

PERSPECTIVE: My Own Private Holiday

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I consider myself very fortunate in a strange way — I seem to have my own private, annual “holiday.”

Feb. 26, 1972: I received the Gohonzon and joined the SGI-USA.

Feb. 26, 1987: SGI President Ikeda wrote “Arise, the Sun of the Century” to mark the 30th anniversary of America’s kosen-rufu movement.

Feb. 26, 1990: President Ikeda, during his landmark visit to America that led to the revitalization of our organization, gave a speech on the importance of developing new ways of thinking and demonstrating the greatness of the Daishonin’s Buddhism through actual proof.

Feb. 26, 1995: My family received the Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan.

This year, Feb. 26 marked the 25th anniversary of my practice. I admit that I did not consider the number 25 especially significant — after all, if one is to practice until the last moment of life, I still have (I hope) another 35 or 40 years to go.

But that day’s mail brought the Feb. 21 *World Tribune* with two speeches by the SGI president in which he notes that 1997 marks his 50th year of practice.

And then the significance of my anniversary sunk in: President Ikeda has been my guide and teacher for more than half my life and has had a greater influence on me than any other living human being.

In both speeches, he follows his remarks about his 50 years of practice with comments on building a “diamond-like body.” In the Dec. 28 speech, he explains: “It is vital...to forge a resolute and unshakable self — a self strong enough to calmly withstand whatever conditions or circumstances one may encounter in daily life and society” (p. 12).

In his Jan. 11 speech, he describes how to build such a life-condition: “This is a theme that runs throughout the Goshu. The Daishonin’s conclusion is that one must thoroughly oppose evil. That is, one must refute what is erroneous and spread the True Law; exert oneself wholeheartedly for justice; and struggle for the sake of the Law. Repudiating supreme evil is a cause of supreme good” (p. 11).

Reflecting on my practice, I see I have not quite managed to build a “diamond-like body.” Why not? In the Jan. 11 speech, President Ikeda gives me an answer: “For half a century, except for a 10-day period when I was ill, I have not rested for a single day. I have worked unceasingly, solely for kosen-rufu and the happiness of the members. I have exerted myself tirelessly in action and deed. And I have written prodigiously” (p. 11).

After 25 years of practice, of course, things have changed immensely, and I live in what might be called “comfortable” conditions: money, a nice house, a loving wife, and my child doing well in school. Many members are beginning to look for and take responsibility. So by focusing my eyes a certain way, I can believe that “there’s nothing for me to do today.”

Yet President Ikeda never feels this way.

At a very low time in 1984, when I was sure I was hurtling toward disaster, he said: “The Gohonzon is absolute. By virtue of the beneficent power of the Gohonzon, where there is earnest prayer, the improvement, progress and fulfillment of desires that you pray for will all come true in time, in exact accordance with your wishes” (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 2, p. 51). Those words restored my confidence and determination, and in fact brought me back to life.

At an even lower time in my life, when I truly did not understand what I needed, he arrived in 1990 and said, “My wish is that NSA [SGI-USA] will become an organization

Title: Perspective: My Own Private Holiday

Subject: World Tribune 04/04/97 n.3133 p.3 WT970404p03 Omaha, Nebraska

Author: Jim Celer

Keywords: Experiences Holiday January June Nebraska Omaha Opinion Perspectives Practice Private Tribune World

overflowing with smiles, friendship and humanity” (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 10). That was it! My personal campaign to become a smiling, friendly and humane person led to another revitalization of my life.

So now, owing so much to this man, knowing that he is tireless in his efforts and knowing that there are still so many people who do not know of or understand the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and the organization that propagates it, how can I feel comfortable? After all, I have a lifelong mentor who every second demonstrates that the way to build a “diamond-like body” is to “refute that which is erroneous and spread the True Law.”

And what’s more, it is possible, on my 25th anniversary or any day of any year to begin a new life with a new sense of hope and determination.

At 10:05 a.m. on Feb. 26, 1987, President Ikeda concluded his poem to the American members:

*Let us aim for the summit of eternal happiness in the new century,
Shining beyond the vast prairies.
This day, this very morning,
With great pride and conviction
Have we boldly launched
On a brand new voyage.*

From the midst of the “vast prairies” — congratulations, President Ikeda, and thank you.

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