

**SIGNIFICANT DATE: June 6, 1871: President Makiguchi's Birthday
His Dream Lives On
By ALISON FINNEGAN, Tokyo Correspondent**

This morning, while I was drinking coffee on my front porch, my gaze wandered over the hill to a magnificent structure on the edge of the forest. It is the Makiguchi Memorial Hall, which borders Soka University in Hachioji, Tokyo, and was built to honor Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the astonishing educator whose philosophy of value-creation is the cornerstone of the Soka legacy.

I was thinking about how this man, born in 19th-century Japan, whose stern face and traditional clothes at first glance seem the antitheses of an American woman from California, has changed the course of my life. I first visited Soka University 10 years ago, when I was a college freshman. Although I was on the campus a mere two hours, I had an indescribably strong desire to return one day as a teacher.

Last spring, I realized this dream: After completing Soka University of America's master's degree in second and foreign language education, I joined the faculty of Soka University in Japan. Now having lived here for more than a year, I am even more impressed with Makiguchi than I was before. He was truly a courageous visionary who never gave up hope and always fought on the side of the people.

Makiguchi was born in a small town on June 6, 1871. His father soon abandoned him. Later, his mother committed suicide, and he was taken in by an uncle. He was too poor to attend high school, so he took a part-time job. His diligence attracted the attention of his boss, who later sponsored his schooling. He eventually became an elementary school teacher and, in time, a principal. In 1928, he converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and in 1930 he established an education society that is now known as the Soka Gakkai.

Because of his deep religious conviction, Makiguchi was imprisoned by the Japanese military government during World War II. His jail cell was barely the size of a small closet, with broken windows that exposed him to the rain and snow, and he was given little to eat. But like the Daishonin before him, he refused to compromise his beliefs. He subsequently died in that cramped cell at age 73, robbed of the chance to fulfill his dream of creating an educational system based on the philosophy of fostering each individual. But Josei Toda, Makiguchi's disciple, emerged from prison following World War II, determined to vindicate his mentor as well as continue his life's work. Toda raised his own disciple, Daisaku Ikeda, to realize Makiguchi's great vision.

As a tribute to the astounding educator, the Makiguchi Memorial Hall now stands majestically overlooking Soka University. Inside, a statue of him sits peering intently at the campus, watching over its progress. Makiguchi believed that the purpose of education is to help students become happy, and that this in turn will contribute to society. On the opening of SUA's graduate school, President Ikeda sent a message as founder that elucidated this: "A person who lives in a self-reliant manner may have a clearly defined sense of self and creed, but is prey to alienation and self-aggrandizement. A person who lives a contributive life neither relies on external authority nor lapses into arrogance. In a contributive life, the prime motivation is to contribute to the lives of others and to the realization of their happiness."

My precious experiences as a student at SUA and as a teacher at Soka University have enabled me to discover my true self, expand my life and realize my purpose. As a teacher, it is now my great responsibility and honor to help my students do the same. I am striving to actualize Makiguchi's vision, so that his dream will live on.

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