

SEATTLE INCIDENT OVERVIEW — PART 2
NIKKEN'S DUBIOUS DIARY
BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A questionable piece of evidence, Nikken's diary of his 1963 trip to America, has become a major focus of the Seattle Incident trial. Nikken's attorneys submitted the diary (previously undisclosed until then) in late 1997 to the Tokyo District Court. During his first appearance before the court, on Dec. 22, 1997, Nikken quoted from the diary, attempting to prove that, while he had left his hotel for drinks, he had never had a dispute with prostitutes in downtown Seattle the night of March 19–20, 1963.

First, Nikken had to explain where the diary came from. He claimed that in March 1995, while he was in the process of moving into a new Tokyo residence, his wife discovered the diary in a box. Supposedly, it was only when he read the diary (which he had no memory of keeping until then) that he remembered leaving his hotel that night. "This recollection came to me as a tremendous shock," he testified.

Soka Gakkai attorneys had often pointed out how Nikken, beginning in 1992, had been publicly declaring that he never left his hotel that night — but, in 1995, did an about-face and admitted that he had, after all, stepped out. Until his December 1997 testimony and the revelation of the diary, no explanation for this discrepancy was forthcoming from Nikken or his legal team.

The crucial March 19 diary entry, which Nikken introduced in court, reads: "In the evening, for the first time since I arrived in the United States, I took a walk by myself here and there, ending up with the glasses of whiskey I longed for. Since I have not had any alcohol for such a long time, I got drunk.... Now I'm going to sleep. 1:00 p.m." (Nikken explained that he sometimes confuses p.m. and a.m.)

What time Nikken returned to his room is crucial to his testimony, for Mrs. Hiroe Clow testified that she was called by Seattle police to the scene around 2:00 a.m. She convinced the police to release Nikken to her then, which would not have been possible if he had been asleep by 1:00 a.m.

In court on Feb. 2, 1998, an attorney for the Soka Gakkai showed that two different colors of ink were used in writing the March 19 entry. Nikken was asked why the ink for "Now I'm going to sleep" was in blue, and "1:00 p.m." was in black. He answered, "After I wrote 'Now I'm going to sleep,' I went to sleep for awhile and got up again — maybe because of jet lag or something — and that's when I added '1:00 p.m.'"

The defense attorney asked how Nikken could remember such a minute detail, especially when he had previously testified that he was shocked at the diary's discovery, that he did not remember keeping it at all until his wife came upon it. "I'm not sure on this point" was Nikken's reply.

Recently, scientific tests were conducted on the diary by the defense; they suggest that "1:00 p.m." was added at a later date. Erich J. Speckin, a U.S. forensic expert, used a high-powered microscope to show that impressions made by the next day's diary entry, appearing on the reverse side of the page, affected the ink flow in "1:00 p.m." This would not have been possible if Nikken had written the March 19 entry before the March 20 entry, as he said he did.

Another test, conducted by David S. Moore, also a U.S. forensic expert, employed specially filtered light shone on the page to reveal that the black ink used for "1:00 p.m." is most likely different from the ink used in the following paragraph (also in black, which

Nikken testified that he wrote just before he wrote “1:00 p.m.” and with the same fountain pen).

These tests were submitted to the court by the defense in hopes of convincing the panel of judges who will decide the case that the March 19 entry is of a suspect nature. Of course, this would cast great doubt on Nikken’s entire testimony and would lend credence to Mrs. Clow’s and former Seattle police officer Ronald Sprinkle’s testimonies as to the truth of the Seattle Incident.

Two in a three-part series

Nikken testified that he ended his March 19, 1963, diary entry in blue ink with ‘Now I’m going to sleep,’ then went to sleep, soon woke up again, then wrote in black ink the final paragraph about Mrs. Clow’s husband’s remains. Last of all, he said, he inserted ‘1:00 p.m.’ at the previous paragraph’s end with the same black pen. But forensic tests suggest that ‘1:00 p.m.’ was added at some later date and is inconsistent with the black ink in the final paragraph, supposedly written with the same pen.

Page 53 of Nikken’s diary:

[IN BLACK INK:] 19th: Left Los Angeles for Seattle at 8:30 with Vice General Chapter Leader Takahashi on a jet. (Camera → Mt. Lassen) After a stopover in San Francisco and Portland, arrived at 12:12. Four or five people, including Hiroe Clow, came to greet us. Headed for hotel right away and rested until 4:00. Was treated to sashimi and other Japanese food at a restaurant owned by Japanese.

Boeing Aircraft Company.

Seattle Chapter is about 180 households.

[CHANGES TO BLUE INK:] Chapter Leader Clow is a rough but good-hearted woman. Don’t know how to describe Women’s Division Leader Kawada. In the beginning, Seattle generally lacked a pure seeking spirit toward priests. Three or four women who showed up at the airport did not even greet me. They seemed to avoid me. Is it a sign of their humility or dislike? But as I spoke with them a little and gradually got used to them, I felt they seemed OK.

From 7:00, conducted a Gohonzon-conferral ceremony at Women’s Division Leader Kawada’s home (her 3rd-floor apartment). Ninety-eight people accepted the Buddhist precepts. Two Gohonzon.

When I spoke, I sweated a lot.

Is the atmosphere of all the northern area like this?

Page 54:

The membership system of the Seattle Buddhist society.

In the evening, for the first time since I arrived in the United States, I took a walk by myself here and there, ending up with the glasses of whiskey I longed for. Since I have not had any alcohol for such a long time, I got drunk. When I spoke, they seemed to understand me, but I had no idea about what they said. Pitiful. Now I’m going to sleep.

[CHANGES TO BLACK INK:] 1:00 p.m.

Title: Nikken’s Dubious Diary

Subject: World Tribune 04/02/99 n.3236 p.3 WT990402p03

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Keywords: Diary Dubious Farr Incident Jeff Nikken Overview Seattle Tribune World

The case of Mrs. Hiroe Clow:

Her husband's will was to keep his ashes at Taiseki-ji. Regarding a certificate from Taiseki-ji, should I ask her to contact the Overseas Bureau and ask for a certificate directly from the head temple? She may contact Hosho-ji in Yokosuka. But those who take faith in America do not have their own branch temple. In such cases, they should go through the Overseas Bureau. The experience of Hiroe Clow: She insisted on cremation [of her husband's body], according to his will, despite the Navy code for interment.

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