon me,
Am determined
To build a glorious
Monument of achievement
In the depths of my life.

Ah! How incredibly bright
Are the skies of our future!

*Daisaku Ikeda
November 7, 2000*



AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Insights of an Unpretentious Educator

In commemoration of the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary, SGI President Ikeda remembers the teachings of his mentor, Josei Toda, 'an honest, unpretentious educator, a complete contrast to hypocritical religious leaders who try to force people into rigid, stifling molds.'

For the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, I want to share some more of my mentor's insights on humanity and life.

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On the subject of personality, my mentor, Josei Toda, said: "Our personality is largely unalterable. Just as a river's course does not change that much, our essential personality is something that does not change radically either. The personality we have is the way we were destined to be. Nevertheless, just as it's possible for a muddy river to become pure and clean, we can rid our personalities of mud and dirt, and purify them."

How can we purify our personalities? By vigorously chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and working earnestly for people's happiness and the welfare of society. This is what Mr. Toda taught. For only through working for the highest good can the river of our lives be purified and its waters rise to become a lush, abundant flow.

In the course of working wholeheartedly to achieve the unsurpassed goal of kosen-rufu, the negative aspects of our personalities are naturally submerged, while the positive aspects come vibrantly to the fore.

For instance, a short-tem-

pered person can direct his or her anger against evil and injustice. An introverted person can transform his or her shyness into thoughtfulness and consideration for others. An impatient person can use his or her speed and efficiency to accelerate the progress of good.

We each strive to realize our own wonderful, great human revolution, in a way true to ourselves, while giving full play to our unique qualities and talents. This is the way of life based on the Buddhist teaching of cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms, which expounds the unique beauty and mission of each person.

Mr. Toda also stated with great candor: "It is human nature to want to make ourselves look good in the eyes of others. We all have this tendency. But I urge you to be yourself. I have worked hard to overcome my own sense of inadequacy and unworthiness."

These words give us a glimpse of an honest, unpretentious educator, a complete contrast to hypocritical religious leaders who try to force people into rigid, stifling molds.

Mr. Toda also said: "Anyone—thanks to having people take him or her to task and pointing out his or her errors again and again—can smooth his or her

rough edges and improve over time, eventually finding the niche that is just right for him or her."

This was his view of life. Based on what he said, it is extremely important to have seniors and friends who can give us this kind of feedback and point out our shortcomings in a constructive way. And how even more valuable is the occasional scolding of a mentor, who cares above all for the progress and growth of his disciples!

A true leader understands others' personalities and strives to guide people in a positive direction while respecting their individuality.

Mr. Toda described the art of leadership as follows: "The greatest person has shortcomings, just as the most difficult person has strengths. If you help everyone maximize their strengths, all can be capable and active participants in our movement. It is vital that we look at each person and identify where he or she can be most effective."

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Mr. Toda also had wise, reasoned words to offer on the subjects of husbands and wives, and families: "Though a person may score 100 points on the likability and character scale, if the spouse is ignorant and foolish,

the score can be dragged down to 50. On the other hand, even if a person scores only about 50 points, if the spouse is wise and prudent, he/she can make their spouse come to shine with a brilliance that earns them as much as 80 or 90 points.

"Therefore, it is important for couples to be wise and sincere in the way they live their lives as people, in the relationship they have with one another and in their dealings with society. And it is faith and the guidance of the Soka Gakkai that enables a wife to earn a perfect score of 100 points. The same applies to a husband."

Mr. Toda also strictly instructed the women of the Soka Gakkai who worked in the home: "If you have a sloppy attitude toward finances, you cannot hope to establish a stable home. Just complaining all the time about having a meager monthly income serves no constructive purpose. I ask that you keep a careful record of all your daily expenditures."

By keeping a daily account of your expenditures, you can see where money is being wasted and find ways to economize. And you can acquire the skills to plan and live more practically and frugally.

My wife still keeps a household account book today, just as Mr. Toda urged. Over the years, those account books have become a family treasure.

One day Mr. Toda offered advice to couples: "It is all right if you get into an argument at night. But in the mornings, I want you to always part with a pleasant smile before heading out for another demanding day. Do not get angry in the morning. Never have an argument just before leaving the house for work."

