

World Tribune

No. 3147

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JULY 11, 1997

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Gen'l Dir. Gives 3 Points for Rest of Year

At Central Executive Committee meeting, Mr. Zaitzu also reports on Diversity Committee. 'Action plan' devised.

By **DAVE McNEILL**
MANAGING EDITOR

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., June 28

At the first Central Executive Committee meeting of the year, General Director Zaitzu urged joint territory leaders today to work with him to prepare the SGI-USA for the next century.

Referring to SGI President Ikeda's hopes that the U.S. organization will become the "main stage" of the SGI's worldwide efforts, Mr. Zaitzu asked: "Are we ready to accept this role? Unfortunately, I have to say, 'Not yet.'"

Mr. Zaitzu went on to outline how he feels the organization should grow to meet that challenge. In response, the participants later devised an "action plan," with specific targets, for the second half of the year.

The general director also reported to the leaders gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center about the SGI-USA Executive Committee on Diversity. Mr. Zaitzu formed this committee a year ago to begin looking at how to better address the needs of the organization's diverse membership.

Three Points

With less than four years until the new century, Mr. Zaitzu said that the organization is at an important juncture. He focused on three points for the SGI-USA's

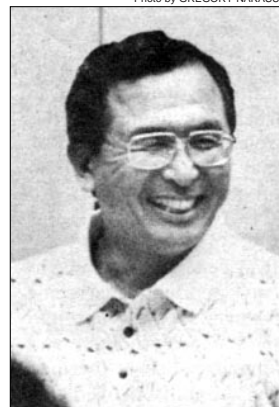


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

General Director Zaitzu enjoys the dialogue at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, June 28.

growth — dialogue, gaining trust in the community, and sharing this Buddhism with others. He expressed his confidence

that by working together in the spirit of many in body, one in mind, the SGI-USA can fulfill its important mission.

One-to-one dialogue is the most effective way to advance our cause, he said. Citing a recent speech by President Ikeda, the general director reminded the leaders that only gathering people for meetings is not effective in the long run.

Rather, he said, quoting the SGI president: "Visiting each person one by one and house to house is the way to encourage our friends. A person who does this can be called a true leader."

All other measurements of the organization's growth — number of new members, discussion meeting attendance, number of subscribers — start

PLEASE SEE ZAITSU, 4

REORGANIZATION REPORT

A Time of Thanks, New Beginnings

By **DIANA DECKER & SALLY MARKS MCKEE**
CORRESPONDENTS

Phoenix, Ariz., June 28

For some it was a sentimental trip down memory lane. For others it was an opportunity to express gratitude. But regardless of their motives, Arizona Territory SGI-USA members came out in record numbers to meet with their old districts one last time before starting the new neighborhood district system in July.

In Corona del Sol District in Ahwatukee, the setting was festive with brightly-colored red, yellow and blue balloons and a banner bidding farewell to Kimio Hashimoto, a member of the Soka Gakkai Scholars Division in Japan, who had spent the last year doing research on health and stress at Arizona State University. The decorations had the dual purpose of bidding goodbye to Kimio as well as to more than a half a dozen members who would be practicing in different neighborhoods.

A special tribute was paid to Masako Fraley, who had been in

the district the longest time. The Japanese pioneer member, who has been practicing for 37 years, was heralded for her tireless efforts and compassion.

"Masako has been my rock," said Elise Mitchell, as tears filled her eyes. "She has kept me grounded. She will really be missed. But wherever she goes she will bring the same stability and strength to the members as she has for us in Corona del Sol."

Other people expressed their appreciation to one another, as well as their gratitude to district leader Sue Sutcliffe. They reflected on the past but also focused on the future.

"This meeting was an opportunity for us to celebrate the friendships that we have developed together," said Jim Berry, who will be a district leader in a new neighborhood. "But those friendships will always be there. And what we've learned will transfer into our new neighborhoods."

In another part of town, eight



Photos by KENNY SAMUEL

Pioneer member Keiko Gonzales (left) is one of five pioneer women congratulated for efforts in Desert District (below). In Arizona, the new neighborhood districts begin meeting in July.



PLEASE SEE PHOENIX, 4

VOICES

What ways do you find to encourage the non-Buddhists in your environment who may be suffering or facing obstacles?

Members from Texas Joint Territory respond:



I think it is important to show the individual unconditional friendship and to share your past hardships along with your actual proof. You should dedicate whatever time you may have to that person and always use "soft power."

— MANNY MATHEWS, Dallas



Of course, I always encourage people to try chanting at any opportunity that seems appropriate. However, I try my hardest to create a common ground of thoughts and feelings to communicate to them that they possess the power and ability to overcome any difficulty in their lives.

— ALAN SINGER, Dallas



First, I listen to them, then I share one of my life experiences that will be similar or relevant. I always chant for wisdom in solving obstacles. I tell them that I pray sincerely and deeply for the wisdom and strength to grow through the struggle. Our horrible experiences can be catalysts for growth. I always include this wisdom in my prayers daily.

— CHRISTINE BELL, Garland, Texas



Trying to just be there for them quietly is important. Let people feel comfortable and safe around you and feel the warmth of your heart in your voice. I try to think of learning from Bodhisattva Never Disparaging who always treated everyone with great respect — no matter how they treated him.

— DEBORAH WEAVER, Dallas



First, I encourage them to look at their suffering or obstacle objectively. Then I share how I solve problems in my daily life by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. I explain how my Buddhist practice helps me focus on the solution, not the problem, and accept all challenges as opportunities to grow.

— NORENE MANNING, Piano, Texas



I listen to their problems and have found out that helps a lot more than words sometimes.

— ARDELL RICHARDSON, Dallas

Each week (except when we run "Question of the Month"), members of one joint territory will respond to a question on life, Buddhism or the organization. If you have ideas for questions we can ask, please write or e-mail us. Thanks for your support.

'Establishing' Begins In Us

EDITORIAL

This month, 737 years ago, Nichiren Daishonin wrote a seminal essay that explained why embracing his teachings would bring peace and security to the Earth. His Buddhism, it is often said, begins and ends with this thesis, the "Rissho Ankoku Ron."

The writing takes the form of questions and answers between a host, meant to be Nichiren Daishonin, and a traveler, meant to be Hojo Tokiyori, a powerful governmental official. Central to his argument is the oneness of life and environment, that suffering comes when people act based on mistaken beliefs and that harmony results when people behave according to the fundamental law of the universe.

The Daishonin's conclusion — "Therefore you must quickly reform the tenets you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle..." (MW-2 [2nd. ed.], 40) — has become one of the most quoted phrases from this writing.

It is also one of the most far-reaching, for it applies to those, like the "traveler," who are unfamiliar to the Daishonin's teachings and to us who already chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

By urging the traveler to "reform the tenets" he holds and "embrace" the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin is making clear the crux of his teachings.

Mechanically chanting daimoku and doing gongyo are not enough. We must also change the fundamental beliefs that cause us to suffer and truly embrace all of the Daishonin's teachings. "'Embracing the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of the Lotus Sutra]' means, in one sense, abandoning all prejudiced and partial views of life and humanity and returning to a respect for the supreme dignity of life," SGI President Ikeda writes in *The New Human Revolution*. "It means doing away with egoism and living by the rule of compassion, basing ourselves on true humanism" (vol. 2, p. 237). Daimoku helps us do all that.

We all live by our beliefs, the principles or tenets we hold dear. Depending on the nature of those beliefs, the results can be tragic or heroic. Timothy McVeigh's actions based on deeply held beliefs had a horrific result. Others, like the recently deceased

Jacques Cousteau, live up to their principles and inspire millions with their positive example. In Cousteau's case, he stood up to friend and French president Jacques Chirac and resigned from a national committee to protest the resumption of French nuclear testing.

What beliefs do we have to reform? We all look at the Daishonin's teachings through the lenses of our own experience. We find within it principles we find easy to accept because we already embrace them. That it has something for everyone is the beauty of the Daishonin's Buddhism and why our organization is so diverse, attracting people of all colors, political stripes, education, backgrounds, etc.

The difficulty comes when we encounter Buddhist truths that challenge our (sometimes mistaken) beliefs and it comes time to "reform the tenets" we hold. That's another name for human revolution. What those tenets are differs for each of us, which is where study, a seeking mind, self-reflection and prayer come in.

Rissho can be translated as "establishing or solidifying the truth," the truth here obviously meaning Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. *Ankoku* means "peaceful land." The title of this essay is often broadly interpreted to mean that as more and more people accept and embrace the Daishonin's teachings, then the land or the country as a whole will become peaceful.

We can also interpret *rissho ankoku* from a more personal point of view. The more we've reformed our tenets, the more we've embraced the Daishonin's teachings as our own, the more secure and peaceful our immediate surroundings will be. It all begins with one person. As SGI President Ikeda writes: "What is the surest way to bring peace to the land, to transform society that is weighed down with misfortune and suffering? Nichiren stresses that it begins with one person establishing the truth in his or her heart" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 236).

While it is always important to spread these ideas among our friends, we must "establish the truth" in ourselves first, developing the will to reform our beliefs and to act accordingly.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

'How do you attract and support young people in your district?'

Please be specific and limit your responses to 50 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," *World Tribune*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401. Fax: 310-260-8910. Or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Don't Trivialize Racial Problems

I read this morning the article "A Magic Eye for Tolerance" by Jan Sibert ("Perspective," June 13) and found it quite interesting until I got to the portion which stated that "Part of the problem, in my opinion, is that most minorities try to make other people change — enacting legislation, extracting promises that can't be kept, or just raging in pain and frustration. From almost every minority, we hear cries like..."

The message is very disturbing to me as an African American member who has been practicing for over 22 years, because it trivializes the very serious racial problems that we have in this country. It attempts to point the finger at the victims or the people of color (not minorities) who feel the brunt of the racism in this country and tell them to solve the problem.

Racism is a complex issue and unless people fight for change, meaning enacting legislation, fighting for justice — and responding to articles such as this one in our *World Tribune* — people will still think that the problems are with the minorities themselves.

Yes, we do have to be responsible for our lives and continue to review our own biases and prejudices and make change to open up our lives. Yet, we also must work in the greater society to make this country one that is based on equality. I hope the *World Tribune* will evaluate the articles it publishes with a little more sensitivity to its readers, especially people of color.
— DIANNE JACKSON McLEAN, Union City, Calif.

I read through Jan Sibert's article as if I were wandering through a loosened gold mine. I nodded in agreement with Sibert's experience until the gold mine pivoted into a minefield with the statement "most minorities make other people change..."

As an African American, I assert that Ms. Sibert's statement is reflective of those who understand little about racism and institutional discrimination. Ms. Sibert's viewpoint is further outrageous given the history of domestic terrorism in the United States that was perpetuated by slavery and segregation. The legislation we currently adhere to is a remedial response to gross inhumanity and injustice. The laws are also a mechanism by which this nation, which espouses the strongest democratic philosophy, can exhibit avenues of parity among people rather than parody.

I do agree with Ms. Sibert that we each do need to develop the magic eye for tolerance. However, the majority of the oppressed have already demonstrated their refined perspective through their survival and success stories. Buddhist believers in particular have to carve a more sensitive recognition of those who have taken responsibility for their lives and to offer dignified suggestions to further assist their progress. Ms. Sibert needs to re-examine and pinpoint who needs to develop the magic eye for tolerance.
— JOYCE G.D. LAW, Augusta, Ga.

Write for Bodhisattvas, Betty

A suggestion I would like to make is that the Betty B. column might benefit more people if its approach were to firmly take root in the Buddhist view of respect for life and its responses, avoiding arbitrary or impertinent judgments, hold unwaveringly to what Buddhism teaches. The element of humor would not have to suffer and only be enhanced, I believe, were this inviting column geared more to bodhisattvas and the "bodhisattva" in all of us.

— AUDREY MARXER, Los Angeles

Creative Conversations

PERSPECTIVE

By PHIL SIMPSON
ATLANTA

Fire, Flood Afflict Grand Forks" reads the headline. Downtown Grand Forks, N.Dak., looks like Venice, Italy, after a bomb. Hundreds of thousands of people are without food, shelter and water.

