

## The Third Stage of Life A Partnership for the People

*Participants in this installment are SGI President Ikeda, Kaneko Ikeda, Seikyo Shimbun General Editorial Bureau Senior Director Osamu Matsuoka and Vice Director Katsusuke Sasaki.*

**MATSUOKA:** After we broached the subject, earlier in this series, of Mrs. Ikeda being a guest participant, we were deluged with letters expressing enthusiastic approval of our proposal. Now our wish has come true, and Mrs. Ikeda has joined us.

Thank you both very much for making this possible.

**D. IKEDA:** Don't thank me. It was entirely up to my wife. She finally decided that if she could be of any help, she'd be glad to participate.

**SASAKI:** Thank you again, Mrs. Ikeda.

**K. IKEDA:** I really don't know if I have anything useful to contribute, but I'll do my best.

### **A Visit From the Thought Police**

**MATSUOKA:** The two of you were married on May 3, 1952, and this year you celebrate your 46th wedding anniversary. I express my most deep-felt gratitude for the utterly selfless dedication and commitment with which you have worked together for the progress of kosen-rufu, the development of the Soka Gakkai and the happiness and welfare of the members over those long years.

**SASAKI:** In a poem you dedicated to members in Tokyo's Ota Ward, where you were born and raised, President Ikeda, you related the story of how Mrs. Ikeda, when she was still a young girl in pigtails, went to meet Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's founder, at Ota's Yaguchinowatashi Station and guide him to a discussion meeting at her home. That story points to the long history of Mrs. Ikeda's faith.

**K. IKEDA:** Yes, I was an elementary school student at the time. I went with my mother to meet Mr. Makiguchi at the station. He patted me on the head and said: "How nice of you to come to meet me! Thank you!"

In those days, there were only a few little shops in front of the station. There were so few houses that you could see the banks of the nearby Tamagawa river from the station.

As we walked toward our home, I remember thinking that Mr. Makiguchi was very old. But the moment he arrived at the discussion meeting, he was transformed. He sat up straight and spoke in ringing tones. He had tremendous authority and dignity.

**D. IKEDA:** That's the mark of a true leader. When the time comes to exercise leadership, a leader acts with confidence and strength. The more responsibility a leader bears, the more youthful and energetic he or she becomes.

It's important to note that right up to the time Mr. Makiguchi was arrested for alleged violations of the notorious Peace Preservation Law, he was active everywhere, even in

places like Yaguchinowatashi, on the fringes of Ota Ward. To the very last, he was among the people, indefatigable in his efforts to meet and talk with others about the Daishonin's Buddhism.

This is the spirit from which the Soka Gakkai springs. It offers us a model for all eternity.

**K. IKEDA:** Sometime after the discussion meeting began, three members of the Special Higher Police arrived and stood in the hallway facing our garden to observe the meeting. Suddenly, in the middle of Mr. Makiguchi's words, they shouted: "Stop right there! That's enough!"

I recall that they interrupted him just after he had denounced the policy of forcing all Japanese to accept the Shinto talisman that was part of the militarist government's drive for "thought unification" to strengthen the war effort.

I remember being frightened at that moment. But when I asked my mother later, she said that she wasn't the least bit afraid because Mr. Makiguchi was so dignified and unwavering in his convictions.

By the time the discussion meeting came to an end, the Special Higher Police had disappeared.

**D. IKEDA:** The struggles of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda in prison are what made today's Soka Gakkai and the miraculous progress we have seen in the kosen-rufu movement possible. Giving one's life for one's beliefs is the greatest honor for a person of faith.

I, too, have devoted myself completely, exerting myself unceasingly, without any thought for my own well-being, all for the sake of our movement. I want to bestow the highest praises on those members who have fought valiantly alongside me.

## **Praying To Get Sick**

**K. IKEDA:** We have never really enjoyed a private life or the pleasures of ordinary domesticity. When we were married, Mr. Toda looked at me solemnly and said with deep earnestness: "I'm counting on you to support Daisaku. The future of the Gakkai depends upon it." Since that day, I have done everything I could to help and support my husband.

**D. IKEDA:** I remember once at a New Year's celebration, Mr. Toda wept openly, tears streaming down his face. "Your life is bound to be short," he said to me. "What will become of the Gakkai?"

On another occasion, he said that he would gladly give me the remaining days of his life so that I might live on for my mission. It was really a strict injunction and impassioned plea on the part of my mentor — who knew that his life was ebbing away — that I improve my health and get well and strong.

Since that time, I have always tried to pay attention to my health, but in the endeavor to establish a firm foundation for kosen-rufu I have found myself working and traveling day and night, around the clock, without much time to think of my own needs.

I am deeply grateful to my wife, whose unfailing support has made my work possible. Thank you.

**K. IKEDA:** My, my. I don't know what to say. You're very welcome. Thank you.

Having heard Mr. Toda say that my husband wouldn't live very long, my mother was beside herself with worry when he became the Soka Gakkai president. She fretted over what would become of us, his wife and children, if he should die young.

I responded to this by doing everything I could think of to help him stay well and healthy. Then, some time later, my mother told me that I was taking too good care of him, that I was spoiling him!