Mr. Toda's guidance always reflected a keen sensitivity to the complexity of human feelings.

He also said: "Children's faith is determined by their mother. Mothers have a natural love for their children. Because of this, even when scolded by their mother, children can still sense her true warmth and affection. But if their father scolds them or nags them about practicing Buddhism, they will rebel.

This is because, in the father's case, they sense a certain kind of harshness rather than the love and affection they feel from their mother."

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When Mr. Toda was envisioning the establishment of the Soka Schools and Soka University, he said: "We do not need to include religious education in the curriculum. If we force religion on the students, their outlook will become narrow. By the same token, however, education cannot completely neglect spiritual matters. What we need to teach is spirituality. If we put so much emphasis on knowledge and science that we reject all spirituality, we will not be able to provide good education that fosters well-rounded human beings."

Whether your children decide to practice Buddhism or not, or whether you as a parent insist that they practice or not, is ultimately something that has to be decided by the individual or family.

However, spiritual nourishment is vital for society as a whole, in the form of such teachings as the sanctity of life, respect for the individual and the rejection of violence.

It is clear that education in Japan today is in dire need of this kind of sound spirituality.

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One day, looking into the distant future, Mr. Toda said: "In the future, many of our members will travel overseas to work for world peace and kosen-rufu. When that happens, we must not suddenly spring discussions of Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai on others, thereby causing ill will and casting doubt on our motives and intentions. Truly humanistic dialogue that nurtures communication, friendship and an understanding of other cultures is absolutely crucial. We must never give an impression that runs counter to this basic commitment.

"When there are women present, especially, it may be preferable to allow the conversation to unfold in a wise, harmonious manner, centering on something like culture or literature—for instance, sharing well-known Japanese stories such as *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, Sei Shonagon's *The Pillow Book* and Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*."

My dialogues with over 1,500 leading figures worldwide are my continuing effort to carry out Mr. Toda's guidance on this matter.



Josei Toda (at left), with wife, Ikue, holding baby, and family and friends, 1936.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

PLEASE SEE ESSAY, 9

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 1, PART 9-10

At the May 3 Headquarters General Meeting, Shin'ichi Yamamoto tackles the question 'Is the Soka Gakkai conservative or progressive?' 'The need to pigeonhole things in this way itself represents an extremely conservative way of thinking,' he tells the members.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto wanted to take the opportunity of the May 3 Headquarters General Meeting to clearly answer a question that some political analysts and journalists had focused on during the nationwide local elections that April: Is the Soka Gakkai conservative or progressive?

Shin'ichi was looking for a way to separate the activities of the Soka Gakkai and the Komei Political Federation into distinct realms — religious and political. Although both shared the same fundamental ideals, each would have its own administration and would function independently of the other.

Despite this, many analysts seemed to think that the Soka Gakkai was aiming for a union of government and religion, and that the two groups were really one and the same. That is why they had questioned whether the Soka Gakkai, and not the Komei Political Federation, was conservative or progressive.

Shin'ichi had addressed this topic at smaller gatherings, but he decided at the general meeting to officially articulate the Soka Gakkai's stance: "Re-

gardless of how much the Soka Gakkai has contributed to society, rather than being praised, we have been exposed to constant criticism.

"If we look for a basis for such criticism, however, we find only the vaguest suspicions. For example, simply because our youth division uses such titles as corps leader and company leader, and because we are united and well organized, some irresponsibly assert that we are militaristic.

"This same kind of thinking has led to heated speculation and rumor over the Soka Gakkai's political leanings. Some contend that, because the Komei Political Federation backed the rightist Liberal Democratic Party's candidate in the Tokyo gubernatorial race, the Soka Gakkai is an arm of that conservative party — and therefore must be conservative. There are those who, on the other hand, claim that, because we have spoken of a new form of socialism based on humanistic ideals, we are allied with the socialist party and so must be seeking reform.

"Another argument has it that, since the Soka Gakkai is based on the teachings of

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which date back to Japan's Medieval Period, it must be a conservative body. Others say that we are progressive because we have many youthful members who aim to improve society. And yet still others say that within the organization, the older members are conservative and the younger ones are progressive.

"So people are eager to label the Soka Gakkai as either conservative or progressive, but the truth is that they can't decide which it should be. In my opinion, the need to pigeonhole things in this way itself represents an extremely conservative way of thinking. It means stagnation even for those who claim to be progressive, and it will lead nowhere."