One day after celebrating Earth Day here in Atlanta, I found myself sitting at the kitchen table looking at the morning paper, pondering the meaning of nature's devastating effects and what we can do to minimize humanity's negative influence on the environment. Some scientists say that spring came one week early in the Northern Hemisphere this year, due to global warming. Will scenes such as the one in Grand Forks become more prevalent?

We are just five years out of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, at which the SGI displayed a huge environmental exhibit, "Toward the Century of Life: The Environment and Development." Since then, the exhibit has toured major cities around the world. In the SGI-USA, also, we have hosted an environmental exhibit around the country.

Much still needs to be done to turn the corner on the environmental degradation around us. Catastrophes of nature brought about by humankind's destructiveness continue to plague our planet.

How can one person help change come more swiftly? The answer seems to come at me from two directions. One source is a former Roman Catholic priest, Danny Martin, who lectured at Emory University on "Faith and Environment Symposium" for Earth Day. The other is "New Horizons of a Global Civilization" — SGI President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal (April *Living Buddhism*).

Dr. Martin, who grew up in Belfast, Ireland, amid religious strife and war, explains that he has broken through those limitations. He now travels around the United States with a message of human dialogue, which he considers necessary if we are going to solve our environmental problems.

Others' hearts. These are the very things President Ikeda has been encouraging us to do as the means to make positive change in the world. "Take your practiced powers [of collaboration] and spread them out till they span the chasm between [people]," Dr. Martin said.

President Ikeda, once again, as he has done over and over, stressed in his most recent peace proposal the need to "probe much deeper, questioning and redesigning the relationships of human beings to each other, of human beings to the environment, and of human beings to society as a whole. It is a time of shift in the perspective of each and every person in the world."

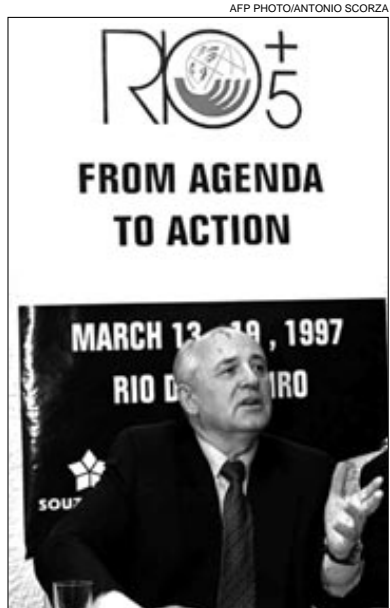
This shift to which he is referring is the shift that needs to occur in the hearts of all people as they internally reform themselves based on the Buddhist value of the sanctity of life. We call it human revolution.

As we share that reformation with others, President Ikeda goes on to say, "trust between human beings becomes the lubricant that smoothes the functioning of a better society," leading to the changes in perception that humankind needs to have to live in harmony with

the environment — and eventually to begin making more positive changes on the Earth.

Our internal development first and then the sharing of it with others — could this be the truly forgotten part of skillful collaboration that Danny Martin is looking for? After all, there is a lot of talk going on while the environment just seems to be getting worse.

After his lecture, I had a chance to meet briefly with Dr. Martin. I shared with him President Ikeda's peace proposal and had a little creative conversation. As a human being dedicated to the betterment of the environment through dialogue, I hope that my human revolution had some small effect on him. I will continue to do my human revolution as best I can to become the lubricant for a better functioning society — one that enhances the environment, not destroys it. **W**



Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev addresses a press conference in Rio de Janeiro on March 17, during the Rio-Plus-Five conference.

"Faith is most basic in reaching beyond ourselves," he said at his lecture. "Be present to one another in new and creative ways. If you are unfaithfully here [on Earth], you are causing damage." His seems to be a message of hope.

He was also saying something else. We need to participate in skillful conversations with others, which he termed "creative conversations." "Dialogue," he explained, "comes from *logos*, the meaning of things, and *dia*, meaning 'through.' Through dialogue we discover what it means to be a human being in our own time. The next stage of realization [i.e., of a problem like the environment] must be actualization."

This requires using the "forgotten skills of collaboration," he explained — collaborating with others, making friends with those who have sympathetic views with ours, or winning over

Gen'l Dir. Gives 3 Points for the Rest of the Year; Reports on Diversity Committee

ZAITSU, FROM PAGE 1

with the leaders giving heartfelt encouragement to one person at a time, he said. Moreover, such reasoned, personal conversations, and the friendships that result, are the best way to clear up any confusion members may have about the priesthood, which is actively trying to recruit SGI members.

Mr. Zaitzu next addressed the geographic reorganization taking place across the country. It is important gain even more trust from our communities, he said, "so we do not create an image that the SGI is a closed, strange Buddhist organization separated from the community." Reorganization efforts are worth the many difficulties entailed in im-

plementing them, he said, because the organization will become more deeply rooted in the community, better able to support our members and to reach out to our neighbors.

Finally, the general director focused on sharing this Buddhism with others. "Propagating this Buddhism is the key to our human revolution and the most direct way to transform our destiny and that of society, thus leading to lasting happiness and peace," he said, quoting President Ikeda.

He asked that all leaders share a determined prayer for propagation.

After Mr. Zaitzu's speech, the leaders broke into small groups to devise specific action points for the next six months. The re-

sulting plan focused on increasing readership of the publications, completing the geographic reorganization, propagation and studying the essence of the priesthood issue. Each organizational unit is encouraged to set its own goals in these four areas.

Diversity Committee

Mr. Zaitzu formed the diversity committee last October, in response to a growing number of voices within the SGI-USA that the organization look into issues resulting from its diverse membership. The 22 men and women — representing various races, language groups and sexual orientations — have met six times since.

"In the beginning it was a

very difficult experience for everyone," Mr. Zaitzu reported to the leaders. "But as we continued to meet, we found that we could talk about these issues much more freely."

He said that the committee, which will give a detailed report to the organization in a future *World Tribune*, had confirmed two main points:

- Racial prejudice exists in everyone's life because we all possess the ten worlds. Therefore, each of us should challenge ourselves to overcome the life-condition of discrimination. As an organization, we should have a keen sense of this issue and make every effort to enhance the spirit of equality and compas-

sion among ourselves and our membership.

- Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches the dignity of life, human equality and respect for each individual's character and differences. We have the great philosophy that is the key to finding a solution to these important issues of diversity.

The current committee will continue to meet until the end of the year. At that time, it plans to provide basic guidelines and materials for each joint territory to form its own diversity committees in early 1998.

(A report on revisions to the personnel manual and other CEC discussions will appear in future issues.)

A Time of Thanks, New Beginnings in Phoenix

Photo by JAN RUTKOWSKI



Grand Canyon District members mark their last meeting before switching to neighborhood districts. Some people will be going to new districts.

PHOENIX, FROM PAGE 1

north Phoenix members gathered in Marsha Robb's home to celebrate their final Grand Canyon District meeting.

The discussion on the changeover to the neighborhood system focused on the article by General Director Zaitzu, "Standing Alone But Not in Isolation," (*June Living Buddhism*, pp. 4-5). Taking initiative in the neighborhood, being at the helm, not just a passenger, is the important point.

Mr. Zaitzu chronicled the efforts of one woman, Sylvia Saito, who chanted to change the political situation of Brazil. The situation changed enough that SGI President Ikeda could return in 1984 to an overwhelming reception, contrasting to the oppressive climate that cut his 1966 visit short. The article included quotes from President Ikeda's 1997 peace initiative:

- "Indeed, everyone of us should realize that we possess the ability of spirit to be the main actor

in changing the course of history, and with that conviction, to undertake the task we share of solving the global issue of our time...."

• "The crux of our challenge is whether to simply be a passenger on the ship of fate leaving everything to others, or to take the helm and be responsible for that ship ourselves."

"The timing is right," Ms. Robb said. "It's up to every one of us to take responsibility for our neighborhoods, our world, our organization."

After the meeting, Jan Rutkowski mentioned Ms. Robb's role in smoothing the transition of her district to the neighborhood system. "I've been impressed with the way Marsha followed through with the new organization," Ms. Rutkowski said. "She took total responsibility for the new neighborhood groups, following through with each individual. Her attitude was that this was a chance for the people to expand their hearts, learning new things with new people. She un-

derstood the heart of the change so thoroughly, members had no confusion."

"I think the neighborhood system will be a good thing," Nora Stanley said. "Without change, we can get stagnant. Getting to know others and sharing experiences is nice."

Naomi Larson agreed. "I think it's going to work out great," she said. "People realize it is our responsibility to work for world peace where we reside."

"For the first few times you go to another house, it will be different," Esperanza Scott said. "I have to get used to it, but then it will be OK. If you chant a little bit extra, that helps."

"Desert District Bon Voyage — A Hallmark Father's Day" was the slogan at the district's final gathering in Tempe. Humor and study, recurring themes for many of the district's past meetings, was highlighted once again.

A favorite skit from the past, "Much Ado About Gongyo," was reenacted starring district leader Vladka Preiss in the role of "Ima Griper." Youth division members Brittany McKee, Alicia McKee and Nana Ogburn played supporting roles under the direction of Steven Ogburn.

Certificates of appreciation and flowers were presented to the many Japanese pioneer women who had helped the district through the years. Afterward, the atmosphere turned a little silly when songs from the 1950s were sung to Gakkai-oriented lyrics. Some of the reconstructed songs included: "You Ain't Nothing But a Hancho," "Shakubuku Sue" and "1-2-3

O'Clock 4 O'Clock Chant."

On a more serious note, Greg Hargis read excerpts from President Ikeda's lecture "Advancing Together on the Front Line" from the May 30 *World Tribune*. Greg likened President Ikeda's example of a good leader to the efforts of their district leader, Paulette Aasen. He thanked her for her efforts and encouraged his fellow members to follow her example. The district, which has been one of the area's largest for the past 14

years, will have members going into three different headquarters and five different neighborhoods.

"I'm looking forward to expanding my 'family' and friendships," Karen McDougald said with a broad smile.

"But I'm glad we had this last meeting to celebrate as a district one last time. It gives us a chance to say thank you, goodbye and bring about a sense of closure before moving forward to the next challenge."

DEADLINE EXTENDED
NEW DEADLINE: JULY 31, 1997

Essay Contest

THEME: *Human Diversity*

CATEGORIES: *Elementary School; Junior High; High School; College/University; Open (All Ages)*

The World Tribune invites all members to share their thoughts on one of the most important subjects of our day: human diversity. (See previous announcements for more details.)

We are looking for short, personal essays no more than 750 words long on any ideas you have about human diversity. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing as well as on clarity and originality. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in the World Tribune. Plaques and other non-cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers.

To Enter: *Send your essay (double-spaced, typed) to "Essay Contest," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Indicate which category you are entering. Only one entry per person. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Essays become the property of the World Tribune. Any essays not double-spaced and typed or exceeding 750 words will not be considered.*

Shin'ichi Yamamoto and his group were scheduled to fly from Cairo to Karachi, Pakistan, on Feb. 9, departing at 8:15 a.m. They arrived at the airport a little after 7:00, only to find that their flight would be substantially delayed. An airline official told them that they were waiting for the plane to arrive from London, where it was grounded due to heavy fog. They didn't seem to know yet when the plane might take off.

Yusuke Yoshikawa muttered angrily about this unexpected interruption to their plans: "What a disaster! There goes our entire schedule."

Akira Kuroki tried to placate him, saying: "This happens all the time. The last time we were in Europe, we had to wait more than six hours in the London airport because of fog."

Shin'ichi, standing beside the two men, laughed: "Kuroki, you've become quite an old hand at traveling, haven't you? Yoshikawa, I know Japanese trains always run on time, but you mustn't judge the rest of the world according to those standards. We're taking a plane, not a train, and Japan isn't the world."

"Look at the bright side and be glad that we now have unexpected bonus time to discuss future activities. Nichiren Daishonin said: 'The generals in a tumultuous age develop strategy behind drawn curtains, and victory is decided thousands of miles away [from the field of battle]' (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 183). Detailed advance planning is very important."

And so their discussion began in the waiting lounge.

