

**TOM'S EXPERIENCE  
A YOUNG MAN'S COMMITMENT  
"WHAT TRAINING HAVE I GOTTEN FROM DOING GAJOKAI?"**

*Tom DeSimone passed away on Feb. 4, 1999.*

*He was a great young man who always impressed me deeply. One day last July, I asked him, quite casually, what he felt he had learned from participating in Gajokai. I asked him this because he seemed to have an exemplary spirit for doing behind-the-scenes activities – always warm and friendly, even at the busiest moments, never complaining about doing the hard work of caring for the members.*

*It was just a question of which I expected an answer of only a few words. Instead, Tom furrowed his brow and said, "Let me think about this for a while." I came back later that evening, and said, "Well?" He looked at me again for a moment, and said: "It's too important a question for me to respond offhand. Let me get back to you on this." A few days later, he handed me a two-page, typed reply to my question! I'd like to share with you all what he wrote... Ray Bokhour, New York*

First, Gajokai is a faith activity, and I feel it must therefore be approached from this perspective. As a faith activity, it means I must believe that what I am doing during my shift is making a difference to our kosen-rufu movement. It is more than just checking IDs, smiling or locking and unlocking doors. It is an activity I do with my life. Just as I am committed to my practice, I must be committed to this activity. We cannot "hire" someone to do a faith activity like this (or any faith activity for that matter). When I sign up for a shift, people are counting on me to be there, on time and ready to fulfill my responsibilities.

By being there as a member of the Gajokai (or other behind-the-scenes groups, such as Byakuren, Soka Group, Reception or Bookstore volunteers), we are enabling the other members to move forward with our kosen-rufu movement. However, ensuring the safety of the members is our number-one responsibility; looking for potential hazards, watching for possible breaches in security and protecting the Gohonzon – all this allows the members to use the building for *tosos* (chanting sessions), planning and study meetings, etc. We are part of what they are doing at that moment, and we may not even be in the same room with them, but we are. We are the eyes, the ears and the hands of the building, all the while embracing the members and guests as they enter and exit the building.

Doing this can be a challenge. Balancing is the key. Making people feel welcome and using the building for its purpose while maintaining absolute safety takes, sometimes, a sleight of hand. Dealing with people when they are focused on their own particular meeting or activity can sometimes become demanding. No one wants to sound or be authoritarian. Each situation needs to be addressed, assessed and acted upon, sometimes in a matter of a few seconds. This is our training, which comes from watching the chief on duty and *chanting for our successful shift*. This is the essence of our activity and, as you might imagine, is extremely important.

The training I received from doing Gajokai, has also taught me to be tolerant of the members' needs. Strictness toward the Law and tolerance toward humanity – this should be our motto. Members are people. Members are doing their human revolution...as are we. It's my responsibility as the Gajokai-on-duty to understand this.

There are occasionally moments of "stress." At these times, these crucial moments, the

Gajokai has to pull up his Buddha nature and turn the situation around. This comes with training. TRAINING, WE SAY, FOR LIFE.

How true it is. What a benefit to bring this training home, to work or school and into our daily lives! When I first started doing Gajokai, we had sign-in sheets with space on the back for our determinations. This is currently not available, but I still would make a personal determination with each shift. Just like when we chant, we are determining and praying for something or someone. We manifest a direct cause and effect. I realized that when I did my Gajokai shift, I was making a cause and would determine a desired effect. This I feel should be stressed and reinstated. The activity connects our faith with the activity.

Finally, the training has helped me develop relationships with other members with whom I might not have otherwise had any contact. These relationships help me with my practice and have helped me develop my faith. Working with others in different capacities has truly and boldly solidified my mission to help move our kosen-rufu movement forward.

*Thank you.*