Shin'ichi expanded on the basic stance of the Soka Gakkai: "A sutra states, 'Immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law.' The Soka Gakkai aims to bring happiness to all humanity and build lasting peace based on the single Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the Gohonzon, and the Daishonin's philosophy of life. Therefore, from the standpoint of life's eternity, it is our mission to show all people, regardless of their political position, the way to genuine happiness.

"Without fundamental guidelines on which people can base their lives, even a free-market society will deteriorate into corruption and chaos. The law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest, will rule. And without an internal revolution in the lives of individuals, socialism will only produce a cold-hearted, oppressive system. We



Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

of the Soka Gakkai live by a profound, powerful philosophy that is capable of giving direction to liberalism and socialism alike, positively guiding both conservatives and progressives.

"In that sense, if the Soka Gakkai must be called progressive, I think it can be said to be so in the truest sense of the word. This is on a different level from being a progressive political force, as some now view us.

"The Daishonin's Buddhism is a great teaching of enduring, eternal happiness that enables all people to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. The power of the Gohonzon is as limitless and vast as the universe.

"We have spread this philosophy to more than 3 million households nationwide, showing them the way to real happiness. With the conviction that our movement is giving people a means to revitalize their lives based on human revolution, let us boldly push forward along the path of our mission, never getting caught up in such narrow-minded political labeling

as whether something is conservative or progressive."

Enthusiastic applause filled the hall.

Shin'ichi worried that some members might be led astray by the attempts of outside critics to tag the Soka Gakkai as a political force and thus lose sight of the all-important path of faith.

"With your support," Shin'ichi continued, "the Komei Political Federation has made tremendous progress. I am worried, however, that we will now see the emergence of people who wish to use the Soka Gakkai as a stepping-stone into the political arena, people who will try to take advantage of the Soka Gakkai toward elections. We must be on the lookout for any such tendencies and continue to advance while always putting faith first."

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

FROM ESSAY, 8

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In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, we find the passage "When I asked him about what you told me the other day, I found it to be exactly as you said" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 33). In other words, the Daishonin confirmed the report of one of his disciples with another and found it to be accurate.

Mr. Toda, quoting this pas-

sage, keenly observed: "We receive all kinds of reports. But are these reports accurate? Are they based on emotion? Or are they motivated by malice? It is very difficult to judge these things on the spot. So you must not accept a report at face value. You must use your wisdom, always trying to discern the real situation, so that you can make a sound judgment."

Leaders must be neither shortsighted nor longsighted. They

must see things and events with undistorted vision at all times. This has been the lesson and the practice of Soka Gakkai leaders from the time of first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

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The anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding is also the anniversary of the day Mr. Makiguchi died in prison for his beliefs.

Every time Nov. 18 came around, Mr. Toda would de-

clare with passion, his voice ringing with anger at injustice: "We must never forget the authoritarian powers who oppressed, persecuted and ridiculed the Soka Gakkai, an organization committed to justice and truth. We must never forgive the authoritarian powers who hurt, scorned and insulted our members. As the Daishonin says, 'Buddhism primarily concerns itself with victory or defeat' (WND, 835).

"We must clearly perceive

the true workings of the strict law of cause and effect, and through the Soka Gakkai achieving overwhelming, total victory, become models for the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law."

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the Oct. 27 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

Pride and Prejudice, Celebrating and Standing Up!

By **DEBORAH GOODWIN**
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

SGI-USA So. Calif Zone's first LGBT Pride Celebration for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members was held at the Los Angeles Friendship Center on Oct. 23 with a sense of history in the making.

In his message to this event, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima encouraged participants with SGI President Ikeda's guidance: "Love the people! Live splendid lives! Make your life a beacon that will illuminate the darkness ahead."

The celebration highlights included experiences from SGI-USA members Michael Angelo and Becky Heath. Both experiences reflected the struggle to challenge inauthenticity

in one's own life, and the sufferings that arise when families become divided. Becky and Michael eloquently shared the doubts, fears and obstacles that arose in the course of their growing awareness of their sexuality and the pain of keeping it secret. Ultimately, both have experienced victories in their practice of faith that have changed long-term sufferings into beautiful causes for advancement and profound personal human revolution.

