

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

'Friends for Peace' Encourages

Thank you so much for Andy Odano's experience in the Feb. 5 *World Tribune* "Friends for Peace" pullout section. His experience about losing his wallet and then chanting determined daimoku and finding it really encouraged my family and myself. Our daughter, Diana, age 13, had just lost her school backpack with all her notebooks and textbooks. She was quite upset about it. We had just recently received this issue of the *World Tribune* and I happened to come upon Andy's experience. It really gave us encouragement to chant more daimoku.

Two weeks later the backpack was found and returned to us intact. This was such great actual proof to all of us! We are presently living in Beijing, China (where there is no formal organization at this time) and even though we receive our SGI publications late (because we have to have our mail forwarded), we've never appreciated them more! Thanks again!

— MONICA, JIM, GEORGE and DIANA WELLS,
Beijing, P.R. China

On the Temple Issue

I related to the experience that Carrie Triffet gave on her husband joining the temple. My wife and I had district leaders quit the SGI and badmouth SGI leaders, and as a result my wife gave up chanting altogether. My situation at this time is not as difficult as Carrie's experience in the March 5 *World Tribune*. I freely chant and attend SGI activities though my wife isn't active. Carrie's experience gave me hope.

— PHILIP RAY,
Ventura, Calif.

I would like to clarify a statement I made in my experience in the issue dated March 5. I said that my husband is on the temple payroll, but that is not an accurate statement. He produces the temple publications as a faith activity, but at my insistence he receives a token payment from the temple each month just to cover expenses. I regret the error.

— CARRIE TRIFFET,
Van Nuys, Calif.

Editor's Note: Reader responses to Carrie Triffet's experience indicate confusion on some points. To clarify, Carrie Triffet wrote and voluntarily submitted her experience to the World Tribune. We believe her intention in sharing this experience was to take a courageous stand on the temple issue as well as to encourage SGI members to take personal responsibility for this issue.

Bravo for the ‘WT E-Mail Express’

When I came across the announcement of the *WT E-MailExpress* in the *World Tribune*, I thought, “What a great idea.” As a professional musician and educator, I travel extensively. I tour regularly and I teach at a music conservatory in another state. I was falling behind in my reading of the *World Tribune*. I just received my first copy of the *WT E-Mail Express* a few minutes ago, and although it doesn’t substitute for reading the *World Tribune*, it makes me feel connected to the current rhythm. I’m now able to read excerpts from President Ikeda’s latest guidance and related materials, no matter where I am in the world. It’s also nice to have it delivered to me on my computer since I’m on my desktop or laptop daily. In addition, I can archive subsequent *WT Express* mailings with clutter-free storage. Perhaps one day the *World Tribune* will be delivered in this manner. I’m so happy to see how the SGI-USA is adapting and using today’s technologies to help further support and promote kosen-rufu.

— ROBIN EUBANKS,
New York City

‘Rising Furor’

In the Jan. 15 *World Tribune* Perspective “Set Yourself Free!”, Deborah Goodwin talks about the misuse and abuse of our freedoms in America, and indicates “the rising furor that decries our military agenda in Iraq” is an example of this. The only “rising furor” I am aware of concerning Iraq centers on the behavior of Saddam Hussein, and his documented history of the plunder, pillage and murder of his own people, and his fanatical determination to produce chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction to be used against people in other countries. As followers of Nichiren Dai-shonin, it is our vital mission to pray for, and take action to establish world peace, but, as we have learned in our dealings with the Nikken sect, this sometimes means confronting, and refuting evil when we become aware of it. Indeed,

President Ikeda reminds us “we need to resolutely attack abuses of power that cause people suffering. This is fighting on the side of justice. It is wrong to remain silent when confronted with injustice. Doing so is tantamount to supporting and condoning evil.” Through repeated experience, we know Saddam makes a mockery of dialogue, and only responds to threats of military force.

If we become silent and passive in the face of his injustice and tyranny, we will be condoning evil. If we truly wish to set ourselves free, we must tap our Buddha wisdom to understand our environment, and take responsibility for safe-guarding the people as we work to improve our world.