Shin'ichi offered an idea: "We're stopping over in Bangkok again after Pakistan, and I'd like to form a chapter there. What do you think?"

Eisuke Akizuki replied, "It will be an important new move — the first Soka Gakkai chapter in Southeast Asia."

Shin'ichi gazed at each of them as he continued: "Unless someone disagrees, then, let's plan on doing that. Our flight from Bangkok to Japan will make a stopover in Hong Kong. Will Hong Kong members be coming to meet us at the airport?"

Once again Akizuki replied: "When we left Japan, the Overseas Affairs Bureau had already received notice that members wanted to meet us at the Hong Kong airport."

"I see," said Shin'ichi. "Then let's also form a Hong Kong chapter. Would you contact the Headquarters and suggest some leadership appointments for these two new chapters?"

Though noon rolled around, there was still no word on their flight. They ate lunch and discussed until nightfall various activities scheduled after their return to Japan, including youth division events to celebrate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day.

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 2

Long Journey

Translation of parts 28–30 of the 'Long Journey' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

It was night by the time the plane finally left Cairo. Because of the late departure and the time difference, Shin'ichi and his group arrived at the Karachi airport at 3:00 a.m., Feb. 10.

Though it was the middle of the night, several people were waiting for them. One was Shingo Shiroyama, a Japanese member in his 50s, sent to Karachi by his Japanese employer as a technical instructor to help introduce more advanced textile-dyeing technology. Another was Masao Kawakita, about 27 or 28. He and his wife were both living in Pakistan, where he had been posted by the Japanese import-export company for which he worked. Kawakita would be the guide for Shin'ichi's party during their stay. He wasn't a member of the Soka Gakkai, but his mother-in-law was; Shin'ichi had met her before he left Japan.

A young Pakistani man, a student of the University of Karachi, was also there to greet them. He had been asked by Gakkai member Asanobu Komori, who was engaged in technical training at the tire factory run by the young man's father, to meet Shin'ichi and his party at the airport, and show them around Karachi. Mr. Komori himself, the young man said, was currently back in Japan on a short visit. Shin'ichi sincerely thanked the Pakistani youth for coming all the way to the airport and staying so late to meet them, explaining with deep regret that they had already arranged for Mr. Kawakita to be their guide.

A representative of the Japanese trading company stationed in Karachi which would help Shin'ichi and his group purchase materials for the Grand Reception Hall at the head temple was also there.

Shin'ichi expressed his sincere thanks to all for coming to meet them in the middle of the night.

The group's plans had originally called for touring Karachi starting on the morning of Feb. 10, but Shin'ichi announced that they would push the schedule back to the afternoon.

When they arrived at their hotel, Yusuke Yoshikawa commented, "If we don't start our day until the afternoon, we're going to be very rushed."

"I, too, prefer to start moving in the morning," said Shin'ichi, "but when we think of our driver, of course the afternoon is better. He came to the airport to greet us in the middle of the night. If he has to drive us around and be our guide

pulling large carts. The animals were clearly an intimate part of Pakistani life, much relied on for their physical strength.

After seeing the city's main sites and buildings, the group visited the ruins of Bhambhore, 36 miles east. The ancient port of Bhambhore had flourished from about the beginning of the 1st century C.E. It was here that, in the 8th century, the Umayyad general Muhammad bin al-Qasim landed, thus marking Islam's first step onto the Indian subcontinent. In that sense, Bhambhore could be regarded as the origin of the modern Islamic state of Pakistan.

History is a series of new steps, one following another, Shin'ichi mused. The far-distant future begins right here and now. That is why the present moment is always a beginning, the first step on a long journey. To weave a tapestry of eternal peace, we must win in each present moment. We must rouse the sun of courage in our hearts and make a rainbow of hope shine there, winning one day at a time, opening the door to triumph again and again.

Shin'ichi had made arrangements for a banquet at a Chinese restaurant in Karachi that night. Those who had met his

party at the airport and shown them around the city were all invited.

At the dinner, Shiroyama spoke to Shin'ichi about something troubling him: "Sensei, I have five children. Two of them, one son and one daughter, are not practicing Buddhism. I am disappointed that I have not put into practice Mr. Toda's guideline of 'faith for a happy, harmonious family.' I'm ashamed of my failure."

"How old are your children?" Shin'ichi asked.

"They are all adults already."

(To be continued)



from the morning, he'll be lacking sleep. How terrible it would be if that resulted in an accident! How could we ever apologize to him and his family if that happened?"

"As leaders, we must be careful to always think first not of our convenience but of the others who are working so hard for our benefit. Nor can we ever let up our guard against accidents. These are very important points for leaders to bear in mind."

Shortly after noon on Feb. 10, the group began their tour of Karachi. Masao Kawakita, their guide, and Shingo Shiroyama accompanied them.

Pakistan had split off from India as a separate Muslim country when India declared its independence from Britain in

1. Karachi was the capital 1947–60. The present capital is Islamabad.

DOUG HEBERT, ATLANTA

Determination, Daimoku and a Little Help From His Friends

He has less than three weeks to live." Those were the words my doctor told my brother as I lay in a coma in the middle of February 1996.

Until that point, my life was, I thought, pretty good — I was going places, literally. I had been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for about two years and was working as a computer programmer. I was on the verge of moving to sunny California from Atlanta when things starting crashing around me.

I was admitted to the hospital after a short illness. The doctor informed me that I had a serious case of fungal meningitis, an inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal column. The meningitis had already begun damaging my eyesight and hearing.

I was in so much pain the nurses had to give me the maximum dosage of morphine allowed. The last thing I remember before slipping into the coma was my joint territory chief sharing encouragement from SGI President Ikeda, saying, "chant until... never give up!"

As my coma began I was plunged into a strange world controlled by a demon. In my hallucination, he was holding me hostage and trying to defraud the insurance company. One of my first encounters with the demon stands out clearly in my mind to this day. I was fighting him with my left hand on his face and chanting with all my might: Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. I began to push him further down and down, and the fire in his eyes began to cool. I began to think I was winning. Suddenly he grew stronger and his eyes began to glow a fiery red once again. I chanted as hard as I ever had, but I found my right hand was tied down and I could not push any further.

Later I thought it represented our daily struggles and how, without faith, our hands are tied and we cannot realize our power.

My fight with the demon continued for two months until I slowly awoke from the coma. I gradually became aware that three of my closest friends in the district were holding my hand



Photo by LUCY ESTEPHANOS

Doug Hebert (center) is surrounded by fellow members who supported his efforts to pass the most recent SGI-USA Elementary Exam. (L to r) Donna Fabian and Roy Scotter, who helped administer the test, and Beverly Reeder (2nd from right) and Mark Cantrell, who helped Doug study and record his answers.

and encouraging me to chant. It was at that point — in that twilight between dreams and consciousness — that I had my last encounter with the demon. Encouraged by my friends I was able to look the demon in the face and say, "I'm not listening to you anymore!"

I woke up fully at that point and realized the severity of my situation. My vision was severely impaired and my hearing was gone completely. The only way to communicate with me was for someone to use one finger and write words, letter by letter, on my forehead. I also became aware that my left arm was paralyzed and my fingers and toes were numb. I later learned I had lost 57 pounds — I was too weak to walk or even feed myself. To make matters worse, I found myself no longer in the hospital but in a nursing home. Three of my worst fears were to go blind, deaf and be institutionalized — I got all three of them at once!

I could not watch television or listen to the radio, and the hours became long and painfully slow. The only thing I could do was chant and visual-

ize in my mind what I wanted my future to be.

In May 1996 I took my first steps assisted by a walker. By June I was able to give my experience at the World Peace Gongyo meeting at the Atlanta Community Center.

The members in my district — Marietta District — had held weekly chanting sessions for my recovery since the beginning of my hospitalization. They had chanted 2 million daimoku for my recovery. As a representation of their daimoku, they created two colorful groups of cranes. The cranes were made from folded slips of paper, each one representing 1,000 daimoku.

In August, I attended a meeting with Japanese exchange students visiting Atlanta. I participated in an introduction to a skit I had written the previous year titled "The Bus Incident — The Rosa Parks Story." The theme of the skit was "one person can make a difference."

In September, I was well enough to move to my own apartment, which was one of the first goals I had chanted for in those early days after waking

from my coma. My vision and hearing gradually improved so significantly that I could cross streets and do my own grocery shopping.

In November I took the SGI-USA Elementary Exam. Because I was still unable to see and read clearly, several members read the sample questions and answers into a tape recorder to help me study. Unlike the rest of the members, I had to take the exam orally. With much determination, daimoku and the support of the members, I passed.

In December 1996 something extraordinary happened. When I gave my experience back in June, what I didn't talk about was that the meningitis was the direct result of my HIV infection. I really hadn't admitted it even to myself. At the December World Peace Gongyo, youth division members were giving a skit on AIDS awareness for AIDS World Day. They asked me to speak about it from my perspective. It was frightening at first, of course — human revolution usually is.

As I chanted about it, I realized I had the power within me

to overcome my negative circumstances. I hadn't told everyone about my status because I was afraid they would treat me differently. However, as I began to speak, I imagined how Rosa Parks must've felt as she took a stand (actually, a seat) alone against the tyranny of racism and refused to give up in the face of all odds.

I didn't know what to expect after I gave my full experience. Much to my surprise, the response was overwhelmingly positive, even heartwarming. In fact, several members told me that because I had opened up about my situation, they were able to let go of preconceptions they had about gays and HIV. One person can make a difference!

This year I have grown by leaps and bounds in both my practice and my daily life. The things that used to be so difficult after my coma — the same things that I used to take for granted — are once again becoming second nature, such as getting a checking account and paying monthly bills.

My eyesight and hearing are improving every day. At this time I am walking two miles a day. I have gained 35 pounds, and people tell me I have a healthy glow. Through my daimoku I am handling new challenges, both mentally and emotionally. Recently I have finally been able to read the regular sutra book to recite gongyo (before, I was using copies that had been enlarged five times the normal size!).

Even though this experience cost me my sight at one point, it also has given me a new vision. I am now awakening to my mission for kosen-rufu. I want to share this Buddhism with those who may ordinarily not hear about it — those who cannot see, those who cannot hear, and those living with the hardships of HIV infection.

My faith and strength have reached new heights. Even though I'm faced with challenges every day to do ordinary tasks, I find my life enriched and full beyond my imagining.

If someday we meet on life's highway — remember to give me plenty of room. ❧



Actively Closing the Gap

From *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, pp. 138-148:

When Shin'ichi came to Kyushu, Hironori Kawanaka was always the first to welcome him....

On one occasion after Shin'ichi had become president, Kawanaka said to him:

"A person who seeks growth and self-improvement needs a mentor in life. I will fight throughout my life as your disciple, President Yamamoto. This is what I have decided.

"Inspired by the relationship you shared with President Toda, I have given some thought to the action and behavior required of a disciple. But the truth is that the mentor-disciple relationship involves something so profound, I find I cannot penetrate its innermost essence. At the same time, my situation makes it impossible for me to always be near you.

"From your deeds and actions, however, I know that a disciple is one who strives to actualize the mentor's vision — in this case, for the happiness of all people and the realization of world peace. Therefore, I am determined to successfully accomplish all the goals and objectives you set forth for kosen-rufu. I will reply to your expectations by winning in these endeavors."

In fact, Kawanaka always came with news of some laudable success or achievement when he met Shin'ichi....

He modeled his behavior after that of Shin'ichi, whom he looked up to as his mentor; in any situation he would ask himself what Shin'ichi would do if Shin'ichi were in his place. In other words, he did not stand looking toward his mentor, thinking of himself as one of the crowd; he instead strove to live side by side with his mentor, facing the same direction in which his mentor's gaze was focused. This was his philosophy as a disciple.

Kawanaka had also been the driving force behind the great turnout for this Kyushu young men's division general meeting. In the weeks leading up to the meeting, he had rallied his fellow young men's division members telling them:

"The first of this year's scheduled regional youth division general meetings will be held here in Kyushu. What this means is that we hold the key to victory or defeat for the entire country. That's because if Kyushu gets off to a successful start, then members in other regions will throw themselves headlong into their activities, determined not to be shown up by Kyushu. I say: "Let us now demonstrate to our fellow youth division members throughout the country the passion and power of the sons of Kyushu!"