SGI-USA Vice General Director and Culture Department Leader Eric Hauber, as a guest speaker, offered a thought-provoking perspective and guidance.

Later, Mr. Hauber shared on an equally resonant note that a philosophy, in this case the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, must be authentic in both word and deed.

In terms of this "authentic philosophy," he relayed SGI President Ikeda's guidance on three fundamental points that people must foster within themselves in order to live authentically:

"You must have the courage to face life squarely, you must care deeply for others and their suffering, and you must have the courage to stand up and speak out against evil — no matter what the cost."

Mr. Hauber identified the definition of evil, based on President Ikeda's explanation, as the following: "Any person's or group's behavior that abuses or robs another human being of their hope for the future." This was a particularly powerful statement.

Mastering the evil in our own hearts requires fortitude, persistence and diligence, and on that note Mr. Hauber brought up a



The mosaic at the Los Angeles Friendship Center.

delicate point: It is not enough to tolerate others while harboring secret grudges, judgments and prejudices. Authentic compassion lies in the ability to love other human beings — to fill our own hearts with love and develop

the mighty life-condition that inspires others to love this way.

The meeting showed a great example of the magnanimousness that Buddhism encourages its practitioners to establish within themselves. **WT**

What Is Pride?

PERSPECTIVE

By **JACCI YBARRA**
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

Jacci Ybarra says that pride emerges 'when we sincerely endeavor to become our true selves.'



One definition of pride that resonates with me, however, is: "A proper sense of personal

dignity and self-worth; what is fitting for one's position or character; honorable self-respect."

As a lesbian, I've had many experiences where I've felt unworthy or undeserving. Sometimes I've felt this way because of how others viewed me, and other times I found myself feeling this way because I believed that I was undeserving and unworthy!

So, as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, what can we be proud of? Our sexuality, who we love, what we do in bed? Well honestly, if you know me and my sense of humor, I've got to say that if you have the fortune to love someone and to actually have someone, other than yourself, in bed — well then, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, that's something to be proud of!

But that's not the only pride I'm talking about. On another level, in order to be successful in all aspects of our lives, in order to make our dreams come true, we must look deeper to find a source of pride. Perhaps it's in our psyches, or in what we perceive to be our own true

essence as human beings, here in this place, at this time.

When we look at society, we often see a propensity to label or categorize people. We do it ourselves. To understand or have a point of reference for other people, we have to define them. And, we are not always generous in our definitions of others. Generally, that's because of our limited ability to see another person's true self. Okay, so what is our true self, which is the basis of our source of pride?

A first attempt to define our true self might begin with where we came from, where we originated. Some of us came from perfect, Leave It to Beaver-type families, others from a virtual "house of chaos." Both types of origin bring with it experiences that have formed our own self-image. Add to that experiences we've had growing up — environmental influences.

Next, we add where we're going — our goals, our dreams, what we hope to achieve with our lives. Simply put: We are the totality of where we've come from and where we dream of going. But it is exactly that self-image that can limit us. How? By the messages we've learned and often replay in our own heads. Things like: I'm too fat or too thin; I'm too young or too old; I'm too smart for my own good or maybe I'm just too dumb.

We set ourselves aside, often out of fear, often out of habit — habit borne out of our past experiences. Then hope, confidence and pride fly out the window. Yes, we are essentially molded by our past, but not necessarily defined

by it. This is where Buddhism steps up to the plate.

Buddhism speaks of developing one's true identity or Buddha nature. I'd like to share with you some encouragement I received a couple of years ago about "On Offering Prayers to the Mandala of the Mystic Law." In this writing, Nichiren Daishonin mentions the four great bodhisattvas. (A bodhisattva is a being who aspires to attain Buddhahood and carries out altruistic practices in order to achieve that goal.) Each of these four great bodhisattvas fulfill a specific function or role. First is Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who indicates true self. Next is Boundless Practices, who indicates eternity. The next is Pure Practices, who indicates life's inherent purity. The last is Firmly Established Practices, who signifies happiness. These functions or values, known as the four virtues, are innate within our lives. You don't need to seek them or ask some external being to give them to you. They have been inherent in your life from the very beginning. These four virtues — true-self, eternity, purity and happiness — are inherent in our lives and have been from the very beginning. So, the question then becomes, how do we uncover or unlock these functions in our lives?

