

**RECOLLECTIONS OF MY MEETINGS WITH LEADING WORLD FIGURES
DR. LINUS PAULING—NOBEL LAUREATE IN CHEMISTRY AND PEACE
BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA**

The Linus and Ava Helen Pauling Hall, which was dedicated on the campus of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo on May 2, 2001, was the result of four meetings between President Ikeda and Dr. Pauling. President Ikeda recalls their friendship in the following article.

Once, several years ago, Dr. Linus Pauling told me that he had continued to work for the peace movement because of his wife, Ava Helen. “I felt compelled,” he told me, “to earn and keep her respect.” In that simple statement, I heard the voice of Dr. Pauling’s spirit. He wanted to do the right thing as a human being. That was what he had always fought for. He wanted his wife, the person who knew him best, to respect him. As long as he had that, he was afraid of nothing.

“Are you or are you not a communist?” This was the question that would be put to him at a state senate committee hearing that he had been summoned to appear before. In the 1950s, McCarthyism swept across the United States — a storm of anticommunist hysteria and witch-hunts. Dr. Pauling, a standard-bearer for world peace, opposed the U.S. government’s position on the necessity of nuclear weapons. The authorities used subpoenas as a means of intimidation.

Of course, Dr. Pauling was not and never had been a communist. He was a humanist and a peace activist. “The enemy,” he said, “is neither the Soviet Union nor America. The greatest enemy is war itself.” His stance was absolutely correct, but the government was not inclined to accept it. Dr. Pauling refused to state under oath before the committee that he was not a communist, because he didn’t believe the government had a right to interfere in an individual’s private beliefs. But if he continued to refuse, he would be given a citation for contempt.

What did Dr. Pauling do? On the day he was to appear before the committee for a second time, he took the bold step of holding a news conference right beforehand and declaring to the gathered reporters that he was not a communist. Since he had already publicly announced his position, it would have been absurd for the committee to ask him if he were communist. Nor was it then possible for them to cite him for contempt. He bested the authorities with his wits and fought back against their insidious machinations.

But the persecution continued, taking new and different forms. It extended even to his family. When it was announced that he had won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1954, the authorities at first refused to issue the passports he and his wife needed to attend the award ceremony. He was subpoenaed and threatened time and again. He was also pressured by his university and forced to resign from his post.

The age of madness eventually passed, however, and when it was gone, Dr. Pauling’s reputation as a man of outstanding achievement and integrity remained. When he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962, he said: “I believe that there is a greater power in the world than the evil power of military force, of nuclear bombs — there is the power of good, of morality, of humanitarianism. I believe in the power of the human spirit.”¹

Dr. Pauling is known as the father of modern chemistry. The British journal *New Scientist* has called him one of the twenty greatest scientists of all time alongside Newton, Darwin and Einstein. He is the only person in history to have received two unshared Nobel Prizes — for chemistry and for peace.

I first met Dr. Pauling in February 1987. Though he would soon be eighty-six, he had come all the way to our newly opened Soka University Los Angeles (SULA) campus (now Soka University of America, Calabasas). Rain had fallen earlier, but the sky was clear when he arrived. The fresh greenery sparkled like gems. Dr. Pauling had traveled some 500 miles by plane and car from his home to get there. “I’m happy,” he said, “to cooperate in any way that I can for the sake of world peace.”

Though he was a great scholar and scientist, he was completely unaffected. In fact, he listened eagerly to what I had to say, even though I was young enough to be his son. He was a person of immense and embracing character. I met him four times, and each of those occasions is engraved in my memory like a scene from a film. I am very proud that we were able to see the publication of our dialogue, *A Lifelong Quest for Peace*, before he passed away.

How did Dr. Pauling become the genius that he was? Was he a child of privileged circumstances?

Dr. Pauling was born in 1901, the first year of the new century. His father died when he was nine. As a boy he was sickly, as was his mother. He had two younger sisters. He had no choice but to go to work, but he also wanted to study. He attended high school, but because of an error in school records, he never received his diploma!