"The only way we can do this is to put our utmost effort into visiting our members and offering them encouragement in faith. I regard all of the young men's division members as younger brothers of President Yamamoto. I take the view that when we accept a position of responsibility in the YMD organization — no matter how minor that position may be — we are being entrusted by our mentor with the task of looking after his beloved younger brothers."

Hironori Kawanaka candidly related his feelings: "I think that if President Yamamoto were to ask any of us

The following four pages comprise the second edition in the quarterly women's division series devoted to its action-oriented theme for 1997, "Actively Closing the Gap." This series celebrates SGI-USA women all over the country who are accomplishing breakthroughs in their daily lives and achieving a reawakened sense of mission for kosen-rufu.

How to correctly practice as a disciple of President Ikeda, and where to find the time to meet the demands of our daily lives, families and the organization remain questions for many. Now, halfway through the year, seems like a good time to review excerpts from The New Human Revolution, vol. 4, "Fresh Leaves" chapter, which addresses these issues.

determination not to retreat a single step. When placed in severe circumstances, people all too easily tend to give up, convinced that the situation is hopeless, before even considering what concrete actions they could take. In their hearts, they have already conceded defeat without putting up a fight. That, in fact, is the cause of all failure.

"The crucial thing is to determine to do your absolute best both at work and in Gakkai activities, and to find time to earnestly chant daimoku about your situation. You have to bring forth your wisdom and life force, and then exercise your ingenuity.

"How you go about resolving the dilemma will differ according to the work you do, conditions on the job and your position. For instance, leaders who cannot get around to see their members because they have to travel frequently can encourage them by writing them letters regularly while on the road. Or, if they have to work overtime until late at night six days a week but have Sundays off, they can do a week's worth of activities on that day. A hundred people will come up with a hundred different creative ways, but in every case the basic principle is the same."

The eyes of the young man who had asked the question gradually brightened. Shin'ichi's guidance was specific and to the point. He continued: "If you are the central figure in your organization, it is particularly important to train someone who can lead activities in your absence. It's vital that you be determined, no matter what, to achieve the targets everyone has agreed on as an organization. You must not allow the organization to come to a standstill simply because you can't be as active as you would like.

"Often, curiously enough, the leaders of those areas making the most remarkable progress — regardless of their division — are people who have very demanding work schedules. Their all-out dedication moves others, with the result that those around them become serious and start working hard, too."

Because this was a very important issue, Shin'ichi wanted to discuss it from a variety of angles.

"Again, in trying to strike a balance between work and activities, you have to consider the problem of time. It is only natural that a student, for example, should study hard before an examination. And there are similar critical times on a job. At such times, it is natural to devote most of your time to work.

"So how to balance things has to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Also, rather than viewing things only in the short term, it's important to have a long-range perspective.

"While we are young, however, we should exert ourselves so that we can honestly say that we've done our best in both our work and Gakkai activities. That's because our efforts during this time will become the foundation for our entire lives. President Toda often said, 'In faith, do the work of one; in your job, do the work of three.'

"Since there are only 24 hours in a day and each of us is only one person, some of us probably feel it is a contradiction to say we should make an all-out effort in both our

Heart To Heart

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



In SGI President Ikeda's 'The New Human Revolution,' he addresses issues — including what it means to be a disciple, and how to most effectively use our time — through the use of dialogue. Dialogue is one highlight of conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center (above).

to look after his younger brother, we would be concerned not only about that young man's faith but also about his work situation and even his eating habits. We would go every day to encourage him. If we learned that our president's younger brother was not doing gongyo, then we would certainly sit down with him and have a frank talk.

"But if we in fact look at our division's members in each area, I think we will find that there are any number of members who are not doing gongyo. To turn a blind eye to their situations is irresponsible and lacking in compassion.

"By the way, do any of you have any questions?"

One young man who looked rather fatigued, said:

"President Yamamoto, I'm having a hard time participating in Gakkai activities as much as I would like to because of a busy work schedule. How can I find a way to do both?"

This was a problem that had once given Shin'ichi himself quite a bit of anguish. He immediately replied:

"To get right to the point, it boils down to making a decision to do your best in everything and then having the

• LINKING • THEORY • WITH • REALITY •

A Perspective on Prayer

By LINDA JOHNSON
WOMEN'S DIVISION
SECRETARIAT VICE CHIEF



Linda Johnson

In so many ways throughout the Goshu, Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly tells us of the amazing power of prayer. In "Reply to Kyo'o," he states: "Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myohorenge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 119).

When giving advice in "On Prolonging Life" to a woman who had fallen gravely ill, Nichiren states:

It is extremely difficult to fathom another person's mind. I have experienced such difficulties on many occasions. You do not readily accept advice, so I will not counsel you directly. Just pray to the Gohonzon frankly and sincerely, without help from anyone. (MW-1, 231).

And, in "On Attaining Buddhahood," he states, "Therefore, when you chant the Mystic Law and recite the Lotus Sutra, you must summon up deep conviction that Myohorenge-kyo is your life itself" (MW-1, 4).

While extolling the virtues of prayer, Nichiren Daishonin also strictly warns us that our faith alone will determine whether we can manifest our prayers into reality. He states: "But your faith alone will determine all these things. A

In the crucial moment, all of these these people developed one thing in common — the ability to pray wholeheartedly.

sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff. I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart" (MW-1, 3-4).

The bottom line for us, as practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, is how can we actualize our prayers, thereby proving to ourselves and others the validity of our practice?

I believe that there are two

essential ingredients — the sincerity of our prayer and our ability to not be swayed by obstacles that will surely arise to test us.

With regard to the sincerity of our prayer, I have watched over the years as countless members literally make the impossible happen when they were backed into a corner and had nowhere else to turn but to the Gohonzon after all other strategies had failed. In this kind of crucial-moment situation, I have seen houses saved from foreclosure, cancer disappear on the morning surgery was scheduled, a life that medicine had given up on extended for a period of years, a terribly lonely woman find a wonderful partner, a homeless couple find a home and jobs, and a suicidal person develop the will to live, just to mention a few.

What has always been apparent to me is that, in the crucial moment, all of these people developed one thing in common — the ability to pray wholeheartedly. The depth and sincerity of their prayers moved the universe and was revealed in a manifest form.

I believe the challenge for each of us is how to develop this sincerity of prayer on a more consistent basis. In other words, how to be sincere without having to wait for the crisis to occur. One way is to awaken to a deeper understanding of our respective missions.

As human beings, each of us must cultivate our inner beauty from within, a beauty that results from constantly challeng-

ing our own inner limitations while helping others to do the same. We must become people of integrity who are trusted and respected by those around us. Integral to this process is our ability to use all obstacles that arise to deepen our commitment to win. As President Ikeda states in *The New Human Revolution*:

The greater the adversity, the more important it is to resolve that now is the time to achieve a victory in life and to keep challenging oneself. It is here that the beneficial power of the Gohonzon becomes manifest. Adversity is therefore an opportunity to prove the power of Buddhism. (vol. 1, p. 251)

In *Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, President Ikeda also writes:

It is said that life is like a drama. Whether in the world of business, education, the home or wherever, each person acts out a drama. This "role" is itself an expedient means; but should the "actor" abandon this role, he or she will be at a loss for a mission. When acting our respective roles, we manifest our own inner truth most fully.

Daily life equals faith. And the world of Buddhahood appears nowhere except wedded to the stage of the reality of the nine worlds. Let us enact the drama of human revolution on the stage of our lives.

From misery to happiness, from disappointment to hope, from fate to mission, from suffering to eternal joy — the driving force that makes these dynamic transformations possible is the Mystic Law, is faith." (vol. 1, p. 83)

Thus, it can be said that our mission is to do our very best each moment of our lives. Grappling with our present reality is what gives us the opportunity to expand our lives, to win over our circumstances, and to prove to both ourselves and others the power of faith. What really matters is not which "role" we play in life so long as we devote ourselves to playing each "role" to the best of our ability. Obstacles are the fuel for the development of our character, and everything

Daimoku Filled With Appreciation

By BARBARA SOHMERS
LOS ANGELES

It seems to me that during the 11 years I have practiced this Buddhism, I have almost always been involved in some campaign. At first, during what I think of as the "New Members' Honeymoon," chanting daimoku was sort of like playing a new and exciting game, a game played for benefits, which I usually won. The benefits were mostly material and conspicuous: a lead role in a play and, greatest of all, the ability to find, and actually buy, my own house!

After a while, though, the game seemed to lose its edge. Actually, it was I who lost mine. I was so busy enjoying the gifts of my newfound good fortune that I found I had less and less time or energy to devote to my practice or to the seemingly nonstop activities my seniors kept encouraging me to join.

Did I say "encouraging"? Often, it felt more like a thinly disguised command! As if I would be expected to pay back the Gohonzon and the organization for the goodies I'd received! I did not see why I should go driving around to chant at the community center or other people's homes, when I could chant as much (or little) in the freedom of my own house! Not to mention the obligatory propagation campaigns, in the mall or down the street, as we tried to introduce people to Nam-myohorenge-kyo. I would follow the leader, smiling but wishing I were somewhere else.

All too soon I discovered, to my chagrin, that the fortune I had been taking for granted was as changeable as clouds in a windy sky. My play ended its limited engagement and

nothing else came along. The benefit, though I was not yet ready to see it that way, was that I had more time to chant, perfect my gongyo, even begin to enjoy the activities somewhat. The energy my daimoku often lacked seemed to multiply in the presence of the friendly, optimistic members and leaders I grew to like, respect and love.

Then, just as fortune



Barbara Sohmers

seemed to be coming my way again, my world fell apart. I lost my speech, and with it the only career I'd ever had. My practice became one long campaign; a life-or-death struggle for the only thing I felt was worth fighting for; a cure!

Through the nearly seven years since then, I have begun more campaigns than I have finished. There was one for 10 million daimoku, which took a lot longer than I expected. Another time, a senior leader suggested I double the amount of daimoku I was doing to four hours a day.

I kept it up for about three months, until I began to grow impatient. I never seemed to have time to do anything else. It seemed as though my relationship with the Gohonzon was being tainted by impatience and a creeping resentment. I went back to two hours a day, and that feels like a healthy medium, for now.

My relationship with the

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PLEASE SEE PRAYER, 9

FRESH LEAVES, FROM PAGE 7

work and Gakkai activities....”
Smiling, Shin’ichi continued: “But if this is a contradiction, then everything is a contradiction. We live in a world where all kinds of demands are constantly pulling us in different directions. If our job entails manufacturing something, then we will be told to make a good product. But even though doing so will require more time, we’ll still be pressured to complete the work quickly....”
“There are two sides to everything. Not seeing things just one way is very human. Life involves striking a balance amid the tensions of conflicting issues while striving always to improve ourselves and move ahead. While we may think that concentrating on one thing — work for example would make life a lot less complicated, it’s a mistake to cast aside other commitments or pursuits on that account. 卍

“I’m well aware what a challenge it is to hold down a job, to study and do Gakkai activities all at the same time. But true Buddhist practice and training lie in working hard and succeeding in each of these areas. Moreover, all of these struggles will become precious lifelong treasures.
“If we feel that our lives are painful or agonizing, then let’s find a spare moment and pray about our situation. If we pray, then the energy to challenge our circumstances will emerge, and we will definitely find a way to break through. Eventually we will attain a life state where we can do activities and devote ourselves to kosen-rufu to our hearts’ content, free of all hindrances.
“We may think there’s no advantage to working hard. But hard work pays off in the long run. All our efforts will become valuable assets in life. So let’s work really hard! And let’s relish doing so!” 卍

Nationwide Women’s Chapter Leaders Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center

Don’t let another year go by without visiting the Florida Nature and Culture Center! Come and meet SGI women from all over the country — it’s time to actively close more gaps! First-class accommodations... great food... field trips... new friends... heart-to-heart dialogue. If this sounds inviting, then this year’s Nationwide Women’s Chapter Leaders Conference is for YOU! Come relax, re-group, REVITALIZE!

