

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 29 SPEECH—PART 1 CAPTURE THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS

'The key is, like the star in a grand drama, to strive to capture people's hearts and respect your noble fellow members,' says SGI President Ikeda.

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 2nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka International Friendship Center in Sendagaya, Tokyo, Jan. 29. Today, I want to talk with you informally, so please relax and make yourselves comfortable.

In March last year, the Tokyo Soka High School baseball team made its seventh appearance in the National Invitational High School Baseball Tournament, which is held each spring at the Koshien Stadium in Osaka. This March, according to newspaper reports, prospects look good for our Kansai Soka High School baseball team to make its Koshien debut—in the 73rd National Invitational High School Baseball Tournament. [The team's selection was formally announced two days after this meeting.]

The Kansai Soka High School rugby team has also won its way into the national finals with a terrific victory in the Osaka divisional finals at the Kinki Region High School Rugby Championship held yesterday.

In addition, one of our Kansai Soka High School graduates, Akiyo Onishi, yesterday placed an admirable seventh in the Osaka International Women's Marathon. As a member of the Sekisui Chemical track team, Ms. Onishi trains with many fine athletes, including Sydney Olympic women's marathon gold medallist Naoko Takahashi.

Every day, I receive letters and reports from alumni of the Soka Schools and Soka University. Just the other day, a Soka High School graduate who is an airline pilot shared the wonderful news that he has been promoted to the rank of captain. He is now the second airline captain among our graduates, and I am sure that many others will follow in the future.

Also, approximately 160 Soka University graduates have passed this year's prefectural teacher employment examination. I understand that this is around 30 more than last year. Each year, our graduates distinguish themselves in these exams.

The 21st century is the century of education. We have entered an era when Soka education will come into its own.

The world is coming to recognize the greatness of Soka Gakkai presidents Makiguchi and Toda.

The other day, I was informed that a street in the central Italian province of Perugia has been named after first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Maki-guchi. [The Passignano sul Trasimeno City Council unanimously passed a resolution to name one of its streets after the Soka Gakkai founder, in recognition of his struggles against fascism during World War II.]

This most recent honor brings to 20 the number of public streets, parks, gardens—and even a beach—that have been named after the first three Soka Gakkai presidents. This is an amazing achievement. It is a hopeful sign of the progress we are making in our global kosen-rufu movement.

This year, by the way, is the 130th anniversary of Mr. Makiguchi's birth, and Feb. 11 is

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Title: Capture the People's Hearts

Subject: World Tribune 03/02/01 n.3335 p.5 WT010302p05 Sendagaya, Tokyo, Japan 01/29/01

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 01/29/01 Capture Encouragement Guidance Hearts Ikeda January Japan Leadership March es Organization People President Proposals Sendagaya Speeches through Tokyo Tribune World+more...

Mr. Toda's birthday. The world is gradually coming to accord these two great mentors lasting recognition and a rightful place in history.

Today, for the record, I want to introduce each of the 20 landmarks I have just mentioned. I do so humbly, sharing them with you as an example of the global recognition we are receiving for our movement for peace, culture and education.

Incidentally, many representatives of SGI-Brazil are here with us today.

First, in the State of São Paulo, Brazil:

- A resolution to establish a Josei Toda Park has recently been passed by the city of São Paulo, the largest metropolis in South America.
- There is a Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Road and a Josei Toda Park in São José dos Campos, which, located near São Paulo, is a leading center of industry and home to several noted educational institutes. [In addition, an education facility in São José dos Campos, the Hélio Augusto de Souza Pro-fessional Education Center, has a Daisaku Ikeda Library and Kaneko Ikeda Garden.]
- There is a Tsunesa-buro Makiguchi Boulevard and a Josei Toda Avenue in Pindamonhangaba, a city famous for its lush scenic beauty.
- The city of Monte Alto, which this year celebrates its 120th anniversary, has a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Garden, a Josei Toda Garden and—I am humbled to say—a Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Garden, to honor the first three Soka Gakkai presidents.
- There is a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Street and Josei Toda Street in the burgeoning city of Guaratinguetá.
- There is a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in Ribeirão Preto, a city with a strong commitment to education.
- The city of Itapevi, where the SGI-Brazil Nature Culture Center is located, has a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Street.

In the State of Paraná, Brazil:

- There is a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in Curitiba, a city renowned for its cultural richness and many fine educational institutions.
- The cosmopolitan city of Londrina has a Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Ecological Park, which encompasses a vast 302 acres.

Moving on to the United States:

- In Denver, the mile-high city with its breathtaking views of the Rocky Mountains, there is the Ikeda Cherry Tree Garden.

Next, in the Kingdom of Tonga, in the South Pacific:

- There is a Daisaku Ikeda Beach on Tongatapu Island. I understand that it is a lovely white-sand beach.

I have also had the privilege of meeting Tonga's great monarch His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV last November. On that occasion, I was honored to receive some sand from that beach in Tonga, along with a name plaque.

In New Zealand:

- There is an Ikeda-Hall Peace Garden in Rotorua, a city dedicated to peace. [The garden is named after President Ikeda and Rotorua Mayor Grahame Hall.]

Also, in Italy:

- There is a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Street in the city of Stia, which is located in the central Italian province of Arezzo, in Tuscany.

Meanwhile, in Ghana:

- The district of Kwabre, known for its verdant green, has announced its decision to build a Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Garden.

And there's one more piece of good news that I want to share. A Soka Kindergarten will be built in the city of São Paulo. [A nursery school will be attached to the new kindergarten.]

The light of humanistic education is beginning to spread more and more throughout the world.

People love a leader who casts aside all pretension.

At the start of this new century, our members in each region are bubbling with fresh energy and vitality. This is true nowhere more than Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands, where members achieved the top propagation results nationwide for the first six months of last year. Also, 180,000 people, a record number, attended this year's New Year's gongyo meetings in Hokkaido. I hear that this is an astonishing 30,000 more than last year.

The Hokkaido youth, meanwhile, extended their network of friends to more than 400,000 in the last six months of 2000. The young women, in particular, achieved a new propagation record last year. They are setting a shining example for the rest of the country. I want to commend all the Hokkaido members for their admirable efforts.

I ask our leaders to show wise leadership in promoting our movement to spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, so that everyone can advance harmoniously and joyously. The key is, like the star in a grand drama, to strive to capture people's hearts and respect your noble fellow members. Members will be inspired to stand up and fight alongside a leader who casts aside all pretension, conceit and vanity—a leader who laughs and cries with them while sharing their struggles. When leaders devote themselves to activities in this way, they can bring forth great wisdom, create hope and open the way to victory.

To be continued in the March 9 issue