Although he gained admission to a university, he was so poor that he didn’t even have enough money for regular meals. He had a donut for breakfast, skipped lunch, and ate at a cheap diner in the evening. “I was always hungry,” he recalls. He had many part-time jobs while in college, doing any work he could find — he chopped firewood, worked as a kitchen hand and cleaner, and also worked as a road paving inspector for a construction company.

One day, his aunt traveled through a train station near his university. He met her there and she gave him two dollars. “Those were the most important two dollars I had ever received,” he recalled. Yet even in these straitened circumstances, he continued to send money home to his mother. No matter how trying or disadvantageous his situation was, he always remained optimistic.

What makes for genius? Is it curiosity? Concentration? Determination and perseverance? At one of our meetings, I jokingly asked Dr. Pauling if there was some medicine that could make us smarter. He thought about it a moment, and then he said: “The only way is effort and more effort, really putting our minds to work until it hurts. And when it comes to children, we must give them the self-confidence that they can do anything if they try hard enough.”

The twentieth century has been a century of war and science. One estimate puts the number of those killed in wars or revolutions during the twentieth century at more than 167 million — more than the entire number killed in such conflicts throughout human history up to the end of the nineteenth century.² That is the equivalent of 4,575 people a day for the last 100 years.

For what purpose do we have science? For what purpose does government exist? The world lacks a “philosophy of value” that delves into the true purpose and meaning of things. This is the fundamental problem we face at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

But Dr. and Mrs. Pauling never forgot the all-important question of purpose. They always took action to minimize the suffering of their fellow human beings.

During World War II, they sheltered a Japanese-American in their home and were criticized and attacked for their stand. As soon as they learned of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they threw themselves into the peace movement. “I am fighting,” said Dr. Pauling, “for those who cannot fight as hard as I.”

In 1993, I gave a speech at Claremont McKenna College near Los Angeles. Dr. Pauling, ninety-one at the time, served as commentator, and in his remarks he declared that acting in the

spirit of “No. 9”— that is, the ninth of the Ten Worlds, the state of Bodhisattva — is the true duty of all human beings.

Let me share an episode that took place when Dr. Pauling first visited Japan in 1955. After finishing a lecture at a certain university, he was walking with some other professors to his next appointment when they came upon a gate that was locked. The gate was in a fence about five feet high. The other professors made to make a detour, but Dr. Pauling used a trash can standing nearby as a stepladder and blithely hopped over the fence.

The others with him were shocked for a minute. Dr. Pauling, the main guest, had gone ahead, leaving them there. What could they do but follow suit and hop over after him? Dr. Pauling has always been this kind of person, a person who leaps lightly over the artificial fences that humanity builds.

When he was told that he was a scientist and should not express political opinions, he countered that that was wrong. All human beings, he firmly believed, have a responsibility to participate in political debate. It is very important for the people to exercise their power to keep political leaders on the correct path. People’s movements are absolutely necessary, he concluded.

In our last talk [in 1993, a little more than a year before he passed away], I suggested that we organize an exhibition on his life and achievements. Four years after his death, the “Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century: Quest for Humanity” exhibition was finally realized [in September 1998], the fruit of the full cooperation of the entire Pauling family, including Dr. Pauling’s son, Dr. Linus Pauling Jr., a world-renowned psychiatrist.

A junior high school student who visited the exhibition wrote, “I now know that there is no such thing as a good war!” In this way, Dr. Pauling’s passionate appeal continues to be transmitted to young people who will shoulder the future of our planet in the twenty-first century. How happy that would have made him!

I can see his face now, with his rosy cheeks just like a baby’s. I see him smiling his big smile and saying, “How happy I am! This is a triumph for me and Ava Helen!” Thirteen years after the death of his beloved wife, Dr. Pauling passed away. He was ninety-three. His was a life lived at the forefront of the twentieth century.

1. Linus Pauling and Daisaku Ikeda, *A Lifelong Quest for Peace: A Dialogue*, translated and edited by Richard L. Gage (Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1992), p. 72.
2. According to the calculation of Zbigniew Brzezinski.