- When:** Oct. 9–12
- Where:** Florida Nature and Culture Center, Miami
- Who:** Women holding chapter-level positions and up (seven spaces per joint territory)
- Cost:** \$330 (excluding airfare)
- Contact:** Your women’s division joint territory chief for information

APPRECIATION, FROM PAGE 8

Gohonzon resembles, in many ways, my relationship with the man I love and have lived with for the past 20 years. By this I mean that there is a constant balancing, conscious or not, between positive and negative attitudes and emotions; from trust to doubt, from appreciation to complaint, from total love and respect to suspicion and jealousy. If this seems to diminish my reverence for the Gohonzon, it is not meant to. After all, the Gohonzon repre-

sents not only the vastness of the universe, but the tiniest fragment of energy or matter that makes up our bodies and minds.
Meanwhile, although I was hardly paying attention, benefits kept piling up. Material and physical problems seemed to melt discretely away, and any new ones that turned up never seemed to last. I learned, among many other things, that the quality of my daimoku doesn’t depend on its quantity, except insofar as the longer I chant, the more my mind and heart seem to see clearly

what I need to do. Five intense, heartfelt minutes can sometimes do more than an hour of less focused prayer. But the other 55 minutes may have been necessary for those five to come.
As for challenging myself when I don’t want to chant, my life-condition tells me what to do. When the problem is only laziness, it’s fairly simple. If, on the other hand, I’m unwilling to face my own thoughts, then I have to take action. I may remind myself, as vividly as I can, of the awful suffering that brought me to the

Gohonzon on the worst days. That memory strikes terrible fear in me. Reliving the awfulness, I remember how daimoku calmed it and drove it out of my heart. The daimoku of helpless misery becomes daimoku of freedom, relief and, above all, appreciation for the Gohonzon and for my life.
A few months ago, when I least expected it, my major obstacle began to ease. My speech began, unevenly but surely, to improve. Imagine the joy of hearing a normal, ordinary voice reply to a casual greeting, and

knowing that it’s mine!
“How’re you doing?” the cashier says, in the mechanical tone she’ll use a hundred times that day.
“Great!” I answer, and she glances up, not knowing why, but pleased at the joy in my voice. “Sure is a gorgeous day,” I throw in for the sheer pleasure of hearing it, and we smile at each other warmly.
Now my daimoku, filled with appreciation, resounds loudly and most clearly throughout the universe. 卍

PRAYER, FROM PAGE 8

that happens to us can be a source for our growth, if we use it that way.
I wonder how many times a day we miss the opportunity to grow. How many times do we not tap the power of the Gohonzon? How often do we just pray out of formality? Or how many times do we pray but actually expect to get the “answer” from our friends, lover, boss, psychic, etc.?
First and foremost, I believe that sincere prayer begins with challenging ourselves to be 100 percent present in the moment while we are in front of the Gohonzon. We must check whether we are truly praying with a sincere heart to find a solution to the problem. For example, our prayer should be based on a determination that — “I will show actual proof.” Then, we must rely exclusively on our prayer and the action based on the wisdom resulting from our prayer to create the victory. This kind of prayer

stands in vivid contrast to the one in which we expect the Gohonzon to give us the benefit merely because we have offered our prayer.
Buddhism means taking full responsibility to find the solution. Precisely because we are experiencing the problem is why we must be the ones to find the solution. This is our golden opportunity. Taking this kind of responsibility for our lives is actually freeing. For the first time our ability to transform any suffering into joy is no longer dependent upon anyone or anything outside of ourselves.
But sincere prayer does not stop once we have finished chanting. The willingness to change our lives and achieve our prayers means taking action to accomplish our prayers. In other words, we must make effort.
Buddhism teaches us that we create our lives by our thoughts, words and actions. Are we taking responsibility for the thoughts, words and actions we engage in once we have stepped

away from the Gohonzon? Our lives and our environment are inseparable. This means that, as Nichiren Daishonin teaches us in “On Attaining Buddhahood,” our “life at each moment permeates the universe and is revealed in all phenomena” (MW-1, 3).
Is it any great mystery, then, that we do not achieve our prayer if we repeatedly tell ourselves that we are a failure, that we cannot do this or that? Our tendency is to doubt that we can accomplish something. We usually use this to justify giving up on our dreams; “reality,” we think, is showing us that we cannot reach our goals.
However, the environment from a purely causal standpoint is only mirroring our own *ichinen* or belief system. Human revolution, the object of our practice, entails a change on the inside that manifests itself in our behavior. One does not, for example, become a more compassionate person without being

able to visibly express this compassion to others. Thus, sincere prayer must be accompanied by action that is consistent with the object of one’s prayer.
Our daily lives should be based on daimoku. It is daimoku that purifies our lives over time. As President Ikeda tells us:
When you purify your lives with daimoku, you will definitely develop an utterly indestructible state of absolute happiness that abounds with great fortune. In such a state of life, everything will become a source of joy. You will feel a deep sense of fulfillment even if you have neither worldly fame nor wealth. Each moment will be totally satisfying. Your heart will be filled with joy and all things will appear beautiful to your eyes. You can instantly discern the truth, distinguish between good and evil. You will think about the welfare of others in any circumstances. This is the state of mind you can

develop through faith. (April 1993 *Seikyo Times*, p. 40)
I believe that each of us deserves to achieve this state of life. However our efforts and our efforts alone will determine this. Even though we have the all-powerful daimoku at our disposal, whether and how sincerely we strive to utilize it in our lives will determine the quality of our daily existence. After all, no one can give us happiness. It is something that we must earn through our own efforts.
Discovering the limitless potential of our lives is our option. How will we ever know the true power of faith if we don’t challenge ourselves to really live this Buddhism? To me, living Buddhism means more than the ability to talk about theory, it means the ability to translate the theory of Buddhism into actuality in our lives. This is the struggle. This is the challenge. Exploring the depths of absolute happiness is our destination. 卍

CARRIE TRIFFET, LOS ANGELES

Changing My Perceptions

My father died recently, following a long illness. But first, let me tell you a little about my family.

I never got along with my sister. Sharon was an only child until I came along, and she made me pay for ruining that good thing she had. As a kid, I had monsters, and she loved to terrify me with them. I hated her for it.

As a teen, Sharon embraced a strict sect of orthodox Judaism. We were brought up "suburban orthodox": We kept kosher at home, but ate in restaurants when no one was looking. Suddenly, Sharon was too kosher to eat off our plates or even sleep in our house.

She and her religious friends would try to coerce me into joining their sect, too, but there was no way. I hated how they would look me up and down, disapproving of the pants I wore, the fast food I ate, the school I attended.

When Sharon was married in an arranged match that seemed straight out of "Fiddler on the Roof," I was relieved to see her go.

Neither liked nor respected my father. He seemed to me to be both an ineffectual Walter Mitty and an arrogant patriarch, demanding parental respect. This being the "I am woman, hear me roar" '70s, I fought him tooth and nail.

In 1974, after my mother's death, my father's life seemed over

as well. He gathered his memories and waited to die. My grandmother moved in to take care of him.

At 18, I split for California and never looked back. Soon after, Dad remarried. Audrey appeared to me a nasty sort: cruel, petty and not too bright. But she seemed good for Dad, so I tried to keep the peace. It didn't work. I went for years without contacting them at all.

In 1981, Dad had open-heart surgery. Combined with his acute diabetes, it made him quite frail. Audrey watched him like a hawk, monitoring his medicines and food. It was a love-hate relationship. She single-handedly kept him alive all these years, but at a huge cost.

When I received the Gohonzon in 1986, I immediately worked to repair my relationship with Dad and Audrey. Slowly I learned to accept and appreciate them for who they are, rather than be bitterly disappointed by who they're not. We built a relationship, and I called and visited fairly often. Dad was glad I was back in his life, but he wished

I was closer to my sister. I let him know it wasn't gonna happen.

Now, fast forward to a couple months ago: Dad fell one night and broke four ribs. His blood sugar went haywire, his already weak heart rebelled, and his lungs filled up with fluid. Audrey was terrified. She couldn't sleep nights for fear he'd die while she wasn't looking. She screamed at my sister. She screamed at the doctors, and of course, she screamed at Dad. The situation was grim. I realized I'd better fly to Pittsburgh, pronto. On Friday, I booked an emergency flight for Sunday.

I couldn't fly Saturday, because I was scheduled for an endometrial biopsy. The biopsy hurt like hell. But I figured traveling the next day wouldn't be so bad; maybe some cramps and bleeding. Well, there were both, as well as severe nausea. I couldn't eat anything for days.

I felt hopeless and overwhelmed about this visit. What could I accomplish in four days? I'd had no time to chant about it,

and I felt unprepared. I arrived in Pittsburgh Sunday evening in a freak snowstorm, and went straight to the hospital. Dad was tiny, shriveled, in his hospital bed. He didn't recognize me.

I sat passively in his room that evening, and the next day as well. Sharon sent over homemade meals for Audrey and me, but I was too queasy to eat. I just sat bedside my father, polite strangers, for hours on end. When he needed private things attended to, I obediently left the room.

At home, doing gongyo at 11:00 p.m., confronted by the painful reality of illness and death, I felt paralyzed and overwhelmed by my own selfishness and immaturity. But a small, calm voice in my head reminded me this was no time to wallow in my own failings as a human being. Somehow I had to rise above my weaknesses, summon my highest self, and provide peace, comfort and strength to those around me.

The next morning, I awoke to Audrey bursting into my room in a white-hot rage. She was furious with my sister for not properly feeding me. She ranted that I couldn't eat that crummy hospital food, and selfish Sharon wasn't bringing me the right kinds of homemade foods. She insisted that I go to Sharon's house for dinner that night, where I could be properly fed. I listened quietly. The calm voice in my head came to me again. I told her it was clear she's not really angry at Sharon, who does so much to help her. I talked her through it gently. She cried, then calmed down, although she wouldn't take no for an answer about dinner.

Snowstorm turned to rainstorm that day, and my queasiness decreased. But I began hemorrhaging blood. It would continue for the next three days. But after my morning conversation with Audrey, I started to manifest a diamond-like life-condition, full of boundless patience and compassion. Nothing could get to me, least of all my torrential blood loss. It was only a minor inconvenience.

I saw Sharon for dinner that night, although I could barely eat.



Carrie is escorted at her 1990 wedding by her father and her stepmother, Audrey.

The moment we were alone, she poured out her heart to me about the things Audrey says and does to her, and how grateful she was that I'd stood up for her that morning. I realized how much Audrey's abuse has damaged Sharon over the years, and I saw my sister as a human being for the very first time. It had never occurred to me that she would be one of the people who needed peace, comfort and strength. It turned out she needed it most of all.

Under this tremendous stress Audrey's destructive cruelty was out of control. But I found that the more appalling her behavior, the more genuine compassion I felt for her. And because she sensed my empathy, I was able to stop her from inflicting harm on others. She was never threatened by it. Instead we grew closer.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, another transformation was taking place. I've never been a natural caregiver. I'm awkward and don't know what to do. But I began doing things for Dad. Little things at first. Adjusting pillows, reading him the sports page. Soon, I was happily spending 10-hour days tending to his every need. By the end of the visit, I was the caregiver of choice. He ate for me, when no one else could get him to eat. No job was too gross or too private. He was happy to have me there. And he told me how glad he was to see me and my sister so close.

My last morning in Pittsburgh dawned sunny and warm, and my bleeding slowed as well. As I did morning gongyo, I felt vastly happy and content. Although nothing had changed, everything had changed, and I had more appreciation than ever for my Buddhist practice, which enabled me to transform bitter poison into lasting medicine.

