

SEATTLE INCIDENT OVERVIEW — PART 3
WHEN WILL THE TRIAL END?
BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

After four years of the Seattle Incident trial, where is it going? When will it end? To be honest, it's hard to say at this point. It's possible that the trial will wrap up soon — just as it's possible that it will continue for years to come.

Complicated cases like this libel case, in which Nichiren Shoshu is suing the Soka Gakkai over coverage in Gakkai publications of Nikken's 1963 incident with prostitutes, can take several years to conclude under Japan's legal system, especially when you consider the possibility of appeals.

For now, the trial is slowly (by U.S. standards) proceeding forward. The latest evidence presented came from the Soka Gakkai side: At the March 16 court session, attorneys for the Soka Gakkai submitted another affidavit by a former Seattle police officer, Edwin Curtis Marion, linking Nikken to the incident. Mr. Marion, although not at the incident site in downtown Seattle that night himself, remembers that immediately afterward his colleague Ronald Sprinkle, who *was* there, told him about the dispute between Nikken and the prostitutes.

In September and October 1996, Mr. Sprinkle traveled to Tokyo and testified as a defense witness. An affidavit from the other officer at the scene, Victor Mayhle, which corroborated Mrs. Hiroe Clow's and Mr. Sprinkle's accounts, was also submitted.

Basically, then, the Soka Gakkai side has offered two testimonies and two affidavits that link Nikken to the incident. This evidence seriously questions his testimony of what happened on March 19–20, 1963.

The most recent testimony in the case came from Soka Gakkai Vice President Isao Nozaki, who was first called in November 1998 by the Soka Gakkai as a defense witness to explain why the Soka Gakkai youth division newspaper, the *Soka Shimpo*, decided to cover the Seattle Incident in the first place. He explained that the purpose was simply to show what Nikken was really like, that Nikken was not the holy man he was pretending to be.

Vice President Nozaki was cross-examined by Nikken's attorneys twice, on Dec. 21 and March 16, at which time they asked him about various peripheral issues, including the camera Nikken had with him the night in question, Mrs. Clow's husband's military records, where Nikken left the Gohonzon in Hawaii and the prayer beads that Nikken sent for Mrs. Clow's daughter's wedding.

We may not be able to predict how soon the trial will come to a close, but what's most important is that we continue to pray for the truth to be revealed through these court proceedings. Many of us have been doing so ever since the trial began, but we should be aware that we have not reached the end of this struggle yet. Like Mrs. Clow, we want the world to know that Nikken is not what he claims to be. If Nikken loses this case, an important step toward this inevitability has been taken.

Conclusion of a three-part series