Our room was very small, so sometimes when he was really exhausted, I insisted on putting my futon in the hallway and sleeping there, so as not to disturb him when I got up early in the morning.

**MATSUOKA:** I heard that on one occasion, when you saw President Ikeda hard at work despite his deep fatigue, you prayed that all his sickness might be yours instead.

**K. IKEDA:** It was a difficult time for the Soka Gakkai. I was healthy, and I wanted to do anything I could to lessen my husband's sufferings. That was my prayer.

**D. IKEDA:** Yes, and after that she came down with something and had to stay in bed! I wrote her a letter while traveling, chiding her gently that she had only made me worry more, and that she shouldn't be so foolish as to pray for ill health again.

**K. IKEDA:** I had never been sick until then. When I did become ill, I realized that I had never really appreciated how bad he must feel all the time, suffering as he did in those days from extremely poor health and a nagging fever. It was a good lesson for me. From then on, I have always prayed for both of us to be healthy.

One thing that I have learned over the years is that there is nothing more wonderful than sitting before the Gohonzon as husband and wife and praying together.

### **Mr. Makiguchi Still Introduces New Members**

**SASAKI:** When I attended a discussion meeting of the Takanawa Chapter in January this year, a former pupil of Mr. Makiguchi's had just joined the Soka Gakkai — an event that was celebrated with great enthusiasm at the meeting. The name of this new member is Kiyoko Sudo, and she is now 78.

She enrolled in Shirokane Elementary School — where Mr. Makiguchi was principal — in April 1927. She recalls from those days that Mr. Makiguchi was a dignified man with a commanding presence yet also warm and gentle.

She remembered him once going on a school field trip with the students to Hibiya Park. This was in 1929, a time when Mr. Makiguchi was certainly still grieving over the loss of his own children, who had died one after another.

**MATSUOKA:** Mrs. Sudo joined the Soka Gakkai when she learned from her hairdresser, a women's division member, that Mr. Makiguchi was the organization's founder. Mrs. Sudo had always loved and respected Mr. Makiguchi, so she decided to become a member without a moment's hesitation.

**K. IKEDA:** That is amazing. After all these years, Mr. Makiguchi continues to bring in new members!

**MATSUOKA:** Mrs. Sudo remembers that Mr. Makiguchi always walked from Meguro Station to the school, and when he encountered students on his way he would lift his hat and greet them pleasantly.

At lunch time there were always a stack of lunch boxes wrapped in white handkerchiefs left in the school office for students who, for family reasons, couldn't bring their own lunch.

These had been provided by Mr. Makiguchi out of his own pocket, she said.

**D. IKEDA:** That's just like Mr. Makiguchi. He believed that education's foremost goal is the happiness and welfare of children.

Mr. Makiguchi paid close attention to his health, too, it seems. I often walked from Meguro Station to Mr. Toda's house, on call as I was at all hours of the day and night. It was not far from Shirokane Elementary School, and it's a brisk 15-minute walk.

That was Mr. Makiguchi's walk, too.

**K. IKEDA:** You've also been walking a lot lately, haven't you? Your hectic itinerary in the Philippines didn't permit you to get much exercise while we were there, but in Hong Kong you took every opportunity to go and stretch your legs on the grounds of the Grand Culture Centre and in the nearby seaside park.

Later, we flew to Okinawa, arriving there in the evening. The next day was a Sunday and from 9:00 in the morning you were outside chatting and walking around the grounds of the Okinawa Training Center with local members, soaking in the view of the emerald sea.

## **How We Live**

**SASAKI:** Mrs. Sudo showed me an old photograph she has of herself and her classmates with Mr. Makiguchi when they were in the second grade. Now, four from the class are Soka Gakkai members. One of them, her best friend in those school days, Sadako, later married Mr. Makiguchi's third son, Yozo. Sadako was overjoyed when she learned that her old school friend had recently joined the Soka Gakkai.

**MATSUOKA:** The other two classmates who are Gakkai members are Sumiko Miki and Mitsuko Asao. Mr. Makiguchi resigned as principal of Shirokane Elementary School when Mrs. Asao was a third grader, but she still remembers him vividly. Mrs. Miki is a women's division vice leader of Tokyo's Koto Ikeda Ward.

How you have continued to honor Mr. Makiguchi, she says, is a tremendously moving example of the solemn path of mentor and disciple.

**D. IKEDA:** The way that we live determines the way that we are spoken of and remembered in the future. That is, in a sense, how we live in this world after our passing.

Having turned 70, I have resolved to work even harder than I have until now. Looking back, when I was young I worked with single-minded intensity but sometimes wasted energy because of overzealousness.

After reaching 60, however, all my efforts have been productive and fruitful. There is no wasted energy. I believe that I work as hard and effectively now in one year as I did in five in my youth.

Giving earnest thought to the future is the world of Humanity. Living only for the moment is the world of Animality.

My foremost concern now is leaving the future of our movement in capable hands. And fostering and educating youth is the only way to ensure this.

What kind of example can I leave for them as Mr. Toda's disciple? All I can do is dedicate myself to kosen-rufu to the last moment of my life.

*(To be continued)*

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