P.S. My biopsy was, by the way, negative. ❧

Actively Closing the Gap Between Ages and Stages

By SHIRLEY M. JACKSON
LOS ANGELES #2 JOINT TERRITORY

*Our lives are filled with ages and stages
that keep us apart
from other faces and places in our own hearts —
That prevent us from enjoying the
opportunity
to invest our souls
and our hearts
in the community
where we live,
where we work.*

*Dare we shirk from our task
to rein in society's injustice —
Exerting ourselves
to expose its ugly mask?
Do we move forward
with faith that is fresh?
Closing the gap between others
and our true selves without fear...
Come, let's work together —
the next millennium is near!*

*Let our shoulders bear the axle
that bridges the gap
between apathy and action,
between theory and result
and anything!
Or everything that keeps us apart!
Approach us all our neighbor, saying:
"Come! Let's pray together.
I promise you*

*I'll strive for changes in my heart...
I'll look with all my might
To see your value
To see your worth
To see the efforts that you make."
We'll approach Century 2000
knowing
we did all we could — together
for the future!
for humankind!
for our children!
for their sake!*

*Our efforts will be engraved
in their lives.
They'll advance brave and strong!
Because we strove today
to make right
what is wrong.
To actively close the gap
between ages and stages
and faces and races.
So! If what you see and hear today
moves your life in any way
to take action
to remove the suffering of another,
we can boldly claim our victory!
That today — each of us will
say to ourselves:
"I can make a difference!
I have a stake in history!"*

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

To Be a Better Son

By SHIN YATOMI

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

In general, it is the son's duty to obey his parents, yet on the path to Buddhahood, not following one's parents may ultimately bring them good fortune. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 141).

Here Nichiren Daishonin encourages the Ikegami brothers to carry out their faith despite their father's opposition. The Daishonin assures the brothers, who are torn between faith and filial duty, that their unwavering practice will eventually lead their father to happiness.

I share similar circumstances. My atheist father vacillates between disliking and being indifferent toward my practice. My mother, who has practiced with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood since 1991, detests my association with the SGI.

About a week before Mother's Day, my mother left me a message. I had been sick with severe bronchitis. It was, my mother said, punishment for chanting to the "counterfeit" Gohonzon.

Her message infuriated me. I dragged my weary body to the Gohonzon and started chanting while coughing and gasping for air. How could she say that? Was my sickness really a punishment?

My anger was overwhelming, and fear crept inside. But I said "No" to these voices. I know that this Gohonzon is absolutely true — both from the Daishonin's teaching and my experiences. I have to prove to my mother the greatness of this Gohonzon and of the SGI — through my growth that she cannot deny.

My resolute prayer melted the anger and drove out the fear. It gave me a renewed sense of appreciation that I'm joining millions of other SGI members in their noble struggle to protect and validate the Lotus Sutra (i.e., the Gohonzon) when it is slandered by the priesthood.

The next day, I sent a card to my mother, expressing my thanks and affection for her on Mother's Day. This was a small yet important victory for me. Yes, I grew a little to be a better son than before. ☐

UNDERSTANDING MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

It's Your Choice

By GINA JONES
RIVERSIDE, CALIF.

I believe that for us to develop a mentor-disciple relationship, the first thing that must exist is a sense of trust in the mentor. For that relationship to have value, the disciple must have more than merely a blind trust in the mentor. Instead, it should be a trust established through the mentor's proven behavior. In other words, it is through observing the behavior of an individual that we can determine whether he or she is someone we want to learn from and emulate.

Being a disciple of SGI President Ikeda is a choice that we, as individuals, can make in different ways. Ultimately, it's a choice over whether to trust him. Through our study of his speeches and dialogues, and by implementing them in our lives, we are behaving as disciples.

We develop our personal sense of what it means to be a disciple as our trust grows — as we begin to cherish the same innermost desire or dream as our mentor. In *The New Human Revolution* (vol. 6, chapter 2), President Ikeda writes, "Disciples of such great teachers always stand up to carry on their teachers' work."

The depth of this type of trust is exhibited not only within the SGI. Recently, in his recollections of a meeting with Dr. B.N. Pande, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, President Ikeda stated:

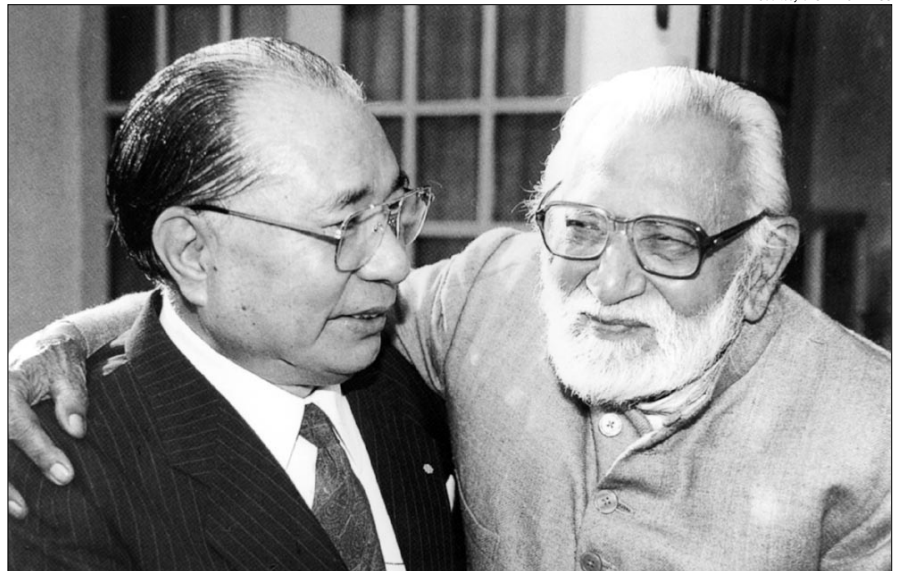
I understand Dr. Pande's feelings; his pride and joy is to live his life exactly as his mentor taught him.... When a mentor and disciple are united in spirit, unbelievable courage, strength and compassion emanate from their lives.... Through the person of Dr. Pande, who embodies his mentor's spirit, Gandhi still speaks to us today.... As Gandhi's disciple, he would not let his mentor's cry fade, but he would continue to fight, keeping his message alive until the last day of life. (June 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 38)

I have not had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Ikeda one on one. But like many, I have heard anecdotes about the SGI president's behavior from others who have met him. He shows the greatest respect to all whom he meets, bring-

ing forth joy all around him. Because of his example, I have found myself increasing the quality of my day-to-day interactions with people in my life. Once painfully shy, I now talk with perfect strangers with a desire to bring hope and joy to their lives. Were it not for President Ikeda's example, for the trust I have placed in him, I don't know if I would have learned to stretch myself.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "The real meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240). It all comes down to our behavior.

Our efforts to teach others about the greatness of the Law are, I believe, what qualify us to be called mentors or disci-



SGI President Ikeda meets with B.N. Pande, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. 'Through the person of Dr. Pande, President Ikeda writes, 'Gandhi still speaks to us today.... [Pande] would not let his mentor's cry fade...'

In some ways, a mentor is like a parent. The job of a parent is to teach his or her child how to live. Today it is widely agreed that what has the greatest impact on children are the examples around them. Children emulate what they see and hear, and not necessarily what they are told. For instance, my 2-year-old did not hesitate to share an expletive immediately upon finding her baby sister had spilled the incense ashes from our Buddhist altar the other day. But I can also share with pride her expressions of concern for the welfare and happiness of others around her. I'll take some credit for both. (She does, after all, have two parents to emulate.)

I firmly believe it is the behavior of parents that has the most impact on how a child will behave throughout his or her life. And I can think of no greater example in faith, no greater "parent" in faith, to emulate than President Ikeda.

In one sense, we are all mentors in that we teach others about this Buddhism and encourage those who already practice. Again, our example is of the utmost importance — no one will be encouraged to join or continue practicing if we are not enjoying our lives and showing proof of this practice. As

ples. It's not that we *must* be disciples of President Ikeda to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Rather, it is holding the same dream of teaching the Law to others and eradicating their suffering that naturally binds us together as disciples of President Ikeda.

Another of the wondrous things I've begun to discover in my life through this relationship is that often when I chant about something in particular, the answer clearly appears to me from within President Ikeda's writings. So many times I am struck by the direct relevance of what he has written to what is occurring in my life. I like to think that as a disciple, these kinds of experiences are a manifestation of the connection I am creating between my life and President Ikeda's.

As my understanding of Buddhism has deepened through the years, I have slowly begun to understand the profundity of this mentor-and-disciple relationship. In our continuous effort to self-reflect, polish our lives and enrich the lives of those around us, each of us can be qualified to say, "I am a disciple." Only when many people stand up and act as disciples can we be assured that our movement for world peace will continue on into the future. And it all starts with trust. ☐

SGI President gave the following speech at the 3rd Nationwide Young Men's and Young Women's Division Leaders Meeting, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, March 24.

Brass Band members, thanks for your wonderful performance!

The Tokyo Wind Orchestra performed Edward Elgar's march "Pomp and Circumstance" op. 39 and the Soka Gakkai song "Ifu Dodo no Uta" (Song of Indomitable Dignity).

We are graced with a wonderful full moon tonight. We could call this the Full Moon Leaders Meeting!

The essential phase of youth division activities has now begun. The youth division members have grown tremendously. The bright, golden moon above seems to be smiling upon us, delighting at the solid future that lies ahead for the SGI in the 21st century.

As you make your way home tonight, my young friends, pause to gaze up at the night sky and let your heart communicate with the moon in wordless dialogue. Perhaps you might compose a poem as your journal entry for today. I want you to possess such a poetic spirit.

The Buddha and the Devil

A Buddhist text describes an episode that took place when Shakyamuni was at the Bamboo Grove Monastery.¹ In Buddhism, a monastery is for engaging in Buddhist practice. In modern terms, it would correspond to our SGI community centers and training centers. We might dub this hall tonight the Full Moon Monastery.

Shakyamuni addresses practitioners at the Bamboo Grove Monastery as follows:

Brief...is the life of men — a matter of flitting hence, having its sequel elsewhere. To be wrought is the good; to be lived is the holy life. To him that is born there is no not-dying. He...who lives long, lives but a hundred years or but little longer.²

Human life is brief — sooner or later we all die. Therefore, Shakyamuni urges, we should value our time, using it to ac-



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

'The bright moon above seems to be smiling upon us, delighting at the solid future that lies ahead for the SGI in the 21st century,' said SGI President Ikeda. 'As you make your way home tonight, my young friends, pause to gaze up at the night sky and let your heart communicate with the moon in wordless dialogue.'

Read the Gosho! Take Action!

complish good and advance in Buddhist practice.

Barely are these words out of his mouth when Mara — the personification of all evil — appears and proceeds to contradict everything that Shakyamuni has just said. When a Buddha appears, someone is sure to appear in opposition. Buddhism, after all, is a struggle between the Buddha and the devil, the negative functions inherent in life itself. Had it not been for Devadatta, an evil monk who abandoned his practice, turned against his teacher, Shakyamuni, and severely persecuted him, Shakyamuni could not be called a Buddha.

Buddhism is concerned with winning. When we battle a powerful enemy, either we will triumph or be defeated — there is no middle ground. Battling life's negative functions is an essential part of Buddhism. By being victorious in this struggle, we become Buddhas. So we have to win. Moreover, Buddhism ensures that we can definitively do so.

Deception, cunning and tactics, which are so prevalent in the world, are completely ineffectual in this vital struggle against negativity. That is because this strug-

gle is governed by the strict law of cause and effect.

Recognize the Devil

Mara the evil one speaks in verse as follows:

*Long time have sons of men
on earth to live.
Let the good man herein no
trouble take.
As babe with milk replete,
so let him act.
There is no present coming
of of death.³*

Mara's argument is that because life is long, we need not be careful with our time. We should use our abundance of years to avidly pursue life's enjoyments. He says that because death will not come, we ought to conduct ourselves with the leisure and contentment of a sleeping baby who has plenty of milk. This is the exact opposite of what Shakyamuni has just taught.

Some among Shakyamuni's followers may have been swayed by these words. Human beings tend to be foolishly susceptible to the snares of negative influences. Certainly, young people have a tendency to believe they will be

forever young, just as Mara tries to assert. They give little, if any, thought to their mortality. They feel secure that they have their whole lives ahead of them.

In response to Mara's seductive whisperings, Shakyamuni says:

*Brief time have sons of men
on earth to live.
Let the good man herein
much trouble take.
Acting as were his turban
all a-blaze.
There is no man to whom
death cometh not.⁴*

Human life is short, he says. Therefore, all upright people should regard time as precious and devote themselves earnestly to Buddhist practice. In other words, they should value the Law more than their lives. They should practice with the spirit of not begrudging one's life.