By endeavoring to attain enlightenment through chanting to the Gohonzon, we can reveal or uncover a supreme state of life from within. We don't have to rely on or ask anyone else to do it for us. Each of us is truly the only one who can open up

our own great potential. So then, what is it that is covering up our inherent Buddhahood? It is the cloud of doubt, hopelessness and fear. When we overcome them, we can uncover the great potential that exists within us.

If this great potential lying within is our true self, how does it relate to pride? Well, I can honestly say from my own experience that when we develop faith and confidence in this great potential, when we sincerely endeavor to become our true selves, we literally flower with potential and the possibilities for our goals and dreams become limitless.

President Ikeda shares the following: "A small heart gets used to misery and becomes docile, while a great heart towers above misfortune. True happiness is not the absence of suffering; you cannot have day after day of clear skies. True happiness lies in building a self that stands dignified, proud and indomitable like a great palace — on all days, even when it is raining, snowing or stormy." Lastly, I've often heard, through the course of my practice in this Buddhism, that a candle can light up a place that has been dark for a billion years. Whether that darkness exists in our own hearts or in those of others, we can become that light that shines so brilliantly. It is my greatest wish, that we all can all develop such a life. Be proud and shine bright! **WT**

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

Kentucky Area Celebrates

By JOHN C.K. FISHER

COVINGTON, KY., CORRESPONDENT

Anne Braden has marched for civil rights with Martin Luther King Jr., Julian Bond and Fannie Lou Hamer.

She and her late husband, Carl Braden, were charged with sedition in the 1950s because they had the courage to sell a house to a black family in Louisville during a time of racial segregation.

She has been a newspaper reporter, college instructor and mentor for dozens of activists, including Angela Davis, who view her as one of the beloved figures of the modern civil rights movement.

But until October, Mrs Braden, 76, a Louisville resident, had never attended a Buddhist activity.

That changed when Janet Martin, Kentucky Area leader, and Vanguard District Leader Kathleen Parks in Louisville, began discussing how to make their meeting celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of SGI in America relevant to their members.

So they invited Mrs. Braden, an accomplished speaker and writer, to share her views of improving humanity during a special meeting in October at the Louisville SGI Community Center. Afterwards, Mrs. Braden said she felt she learned as much as she had taught.

"I was quite impressed with the service and the dedication of the people and the diversity of the crowd," Mrs Braden said.

"There were young and old. African Americans and whites and Asians. There was a good mixture of people. The sense I got was these were people who wanted to make a difference in the world. I thought that was very encouraging."

Mrs. Braden is not a Buddhist but believes that various religions and philosophies should be used to benefit humankind. After spending the morning listening to Kentucky SGI members chant, do gongyo and complete their prayers, Mrs Braden said she felt the members were sincere in their beliefs.

"I think for most people in Louisville, the Buddhist faith doesn't impinge upon them that much," Mrs. Braden said.

"I hope more people will know what Buddhists do."

During her speech, Mrs. Braden encouraged SGI members to participate in their communities for the betterment of all. She urged people to exercise all their rights—including political activity—to make the world a better place. And, most of all, she asked members to get to know others who may be different from themselves.

"I think we have to be about changing the world," Mrs. Braden said.

"You do that by organizing and making your voice heard with other people. We can't do it by ourselves. If you work with other people, you get more done. Sometimes there are trails and tribulations, but we can overcome those. I think that fits in with Buddhist beliefs." **WT**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NOV. 1 ENCOURAGEMENT

Have Faith in Yourself

'Please have faith in yourself,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'reminding yourself of all you have accomplished thus far.'

Everything begins with one person," SGI President Ikeda said at a Tokyo No. 2 Joint Territory executive conference held Nov. 1 in Akishima, Tokyo. "The great human revolution of one person can change a family, a community and the entire world.

"If there is just one leader who strives with wholehearted dedication, the way forward will open. Such

people are victorious in the end. They leave behind an immortal history.

"Genuine leaders do not flout their authority or position. They demonstrate their ability through their efforts and are loved and trusted by all as a result."

