

**LIVING THE TEACHINGS (4)  
DREAMS FULFILLED  
BY FRED ZAITSU, PUBLISHER**

***“One may ask why the results of these vows should be so long in appearing. And yet, though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered.”***

*(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 345)*

When I was in junior high school, I decided that I would become a journalist. I dreamed about the excitement of being a newspaper reporter. But when I was in senior high school, I changed my mind. I thought journalism might be too hard and probably didn't pay very much. I was drawn toward the excitement of international trade, like an import-export business. This also fit in with my interest in the English language, one of my favorite subjects in school. It was for that reason I went to Kanagawa University — known for its foreign trade expertise — and majored in economics. It would be years later, after I started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, that I would find both dreams — journalism and the international stage — fulfilled.

I joined the Soka Gakkai in 1962 while in college and participated in the organization's student division activities. After a couple of years, I was appointed to a position of leadership in the student division. This was very important to me because such a position qualified me to join a select group of youth attending lectures by President Ikeda on the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.” These were the chapter-by-chapter commentaries of Nichiren Daishonin on the Lotus Sutra as recorded by his disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin.

Everyone knew of these lectures, and we all admired those who could attend them. I was very excited to join them. In January 1964, I attended my first lecture. I was in my senior year of college and had secured employment with an international trading company, to begin as soon as I graduated in March.

Preparation for President Ikeda's lectures was intense. We met beforehand to read, interpret and become acquainted with the material. But the material was so difficult. You couldn't just read it and understand it. It was at the lectures that it all made sense. “Oh, so that's what Nichiren Daishonin is saying!” we thought. Listening to President Ikeda explain it was like clouds lifting in our minds. Even though he was only 36, he was the leader of millions of people, the successor to the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda. He bore the responsibility to accomplish kosen-rufu, and he was very impressive. President Ikeda's lectures, however, were full of tension, but at the same time very joyful. It was an atmosphere that allowed young students like myself to fully absorb the meaning of the Daishonin's teachings. After the lectures, President Ikeda treated us to snacks, creating a very close feeling among us.

March is the month when students graduate from college in Japan. To celebrate, President Ikeda invited some thirty of us to dinner in the basement cafeteria of the Soka Gakkai headquarters. President Ikeda sat at one end of a long table and I was at the other, so I couldn't really hear what he said. But I remember to this day that we had delicious curried rice for dinner! I also remember that he seemed very happy to be with so many young people who were about to venture off into society. We knew of his expectations that we be successful at whatever we did.

After dinner, he went around the table and greeted each youth, offering encouragement of one kind or another. Finally, he was standing in front of me. “What’s your name?” he asked. An easy question that I answered correctly. And then he said, “I will remember you.” That was it. Not, “do your best” or “become this or that.” Just the simple statement, “I will remember you.” But that was the moment I knew in my heart that President Ikeda would be my mentor in life. I knew from then on, I would devote my life to kosen-rufu. It was more than just a thought—it was a profound feeling I had never felt before.

Just before I was to begin my employment at the trading company, I was asked if I would like to work for the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. I felt it was a tremendous honor and agreed. To my surprise, I was made the administrative director of the newly formed Asian People’s Association, which was a sort of public relations function of the Soka Gakkai. Since I was the only person in the office, I was the director of myself. My responsibility was to meet with representatives from the embassies of Asian countries and arrange opportunities for them to introduce their culture to Japanese audiences. For example, officials from the Thai embassy could inform Japanese people about their culture, and at the same time, they could learn about the Soka Gakkai. Eventually, I was joined by other staff and even started a quarterly magazine.

After three years I was transferred to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the newspaper of the Soka Gakkai, as a reporter. For the next few years, part of my job was to use my English ability to interview American members attending the summer training course in Japan. As a result, I became very close to many Americans.

In 1971, I was sent by the newspaper to cover the American organization’s Seattle convention. This was my first trip outside Japan, and I visited several cities during my forty-five-day stay. I even co-authored a book about the kosen-rufu movement in America based on that experience.

In 1973, President Ikeda proposed sending *Seikyo Shimbun* correspondents to five cities outside Japan. He asked all the staff writers to submit their city of choice. Some chose Paris; others chose cities in Asian countries. I was the only one who wrote Los Angeles. Very soon, I was on my way.

Back in my days with the student division, I remember that we studied Buddhist philosophy all the time. There was one quote from Nichiren Daishonin that was so encouraging I read it repeatedly. It is the one quoted in the box from “On Prayer.” When I think back to my dreams in junior and senior high school of being a journalist and working in the international arena, the phrase “though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered” has profound meaning. From the moment I connected with President Ikeda and determined to dedicate myself to kosen-rufu, great things started happening and without realizing it, my prayers were answered.