Shakyamuni urges his followers to strive passionately — desperately almost, like someone whose head is on fire — because life passes by in an instant. He exhorts them to do good, to create good causes, reminding them that death is inescapable.

When Mara hears this, he re-

alizes that Shakyamuni has recognized him. Crestfallen, he retreats in disappointment. Mara is no match for reason.

Once you see a devilish function for what it is, you can defeat it. On the other hand, if you react with fear, if you are swayed, its negative force will only grow stronger.

A Weak Self and a Strong Self

Mara represents our inner weakness and negativity, which function to obstruct our Buddhist practice. We have both a weak self and a strong self — and the two are completely different. If we allow our weak side to dominate, we will be defeated. The thought "I am still young and have a lot of time, so I can relax and take life easy" is the seductive whispering of Mara, a function of our weakness.

Both the Buddha and the devil exist within our lives. Ultimately, our battle is with ourselves. Whether in our Buddhist practice or in our activities in society, whether in history, politics or the economy, everything boils down to a struggle between positive and negative forces. These are all manifestations of the Mystic Law, or *myoho* — *myo* representing Buddhahood, and *ho*, the nine worlds. The Mystic Law embodies the mutual possession of the ten worlds, or the truth that Buddhahood contains the nine worlds and that the nine worlds contain Buddhahood.

All phenomena are functions or manifestations of the principles of the mutual possession of the ten worlds, the principle of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and the principle of a single life-moment possessing 3,000 realms. Everything reflects the causality of the ten worlds. It is a struggle between good and evil. It is a desperate tug of war between happiness and misery, between progress and decline.

Many things happen in life. There are joyous days and times of suffering. Sometimes unpleasant things occur. But that's what makes life interesting.

The dramas we encounter are part and parcel of being human. If we experienced no change or drama in our lives, if nothing unexpected ever happened, we would merely be automatons, our lives unbearably monotonous and dull.

PLEASE SEE READ, NEXT PAGE

READ, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Please develop a strong self so that you can enact your drama with confidence and poise in the face of whatever vicissitudes you may encounter.

Reading the Goshō Each Day

One thing I especially want to say tonight is, "Let's read the Goshō regularly!" Even just a little is fine. Even a single sentence. Just opening the Goshō is a start. At any rate, let's strive to read the Daishonin's writings. Get into the habit of turning to the Goshō while you are young.

The Goshō is filled with illumination. When we open its pages, we are bathed in the sun of life and its rays of philosophy. The Goshō is Nichiren Daishonin's voice. It is the collection of his golden words and teachings.

So it's important to have the spirit to study the Goshō, to open it up. Even if you forget what you've read, something profound will be engraved in the depths of your life.

Treasuring the Goshō doesn't mean never touching it, leaving it closed all the time! The Daishonin teaches that embracing the Gohonzon is itself enlightenment. Having faith in the Gohonzon is fundamental. And, in fact, only through strong faith, seamlessly fused with Goshō study, can we truly be enlightened and accomplish our human revolution.

From today, I want you, the youth division members, to challenge yourselves to read the Goshō a little each day, even just one or two lines.

Become a Person of Great Good

It is important to live with the awareness that death will certainly come to us one day. To die is part of the natural order of things. If people did not die, the population would increase endlessly, with dire consequences. Pretty soon, there'd be nothing left to eat! It is not a question of whether, but of how, one will die.

Shakyamuni once said:

*Just as family and friends
Sing out for joy when they
see
A long lost exiled relative
Coming without mishap
from afar;
So those who have merit
feel joy
As for a relative, at the
approach
Of people who have made*



Photo by MIKE MULLEN

'A beautiful sunset coloring the Western sky in brilliant hues of pink and crimson is supposed to indicate clear skies the following day. Similarly, a person whose life glows brilliantly in the final years will go on to a bright, sunny future existence.'

*merits
As they go through this
world.*

*So collect together merit
For what lies beyond this
world;*

*Beyond this world merits
become*

*The ground of every living
being.⁵*

The state of mind with which we meet death will greatly influence the course of our lives over eternity. The cornerstone of Buddhism is the solution it offers to the problems of life and death. Granted, if one is unconcerned about how one dies, or dismisses any connection between this existence and the next, then there probably isn't any need to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. But the truth is that life is eternal, that our existence continues after we die. Moreover, during the latent stage of death before rebirth, we cannot change our lives' essence; we cannot carry out Buddhist practice. Only while we are alive can we practice Buddhism. Therefore, Shakyamuni urges us to whole-

heartedly exert ourselves in this lifetime.

A beautiful sunset coloring the Western sky in brilliant hues of pink and crimson is supposed to indicate clear skies the following day. Similarly, a person whose life glows brilliantly in the final years will go on to a bright, sunny future existence. That is why it's so important to strive to accumulate enduring good fortune and benefit while we are alive.

To accumulate good fortune, we have to do good. What, then, is good? What, for that matter, is evil? In the Latter Day of the Law — the age in which we live — great confusion surrounds these questions, when there are no firm standards for judging good and evil. Even now, there are those who argue that war is good, and who, even in the event of defeat, see evil as residing wholly in the enemy.

In recent years, values have become increasingly disordered in Japanese society. The same may be true of the world in general. The first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, proclaimed this erosion of val-

ues to be a symptom of "higher psychosis."

*Makiguchi wrote: "Corrupt people differ from decent people in that the former fail to recognize their own dark nature.... Especially when vested interests concerning personal profit and prestige are at stake, such individuals will manifest an unexpected ferocity; we see their abnormality in their complete disregard for the impropriety and indecency of their conduct.... It might be suitable to characterize such individuals as victims of 'higher psychosis.'"*⁶

Such people think only of their own interests. Their sole preoccupation is personal advancement and prestige. They do not care in the least about the future of their country, nor have they the slightest interest in working for the people's sake.

Makiguchi divided good into three categories: minor good, medium good and great good.

In the rapidly moving and changing society of today, acts of minor and medium good are all too easily swept away and

obliterated, leaving no lasting or appreciable impact. For example, money given to the needy will not necessarily be good. Rather than helping them, it might actually cause them to become further entrenched in their downward spiral.

It's vital, therefore, to do great good — the most fundamental, important kind of good.

According to Makiguchi, great good endures for decades or centuries, and is beneficial to all people.

A Buddha is committed to teaching people what is the foremost great good.

Nichiren Daishonin explains that there is no greater good than chanting daimoku and teaching others about the Mystic Law. Makiguchi, too, said that chanting and propagating the Mystic Law alone represent the supreme good.

When we fundamentally change our lives through the great good of the Mystic Law and enable others to do the same, even acts of medium and minor good will all come to have significant effect and value. In this sense, the Soka Gakkai is the only hope for healing Japanese society, which has lost all standards of right and wrong. Everything depends on your efforts, my young friends.

Complete, Total Freedom

A member who had avoided SGI activities for many years admitted a short time before dying: "I wish I'd chanted harder. I wish I'd done more activities. Now it's too late, and I am filled with overwhelming regret." These are haunting words.

You, the youth division members, are still young. You can chant daimoku to your heart's content and accumulate unlim-

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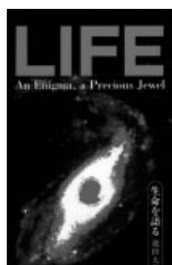
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First published over 15 years ago, the SGI President explains in this book the meaning of life, the spirit and existence after death in a style both passionate and comprehensible.

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AFP PHOTO/EPA-YURI KADOBNOV

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ited good fortune. This is truly a wonderful thing. You are tremendously fortunate.

Since the age of 19, I have followed the guidance of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, and single-mindedly dedicated my life to kosen-rufu. Therefore, I am confident that in lifetime after lifetime I will enjoy a state of life pervaded by inexhaustible good fortune and benefit.

The good causes you accumulate through Buddhist practice will manifest without fail in this existence. You will develop a totally unrestricted, magnificent state of life in exact accord with your inner determination. After death, moreover, your life will go on.

To borrow an analogy used by one leader, a person who has accumulated good fortune in this lifetime is like a rocket with a full tank of fuel.

In this lifetime and after death, such a person can joyfully, freely traverse the universe. There are more than a billion planets like the Earth in the universe. Those whose lives overflow with good fortune and benefit can be born anywhere in accordance with their desires and mission — they enjoy complete, total freedom.

The Hale-Bopp comet is presently visible. What makes a comet shine? Very simply, as the comet approaches the sun, icy material in its main mass vaporizes to envelop it in a hazy cloud of gas and dust. It combines to form the comet's beautiful tail, brilliantly illuminated by the sun's light. The nearer a comet draws to the sun, the brighter it becomes.

In our Buddhist practice, the Gohonzon, faith and SGI meetings are our sun. Plants and trees need sunlight to grow, and so do we. If we fail to attend meetings, then we deprive ourselves of the warm sunlight of faith and, like plants kept in the shade all the time, our lives will gradually wither.

The Daishonin urges us to earnestly chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo, even just once or twice, stressing that we will then definitely attain enlightenment.



Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union, announces his candidacy for presidency during a press conference in Moscow on March 1, 1996. SGI President Ikeda once told the Soviet leader that he eagerly looked forward to welcoming him to Japan. Mr. Gorbachev smiled broadly and replied, 'If possible, I want to visit Japan in the springtime — spring is my trademark.'

Now, some might immediately think: "All right! I'll just put faith aside and take it easy, then embrace it seriously a year before I die." But the Daishonin's words are meant to spur his followers to greater efforts in their Buddhist practice, emphasizing the beneficial power of chanting even a single daimoku. He is drawing attention to what a great benefit it is to chant such amazing daimoku every day. This is how we should take the Daishonin's words, resolving to exert ourselves even harder. The correct way to read the Goshō is to always interpret the Daishonin's words from the standpoint of strengthening our faith.

Again, Buddhism is concerned with winning. President Toda said: Society is concerned with reputation; government is concerned with meting out justice; and Buddhism is concerned with victory.⁷ Reputation in society is as capricious as the wind. A country's laws are judged by the people and change with the times. But the Buddhist law of cause and effect is absolute. Pretense and deceit are futile in Buddhism's win-or-lose struggle.

Life passes by in an instant. Therefore, be people who can say confidently at the end of your lives: "I have won! I have done my very best!" How fortunate you are, now when you are

young, to participate freely in SGI activities.

A Season of Fresh Beginnings

April is just around the corner, and spring, that season of hope-filled, fresh beginnings, is once again upon us.

Speaking of spring, former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev said something to me that I will never forget. During our first meeting at the Kremlin [July 1990], I told the Soviet leader that I eagerly looked forward to welcoming him to Japan. He smiled broadly and replied, "If possible, I want to visit Japan in the springtime — spring is my trademark."

Gorbachev was born in March 1931, became general-secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985, and president of the Soviet Union in March 1990. His first visit to Japan was in fact realized in April 1991.

In Japan, April is a month of great activity and change. Many people start new jobs, move to new areas or assume new positions in the organization.

Konosuke Matsushita (1894–1989) was a noted Japanese industrialist and founder of the Matsushita electric companies. We enjoyed many long conversa-

tions, and a collection of our dialogues has been published.

Their dialogue, Jinsei Mondo (Questions and Answers on Life), has been published in Japanese in two volumes.

Mr. Matsushita often used to advise young people entering the workforce. He would ask rhetorically⁸: As new employees, what will you report to your families when you return home from your first day on the job? Will you express disappointment, saying something like "It wasn't anything special" or "It was a letdown"? Or will you say with delight, "It was even better than I'd hoped" or "I'm really glad I got hired!" He declared that their attitude on that first day would be the point of departure for their future.

Mr. Matsushita said, of course, that he hoped their reaction would be the latter kind. But this was not because he wanted the young people to simply resign or content themselves with their lot. He wanted them to understand that you cannot expect everything to be exactly as you want from the outset. Saying something upbeat and cheerful like: "It's a good workplace! I think it will be really challenging and interesting! I will give it my best!" will help you solidify your determination to do just that, setting your mind in the right direction to do a fine job.