The SGI president added: "No matter how many times you fail or what kind of difficulties you may encounter, please never lose courage. Please have faith in yourself, reminding yourself of all you have accomplished thus far.

"Courage is hope. And hope leads to victory.

"In contrast, dejection and resignation lead to defeat. They produce nothing constructive. Faith is the driving force for never-ending advance." **WT**

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The Justice Chronicle is a free, weekly e-mailer for *World Tribune* subscribers about the Soka Spirit movement. Its purpose is to support SGI-USA's ongoing education campaign about this subject in the timeliest fashion possible.

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General Director
Daniel Nagashima

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

Managing Editor
Margie 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

Staff Photographer
Gregory Nakasui

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

Staff Translators
Jeff Kriger
Shin Yatomi

Contributing Photographers
Robert Jordan
Bradley Kallander
Leo Sorell
Gloria Velasquez

Photo Editor
Lisa Hollis
marvilisa@cs.com

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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

FRIENDS FOR PEACE
ffp@sgi-usa.org

SEIZE THE DAY
seize@sgi-usa.org

FINE PRINT
fine.print@sgi-usa.org

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



ALISO VIEJO CAMPUS

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

Question:

I'm a high school student and I'd like to visit the SUA campus with my family, but we can only come at a certain

time. Can I arrange a tour?

Answer:

Yes. SUA is happy to arrange tours for prospective students and their families on weekdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00

p.m. SUA also has a Family Tour Day scheduled for Saturday, May 5, 2001, which is a wonderful opportunity to meet our faculty and ask any questions you may have. Please contact our enrollment services team to arrange a visit at admission@soka.edu or by calling (888) 600-SOKA.

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What does it cost to apply to SUA? Why is there a cost difference if you apply online?

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The least expensive way to apply to SUA, Aliso Viejo is online. If you apply on-

line from the Aliso Viejo Web site at www.soka.edu, the application fee is only \$30, payable via your choice of credit cards. This method of applying costs less because it is easier for the SUA staff to process your information.

Applications submitted by mail cost \$45. This processing fee is higher because a staff member must enter all of your information into the SUA database.

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.

FROM FESTIVAL, 12 helping middle school children engage in conflict resolution in a non-aggressive manner.

Charlie Wyles, of the Peace and Learning Center commented that the festival had such a warm environment, and that he was so pleased to be there. He mentioned that he definitely wants to work with SGI-USA in the future.

Members and guests were then treated to a live show. Opening with a beautiful ballet solo set to President Ikeda's poem, other performances included a West African drumming piece by the Jr. High and High School members, a staged opera duet, Women's Chorus and a professional jazz combo.

Byakuren members, showing their spirit to support members with quick action, served hot chocolate and tea to performers and audience members during the show. Our featured special guests, the Minyo Dancers of Indiana, shared their beautiful traditions of Japanese culture and dance. Minyo had performed in the past within a small space inside the Indiana Community Center, but now they had a large, beautiful stage to do their full performance. They were thrilled to be able to do a complete set of dances, including a number where the Boys and Girls Group and other performers joined.

"Through the festival, I learned a lot about myself," said 17-year-old Caisy Lun, "and it has motivated me to challenge my dream of attending Soka University of America in 2001."

After the show, members and guests alike lingered around the community center for hours, basking in the glow of a warm, family atmosphere. Many attending the festival, some of whom had been away from the



Celina Jaffe dances to a recitation of an excerpt from SGI President Ikeda's poem 'Soar— Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!'

SGI-USA for some time, commented on the friendly, intimate feeling of the event. They were excited to experience what they felt were dramatic changes in the

spirit of the organization. Some made arrangements that very day to reestablish their Buddhist practice.

"Everyone was involved in

the festival and helped out until its final victory," commented Shinichi Hisano, 21, who performed in the drumming group. "As a result of this festival, I

learned that the members in Indiana can work together." **WT**

Betty Klein and Barbara Smith also contributed to this story.



Two young women enjoy the carnival at the opening of the event.



Along with SGI-related information booths, a few community organizations supported the event with booths of their own, including this one from the Peace and Learning Center.



(L-R) Betty Klein, Ann Hankins, Denise Carlyle and Cynthia Miller perform with the Women's Chorus.



Youth members perform an African drum piece titled 'Yarabi.'

Photos by GLORIA VELASQUEZ