

**Attaining the Happiness He Wants**  
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**When he retired from the military, Cheuk Lau decided to start a new career as a pharmacist. Getting his pharmacy degree — with no previous science background — became the challenge of a lifetime. He and his family had to rely completely on their faith in the Gohonzon.**

When I was 16, I moved to the United States from Hong Kong, where I was born. As soon as I finished high school in 1972, I was drafted into the U.S. Army. Then, in 1973, while stationed in Korea, I married. But from the beginning, our marriage was full of problems.

Oki, my wife, was chronically ill, suffering from epilepsy and severe depression. I never knew from one moment to the next what would happen with my wife's behavior. The only thing that I could count on was that there would be a fight. Indeed, fighting became a daily routine.

Back in the States, we sought help from numerous physicians and faithfully attended church services, but our problems continued — and became worse.

In 1979, I was reassigned once again to Korea. Because of my duty requirement, I could not provide my wife with the attention that she needed. On several occasions, she attempted to end her life. One time, she jumped out of a second-floor window and fractured her back.

Listening to the advice of a Korean fortuneteller, we came to believe that our problems were caused by evil spirits living in our home. So we decided to move to a new apartment. The first night in that apartment, I heard noises coming from next door that sounded like a group of people chanting. I told my wife to quickly close the windows, because it was bad luck to listen in on a funeral. Asians, I knew, usually do some kind of chanting at funerals.

But when my wife met the neighbor the next day, she learned that the chanting was actually a Buddhist meeting. She was introduced to the practice.

At the time, I was disappointed about my life and was not ready to accept any new religion. I threatened my wife that I would divorce her if she continued to practice. Nevertheless, my wife continued to chant secretly while I was at work. After several months, I began to feel a warmth and love that I had never experienced before at home. And my wife's physical and mental condition seemed to improve miraculously. Then, I learned from my wife that she had been practicing all along. At that moment, I no longer objected to her practice; I saw it actually working.

After seven years of marriage, my wife became pregnant with our first daughter, Lillian. My wife's condition, meanwhile, continued to improve. But though I was touched by the power of the Gohonzon, I still would not practice myself.

In 1980, after returning to Fort Dix, N.J., my wife received the Gohonzon. At first, I drove my wife to meetings and simply waited outside. But at the suggestion of a member, I started to participate from the back of the room. It took a few more months, but eventually I could no longer deny the power of the Gohonzon, and I started to practice.

By this time, I was doing gongyo every day and often holding meetings in my house. We had two more children, Vivian and Kenneth. Eventually, we moved to Germany, practicing there for three years. I returned to the United States with my family, retiring from the military in 1992 after 20 years of service and buying a home in Glassboro, N.J.

Following my retirement, I started working as a security guard at a pharmaceutical company. I was also applying for jobs at the post office and in the state prison system. But

my real goal was to become a pharmacist, primarily because of my parents' and my wife's health conditions, and because it was a career path chosen by three of my brothers and sisters. I felt becoming a pharmacist would place me in a position to help people and to relieve people's suffering from illness. At the same time, it would improve my financial prospects.

Even though I was offered jobs at both the post office and the New Jersey State Correctional Facility, I would not accept their offers. I kept thinking I had to pursue my dream in life and personally show actual proof for kosen-rufu.

SGI President Ikeda once quoted the passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writings "Since the Law is supreme, the Person is worthy of respect" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 264) and said, "In light of this passage, I want our fellow members to become people of outstanding caliber both in the SGI and in society at large, giving full play to their unique characteristics and qualities."

With this in mind, I determined to become the best person that my potential would allow and not let any obstacles stop me from attaining that goal. So I informed my family of my decision to become a pharmacist. From that moment on, I determined to win, no matter what.

After submitting several applications to colleges, though, I learned that I was far from qualified to enter pharmacy school. I had only an associate degree in liberal arts without any science background. Needless to say, I was discouraged and felt my dream to start pharmacy school in September 1993 was impossible. My wife, however, encouraged me not to give up.

My experience in practice had given me the power and endurance to move forward. The only school that would even talk to me was a pharmacy school in New York, though the admissions people thought I was crazy to apply. In order to meet the minimum requirements for acceptance, I would have to consolidate four long semesters worth of advanced science and math courses into one year.

I began working full-time at a pharmaceutical company on the third shift and took the maximum amount of courses allowed during the day. I also chanted to find time to attend Buddhist activities. My schedule was as follows: I worked, went to school, slept in the car or at the library and attended meetings and studied Buddhism in my spare time.

The school I really wanted to attend, however, was the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, one of the best in the nation. But people there told me that my qualifications weren't sufficient to gain admission, and that I would need something of a miracle to get accepted. Nevertheless, I took my desire to the Gohonzon and renewed my determination. In May 1993, I received a letter from the school informing me that my chance of being accepted was slim. But they didn't say no. I repeatedly reminded myself not to give up. That night, when I went to work and told my boss about my situation, he offered to introduce me to a local pharmacy owner who, after a brief interview, asked me to work in his pharmacy several hours a week. I agreed. Supporting me, as always, my wife kept on chanting. After two weeks on my new job, I was introduced to the dean of Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, who was coincidentally picking up his medications at the pharmacy. After that meeting, the pharmacist helped me compose a letter to send to the school, asking for an exception to its admission policy for transfer students.

As September enrollment grew closer, I became more anxious. My wife and I kept chanting. The New York university finally notified me that I had been accepted, but that I had to register immediately. And just as I was leaving for New York, my phone rang. It was the admissions officer from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, who offered me a position in the third-year class of the pharmacy program. He asked if I were still interested.

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I yelled: “Yes, yes! I’ll be right there with my deposit.”

I was so overjoyed that I embraced my wife and children, and I was dancing all over the house. I knew that this was the direct result of my Buddhist practice and my wife’s steady chanting.

Of course, this wasn’t the end of my troubles. During the first month of school, I failed two tests and had to give up my job and devote all my time to school. Since the GI bill alone was not sufficient to cover the expenses, my savings were depleted to pay tuition.

I was extremely discouraged, but my wife continued to encourage me not to worry. Together, we kept chanting for me to pass my tests, find enough money to get by and be happy. I was so thankful to my wife for giving me encouragement when I needed it the most. I would not have made it without her help.

At first, I applied for veteran disability benefits but was denied them. Then, suddenly, the policy was changed and I received full veteran financial aid to cover my college expenses. For the next two years of pharmacy school, my family and I chanted for my success, and I passed all my tests without any major difficulties.

During this time, my parents suffered from ill health and I had to travel back and forth to New York to care for them. Eventually, my father died. Though I regretted that I could not convince him to chant, I knew in my heart that he could see the power of my practice to the Gohonzon. My mother has since begun to practice this Buddhism.

In May 1995, I was appointed as the district leader of Garden State District. I was concerned about having enough time to complete my schooling and fulfill all of my responsibilities, but I chanted to attend school through the summer, so that I could graduate before June 1996.

In December 1995, I graduated from Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and joined Rite Aid Pharmacy as a pharmacist. Since then, I have been promoted to pharmacy manager at a Rite Aid store only 10 minutes from home.

After 17 years of practice, I realize that anything is possible with the Gohonzon. I will always keep in mind some guidance given by President Ikeda during a meeting in Dallas: “Everybody is entitled to happiness, and we all possess the same potential to become happy. Through chanting abundant daimoku to the Gohonzon and taking action, you can attain that happiness.”

I am glad to be an SGI member and will continue to chant wholeheartedly for the happiness of my family, my members and to show actual proof in society.

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