Such optimistic, confident words will also reassure your family and put the minds of those around you at ease; everyone will feel good. Young people who show such consideration, who are sincere and enthusiastic, Mr. Matsushita asserted, will become people who

can shoulder responsibility, who are indispensable wherever they are. This was the conclusion he reached based on the many people he observed in his companies over the years.

Subtle Workings of the Mind

Even if deep down you should feel a little disappointed with your job, if you venture to tell yourself and others "It's a wonderful place" or "My job is a golden opportunity," your inner resolve will change accordingly.

When your determination changes, everything else begins to move in the direction you desire. The moment you resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in your being immediately orient themselves toward your success. On the other hand, if you think, "This is never going to work out," at that instant, every cell in your being will be deflated, giving up the fight. Everything then will move in the direction of failure.

I want you to understand the subtle workings of the mind. How you orient your mind, the kind of attitude you have, greatly influences both yourself and your environment. The Buddhist principle of a single lifetime moment possessing 3,000 realms completely elucidates the true aspect of life's inner workings. Through the power of strong inner resolve, we can transform ourselves, those around us and the land where we live. Each of you has this tool, this "secret weapon." There is no greater treasure.

Of course, effecting change is hard work. But it is natural to work hard during one's youth. You cannot, for instance, become an Olympic athlete or an outstanding baseball player without tremendous effort and training. Likewise, without making effort, you cannot hope to create value.

If someone rises to a position of high standing without having struggled hard and overcome difficulties, those under him or her will suffer. Matsushita said with feeling, "Mr. Ikeda, how true it is that people ought to struggle during their youth — and even deliberately seek out hard work!"

Presidents Toda and Maki-guchi were of the same opinion, as invariably are most of those who achieve true excellence in life. During your youth, you should seek out hard work. You should try to gain thorough training. All of your efforts will

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eventually become invaluable assets.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "Do not expect good times, but take the bad times for granted" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 242). If you engrave this in your life, you will have nothing to fear, nor will you ever become deadlocked.

Everything depends on our attitude or inner resolve, on the kind of philosophy and convictions that we cherish. Our environment or circumstances are not the determining factors. When we advance resolutely based on this admonition, then all the hardships we experience will pave the golden path of our mission.

Back to the Basics

Our workplace, community and local organization comprise the home base for our daily activities — the place for carrying out our Buddhist practice. In terms of the three realms,⁹ they correspond to the realm of the environment. On this home ground, we can carry out our mission fully, creating the greatest possible value while fostering capable people. Recognizing that where we are is our True Land, the place of our mission, let us work to expand a network of humanism, to create a history of kosen-rufu that will shine forever.

Strong are those who plant firm roots, tirelessly exert themselves, and create an unshakable foundation wherever they go. Such people are creating their eternal foundation of good fortune and benefit.

I pray for the youth division's successful activities during April, the month of spring.

'Be Not Like Dumb, Driven Cattle!'

One hundred and fifteen years ago today, on March 24, 1882, the great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82) died. "A Psalm of Life" is one of his most celebrated poems. In one stanza, he writes:

*In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!*¹⁰

He is saying in effect: Do not allow yourself to become like a domesticated beast without freedom! Don't be defeated; stand up!

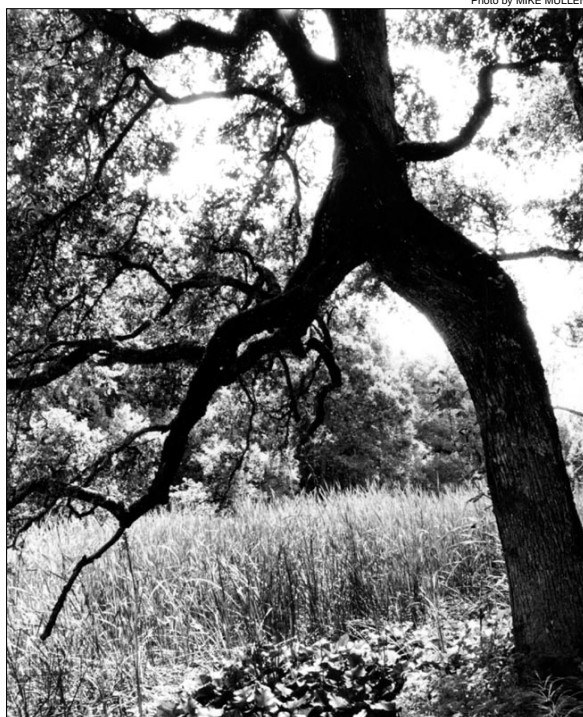


Photo by MIKE MULLEN

'Strong are those who plant firm roots, tirelessly exert themselves, and create an unshakable foundation wherever they go. Such people are creating their eternal foundation of good fortune and benefit!'

*Lives of great men all
remind us
We can make our lives
sublime,
And, departing, leave
behind us
Footprints on the sands of
time.*

Our great predecessors teach that we can lead sublime lives, that we can leave behind a lasting legacy, Longfellow says. A life devoted to kosen-rufu is truly sublime. Someone who thinks only about immediate circumstances is base and ignoble. However, your lives, without a doubt, are noble and sublime.

*Footprints, that, perhaps
another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn
main,
A forlorn and shipwreck'd
brother,
Seeing, shall take heart
again.*

Develop yourself so that just the sight of you will hearten and inspire those shipwrecked on life's voyage. Leave behind great achievements that will encourage all those who follow!

*Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

Please perform an exultant paean to life and humanity as you make your way toward vic-

tory in the 21st century.

Incidentally, a valuable handwritten manuscript of one of Longfellow's poems is among the treasures of Soka University of America. The poem is titled "Excelsior," which in Latin means "higher."

His Motto Was 'Laboremus'

It is now precisely a quarter-century since I held my dia-

logue with British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975). Dr. Toynbee and I held intensive discussions over a 10-day period. I have many fond memories of that time. Our dialogue, *Choose Life*, has been translated into 19 languages.

Dr. Toynbee at one point told me that his motto was *Laboremus*, Latin for "Let's get to work!" Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism focuses on the present and future — it is infused with this spirit. We practice for the present and future. It is important not to become trapped in the past; we have to put it behind us. The Buddhism of true cause is always based on the present. It is always from this moment on.

In one place the Daishonin says, "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month" (MW-1, 241–42). Those who strengthen their faith this way are genuine practitioners. Our daily practice of gongyo, therefore, is important, as well as attending meetings every month. We must not let our faith grow weak. Make it stronger today than yesterday, stronger this month than last. Buddhist practice is a succession of such untiring efforts, the ultimate goal of which is attaining the summit of Buddhahood.

Therefore, I present the mottoes "Excelsior" (Higher) and "Laboremus" (Let's get to work) to my dear, noble friends. And as I do so, I urge you again to read even a page or line of the Gosho each day.

Finally, a special thank you to

all who traveled long distances to join us tonight.

Let's meet again soon! I earnestly send you daimoku.

Thank you! ☸

1. Bamboo Grove Monastery: situated in the northern part of Rajagriha in Magadha, built by King Bimbisara as an offering to Shakyamuni Buddha. Together with the Jetavana Monastery in Shravasti, it was one of the major centers of Shakyamuni's preaching.
2. "The Mara Suttas," *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikaya) or Grouped Suttas: Part I*, trans. Mrs. Rhys Davids (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1993), p. 135.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Dharmatrata, comp., *The Tibetan Dhammapada — Sayings of the Buddha: A Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Udanavarga*, trans. Gareth Sparham (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), p. 58.
6. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1987), vol. 10, pp. 38–39.
7. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, p. 103.
8. Konosuke Matsushita, *Wakana ni Okuru* (Advice to Youth) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1966), pp. 100–03.
9. Three realms of existence: the realm of the five components (form, perception, conception, volition and consciousness), the realm of living beings and the realm of the environment.
10. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poetical Works* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 19–20.

The Student Files

Name: Roy Balleste
School: St. Thomas University
School of Law
Major: Law



I'm now in my third year toward my law degree. My main interest is international law.

Ever since I started practicing Buddhism earlier this year, I feel I can concentrate better on my studies. I feel more at peace with myself and my surroundings. Many times school can be hard, but chanting definitely makes me stronger.

Being a student for me is to some extent like continually dwelling in the

worlds of Learning and Realization. My goal as a law student is to use what I learn to make my contribution to the betterment of society.

Buddhism is still a religion that many people do not know about, so when I get the chance I let them know about the SGI and our practice. They always seem interested.

I always try my best to answer their questions. ☸

Much Work Still To Do

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

A short message at the top of the Cousteau Society's web page, French edition, says it all: "The Commander Jacques Yves Cousteau left us on the 25 of June 1997 to rejoin the world of silence."

More than 1,000 people filled historic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on June 30 for one of France's largest memorial services in decades. They included French President Jacques Chirac, government officials, diplomats, average citizens and those who with Cousteau have explored the oceans, rivers and lakes of the world for more than 50 years.

Several thousands more gathered outside in the rain to mourn one of the world's most famous, outspoken environmentalists.

For the last three months, work at the Cousteau Society's Paris office had slowed down, as people waited for the commander to come back after an illness, spokesman Gregoire Koulbanis said. Now they are left with an almost legendary legacy — a red wool cap to fill.

Cousteau's recent work included three priorities, Mr. Koulbanis said — priorities for action that illustrate his commitment to the future:

- **A global referendum on atomic weapons.** Cousteau was a passionate enemy of nuclear weapons who believed they are "an intolerable menace to humanity and its habitat." He resigned as chairman of Chirac's newly created Council on the Rights of Future Generations in September 1995 to protest France's resumption of nuclear testing. Cousteau believed that a worldwide opinion poll on atomic weapons, which his society is conducting, would be difficult for political leaders to ignore.

- **The Bill of Rights for Future Generations.** By December 1993, Cousteau had solicited 5 million signatures on this bill, which urges the world to consider the rights of future generations who "will pay the ever-mounting bill" for ecological destruction. The bill will be presented in November to the General Assembly of UNESCO, where it stands an 80 percent chance of approval, Koulbanis said.

- **Calypso II.** During the past year, Cousteau oversaw studies for a "truly ecological ship" to carry on the tradition of her namesake, which sank in Singapore harbor.

Cousteau's words, particularly in his new book published Tuesday, *Man, Octopus and Orchid*, often sounded pessimistic. But underlying them was something akin to a prayer for the future — a resolution he wanted to plant in the people around him.

"His philosophy was that we have to be utopian and realist," Mr. Koulbanis said. "He was an optimist because he was always projecting into the future, but he also knew that the world is not in such good shape.... He left us much work to do. We have to do it. We will do it — because he asked us to keep going."

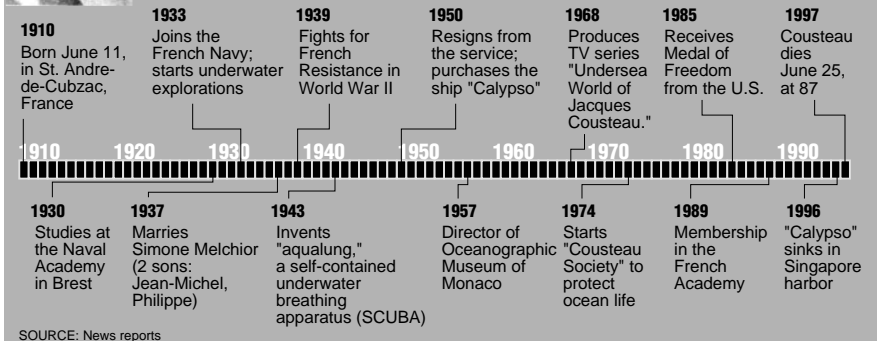


Millions around the world are familiar with this image of Jacques Cousteau, shown here in 1985. As a scientist, inventor and author, Cousteau has been called the most famous Frenchman in history.



The life and legacy of Jacques Cousteau

Oceanographer, explorer, inventor, filmmaker and author, Frenchman Jacques-Yves Cousteau has died at the age of 87. The cornerstones of his life:



SOURCE: News reports

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