

**The Secret of Success**  
**By BRANDON NICHOLSON,**  
**Oakland, Calif.**

I am 14 years old and am entering the ninth grade this fall. I was born into this practice and started doing A-and-C gongyo every day when I was 8. I joined the Brass Band when I was 11 but participated on and off. I could only participate in the fall and winter because I played baseball for the rest of the year. Last fall, I quit baseball to join the band full time because I was having so much fun.

The more I practiced, the more I realized the importance of Brass Band. We performed five or six times this past February and March, so that we could encourage the members. The more we practiced and performed, the more obstacles we faced. We didn't sound good, it seemed that nobody could get along and we had a recital for Brass Band Day coming up in May. After much practice and a lot of daimoku, Brass Band Day was successful — but something was missing.

After the recital, we started to prepare for our trip to the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Shortly thereafter I was accepted to, and offered scholarships for, all four high schools I had applied to. Every Sunday, we practiced for almost eight hours. I was determined to perform for the other Brass Bands and Fife and Drum Corps across the country, who would be at the FNCC. I was fortunate enough to be placed on the list of people to go.

But I faced financial obstacles. I chanted about what to do and was able to put in the first deposit with money from my savings account and graduation presents. I still had no idea how I was going to get the second half of the money. My work time was cut down at my job, and I wouldn't be able to pay for my trip with my paycheck.

I continually chanted for the success of the performance and conference and that each person who was chosen to go would overcome his or her obstacles. I wrote to my grandmother to see if she would lend me the money. After she received the letter, I spoke to her on the phone. She told me that she never lends money to anyone but that she would give me the money and I wouldn't have to pay her back. I was very grateful.

I became more determined than ever. Especially after having performed at a community festival where nobody clapped for us except the other members who were there. I was so determined that I decided to do 10 minutes of daimoku every day with my morning and evening gongyo.

I wanted to move the hearts of the other members when we performed. I didn't want to settle for token applause or, as fellow Brass Band member Michael Reichle would say, the "gratuitous Buddhist applause."

We continued to practice eight hours every Sunday, and we chanted a lot of daimoku. During this time, I visited the doctor, and she told me that I had completely overcome a heart murmur that I'd had for five years. I was also able to play on my high school's varsity basketball team.

On Aug. 7, we arrived at the FNCC. With the help of great experiences and great guidance, we all became a nationwide family of musicians. When the time came to perform, we were all excited about playing in front of the other Brass Band and Fife and Drum Corps members. We all wanted to encourage them.

We played three songs, and our performance was a total success. Many people said that they wanted to use us as models for their own achievement. It wasn't until later that night when I spoke with some other band members, that I realized what had been missing from our recital in May. We hadn't shown enough compassion for one another. But since then,

we had become like a real family as opposed to a dysfunctional one.

After going to the conference, I feel very fortunate to have so many community centers in Oakland and San Francisco that the band can play at. Many band members in other areas have to cross state lines just to go to world peace gongyo.

Being in Brass Band has been a great experience for me. I have learned a lot, and the band has strengthened my practice. I thank all of my fellow band members, especially my band leader, Paul Wallace. They have helped me a lot, and I hope to one day become a band leader myself.

**WT**

Title: The Secret of Success  
Subject: World Tribune 09/12/97 n.3156 p.15 WT970912p15 Oakland, California  
Author: Brandon Nicholson  
Keywords: Band Brass California Corps Divisional Experiences Music News Oakland Secret Success Youth