— DAVID MATTHAU,
Edgewater, N.J.

Thoughts on Ceremony

Thanks to Liz Carter for voicing some of my concerns. Apparently she and I read the same training materials and were both guided by caring leaders who helped set up our altars and

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corrected details in our gongyo, thereby increasing our appreciation for the depth of this practice. I treasure the consistency of bell, book, candle and greens, but am not a slave to these guidelines. Sometimes my candles are green, sometimes red. I have a living plant on the side of my altar and my candlesticks and incense burners are crystal.

What Liz Carter of Boston says about ceremony is true. It is integral to civilization. Every society has rituals and ceremonies, and hence do most of their religions.... For the sake of those who are brand new to the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, these ceremonies should be taught and explained. Everybody should understand what we're doing and why we're doing it.

We must also be clear about which ceremonies and rituals were a result of the culture in which Buddhism germinated and which rituals were prescribed by the founders of the religion. There is nothing in Nichiren Daishonin's writings where he prescribes how much daimoku to chant, how many times per day to recite the "Life Span" and "Expedient Means" chapters of the Lotus Sutra, or how many times per session to recite them. Neither does he specify how we should ring the bell, what kind of bell we should have, or even if we should use a bell to begin with; nor is there anything about candles and incense....

The 5/3 format, as I understand it, was adopted by the Soka Gakkai as per Nittatsu Shonin's instructions in response to President Toda's request on behalf of the members. The members wanted to recite the sutra and the priesthood responded with the 5/3 prescription. It, too, is a tradition that could be altered or jettisoned as the need arose.

In essence, the essential practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism is chanting daimoku, along with propagation (MW, Vol 1, ppg. 99 - 107) and reciting the Hoben and Juryo chapters of the Lotus Sutra.... We must remember one thing: Tradition and ceremony should never be for their own sake. They should be for the sake of the people.

— EDDIE RIOS,
Austin, Texas

I think the thing that centers me and focuses my attention is the consistency of ceremony that creates a foundation from which I can concentrate on my prayers. I'm pretty fanatical about keeping my altar cleaned and polished, no candle wax dripping, etc. I ring the bell in the pattern I was taught.

For some time I've been quietly grinding my teeth as one of our leaders chants "Nan-myoho-rende-kyo-d" and stymied about what action to take. Does no one else hear this? Am I being too picky? I've chosen to ignore my sensitivities and concentrate on my own practice. But I am concerned for guests and new members. Relaxing the rigidity of our practice doesn't mean letting it go to hell in a handbasket. The ceremonial aspects of our Buddhism have meaning and serve many purposes, yet still allow us to practice in a manner most meaningful to our individual personalities.

— BETSY BELL RINGER,
Richmond, Calif.

Gratitude for Spanish Pages

Every week I enjoy all that the World Tribune brings and I would like to express my gratitude for the Spanish Pages. When I read these pages, I feel a deep connection with the Latin American members, especially the Argentinian members. I used to talk on the phone

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with my best friend Valeria about your articles. She lives in Argentina, the country where I am from, and was the person who introduced me to this amazing Buddhism.

I want to say thanks to Maria Panigua from New Jersey, whose experience encouraged me to keep going, keep fighting and not to give up my dream to become an American citizen. I am going through the same experience right now and let me tell you, it is not easy at all. But I have the Gohonzon in my life, the support of the SGI members and a wonderful Argentinian husband who started practicing six months ago. I would like to talk to Maria about our commonalities perhaps by phone or mail. Once again, thank you all very much.

— LAURA LAGO,
Las Vegas, Nev.

A Determination

I have written before (and will write again). Each time I will proclaim, “I love the World Tribune!” The guidance and information shared through this publication has touched my life more than you can imagine. Most of my human revolution has been spearheaded and supported by guidance and encouragement from the World Tribune. I even have a file (since 1976) of articles that have changed my life. Someday I will write an experience that incorporates all the words from the World Tribune that propelled me to formulate my goals and then to accomplish them. My goal for publication is the year 2000.

— PATTI COVICH,
New York City